



AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY FOOD POLICY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation Number: 20180312-5ii1a

Support for Change to Beekeeping Policy

AUSTIN-TRAVIS COUNTY FOOD POLICY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation Number:

Update of City Code Language Regulating Beekeeping

WHEREAS, currently, language in the City of Austin Code Chapter 3-6. - Beekeeping, § 3-6-2 - APIARY MAINTENANCE specifies that "A person shall keep a colony in a Langstroth-type hive with removable frames that is maintained in sound and usable condition" and

WHEREAS, professional beekeepers recommend other types of hives in addition to Langstroth-type hives, such as top bar and Warre hives, and

WHEREAS, many local beekeepers already use non-Langstroth-type hives and therefore are currently out of compliance with City Code, and

WHEREAS, Texas Agriculture Code (Title 6 Production, Processing, and Sale of Animal Products; Subtitle A. Bees and Non-livestock Animal Industry; Chapter 131. Bees and Honey) does not specify the use of Langstroth-type hives, and

WHEREAS, the current language in the City of Austin Code Chapter 3-6. - Beekeeping, § 3-6-2 - APIARY MAINTENANCE has not been updated since 1992, and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin promotes pollinator gardening through the Watershed Department Grow Green program and Parks and Recreation Department Pollinator Challenge and recognizes that the decimation of pollinators has potential negative consequences for natural ecosystems as well as for human food production (Resolution No. 20150514-004),

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

The Austin Travis County Food Policy Board (ATCFPB) encourages the City of Austin to update Chapter 3-6. - Beekeeping, § 3-6-2 - APIARY MAINTENANCE to read as follows, "A person shall keep a colony in a hive with removable frames that is maintained in sound and usable condition."

Date of Approval: March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Record of the vote: 10 in favor, none opposed

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edwin Martinez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

City of Austin, Office of Sustainability, Food Policy Manager/ ATCFPB Staff Liaison



**Board of Directors**

Colin Wallis, Chair  
Ian McAbeer, Chair Elect  
Nancy Spencer, Treasurer  
Cheray Ashwill, Secretary  
Amon Burton  
Carrie Dyer  
Laura Estes  
Felipe Fernandes  
Valerie Romero Foohey  
Kristi Katz  
Cory Leahy  
Erika Levack  
Jody Madden  
James Osborn  
Mellie Price  
Steve Semelsberger  
Shelly Sethi

**Advisory Council**

Will Allen  
*Growing Power, Inc.*  
Lucia Athens  
*Austin Chief Sustainability Officer*  
Wendell Berry  
*Author*  
John-Michael Cortez  
*Mayor Adler's Chief of Staff*  
Honorable Lloyd Doggett  
*U.S. Congress*  
Jim Hightower  
*Author/Commentator*  
Richard Linklater  
*Filmmaker*  
Mike Martinez  
*Former Austin City Council*  
Will Meredith  
*Meredith Family Investments*  
Tom Philpott  
*Writer for Mother Jones*  
Michael Pollan  
*Author/Professor*  
Robin Rather  
*Collective Strength*  
Anne Robertson  
*Healthy Child, Healthy World*  
Dr. Eduardo Sanchez, M.D.  
*American Heart Association*  
Eric Schlosser  
*Author*  
Eugene Sepulveda  
*Entrepreneurs Foundation*  
Jennifer Vickers  
*Community Investment Corp.*  
Alice Waters  
*Chez Panisse*

February 2, 2018

Dear Mayor Adler and City Council:

I am writing in regards to the City of Austin code on Keeping Bees on public land. Currently, a section of it states, “§ 3-6-2 - APIARY MAINTENANCE. (A) A person shall keep a colony in a Langstroth-type hive with removable frames that is maintained in sound and usable condition.”

I would like to suggest an update on the type of hive that is required. Langstroth-style hives are excellent and very popular structures for keeping honeybees, but recently, Top Bar Hives have become widely accepted as safe, reliable and easy-to-use hive bodies in addition to Langstroth hives. Many professional and backyard beekeepers in Austin and nationally use these types of hives with great success. I hope you will consider this request and review the current language in the code and consider adding Top Bar Hives as acceptable to use.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Cardinal", is centered on a light blue rectangular background.

Elizabeth Cardinal  
Grow Local Teaching Garden Coordinator

Two Hives Honey  
720 Bastrop HWY  
#307  
Austin, TX 78741

February 20, 2018

Dear Mayor Adler and Austin City Council:

I am the owner and founder of Two Hives Honey, an Austin-based beekeeping equipment supplier and education provider.

I am writing today to provide my support for the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board's recommendation that the Austin Code Chapter 3-6 - Beekeeping, § 3-6-2 - APIARY MAINTENANCE be amended to allow other than Langstroth hive types, so long as the frames are removable and in sound condition. The current ordinance requires that managed hives be kept in a "Langstroth-type" hive. Langstroth hives are just one of several types of hives that are completely safe, and appropriate, for beekeepers to manage in their apiaries. For example, many beekeepers choose a Top-bar style hive because, unlike in a Langstroth hive, it requires no heavy lifting or bending. Top bar hives provide an opportunity for those to engage in hobbyist beekeeping that would otherwise be unable to participate because of the physical element involved in working Langstroth hives.

I believe that the only responsible specification that all beekeepers should be required to adhere to when choosing their specific hive type is that the hive come equipped with removable frames to allow for proper inspection for pests and disease of the hive. Therefore, I strongly advocate that the ordinance be amended to remove the requirement that "Langstroth-type" hives must be used, and instead recommend that the ordinance only specify that beekeepers keep hives with "removable frames."

Sincerely,

Tara Chapman

## Why does the City of Austin Code Language on Beekeeping Need to be Updated?

- Current language specifies that beekeepers must use Langstroth-type hives, but professional beekeepers use and recommend other types of hives in addition to Langstroth hives, such as top bar and Warre hives. These other types of hives are widely accepted as appropriate and safe. What is important is that hives have **removable frames**, which Langstroth, top bar, and Warre hives all have. This is because removable hives allow a beekeeper to inspect the hive to ensure no diseases are present.
- Many local beekeepers already use non-Langstroth-type hives and therefore are currently out of compliance with City Code. They are therefore at risk of being penalized for code violations.
- Texas Agriculture Code (Title 6 Production, Processing, and Sale of Animal Products; Subtitle A. Bees and Non-livestock Animal Industry; Chapter 131. Bees and Honey) does not specify the use of Langstroth-type hives, so there is no imperative for Austin to do so under State regulation.
- The current language in the City of Austin Code Chapter 3-6. - Beekeeping, § 3-6-2 - APIARY MAINTENANCE has not been updated since 1992.
- The City of Austin promotes pollinator gardening through the Watershed Department Grow Green program and Parks and Recreation Department Pollinator Challenge and recognizes that the decimation of pollinators has potential negative consequences for natural ecosystems as well as for human food production (Resolution No. 20150514-004). In light of this support, the City of Austin should not needlessly limit hive options for beekeepers.

**Article comparing hive types:** <http://beekeepinglikeagirl.com/langstroth-vs-top-bar-hive/>

**Images of three hive types:**

**Langstroth hive (currently allowed in City Code)**



**Top Bar (should be allowed)**





**Warre (should be allowed)**



**Skep (should not be allowed, because does not include removable frames)**



