

To the Editor:

Re: Communication confusion at The Councillors Office

Five years ago, we bought a country home in Kinburn. Along with our gardens and grape vines on our half acre lot, we have a few laying hens that give us fresh eggs.

In August 2013, there was a campaign outside the Carp Farmers Market with a petition to allow hens in rural Ottawa. In 2009, Erika Tar bought a deep property backed by the Torbolton Forest in Constance Bay. With the ok from her immediate neighbours, she has kept three laying hens since 2010. In July 2013 an anonymous call was placed to the City of Ottawa By Law to report the hens. She still doesn't know what the complaint was about. The City of Ottawa By Law 2003-77 defines hens as being Livestock, along with cows, goats, sheep, etc., and you can't have livestock living on residential property in the City of Ottawa. If your residential property is two acres and in Constance Bay, it's governed by the same by-laws as a town home in the Glebe. A By Law officer showed up at Erika's house, issued a warning, and said her hens had to go. The officer admitted, after an inspection of the coop and chickens, that both were well kept (no smell, noise, or health concerns).

Over the past year we have petitioned and collected over 1,000 signatures, and drafted a proposal on the subject. We attend ARAC meetings, and have reached out to the rural councillors. Doug Thompson, Stephen Blais, and Scott Moffatt have all communicated with us. Even Jack Mac Laren, and Derrick Moodie, have spoken with us. However, my own councillor, Eli El-Chantiry, has refused to engage in a conversation. His only response was that he couldn't discuss it because it was a conflict of interest.

On October 6th 2014, we emailed the councillor candidates in Ward 5 with an outline of the current hen situation, proposal attached, and told them we intended to ask them about their stance on the subject at the October 8th debate. Brendan Gorman, Jonathan Mark, and Alexander Aronec all replied, and were up to date on the issue. We still have not had a response from Eli.

At the debate when we asked our question to all of the candidates, all of the other candidates understood that this was a rural issue, and were knowledgeable about the subject. Eli, however went on about urban hens running loose in the City of Vancouver.

The issue is not that Eli does not support backyard hens. The issue is that he has never engaged in a conversation about it, or read the proposal. He has not done his due diligence on the subject, even though it's been an issue for years. If he can't do his homework on a simple subject like backyard hens, what kind of approach is he taking for larger issues like waste management, community resources, and my tax dollars?

After the debate, two women approached me. They said they supported us, signed the petition, and they were friends of Eli's. They said Eli must have misunderstood that we were talking about a rural issue and would talk to him for us and sway him. Though I appreciate their support, this is a disgusting representation of how my current Ward 5 Councillor operates. It appears, Eli has a group of influential constituents that he keeps happy.

In the October 9th issue of the West Carleton Review, Andrew Tait writes "I had a discussion with a friend of mine who is a Jonathan Mark supporter... [He said] Eli had four years to fix the problems and that he had done nothing. I was taken aback and wondered where he had heard such things. It did not

sound like he was talking about the ward 5 Councillor that had recently helped a friend with a unique severance issue and yet another friend with a road drainage problem. It was like he was talking about someone other than Eli.” Again, Eli helps his friends.

Are backyard hens a ‘make or break’ election issue? No. However, it is a symptom of a bigger problem that starts at our current councillor’s office and runs all the way through City Hall.

Before you vote, take the time to think about what is important to you. May you never have an issue that brings you to the local Municipal Office looking for help, but if you do, who do you want there to work with you?

JoAnne Cooney

Kinburn