



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
NEIGHBORHOODS, AND STRATEGIC  
PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

---

**DATE:** November 14, 2007

**TO:** Ray Giometti, Planning Commission Chair  
Members of the Planning Commission

**FROM:** Angie Mathias, Assistant Planner

**SUBJECT:** **Docket File 06-10 – Household Pets and Keeping Animals**

---

**DESCRIPTION:**

As part of this years docket work program, City code regarding the keeping of animals is being reviewed. Residents have expressed a desire to keep animals like chickens and pigeons on their property. The categorization of animals as a zoning use is also being considered. Staff surveyed other cities in the region in order to evaluate Renton's standards in the keeping of animals.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- Amend the definition and revise some standards in City code regarding household pets and so that the keeping of animals is an accessory use. Amend the definitions of small, medium, and large domestic animals so that they are defined by the lot size required to keep the animals.
- Amend City code to allow the keeping of small lot domestic animals on lots that are at least 6,000 square feet, medium lot domestic animals on lots that are at least 12,500 square feet, and large lot domestic animals on lots that are at least one acre in size.
- Change the Hobby Kennel license to an Additional Animals Permit, amend the maximum number of cats/dogs allowed with the license to six (6), clarify the factors considered by which the additional animals may be kept, and institute a revocation policy.

**BACKGROUND:**

The keeping of animals in general and as pets is important to many residents of the City. The current code has precluded some residents from legally keeping animals that they wished to keep because they did not have a one acre sized lot. The City would like to be responsive to residents

concerns, anticipate future needs and desires regarding the keeping of animals, and ensure the keeping of animals does not cause detriment to neighboring properties.

Staff presented issues and asked for feedback from the Planning Commission on September 26 and October 10, 2007. Staff has also had two meetings with animal control officers, on August 28 and October 23, 2007. The second meeting with animal control also included members of the Development Services department. The recommendations that are presented represent a balance of residents' requests, what Development Services and Animal Control regard as being reasonable and enforceable, and what Long Range Planning regards as being solid policy.

### **ISSUE SUMMARY:**

1. What should City policy be regarding the keeping of animals?
2. What number of animals should be allowed, and should there be a greater number allowed for residents with larger lots?

### **ANALYSIS:**

Currently, the City of Renton code regarding animals places the keeping of animals in the zoning use table. Types of keeping of animals are defined and allowed in specified zones. For example, the keeping of three household pets are allowed in all zones. The keeping of animals like chickens, goats, etc. is defined as animal husbandry. The animal husbandry animals are grouped by size, and the keeping of them is only allowed in certain residential zones. Any animal husbandry is only allowed on parcels that are at least one acre in size. Code allows twenty small animals, four medium animals, and two large animals. Those animals defined in the current code as Large Animals included are: horses, ponies, cows, llamas, oxen, buffalo, and deer; Medium Animals are: sheep and pigs; and Small Animals are: chickens, ducks, and geese.

If the ratios of the number of animals allowed in animal husbandry on one acre are calculated down they present a base from which a revised standard may be implemented. The keeping of large animals on lots smaller than one acre was not considered to be healthy for the animals or compatible with neighboring properties. Calculations for medium animals showed application of the same standard would allow one animal to be kept on lots that were 11,000 square feet. The application of the standards for small animals would allow one animal on lots smaller than 2,500 square feet. The City recently amended the standards for large animals to allow large animals per one acre because those animals tend to be companion animals. This same logic follows with small and medium animals; it would be inappropriate to apply these calculations down to what would allow one animal. Therefore, the recommendations are to allow two and three animals with larger minimum lot size requirements.

Staff conducted a survey of other cities in Puget Sound to evaluate their policies regarding the keeping of animals (attachment A). The information gathered included how many dogs and cats can be kept, if birds like chickens and pigeons are allowed and the associated standards, and any other notable policies. The regulations of fourteen local cities and King County were examined. In general, it appears that with the regulations as they currently exist, the City of Renton is in the middle of the spectrum. There are some cities that are more liberal with their policies and others

that are more restrictive. For example, King County, SeaTac, Shoreline, and Woodinville are more liberal with household pets and make a distinction between indoor and outdoor animals and allow citizens to keep as many indoor animals as they wish. More restrictive measures are things such as Bellingham's requirement for a much greater distance between accessory animal buildings being required to be at least 50 feet from the property line.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Amended Definitions:**

With the feedback and insight provided, staff is recommending that the City implement an amended definition of household pets. Also, to revise the definition of small, medium, and large domestic animals so that they are defined as animals that require a certain lot size rather necessarily the size of the animal. The proposed definitions are below:

*Accessory Uses:* Uses customarily incidental and subordinate to the principal use and located upon the same lot occupied by the principal use or on an abutting/adjacent lot that is under the same ownership as the principal lot. Some accessory uses are specifically listed, particularly where a use is only allowed in an accessory form, whereas other accessory uses are determined by the Development Services Division on a case-by-case basis per RMC 4-2-050C4 and C6, Accessory Use Interpretations and Unclassified Uses.

*Household Pets:* Animals that are generally kept as a part of a household and for the purpose of companionship. These animals are to include: dogs, cats, rabbits, caged indoor birds, small rodents, non-venomous reptiles and amphibians weighing less than ten pounds, and other animals of similar size and characteristics as approved by the Development Services Director.

*Small Lot Domestic Animals:* Animals that require at least 6,000 gross square feet lot size; to include chickens, pigeons, rabbits, and other animals of similar size and characteristics as approved by the Development Services Director.

*Medium Lot Domestic Animals:* Animals that require at least 12,500 gross square feet lot size; to include, ducks, geese, sheep, miniature goats that are smaller than twenty-four inches (24") at the shoulder and/or not more than 150 pounds in weight, and other animals of similar size and characteristics as approved by the Development Services Director.

*Large Lot Domestic Animals:* Animals that require at least one acre lot size; to include horses, ponies, donkeys, cows, goats, llamas, oxen, pigs, and other animals of similar size and characteristics as approved by the Development Services Director.

*Commercial Stables:* A land use on which large lot domestic animals are kept for sale or hire to the public. Breeding, boarding, or training of large lot domestic animals may also be conducted.

The animals that are included in these lot size groupings are all grouped by the lot size that animal control stated is a reasonable minimum for those animals, not necessarily by the size of the animal. For example, pigs were previously defined as a medium animal because of their size. With the new method of classifying animals by the size lot that is needed to adequately care for the animal, pigs are placed in the large lot domestic animal group because they require a substantial amount of land.

### **New Definitions:**

With the feedback and specific requests from animal control, staff is also recommending that the City implement new definitions regarding animals. These new proposed definitions are below:

*Additional Animals Permit:* A conditionally granted permit for the keeping of household pets and/or domestic animals at greater numbers than allowed outright. For dogs, cats, and/or combinations of dogs and cats the maximum number allowable with this permit is six (6). Animals kept in small animal hospitals, clinics, pet shops, or grooming services are excluded from this definition.

*Domestic Animals:* Animals that have been bred to be tame, are dependent on human intervention for food and shelter, and are kept continually at the premises of the owner. These animals include: large lot domestic animals, medium lot domestic animals, and small lot domestic animals, and other animals as approved by the Development Services Director. Bees, peafowl, and roosters are excluded from this definition

*Animal Foster Care Provider:* A homeowner and/or tenant who cares for an animal or animals not considered their household pet/pets on a temporary basis that is not longer than 120 days per animal.

*Occasional Breeder:* An owner/tenant with household pets that has a single litter no more frequently than one time every two years and keep the offspring no longer than 120 days.

### **Number of Animals Allowed**

It is recommended that the number of household pets allowed be three. When lots are larger than 20,000 square feet, one additional household animal per 10,000 square feet in additional lot size would be allowed to be kept. With a slightly revised definition of household pets and a possibility for escalation in allowable numbers when people have larger lots, there is a greater amount of flexibility to citizens in the type of animals they keep, but it does not dramatically change the existing regulations and allowances. This change would allow greater flexibility for those who have the capacity in their lot size to keep additional animals without impacts to

neighbors who live in the area. The requirement to obtain a Hobby Kennel license (revised to Additional Animals Permit) when keeping four to six dogs and/or cats, or combinations of dogs and cats, would remain in place regardless of lot size.

In regards to small lot, medium lot, and large lot domestic animals it is recommended that the following standards be applied:

- Small lot domestic animals – 3 allowed on lots that larger than 6,000 square feet and 1 additional small lot animal allowed per 2,000 square feet in additional lot size.
- Medium lot domestic animals – 2 allowed on lots that are larger than 12,500 square feet and 1 additional medium lot animal allowed per 7,500 square feet in additional lot size.
- Large lot domestic animals – 2 allowed on lots that are larger than one acre and 1 additional large lot animal allowed per 20,000 square feet in additional lot size.

### **Additional Animals Permit**

Current City code has a Hobby Kennel License that is used when people wish to keep 4 or more dogs and/or cats subject to certain criteria. It is recommended this set of criteria and process be expanded to allow for the keeping of greater numbers of animals other than just dogs and cats. Citizens would be allowed outright to keep animals in the numbers as explained previously, but when they wished to keep a greater number they would be required to apply for an Additional Animals Permit. The factors considered in the application that were in place for hobby kennels has been modified to reflect the keeping of animals other than dogs and cats. Some new factors have been added to reflect concerns that neighbors may have as pointed out by animal control and development services. The proposed factors are as follows:

1. The keeping of additional animals will not have an adverse effect on abutting or adjacent properties or cause a detriment to the community.
2. Past history of animal control complaints regarding animals kept by the applicant.
3. Facility and rear yard specifications/dimensions that ensures the health and safety of the animals and confines the animals to the owners property. The facility for medium lot and large lot domestic animals must include a grassy or vegetated area.
4. Animal size, type, and characteristics of breed.
5. Manner in which the animal waste will be managed.
6. The zoning classification of the premises on which the keeping of additional animals is to occur.
7. If the application is for the keeping of additional large lot animals, a copy of an adopted farm management plan that is based on King County Conservation District's Farm Conservation and Practice Standards and shows that there is adequate pasturage to support a greater number of animals shall be provided.
8. Compliance with the requirements of RMC 4-4-010, Standards and Review Criteria for Keeping Animals.

If Development Services deems it prudent, an Animal Control officer shall inspect the property of the applicant in order to ensure the humane and appropriate care of the animals. Ultimately, the number of animals allowed with an Additional Animals Permit is at the discretion of the Reviewing Official and/or the Animal Control Officer. Other changes in the code regarding the Additional Animals Permit include the applicability of the license. The Permit also institutes a revocation policy. The Additional Animals Permit can only be held by an individual and only at the address that the permit was approved for. If a person moves from the address approved, but keeps their animals they would be required to apply again in order to ensure that their new location and facility is suitable to keep additional animals. Finally, a revocation clause is instituted so that a person can have their Additional Animals Permit revoked if an investigation finds that the provisions of the section are not upheld.

### **Keeping Animals Regulations**

Household pets and domestic animals are almost always kept in a fashion that makes them an accessory use to either residential or commercial land use. For example, a person keeps a cat in their apartment or a bookstore keeps a cat in the store. The apartment or bookstore is the primary use and the cat is accessory. The first sentence of the definition of accessory uses opens with the statement that accessory uses are, "Uses customarily incidental and subordinate to the principal use". The next part of the first sentence is proposed to be amended to clarify that accessory uses are only associated with the lot where the principal use occurs, so that it reads, "and located upon the same lot occupied by the principal use or on an abutting/adjacent lot that is under the same ownership as the principal lot". Circumstances that make the keeping of animals a primary use are generally when a person engages in a for profit endeavor, such as boarding or stables. There are proposed changes to the code to clarify when keeping animals is accessory and when it is not. The definition of household pets are kept as a part of a household, other proposed code changes include amending subpart b and c of the keeping of animals section to read:

B. Applicability: The keeping of household pets and/or domestic animals up to the maximum number allowed in section 4-4-010 and/or section 4-9-100 Additional Animals Permit by an owner/tenant for the purpose of enjoyment is permitted outright as an accessory use to residential or commercial use subject to the requirements of this section and section 4-5-050A Accessory Use. The keeping of such animals in a manner consistent with the standards in this chapter shall not constitute a nuisance or public disturbance in accordance with RMC 1-3-3 and RMC 8-7-3.

F. Home Occupations: The keeping of household pets or domestic animals for the purposes of sale, boarding, or any for-profit venture in all residential and mixed use zones requires a Home Occupation permit. Any owner/tenant who keeps household pets and/or domestic animals and sells any animal related product made from or produced by their household pets and/or domestic animals shall be required to obtain a Home Occupation permit. Keeping animals for commercial purposes that exceed the

standards of a Home Occupation accessory use requires approval pursuant to RMC 4-2-060 Uses Allowed in Zoning Designations.

Finally, staff recommends combining the general requirements for the keeping of animals and the additional requirements for hobby kennels. This change helps address potential concerns with allowing small and medium lot animals to be kept on lots that are smaller than one acre. Provisions such as a requirement for animal to be properly managed and food waste being removed regularly so as to keep the area free from rodents and insects and to prevent foul odors. The general requirements as proposed would include:

1. *Shelter Location:* Shelters, pens, and permanent or temporary kennel structures shall be located a minimum of ten feet (10') from any property line and in the rear yard unless the Development Services Division, based upon information provided by an owner/tenant, determines that a side yard would be a better location for the shelter, pen, and/or kennel.

a. *Barns and Stables:* Private barns and stables shall be located a minimum of fifty feet (50') from any property line. Barns and stables may not be located in attached garages or carports. All structures, corrals, feeding, exercising, training, riding or other facilities associated with commercial horse and pony boarding, riding stables, and schools shall be located a minimum of fifty feet (50') from any property line.

2. *Confinement:* All animals shall be kept and maintained in a manner that confines their movement and activity to the premises of the owner/tenant.

3. *Health and Safety:* All animals shall be kept in such a manner so as not to create any objectionable noise, odor, or otherwise cause to annoy or become a public nuisance to the health, safety or general welfare of any person. Provision shall be made to ensure that animal food stored outdoors will not attract rodents or insects.

4. *Animal Waste and Food Waste:* All shelter structures, confinement areas, and/or open-run areas shall be kept clean. Animal waste shall be properly disposed of, and any accumulated animal waste must not be stored within the shelter setback area. Any storage of animal waste must not constitute a nuisance as defined in chapter [1-3 RMC](#). Provision shall be made for the removal of animal and food wastes so that the confinement area and shelter are kept free from infestation of insects, rodents, or disease, as well as to prevent obnoxious or foul odors.

5. *Fencing:* All open-run areas shall be surrounded by a fence of a minimum height specified by Animal Control and/or Development Services and located a minimum of ten feet (10') from any property lines. Electric and barbed wire fences may be used to confine animals provided the conditions of RMC [4-4-040](#), Fences and Hedges, are met.

a. Open-run areas for dogs shall be surrounded by a fence that measures at minimum six feet (6') in height.

b. On lots that are larger than one gross acre in size, open-run areas may be located closer than ten feet (10') to a property line if the open-run fence area is no closer than one hundred feet (100') to any dwelling unit and the location is approved by Development Services.

### **Other Code Changes**

Staff recommends code changes to the Home Occupation section to allow for certain outdoor storage and accessory structures when they are used for the keeping of animals that are used as a component of the home occupation. For example, a household that keeps four dogs for breeding would be allowed to have an outdoor kennel area for the dogs as an allowable part of the home occupation.

All other recommended changes are to amend the use tables to strike instances when household pets and domestic animals are cited as a land use. These uses will be regulated as an accessory use in all zones so it is not necessary to list the activity on the land use charts. Also, to amend references throughout Title IV where “Hobby Kennel License” is used so that it reads “Additional Animals Permit” and instances where animals are referred to as Large, Medium, and/or Small Domestic so that they read Large, Medium and/or Small Lot Domestic.

### **Appeals Available**

The Hobby Kennel License is a Type II land use permit and the revision of the title to Additional Animals Permit will not change the land use permit type. As a Type II land use permit the Additional Animals Permit will have available: an open record appeal to the Hearing Examiner, a closed record appeal to City Council, and judicial appeal.