



[EXTERNAL]Input on Proposed Beekeeping Zoning Changes

From Jessica <jessicawinesett@gmail.com>
Date Sat 4/25/2026 4:27 PM
To PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

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Hello,

I'm a local beekeeper and I'm writing regarding the proposed zoning changes for backyard beekeeping.

I understand the goal is to reduce potential impacts on neighbors and create clear, enforceable guidelines. I appreciate the city taking initiative on this.

However, I have a concern that limiting hive numbers—particularly to two on smaller lots—may unintentionally create conditions that are less safe for both bees and the surrounding community.

Responsible beekeeping often requires maintaining multiple colonies in order to:

- Prevent overcrowding and swarming
- Manage disease and pests
- Split strong colonies safely

Restricting hive numbers can increase swarm pressure, which may actually lead to more visible bee activity and neighbor concerns.

I would love to better understand:

- What types of issues or complaints the city is currently seeing related to beekeeping
- Whether those issues are tied to hive numbers or to management practices

I believe there may be alternative approaches that address community concerns while also supporting healthy pollinator management, such as:

- Education or registration-based guidelines
- Performance-based standards (e.g., swarm prevention, water sources, flyway management)
- Tiered allowances based on beekeeper experience

I would welcome the opportunity to contribute constructively to this discussion and support a solution that works for both residents and pollinators.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica Winesett

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[EXTERNAL]Zoning Text Amendment #2026-00002

From Alex E. Crawford-Batt <aecraw@yahoo.com>

Date Sun 5/3/2026 11:32 PM

To PlanComm <PlanComm@alexandriava.gov>

Cc CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov <CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov>

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Members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing in reference to docket item 6 for Tuesday's public hearing. I do not support the proposed regulation of beekeeping in our City. Honeybees are pollinators and beneficial to the landscaping of our City. The 2019 City Landscaping Guidelines encouraged pollinator-friendly landscapes, so needlessly discouraging pollinators, domesticated or native, is contradictory to the spirit as an Eco-City. I must ask what demonstrated problem is this proposal seeking to solve? How does the City intend to enforce reported violations so as to come to a humane and amicable resolution for a filed complaint?

As a beekeeper in this City previously, I understand the challenges of urban beekeeping. But the challenge of urban beekeeping requires adaptability and working with the unique configurations of one's lot, the immediate surroundings including neighbors, and hive needs, which can vary over the seasons. Most concerning in this language, capping a hard 2 hive limit for lots at or under 5000 feet gives no flexibility for responsible management of healthy colonies that need to be split to avoid swarming. Certain times of the year, primarily spring and summer, one often needs to expand the number of hives to accommodate the bees' natural growth.

The proposed language also doesn't really address the differing configurations of yards that could in some cases make the front yard ideal, if set back and not facing the property line or sidewalk. And what of corner lots?

There are multiple styles of hives that would additionally complicate enforcement and regulation, which reads like it is intended for the common Langstroth hive, but how would the City "count" the number of active colonies in a Slovenian-style AZ hive or warre hive? Do 5 frame langstroth "nuc" hives count as a full hive like a 8- or 10- frame langstroth hive? What if they are using Deeps instead of medium sized woodenware for their frames, giving more space for more bees?

Does the City really want its employees spending time counting hives, measuring setbacks, determining what is and isn't an active colony? To what end?

Again I would like the City to clearly articulate what problem is in need of solving. If a neighbor living next door to a beekeeper complains to the city, what constitutes a valid complaint? The noise of buzzing? The scent of honey and wax? The free pollination for their gardens? A sting which could have come from any honeybee resident within several miles or a yellowjacket or native bee.

If the city finds a beekeeper in violation by exceeding the number of hives, what is the resolution? The beekeeper cannot legally sell a hive without inspection by the State, which is a time consuming process. They can't responsibly abandon the hive, which could either doom the domesticated bees to eventual death or they will could find a crevice in a neighbor's house/tree/car to seek refuge, leading to structural challenges to remove them. And moving a hive that is deemed to be misplaced is also an arduous process, as bees' sense of navigation and orientation is very acutely mapped to their exact location, so moving a very heavy hive more than 3 feet per day can disorient them from finding their way home.

I don't believe the zoning code should be changed at all to regulate honeybees, but if a change is deemed necessary, much more thought and research should be put into both the language of restrictions, method of enforcement, and problem needing to be addressed.

Thank you for the consideration of my perspectives. I'm happy to answer any additional questions.

Regards,
Alex Crawford-Batt
300 Aspen Street

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