

Dear Councilman,

I live in this community and I have learned that code enforcement has issued citations for individuals engaged in backyard beekeeping based upon arbitrary interpretation of existing zoning codes. The application of such code is archaic and no longer reflects the ecological, environmental, economic, and safety needs of this community. This is especially true in light of southwest Florida being officially declared as Africanized Honey Bee (AHB) territory. When our local agriculture and our economy are so closely dependent upon the honeybee, there needs to be awareness that such actions work against our community rather looking out for the best interest our community.

I would like this practice of bee banning to be removed and replaced with properly written restrictive code, specifically written to take advantage of the positives of backyard beekeeping.

Bees are an integral part of both residential and urban environments, they are already here in the form of wild, feral bees! Ironically, it is just the gentle, managed bee hives that are not allowed.

There are many benefits to allow and even encourage beekeeping in residential and urban settings:

- ❖ Increase in pollination resulting in an increase in plant diversity and food production.
- ❖ Managed European Honey Bee colonies in residential and urban areas serves as a first line of defense against the Africanized Honey Bee (AHB), because AHB tend to not move into an residential and urban areas where managed bee colonies already exist due to the managed European colonies providing intense competition for resources.
- ❖ Reduction of bee sting incidents from AHB.
- ❖ Increase in plant health and robustness.
- ❖ Increase in biodiversity.
- ❖ Promotion of local production of honey, beeswax and other hive products.
- ❖ Opportunities for education of the public regarding the environmental contribution of pollinators in general, and bees specifically.

There are a few questions that may be brought forth by concerned, well-meaning citizens that should be anticipated and addressed through proper code provisions and education to dispel the myths about keeping of managed colonies versus the problems and fears commonly associated with wild AHB colonies (and the general fear of insects). While AHB pose a threat to our community, wrongly addressing the problem by eliminating managed European Honey Bee colonies in residential and urban settings would only extremely compound the problem and adversely affect our community.

Please consider this request. My local and state organizations (see below) are also available to provide support and code suggestions if need be.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Beekeeper

References:

University of Florida IFAS Extension, EDIS: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg1113> "70% of all wild colonies captured in swarm traps in south Florida are African colonies." "...although the African honey bee has been introduced only recently to Florida, it appears that keeping managed European colonies may help keep African bees out of new territory by providing intense competition for resources. Therefore, beekeepers will become one of the principle resources to whom the general public and agriculturalists can turn as they confront the African honey bee."

The Struggle to Preserve Residential Beekeeping, Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services: <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/pi/preserve-beekeeping/>

Local Association: Beekeepers Association of Southwest Florida <http://swfbees.com>

State Association: Florida State Beekeepers Association <http://floridabeekeepers.org>

Possible Code Suggestions, Templates or Guidelines for Local Municipalities which could be modified to suit our community:

<http://swfbees.com/beekeepModelOrdinance.pdf>

<http://www.freshfromflorida.com/pi/preserve-beekeeping/documents/beekeeping-in-the-midst-of-8-million-neighbors.pdf> ←New Jersey, but could be useful