

*City of Falcon Heights*  
*Environment Commission*

City Hall

2077 Larpenteur Avenue W.

Monday, July 13, 2020

6:30 p.m.

MINUTES

A. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Wassenberg called the meeting to order at 6:43 p.m.

B. ROLL CALL:

Members present: Mathwig, Seth, Wassenberg, McCleery, and Bucholtz, Olson

Also present: Council Liaison Andrews, Staff Liaison Markon

Members absent: De Filippo Vannucci

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 8, 2020

**Marty moved, seconded by Seth to approve minutes for June 8, 2020**

D. AGENDA

a. Discuss Bee Ordinance

- i. Gary Reuter from the University of Minnesota Bee Lab gave a presentation regarding beekeeping and answered questions from commissioners in order to inform further discussion regarding a bee ordinance. Mr. Reuter discussed many of the misconceptions as well as best practices for backyard beekeeping.
- ii. Mr. Reuter opened the discussion to questions from the commissioners or public.
  1. Q: Is Falcon Heights already pollinated by bees from the lab/would it be beneficial to have additional hives?
    - a. A: A lot of pollination is done by native bees and bees on campus, so Falcon Heights is covered pretty well. The bees would still improve pollination.
  2. Q: It is true that it is not good to have hives too close?
    - a. A: Not really. The University has had 20-40 colonies on campus. Long as there is enough forage, food, and water for them in one location.
  3. Q: Why did this bee ordinance not pass in 2012?
    - a. A: Liaison Markon answered that the chicken ordinance and bee ordinance were being reviewed at the same time and bee resulted in more community hesitation than chickens. There was a lot of worry from citizens about children being stung. There was less urgency/press/understanding about threat to pollinators.

4. Q: Can you talk about being stung?
  - a. A: My wife is allergic to honeybee stings and hasn't been stung in decades of bee keeping. The University has kept bees for 30 years on campus without anyone passing by getting stung.
5. Q: If allergic to bee sting, is it a specific type of bee?
  - a. A: There are five types of bee stings that they test for: honey, bumble, yellow jackets, hornets. The number of people allergic to honeybees is actually very small. If an immediate neighbor is very allergic, I would be reluctant to bee keep, but if it is the next neighbor down, it should be fine. It is possible to put a restriction in the ordinance stating that bees cannot be kept where an adjacent property owner is certified by a doctor to be allergic.
6. Q: Is there any difference in terms of the number of bees you have contact with between keeping bees and the natural bee population?
  - a. A: If your neighbor has bees, it is only a slight increase in chance. Part of it is what you have in your backyard. If you have flowers, bees will come. They won't bother you unless you step on them or grab them.
7. Q: How is the number of colonies per size of land generated in ordinances?
  - a. A: Keeping two colonies is recommended, especially for new beekeepers because you can compare and understand if one isn't doing well. If you have more than two in a small area, you need to separate them by 2-3 feet.
8. Q: Can an ordinance have limitation on number of colonies?
  - a. A: Yes, most are two colonies up to a half acre and four colonies up to an acre and after 10 acres there is no limit.
9. Q: Regarding enforcement from the city's perspective, what lessons have been learned from what other cities have done?
  - a. A: Some cities have permits you must apply for. That would mean a staff member would need to be assignment to ensuring compliance.
10. Q: How many bees in a colony?
  - a. A: At peak season, a solid, healthy colony has about 50,000 bees. I don't usually bring it up because it freaks people out. Most stay in the hive and about 1/4 of them are out foraging at any one time.
11. Q: How often to replenish hives generally speaking?
  - a. A: Hopefully never. Unfortunately, seeing about 50% winter loss. Bees make honey for their winter food. They make more than they need, which is why keepers get some of it. Leave them 100 pounds of honey to get them through the winter and wrap them up. Even with all of that, there is about 50% loss every year. So if you have two colonies, chances are one of them would die. Then, next spring your colony that made it is usually strong enough that you can make a second one.
12. Q: What is the most important advice you give prospective beekeepers?
  - a. Take a bee class held at the University or other reputable class. Let them know how much it is going to cost. If their main goal is to save the bee community, we discourage them because planting flowers can help that issues. Beekeeping is unlike taking care of

any other animal and they must be willing to learn how to properly care for them.

- iii. Q: What designs are discouraged?
  - 1. We like people to stick to standard beehives here in Minnesota
- iv. Q: What do you do with the extra honey at the University?
  - 1. A: We sell it, the food service at the university uses it for their restaurants and dining facilities. Sold to public through the meat store.
- v. Q: Is it possible to require education to obtain a permit in the ordinance?
  - 1. The commission discussed possibilities for this idea.
  - 2. A: Be careful how it is written. Couple cities said it had to be from an accredited institution which limited to the U. Other classes out there qualify. Good to say it is an approved class and have list of approved classes. If you need assistance with that, a class that wants to get on list, and get an opinion on it you can ask me or Marla.
  - 3. The commission discussed the possibility of a permit renewal requirement.
- b. Discuss Sustainability Speaker Series
  - i. The commissioners decided to table the Sustainability Speaker Series for a couple months due to lack of communication with Blue Thumb, the pandemic, and recent focus on ordinances.
- c. Discuss Garden Subcommittee
  - i. Wassenberg and Olson will be part of the Garden Subcommittee to discuss and recommend to the council for a more permanent gardening ordinance. The first meeting will be held on Wednesday. Liaison Markon will try to find recordings and meeting minutes to inform the commissions on the prior discussions and concerns of the ordinance.

#### E. NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. The annual ice cream social event is cancelled.
- b. The electric vehicle group, spearheaded by former commissioner Patti Holmes, Cities Charging Ahead, will be focusing on the request for proposals (RFP) for level two chargers to help with applications.
- c. The city of Falcon Heights has met the qualifications for step four and five city in the GreenStep Cities program.
- d. The compost site has been highly trafficked with many citizens dropping off food waste throughout the day.

#### F. ADJOURN

- a. Meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:06 p.m.