



City of Alexandria

Beekeeping Zoning Text Amendment #2026-00002

Planning Commission
May 5, 2026



Agenda



1. Summary
2. Background
3. Proposal
4. Recommendation



Summary

Staff Research

- State Regulations
 - Codified regulations mainly focus on health of bees
 - Provide Best Management Practices for beekeepers
- Local Ordinances
 - Other Virginia jurisdictions
 - Washington, D.C.

Proposed Text Changes

- Focus on land use controls to limit the impacts of beekeeping on the surrounding community
- Encourage compliance with relevant state Best Management Practices while also maintaining flexibility needed for beekeeping in urban and semi-urban environments.



Background – State Regulations

To inform appropriate land use considerations, staff reviewed the Code of Virginia beekeeping regulations.

- Virginia requires all beekeepers to comply with the Code of Virginia's chapter on beekeeping. This section focuses on:
 - Suppression of bee diseases
 - Apiary identification requirements
 - Colony strength standards for pollination services
 - Promotion of sale and distribution of bees and their products
 - Administration and enforcement of rules



Background – State Regulations

- Code of Virginia provides Best Management Practices as follows:
 - Bee health and safety
 - Hive and water source management
 - Swarming reduction techniques
 - Types of hives and bees kept
 - Colony density and setbacks



Background – Surrounding Jurisdictions

Staff also reviewed the local beekeeping ordinances from the following jurisdictions:

- Virginia:
 - Fairfax City
 - Fairfax County
 - Fredericksburg
 - Prince William County
 - Roanoke
- Washington, D.C.



Proposal – Text Changes

Define beekeeping and beekeeping equipment:

- Both definitions based on Code of Virginia and surrounding jurisdictions

Allow beekeeping as an accessory use and beekeeping equipment as permitted accessory structures:

- Accessory uses and structures must be subordinate to the principal use or structure

Create accessory use and structure limitations for beekeeping and beekeeping equipment:

- Require minimum setbacks for hives:
 - 10 feet, or
 - 5 feet with a flyway barrier
- Limit the number of hives on a lot:
 - No more than 2 hives on lots $\leq 5,000$ square feet
 - One additional hive per every addition 2,500 square feet permitted on lots $\geq 5,000$ square feet

Allow beekeeping equipment as a permitted obstruction:

- Some residential zones have larger setback requirements than the two proposed setback scenarios



Staff recommends initiation and approval of the proposed text amendments.

