

But Officer, We Have No Rooster

Moscow, Idaho, City Code, Title 10, Chapter 04.1.iii: It shall be unlawful for a person to keep or maintain male fowl within city limits....

None of the hens ever crowed.

On a morning, the black and brown banty

pullet ventured out early from the hen yard—
stood before the dining room wall window,

a singular sight, raised her chestnut breast—
tip-toed, filling air sacs, flapping wings,

held outspread—and drew us from breakfast
outside. Her rooster rendition resonated

for three trials, songful syllables; then,
she broke—like a vinyl record moving,

dragging the final *errrrs* with silences
like a turn table's dusty needle lifted.

She wouldn't stop—and we imagined
her baying like a hound at a red moon

wishing neighbors found her chorus Pentecostal—
warning of the apocalypse preachers preached

while the flock in the hen yard preened,
their heads vanished into plume.

—Susan Hodgins
Moscow Poet Laureate

Note: This poem was written for the Mayor's Arts Award Banquet, held Thursday, October 25, 2018, at the 1912 Center in Moscow.