

Ordinances of 2024 - Chapter 2

Filed on: XXX,  
Text Amendment Application No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Boston City Council

TO THE BOSTON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND ZONING  
COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF BOSTON:

Boston City Council through and by Boston City Councilor Ruthzee Louijeune petition to amend  
the text of the Boston Zoning Code as follows:

1. In Article 2, Section 2-1. - Meaning of Certain Words and Phrases

- a. Strike the existing definition of 'Accessory Keeping of Animals'  
"Subject to the provisions of Article 10, the keeping of horses, cows,  
goats, poultry, pigeons, rabbits, bees, or similar animals other than pigs."
- b. Replace with following definition of 'Accessory Keeping of Animals'  
"Subject to the provisions of Article 10, the keeping of horses, cows,  
goats, poultry, pigeons, rabbits, or similar animals other than pigs."

2. In Article 89 Urban Agriculture

- a. Strike Section 89-10 - Accessory Keeping of Honey Bees.
- b. In Section 89-2. Definitions
  - i. Strike 3. "Beekeeper"
  - ii. Strike 6. "Colony"
  - iii. Strike 9. "Hive"
  - iv. Strike 20. "Honey Bee"
  - v. Strike the phrase "or bees" from definition 30. "Urban Agriculture"

3. In Article 8 - Table A Use No. 76.

- a. Strike the word "bees" and "or more than three colonies of bees are kept on the lot at one  
time"

Petitioner: Boston City Council

By: Councilor Ruthzee Louijeune

Address: 1 City Hall Square, Suite 550, Boston, MA 02201

Telephone: 617-635-4376

Date: XXX

In City Council **MAR 06 2024**  
*Passed yeas 13*  
*Alex Guintas* City Clerk  
*Approved* **MAR 11 2024**  
*[Signature]* Mayor

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS RUTHZEE LOUIJEUNE, BREADON, COLETTA,  
DURKAN, FERNANDES ANDERSON, FITZGERALD, MURPHY, PEPÉN,  
SANTANA, WEBER, AND WORRELL



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### A TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE BOSTON ZONING CODE WITH RESPECT TO HONEY BEES

- WHEREAS,** Honey bees play a critical role in our food system, as they provide the pollination for over 85 different crops and contribute to 35% of global food production. Accordingly, without honey bees the agricultural system would collapse; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Honey bees enable the production of a wide array of foods, helping to stabilize and diversify ecosystems and further provide support for human habitats and high quality nutrients. Honey bees also contribute to livestock production through the pollination of forage plants such as alfalfa and clover; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Honey bees contribute to the greater biodiversity within urban cities by supporting and strengthening plant and tree growth through pollination, and are also indicator species, where they provide critical information on the health and habitat of our environment; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Honey bee populations have been on a steady decline, whereby city environments can provide alternative spaces for honey bees to maintain healthy habitats as they have access to protected areas, providing themselves with security while also generating a consistent diet and stronger biodiversity for its surroundings; *and*
- WHEREAS,** There are collective and individual environmental and health benefits to urban beekeeping, whereby bee pollination results in a decrease in pollution as their pollination contributes to keeping waterways clean, preventing soil erosion, encouraging oxygen production, and absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Residents and businesses in Boston are already hosting bee hives on their rooftops and backyard as local interest in beekeeping has only increased during the pandemic; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

**ORDERED:** That the Boston City Council, by and through Councilor Ruthzee Louijeune, submits a petition to amend the text of the Boston Zoning Code.

In City Council MAR 06 2024  
Passed YEAS 13  
Alex Spontas City Clerk  
Approved MAR 11 2024  
W. L. Mayor



# BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations

Gabriela Coletta, Chair

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One City Hall Square ♦ 5<sup>th</sup> Floor ♦ Boston, MA 02201 ♦ Phone: (617) 635-3040 ♦ Fax: (617) 635-4203

## REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

March 06, 2024

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Government Operations was referred *Docket #0169, Text Amendment to the Boston Zoning Code with respect to Honey Bees* on January 24, 2024. This matter was sponsored by Council President Ruthzee Louijeune.

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### **Summary of Legislation:**

*Docket #0169* is a petition to the Boston Planning and Development Agency and the Boston Zoning Commission to remove the regulation of keeping honey bees from the City of Boston Zoning Code. The Docket seeks to Amend the following: Article 2, Section 2-1; Article 89 Urban Agriculture, Sections 89-2 and 89-10; and Article 8 - Table A Use No. 76.

The Docket seeks to amend Article 2, Section 2-1. *Meaning of Certain Words and Phrases*, by Striking the existing definition for "Accessory Keeping of Animals" and replacing it with a definition that does not include the word "bees." The Docket seeks to amend Article 89 Urban Agriculture, by Striking all definitions related to regulating bee keeping under Section 89-2. *Definitions*, and striking Section 89-10. *Accessory Keeping of Honey Bees* in its entirety. Finally, The Docket seeks to amend Article 8 - Table A Use No. 76. by Striking any reference to bees.

This Docket was filed in tandem with Docket #0168, which seeks to amend the City of Boston Municipal Code by adding Section 1.27 to Chapter 16 for the regulation and enforcement of keeping honey bees.

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### **Information Gathered:**

The Committee held a hearing on this matter on March 20, 2023 (Docket #0139). The Committee held a working session on February 23, 2024. Invited panelists included Christopher English, Chief of Staff, Inspectional Services Department and Shani Fletcher, Director of GrowBoston, testifying on behalf of the Administration. During this working session, Councilors had the opportunity to speak with the Administration to discuss their concerns and suggestions as well as any further questions still needing clarification. The Chair was joined by Councilor Liz Breadon, Council President Louijeune, Councilor Murphy, Councilor Fernandes Anderson and Councilor Flynn.

The Committee reviewed the language of the text amendment section by section, line by line.

It was explained that the text amendment seeks to strike any and all language related to bees and the keeping of bees. The Committee briefly reviewed the current regulatory scheme for bee keeping under the Zoning Code and it was explained that If a resident is restricted from keeping bees on their property pursuant to Zoning Code, they must submit a long form building permit application to change the "use and occupancy" of their property. Denied applicants are then issued a refusal letter and must seek relief through a variance or "conditional use" permit.

It was stated that Docket #0169 is step one in what was explained as a two step process to remove the regulation of bee keeping from the zoning code so that it can be added to the municipal code.

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**Recommended Action:**

The Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, to which the following was referred:

***Docket #0169, Text Amendment to the Boston Zoning Code with respect to Honey Bees.***

submits a report recommending that this docket **ought to pass**.

For the Chair:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gabriela Coletta". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Gabriela Coletta, Chair  
Committee on Government Operations