

## Recommended Policy on Beekeeping for the City of Cambridge

### Section I

**Statement of Purpose:** The preservation and promotion of bee populations is a public purpose that supports the environment, aesthetics, welfare and public health of the City of Cambridge and its citizens.

Bees are a critical part of flowering plant pollination and reproduction, and thereby contribute directly to the health of the environment, and enhance the visual and aesthetic qualities that attract visitors and businesses.

The City of Cambridge may host both domestic and wild bee populations. This policy aims to allow domestic bees (“beekeeping”) to be allowed in the City of Cambridge under prescribed conditions of responsible practice

### Section II

**Definitions:** The following words, terms, and phrases, when used in this policy, shall have the meanings ascribed to them as follows:

1. “Apiary” shall mean a place where bee colonies are kept
2. “Bee” shall mean any life stage of an insect of the genus *Apis*, subfamily *apinae*, including the common domestic honey bee, *Apis mellifera* species.
3. “Beekeeper” shall mean the person(s) responsible for the keeping of bees
4. “Colony” shall mean the cooperative social group of bees. Bees are social insects; a single bee cannot live alone. Bees live in multi-generational family groups with different bees performing different tasks.
5. “Flight path” shall mean the 3 foot radius surrounding the entrance of a hive. This area surrounding the hive entrance is the site of heightened bee movement as bees enter and exit the hive; bee flights may cover an area up to 42 square miles in search of plant pollen and nectar.
6. “Hive” shall mean a structure intended for the sheltering of a colony.
7. “Nuc” shall mean a nucleus or very small hive often used to temporarily house bees that may be split from a strong colony as a form of swarm management and/or queen rearing.
8. “Observation hive” shall mean a small hive located indoors (but with outdoor access for the bees) that is equipped with components such that it allows one to view the hive contents
9. “Swarming” shall mean the natural proliferation of bees by the splitting of one colony into two or more colonies.
10. “Swarm” shall mean a colony or partial colony in search of shelter.

### **Section III**

**Beekeeping Practices:** Beekeepers in the City of Cambridge should adhere to appropriate beekeeping practices such that domestic bees do not become a public nuisance.

**A. Compliance with State and Local Laws.** All beekeepers in the City of Cambridge shall comply with applicable state and local laws and regulations [Massachusetts General Laws, Title XIX, Chapter 128, sections 32-38. 330 CMR 8.00].

**B. Considerations Regarding Hive Management.** Beekeepers should follow the guidelines laid out in the Massachusetts Beekeepers Association's Best Management Practices regarding Timing and Weather, Swarming, Provision of Water and Robbing Behavior.

[<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/agr/programs/bmp/bee-bmps.pdf>]

**C. Swarming.** Swarming cannot always be prevented but hives should be managed to reduce the chances that swarming will occur. Beekeepers should be aware of the signs of potential swarming, and perform adequate checks of their hives to assess the same. Beekeepers should be prepared to manage swarming behavior. Swarm management may consist of the following activities or a combination thereof:

- a. Beekeeper action to catch the swarm and establish the same in a new hive
- b. Beekeeper action to contact a third party to catch the swarm and establish the same in a new hive.
- c. Beekeeper action to avoid swarming.

**D. Inspection.** Beekeepers will be required to have all of their hives inspected by the State at least once per year.

### **Section IV**

**Apiary Specifications:** Beekeepers are responsible for establishing and maintaining apiaries such that hive placement and bee movement does not interfere with pedestrian traffic or persons residing on or adjacent to hive premises.

**A. Apiary location.** Several factors should be considered when determining the location of an apiary. These factors include but are not limited to: number and size of the hive(s) and colony/ies contained therein, location at ground level or above, features of the natural and built environment, and adjacent property usage.

Beekeepers may refer to the following recommendations for guidance.

**a. Ground-level apiaries.**

i. **Setbacks.** Where there is a wall, fence, dense vegetation, combination thereof, or similar barrier, no setback from the property line is necessary. Where there is no wall, fence, dense vegetation, combination thereof, or similar barrier, hive(s) should be set back five feet from the property line.

ii. **Hive entrance direction.** The hive entrance(s) may face in any direction.

iii. **Flight path barrier.** Barriers may be constructed to interrupt the flight path such that bees fly upward and away from pedestrian traffic and neighboring properties.

1. Barriers should be established when the following two conditions are present: 1) an apiary is within 5 feet of a property line AND 2) the hive entrance(s) face(s) the public areas or adjacent property beyond the property line.

2. Barriers should be at least 6 feet in height and comprised of a wall, fence, dense vegetation, combination thereof, or similar composition should be established within 3 feet of the hive entrance(s) and should extend at least 2 feet in width on either side of the apiary.

b. **Apiaries above ground level.** Apiaries may be located on a porch or rooftop above ground level.

i. **Setbacks.** Hive(s) should be set back 6 feet from the edge of the porch or roof.

ii. **Hive entrance direction.** The hive entrance(s) may face in any direction.

iii. **Flight path barrier.** Barriers may be constructed to interrupt the flight path such that bees fly upward and away from pedestrian traffic and neighboring properties.

1. Barriers should be established when the following two conditions are present: 1) an apiary is within 5 feet of a door or opening where rooftop workers or emergency workers must access AND 2) the hive entrance(s) face(s) the door or opening.

2. Barriers should be at least 6 feet in height and comprised of a wall, fence, dense vegetation, combination thereof, or similar composition. Barriers should be established within 3 feet of the hive entrance(s) and should extend at least 2 feet in width on either side of the apiary.

B. **Size of hives.** Several factors should be considered when determining the appropriate hive size.

These factors include but are not limited to: number and size of the colony/ies in each hive, type or style of hive, presence of other hives in the apiary, and use of hive structures and components to influence bee behavior, including swarming.

Beekeepers may refer to the following recommendations for guidance:

Most hives do not exceed 5 feet in height, and twenty cubic feet in volume.

C. **Number of hives.** Several factors should be considered when determining the appropriate number of hives per site. These factors include but are not limited to: size of the colony/ies in the hive, features of the natural and built environment, adjacent property usage, location at ground level or above, and square footage of the premises.

Beekeepers may refer to the following recommendations for guidance:

1. Lots up to 2,500 sq. ft. suitable for approximately 2 hives

2. Lots from 2,501 to 5,000 sq. ft suitable for approximately 4 hives

3. Lots greater than 5,001 sq. ft suitable for approximately 6 hives

4. Lots may be suitable for greater numbers of observation hives or nucs due to the smaller size of colonies in the same

5. A lot may be suitable for greater numbers of rooftop hives due to reduced interference of the same with pedestrian traffic.

#### **Section V. Notice to Abutters**

Any person(s) wishing to obtain hives at their residence will be required to notify abutters with a written communication stating their intentions, including the number of hives they will be hosting, and include information regarding who to contact with questions, complaints or concerns. Beekeepers do not have to obtain permission from abutters to host a hive(s).

**Section VI. Arbitration of Complaints**

When a complaint about a hive is brought to the city a MA state bee inspector shall be involved in the arbitration process.

**Section VII. Fees**

No fees will be imposed by the City on beekeepers for their practice.