

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Charlie Sellers and Blowing Rock Town Council

FROM: Kevin Rothrock, Planning Director

SUBJECT: Draft ordinance to allow beekeeping as an accessory use

DATE: December 5, 2017

Staff received a letter from Mary P. Williams, President of the Watauga County Beekeepers Association, requesting the Town to consider allowing people to keep bees in the town limits. Currently, beekeeping is allowed in the R-A, R-MH, CB, and TC zoning districts. There are currently no requirements for beekeeping in these areas. A draft ordinance has been included in this report that, if approved, would allow beekeeping as an accessory use in all areas of the Town and ETJ. The draft ordinance requires a zoning permit for compliance, a limit of four (4) hives, a water source for the bees, and a bait hive to attract swarming bees.

PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION

At the November 16th meeting, the Planning Board recommended approval of the draft ordinance which includes some modifications based on comments and clarifications from Ms. Williams.

In the attached ordinance, the suggested changes are **highlighted** and underlined. A letter from Ms. Williams is also attached for review.

I can provide further clarification on the ordinance amendment during the meeting on December 12th, or questions can be directed to me at 295-5240 or kevin@townofblowingrocknc.gov.

**AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING STANDARDS FOR BEEKEEPING WITHIN THE
PLANNING AND ZONING JURISDICTION OF
THE TOWN OF BLOWING ROCK, NORTH CAROLINA**

WHEREAS, the honey bee is one of our most important pollinators but is in decline due to Colony Collapse Disorder and other factors; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina has the largest state beekeeping organization in the country with over 4800 members; and

WHEREAS, the Watauga County Beekeepers Association membership has grown from 18 to 55 in the last three years; and

WHEREAS, there is growing public interest in supporting beekeeping in the Town's Planning and Zoning jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners recognizes the importance of bees and responsible beekeeping to help sustain the pollination of local crops, and that safe, proper beekeeping practices, if properly regulated, will promote the public health, safety and welfare; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners agree that allowing beekeeping in the Town's Planning and Zoning jurisdiction promotes environmental sustainability, and is consistent with the 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update statement which reads; "Become a community that is widely recognized for its sustainability practices and its embrace of the natural environment in its policies and programs as well as the actions of its residents and businesses."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Blowing Rock, North Carolina, that:

Section 1. Section 16-10.6.2.1 of the Land Use Code of the Town of Blowing Rock is hereby added to read as set forth herein.

"16-10.6.2.1 Beekeeping.

The keeping of bees as accessory use requires a zoning permit to establish initial compliance with the following requirements:

- a) No lot may contain more than four (4) hives.**
- b) Hives shall be placed no closer than 10 feet from a property line and shall face the interior of the property. The Administrator may allow setback deviations on hive placement based on site topography.**
- c) A water source must be provided.**
- d) A bait hive must be placed 10-30 feet away and at least ten feet above the hives."**

Section 2. Severability; Conflict of Laws. If this ordinance or application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the ordinance which can be given separate effect and to that end, the provisions of this ordinance are

declared to be severable. All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed.

Section 3. Effective Date. This ordinance shall be effective upon adoption.

Adopted this the ____ day of _____, 2017.

TOWN OF BLOWING ROCK

Charlie Sellers, Mayor

ATTEST:

Hilari H. Hubner, Town Clerk

Mary P. Williams,
President of Watauga County Beekeepers
155 Ruffed Grouse Dr.
Boone, NC 28607

September 30, 2017

Mr. Kevin Rothrock, Planning Director
1038 Main Street
PO Box 47
Blowing Rock, NC 28605

Dear Mr. Rothrock,

Over the past five years the interest in beekeeping has grown. This growth can be attribute to the fact that the honey bee, our most important pollinator, has been in the news because of Colony Collapse Disorder and the overall decline of the honey bee. In the last three years, the Watauga County Beekeepers Club membership has grown from 18 to over 55. North Carolina has the largest state organization in the country, with over 4800 members. People are interested helping and want to learn more about honey bees.

This spring/summer I was approached by a beekeeper interested in beginning a conversation with the Town of Blowing Rock to change the Town Ordinance and allow people to keep honey bees in the town limits. I am aware that there are areas zoned for agriculture/livestock that allow beekeeping, but not in most residential areas. The Town of Boone allows people to keep bees in the Town Limits with the following restrictions:

§ 15.64 BEES (ACCESSORY).

15.64.01 The keeping of bees as an accessory use does not require a zoning permit.

15.64.02 No lot may contain more than four hives.

15.64.03 Hives must be screened with an opaque fence at least six feet high and must provide adequate security and signage to prevent inadvertent entry.

15.64.04 A water source must be provided.

15.64.05 A bait hive placed ten to 30 feet away and at least ten feet above the hives shall be provided.

(Ord. passed 12/16/2013)

<http://www.amlegal.com/>

This ordinance considers the safety of the neighborhood as well as the bees, and restrict the number of hives a person can have on their property. I hope it can serve as a guide for the Town of Blowing Rock. I am not sure what steps need to be taken, but I appreciate your interest in discussing it with the Town Council.

If you have any questions, please let me know, I am glad to assist you.
Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Mary P. Williams
President Watauga County Beekeepers Association
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