



DEPARTMENT OF
PLANNING & ZONING

DATE: April 30, 2026

TO: Chair McMahon and Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Paul Stoddard, Planning & Zoning Director

SUBJECT: Docket Item #6 – Zoning Text Amendment #2026-00002 – Beekeeping

The purpose of this memo is to update the existing proposal with new language that aligns with best management practices and provides limited additional hive density allowances to reduce the risk of swarming events.

The current proposed language limits the number of beehives permitted based on the size of the lot. However, this limit, in some cases, may inadvertently prevent the safest method for hive management and swarm control. Specifically, the time of year for queen mating can create a high-pressure environment within a single hive, which can cause increased swarming behavior among the colony. To limit this occurrence, beekeepers tend to split a colony between two hives.

The Virginia Code's Best Management Practices permit hive numbers to be doubled for no more than 60 consecutive days per year for the purpose of queen mating and swarm control. Other Virginia jurisdictions, such as Roanoke, also give additional allowances during certain periods of the year.

Therefore, based on further research and feedback received from community members, staff recommends the following addition to the proposed text amendment (new text underlined):

- (F) Beekeeping and beekeeping equipment shall only be permitted subject to the following:
 - (1) No more than two beehives shall be permitted on any lot, except that:

(a) Lots larger than 5,000 square feet shall be permitted one additional hive for every additional 2,500 square feet of lot area above 5,000 square feet.

(b) Regardless of the number of hives permitted by 7-103(F)(1)(a), two additional hives shall be permitted on any lot for not more than 60 consecutive days per year.