



Clarification Regarding Tax Assessments on Ag Structures & Zoning Permit Fees for Chicken Coops/Shelters

Dear Western Loudoun Residents,

It has come to my attention that there has been conflicting information circulating on social media regarding two issues:

- Tax assessments on agricultural structures
- Zoning permit fees for chicken coops/shelters

I would like to clarify that no new tax or fee has been implemented by Loudoun County. Both the tax assessment on agricultural structures and the zoning permit fee for chicken coops/shelters have been in effect for many years. The only recent tax change implemented by the Board of Supervisors has been the lowering of the real property tax rate from \$1.145 to \$1.125.

Tax Assessments on Agriculture Structures

There has been no change implemented by the County; however, some residents have experienced an increase in their tax assessment from the Commissioner of the Revenue's office. Please note that the Commissioner of the Revenue is a locally elected official separate from, and not under supervision of, the Board of Supervisors. As a result of these increased assessments, Supervisor Higgins and I were asked by the Loudoun County Farm Bureau to assist them in obtaining additional clarification from the Commissioner of the Revenue's office related to their process for the assessment of agricultural structures. Based on that request, our offices worked with the Commissioner's office and recently received additional clarifying information which was provided to the Farm Bureau last week.

Zoning Permit Fees for Chicken Coops/Shelters

Regarding the zoning permit fee requirement for chicken coops/shelters, the current Zoning Ordinance (Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance) considers the keeping of chickens as an "agricultural use" and it is permitted in many of the County's rural and suburban residential zoning districts subject to the additional regulations of Section 5-626. The procedures apply countywide, in all rural and suburban zoning districts zoned for "agricultural use".

Because chickens are generally housed in a coop/shelter, the Zoning Ordinance (Article 8) applies because these coops/shelters are considered structures and therefore are required to obtain a zoning permit (Section 6-1000) prior to placement. The issuance of a zoning permit for a chicken coop/shelter is subject to a fee of \$165.00 as established by the Land Development Fee Schedule.

While our offices were able to obtain clarity from county staff regarding how the zoning permit process works for chicken coops/shelters, we found that the Zoning Ordinance and permit fees do not have a minimum or maximum size requirement for shelters. Therefore, there is no distinction between larger commercial sized chicken coops/shelters, and smaller homeowner sized chicken coops/shelters, and/or movable chicken coops/tractors.

Supervisor Higgins and I believe this is unreasonable and feel that the Zoning Ordinance regarding chicken coops/shelters needs to be addressed in order to ensure that Loudoun's farmers are not negatively impacted. As such, our offices have requested that county staff conduct a review of the policy in order to find a reasonable solution that will allow minimal sized chicken coops/shelters without the need to apply for a zoning permit.

In summary - both the tax assessment on agricultural structures and the zoning permit fee for chicken coops/shelters have been in effect in Loudoun County for many years. Neither Supervisor Higgins nor I, would support any new tax or fee on Loudoun's agriculture community as we are keenly aware that farming is an integral part of Loudoun's past, present and future, and we are dedicated to its success.

I hope you find this information helpful and informative. Please let my office know if you would like any additional information regarding tax assessments on agricultural structures or zoning permit fees for chicken coops/shelters. And as stated above, both Supervisor Higgins and I will continue our work with the Loudoun Farm Bureau, the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, and county staff to ensure this situation is rectified in the best interest of our farming community.

All my best,



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