

# June 2025 Text Amendment Public Hearing

## Meeting minutes

The Town Council of the Town of Unionville held a public hearing for comments on the proposed text amendment TC-25-01 on Monday, June 16, 2025, at 7:15 p.m. in Town Hall, 1102 Unionville Church Road, Monroe, NC. Mayor Baucom and all the Commissioners were present. Town Attorney Ken Helms was absent.

### Welcome and Call to Order

Mayor Randy Baucom called the public hearing to order for Text Amendment #TC-25-01. He announced that this was the last call for anyone who had not yet signed up to speak.

### Comments regarding Text Amendment #TC-25-01—Section #175 regarding Backyard Chickens in RA-40 Zoning

#### Presentation by Melody Braswell

Melody Braswell, Deputy Clerk, presented the proposed text amendment TC-25-01, a copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes. She explained that the amendment aimed to update section 175 of the zoning ordinance, specifically addressing setbacks and requirements for backyard chickens in RA-40 zoning.

Braswell outlined the purpose of the amendment, which was to clarify and modernize the existing ordinance relating to keeping poultry on residential lots in RA-40 zoning. The goal was to ensure the ordinance was practical, enforceable, and aligned with current trends in rural communities while protecting neighboring property owners.

She highlighted that the current ordinance imposed a 150-foot setback from any property line for keeping livestock or poultry, unless on a bona fide farm. This standard did not distinguish between large-scale agricultural operations and small-scale backyard flocks, leading to complaints, confusion, and inconsistent application.

Braswell explained that the amendment was prompted by recent complaints regarding chickens being kept in violation of the existing 150-foot setback. At the Council's direction, staff reviewed ordinances from other rural municipalities, particularly those identified by the North Carolina Rural Center and Union County towns.

The proposed amendment would:

- Keep the existing 150-foot setback for livestock and poultry on parcels larger than 2 acres in RA-40 zoning.
- Introduce a new subsection for backyard chickens on parcels 2 acres or smaller, with the following guidelines:
- Maximum of 15 chickens with no more than 1 mature rooster
- Chickens must be housed in a coop or pen, not in garages or homes
- All birds must be securely fenced and confined to the coop at night
- Coops or pens must be located in the rear yard only
- A 50-foot setback from all side and rear property lines is required

Braswell noted that parcels larger than 2 acres would still be subject to the general livestock setback of 150 feet and would not be eligible for the modified chicken standards. She also clarified that the amendment would not override more restrictive HOA covenants, and that horse stable regulations would remain unchanged.

## **Public Comments**

- Josh Rushing (Non-resident): Rushing expressed his opinion that the ordinance should be removed completely or have a very low setback of 10 feet or less. He pointed out oversights in the current recommendation, particularly for properties greater than 2 acres but not wide enough to have chickens. Rushing also mentioned that the amendment only considered chickens and not other animals often kept as pets, such as pygmy goats. Rushing presented a petition he had started on Facebook and the WhatsApp Unionville app, which garnered 136 signatures. He read several comments from petition signers who supported relaxing or removing the ordinance. Rushing emphasized that many residents felt the rule didn't belong in Unionville and that it took away from the town's character of being able to raise one's own food and animals.
- John Smith (Unionville Resident): Smith spoke in favor of setbacks, citing reasons such as respect for neighbors, biosecurity concerns (e.g., bird flu transfer to commercial flocks), runoff issues, noise considerations, and potential impact on property values. He cautioned that once setbacks are removed, they would be difficult to reinstate.
- Angela Chu (Unionville Resident): Chu requested the council to reconsider the current livestock setbacks for backyard chickens. As a homeschooling mother, she shared how chickens had become an integral part of their family and education. Chu argued that making chicken keeping accessible to Unionville families was important for keeping the love of agriculture growing in the next generation. She suggested that the council remove setback limits or greatly reduce them, noting that even the proposed 50-foot setback would be challenging for property owners with an acre of land.
- Brendan McGlinchey (Unionville Resident): McGlinchey spoke about his family's decision to move to Unionville 12 years ago for the freedom to have experiences like raising animals. He mentioned living on a 7-acre parcel that is relatively narrow, understanding Rushing's perspective. McGlinchey highlighted a disconnect between the perception of Unionville (where people think you can have animals wherever you want) and the actual statutes. He expressed support for the community's character and the liberties that come with it.

## **Adjournment**

Mayor Randy Baucom adjourned the public hearing and announced a 5-minute recess before the start of the regular meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Melody Braswell  
Deputy Clerk

Note: These minutes were drafted with the assistance of Clerk Minutes by HeyGov. All content was reviewed and approved by the Deputy Clerk prior to submission.

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