

Thank you, Council, for your time.

My name is Sergio Guardiola, I live at 619 Stratton St. And I've worked in the city for nearly 5 and a half years and have lived here for 3. Until today have not felt a strong need to reach out to the council nor to speak at a meeting.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit nearly every industry in a way that hasn't been seen since the Great Depression. It entirely crippled the ability of some families to work, and their ability to pay the bills along with it. Being a first responder, I have a quote "unquote" "Preppers Mentality" by nature. We prepare for the things that aren't supposed to happen, the things that shouldn't happen. We prepare so much that it spills over into our personal lives. And although my family is blessed enough that I maintain a certain level of job security, still we prepare.

I've learned that the difference between panic and preparation is that preparation is Proactive, whereas panic is RE-active. As such I feel that there are still some preparations that can be made.

Today I am simply asking that you allow me to be in more control of how I buffer the impact on my family by unforeseen circumstances. I am asking that you reduce the requirements on keeping poultry in the city. Currently the ordinance requires enclosures to be located "not less than 100 feet from any residence, other than that of the owner. I am asking that you reduce this requirement to 30 feet to be more in line with our surrounding communities.

While I don't believe that 100 feet is an arbitrary number, decided on without thought or consideration, I do feel that it is overkill and especially during this pandemic is limiting my ability to safely provide for my family.

Seguin has the strictest distance requirement of any nearby city that maintains poultry or fowl codes. Higher than Luling and Lockhart, higher than Schertz and New Braunfels. Higher even than San Marcos and San Antonio, which are much more densely populated and have a much higher overall population.

When considering my request, you may come to the conclusion that this pandemic is on the downturn and will pass shortly, and I pray to God that it will. But also consider that the cities that I've mentioned did not relax their codes due to the pandemic, they have been in place for years. It was not adopted RE-actively, in a panic. It was adopted with level heads and in the best interest of the community and the individual citizen.

You may also postulate that the 100-foot requirement was adopted as a matter of safety. After many hours of research and a good understanding of disease processes and transmission due to my profession, I can assure you that those worries, while well-meaning are rooted in misinformation or ignorance. I don't mean that in a demeaning sense but in the true definition of the word. The Mississippi State University Extension service states that, "... opponents of poultry production will often argue for the most restrictive setback distances possible... These individuals will often use unfounded or false accusations concerning air quality, health, odor, environmental, and quality-of-life issues to advance their position (Cunningham, 2006)."

The CDC does not have a recommended setback for poultry enclosures, but does address the concerns of disease and offers some simple guidelines for maintaining a healthy flock and staying safe.

The CDC states that, "It is rare for avian flu to spread to people." & "People who work closely with large numbers of birds, such as producers, are more likely to get bird flu if their animals are infected."

As rare as it is for Avian Flu to spread to humans it is even more rare to see human-to-human transmission.

I finally decided on 30 feet because it mirrors that of New Braunfels which most closely resembles our smaller, and more rural town. I believe it's a good compromise between individual rights and safety.

Ultimately disease transmission comes down to the health of the flock and the cleanliness of the enclosure, if this is not well maintained it is a different issue altogether and needs to be investigated as a case of animal cruelty and neglect.

I will say that the Tyson trucks that transport hundreds and hundreds of birds through town, littering the air with feathers and feces, multiple times a day, put the public at higher risk than any backyard hens ever will. These are the birds most likely to carry disease and infection and that most commonly cause human transmission as stated by the CDC. Yet we balance this risk with the benefits Tyson provides our city and its residents.

As we prepare to open up our economy and hope to get many of our neighbors back to work, I worry that we may have a surge in COVID cases here in Seguin. Like many others in our community I am hoping for the best but planning for the worst. Reducing the distance requirement on poultry enclosures would help more citizens of Seguin be more in control, not just of their food supply but how often they must go out to the grocery store and expose themselves and their loved ones to the virus.

For my family eggs are a staple food in our home. From breakfast, to birthday cakes, to making homemade bread, eggs are essential to our lives.

Reducing this tight limitation would not cost the city any money, on the contrary it will greatly increase the number of citizens eligible to apply for permits, and is something that can be implemented immediately to help reduce the burden on our citizenry, and on our city as a whole.

So, I ask you to please put this item on the agenda, and please decrease the distance requirement to 30 feet.