



# NEWSLETTER

## Bowie-Upper Marlboro Beekeepers Association

SPECIAL October, 2017

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[www.BUMBAees.com](http://www.BUMBAees.com)

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Our Goal: BUMBA members want no regulations restricting beekeeping in the County Zoning document. Failing this, we want the current zoning regulations, AS PASSED BY THE COUNCIL LAST YEAR, to be respected and maintained.

**Public Comments close on  
December 15. See page 7 for more  
information.**

## ZONING CHANGES WILL AFFECT BEEKEEPING!

Prince Georges County zoning changes will limit beekeeping to two hives for every 15,000 square feet of property!

Three public hearings to be held October 24, 25 & 26

Dear BUMBA Members -

Please read this **BUMBA** Newsletter Special and the information regarding the proposed changes to zoning regulations for Prince George's County, MD. If passed, these changes would dramatically change the ability for many or most of us to maintain hives on our properties. I encourage you all to participate in the listening sessions next week. If you are unable to be present, please, at a minimum, send an email, a letter, or make a phone call to voice your concerns with these regulations. You will find the information you need in this Newsletter.

Additionally, please reach out to friends and neighbors who are our allies in beekeeping. For me personally, my neighbors have expressed so much support throughout my very residential neighborhood. In my immediate vicinity, an elderly woman on one side. and families with children on the other side and behind me love the bees as much as I do. Simply ask them if they would submit a letter, email or make a phone call. If all they say is that, as a neighbor to a beekeeper, they think that the new regulations are unnecessary, we can show that the general public is in our favor.

*Sincerely,  
Maggie Mills  
BUMBA President*

## Public "Listening Sessions"

The Prince Georges County Planning Department will hold three "Listening Sessions" for public comment and feedback. A link to the full zoning document is provided below. However, the beekeeping regulations are in to the column to the right. Current zoning regulations are on the next page

### Tuesday, October 24, 2017

Harmony Hall Regional Center  
10701 Livingston Road, Fort Washington, MD 20744  
7:00-9:00 p.m.

### Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Laurel-Beltsville Senior Activity Center  
7120 Contee Road, Laurel, MD 20707  
7:00-9:00 p.m.

### Thursday October 26, 2017

Sports and Learning Complex, Town Hall  
8001 Sheriff Road, Landover, MD 20785  
7:00-9:00 p.m.

DOWNLOAD THE COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW DRAFTS  
<http://zoningpgc.pgplanning.com/?p=2251>

PROVIDE REAL-TIME FEEDBACK  
<https://pgplanning.civiccomment.org/>

## Proposed Zoning Restrictions for Beekeeping

From page 470 of the PDF file "Comprehensive Draft Zoning – Public – Clean.pdf"

(Text has been underlined to emphasize restrictions.)

Division 27-5 Use Regulations

Section 27-5.300 Accessory Uses and Structures

27-5.304 Standards Specific to Accessory Uses and Structures

B. Standards Specific to Accessory Uses and Structures

5. Beekeeping

Beekeeping in the Residential zones shall comply with the following standards:

- a. Only occur in rear yards of single-family detached dwellings, on parcels of land greater than 15,000 square feet in area;
- b. Be located in the rear yard;
- c. Include no more than two bee colonies per 15,000 square feet of parcel area;
- d. Not locate hives within 25 feet of any property line;
- e. Establish a flyway barrier at least six feet in height consisting of a solid wall, fence, dense vegetation or combination thereof. The flyway barrier shall be parallel to the property line, located only upon such property line as is closest to the colony, and extend ten feet beyond the colony in each direction so that all bees are forced to fly at an elevation of at least six feet above the ground level over the property lines in the vicinity of the hive. In instances where more than one hive is kept, a flyway shall be installed and maintained per hive. This flyway barrier

requirement shall not apply if the setback between any colony and the closest lot line is 75 feet or more.

- f. It shall be the responsibility of any person having honey bees on the property to maintain each colony in the following condition:
  - i. Colonies shall be maintained in movable-frame hives;
  - ii. Adequate space shall be maintained in the hive to prevent overcrowding and swarming; and
  - iii. Colonies shall be re-queened following any swarming or aggressive behavior.

Review the complete document at this link:

<http://www.pgplanning.org/DocumentCenter/View/1366>

**Table of Use**

ZONE	TITLE	Min LOT SIZE	Max Units/ Acre
R-O-S	Reserved Open Space	20+ acres	0.05
O-S	Open Space	5+ acres	0.2
R-A	Residential/Agricultural	2+ acres	0.5
R-E	Residential-Estate	40,000+ s.f.	1.08
R-R	Rural Residential	20,000+ s.f.	2.17
R-80	One-Family Detached Residential	9,500+ s.f.	4.5
R-55	One-Family Detached Residential	6,500+ s.f.	6.7
R-35	One-Family, Semidetached and Two-Family Detached Residential	3,500+ s.f. 1-family 7,000+ s.f. 2-family	12.44
R-20	One-Family, Triple-Attached Residential	3,200+ s.f. for end lots 2,000+ s.f. for interior lots	6.0 Town houses 16.33 Triple-Attached
R-18	Multifamily Medium Density Residential	1,500+ s.f. for 2-family dwellings	See the Guide

### Current Beekeeping Zoning Regulations

The County Council adopted bill **CB-80-2016**, November 15, 2016, that defines beekeeping as an agricultural activity and broadly permits beekeeping in residential areas.

AN ORDINANCE concerning

Zoning Definitions – Agriculture

For the purpose of amending the definition of Agriculture in the Zoning Ordinance concerning beekeeping on residential land and permitting the use in certain residential zones in Prince George’s County.

BY repealing and reenacting with amendments:

Sections 27-107.01 and 27-441(b),  
The Zoning Ordinance of Prince George's County, Maryland, being also  
SUBTITLE 27. ZONING.  
The Prince George's County Code  
(2015 Edition).

The zones specifically permit beekeeping are:

R-O-S, O-S, R-A, R-E, R-R, R-80,R-55, R-35, R-20, R-18.

The accompanying “**Table of Use**” from “**Guide to Zoning**” describes what the Zones are. This is a condensed guide.

# TALKING POINTS

*David Morris  
BUMBA Editor  
EAS Master Beekeeper*

Your feedback is important... and anticipated by the Planning Department. Prince Georges County is holding public Listening Sessions because they want to hear your feedback. If they hear a consistent voice that challenges the beekeeping recommendations, we should be able to achieve our goals. You *CAN* make the difference!

If several beekeepers show up at the public sessions:

Agree on who will discuss which topics; dividing talking points helps avoid redundancy or contradictory comments. More topics can be covered.

Repeat the one or two most salient points! Select one or two salient points to be made by two, or at most three, speakers. Repeating the point no more than three times makes the point stand out without becoming irksome.

**Our Goal: BUMBA members want no regulations restricting beekeeping in the County Zoning document. Failing this, we want the current zoning regulations, AS PASSED BY THE COUNCIL LAST YEAR, to be respected and maintained.**

Here are some recommended points to comment on about the zoning:

**The zoning restrictions are trying to “solve” a problem that does not exist.** Zoning restrictions are intended to prevent foreseeable problems as well as guide growth and meet other needs. What problems is this zoning attempting to solve? Can the drafter of this regulation point to complaints and problems about beekeeping in Prince Georges County that absolutely necessitate this regulation? No! There are no public health, nuisance complaints, or other issues with beekeeping that require this draconian response. Beekeeping is such a low profile avocation that the people do not realize there are 223 apiaries registered in Prince Georges County with no discernible problems. This zoning regulation addresses no current or foreseeable problems and should be removed from the proposed zoning

document.

**Honey bees contribute to the wealth, beauty and balance of nature in Prince Georges County.** The wildflowers that bloom so beautifully that provide cover and food for birds and animals would be far less common and beautiful without honey bees in the neighborhood. Honey bees enhance our environment and food production at no cost to the beneficiaries. Restricting beekeeping has hidden costs and hidden losses. Help support our wildlife and remove these zoning restrictions.

**Approximately one-third of our food is directly or indirectly attributed to honey bee pollination.** Honey bee pollination is not important just to the local Prince Georges farmers. Community gardens will be far less successful if beans, squash, zucchini, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries cucumbers, water melons, cantaloupes, apples, peas and many other fruits and vegetables were not pollinated, courtesy of some local beekeeper. Community gardens receive even greater benefits because they do not normally grow grains (oats, wheat, barley, etc.) that are wind pollinated. In the District, community gardens support bee hives to improve productivity. Support our community gardens and remove beekeeping restrictions.

**At a time when municipal governments across the state and across the country are easing or removing restrictions on beekeeping, Prince Georges County is becoming more restrictive and repressive.** Howard and Frederick counties recently dropped highly restrictive zoning for beekeeping and now very broadly permit beekeeping, even in the back yards of townhomes. Both the District of Columbia and New York City once banned beekeeping and now openly permit it. Beekeepers even maintain rooftops hives. There even is a monthly article in a national beekeeping magazine devoted to urban and rooftop beekeeping, written by a DC beekeeper. In both cities, **fine hotels feature desserts made from honey gathered from hives maintained on the grounds!** Beekeeping can be used to enhance local businesses and economy. Remove these restrictions on beekeeping.

**Montgomery County does not regulate beekeeping in their recently re-written zoning documents.** Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties, falling under the Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (MNCPPC), should attempt to keep zoning regulations as common as possible between the two counties. **Montgomery County will use “nuisance laws”** to address problems that arise from beekeeping

activities that encroach upon the public or neighboring residents.

**Nuisance laws should be used to address problems with beekeeping.** Nuisance laws permit authorities to address problems that encroach upon the public space or for private individuals to complain about problems that encroach upon their private property or space. We do not need to address beekeeping via zoning when nuisance laws already suffice.

**The 25 foot set back from any property line, plus a 10 foot space for a flyway barrier requires a lot that is at least 60 feet wide.** This requirement for excessive setback space appears designed to prevent beekeeping in smaller lots and is not based on any proven need. Beekeepers successfully keep hives in the back yards of townhomes and one-eighth acre lots without complaint from their neighbors. This provision is overly restrictive and should be removed.

**The zoning unnecessarily restricts beekeeping to single-family detached dwellings for no discernable reason.** Beekeepers across the county, around the state and across the country maintain hives in small backyards, including semi-detached and townhomes. Beekeepers families want to also use and enjoy their own backyards. These families are able to keep hives and still safely share and enjoy their small backyards with one or more hives. Count on the beekeepers to know how many hives they can reasonably maintain, because they live with them in their own back yards. Rely on the beekeeper's judgment and remove this unreasonable restriction.

**The zoning unnecessarily prevents maintaining hives in industrial zones.** Just because an area is zoned "Industrial", it does not mean there is an industry established there. It could be vacant, undeveloped, land. There is no reason hives cannot be maintained in an industrial area, if the beekeeper thinks it is safe for the bees and for workers in the area. Trust the judgment of the beekeeper and remove this restriction.

**Zoning needlessly requires "movable frame hives".** Maryland Apiary Law requires all honey bee hives in Maryland to be registered with the Maryland Department of Agriculture, to be maintained in movable frame hives, and to be available for inspection by the Maryland Apiary Inspector. The zoning requirement is redundant since a Maryland law already requires this practice throughout the state, and should be removed

***Some of the language is vague and undefined.***

**What is an "aggressive" hive?** Aggressive is a vague term. How does the County propose to define, measure, and enforce this term? Honey bees

are vegetarians that eat pollen and nectar. They sting only to defend the hive, and then they die, unlike wasps and hornets. Visitors to apiaries are often surprised how close they can approach a hive without disturbing the honey bees. This language is highly subjective, undefined, and should be removed.

**Why is re-queening required when a hive swarms?** This requirement appears to have been copied from zoning regulation from some other state, without thought and without any knowledge of the reasons this requirement might exist. This language is appropriate in a southern state where Africanized honey bees are established. Maryland has never had an Africanized honey bee hive established in the state. All available experience with, and knowledge about, the Africanized honey bee in the United States indicates that the Africanized honey bee will never become established in Maryland. {The reasons they will not become established here are: the climate is too cold and they do not over-winter well; there is a long nectar dearth in the summer and the Africanized bees, by their more tropical nature, do not gather enough honey stores to survive the winter and they will starve. This is the considered opinion of numerous beekeeping researchers.} This language has no basis in any fact for Maryland beekeeping and should be removed.

**What is an "Over-crowded hive"?** Beekeepers need strong hives so that the hive can gather as much nectar as possible during our short honey flow. Weak hives do not survive. They either succumb to the Small Hive Beetle, the Varroa mite, or starvation. Strong hives are necessary to promote the swarm instinct so that beekeepers can split them in order to replace hives that died during the winter. University of Maryland surveys show that, on average, 35% or more of the hives in Maryland die out every year as a result of parasites or starvation. This language has no basis in fact or understanding of normal and necessary beekeeping practices and should be removed.

**[www.BUMBAbees.com](http://www.BUMBAbees.com)**

Check out the club web site now maintained by **Larry Prikockis**, [www.bumbabees.com](http://www.bumbabees.com). You will find meeting schedules, newsletters, information and membership application forms (payments are still by mail or at a meeting.) We need content, pictures, ideas, suggestions and help with administration.. If you have any interesting photos to add to the photo gallery, send them with a short description or story to Toni at

phang@tonitoni.org.

[www.BUMBAbees.com/forums](http://www.BUMBAbees.com/forums)

Check our web forum for questions, answers, opinions and help. Thanks to **Scott Seccomb** and **Toni Burnham**, our private web forum on the **BUMBA** web page is available for members' use.

## Actions You Can Take

Attend a public Listening Session.

Submit a written comment.

Ask a friend or neighbor to support your beekeeping by speaking at a meeting, writing a letter or sending an email. They should emphasize that, as a neighbor to a beekeeper, they have no objections to beekeeping in residential areas.

Ask for support from other organizations you may belong to, especially if it is environmentally oriented. We share common interests and goals.

Speak to gardeners, gardening societies and especially to community garden groups. Home gardens benefit greatly from honey bee pollination.

Provide feedback via the zoning feedback process, at a public Listening Session as well as via email, web form, letter or phone call.

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper protesting the changes and asking for public support. Point out that wasps and hornets are the cause of nearly all public complaints (except for honey bee swarms in the spring that we all go out to catch and remove.)

Write to your Council member and ask that the zoning restrictions be removed, or at least maintain the regulations put in place by the Council in November, 2016.

Here is a sample letter you can use for commenting on the regulations.

SAMPLE LETTER:

From: (your name, address and contact information)

To: (your council member or the zoning board)

Dear Council Member

The new zoning regulations as proposed by the County consultants are unnecessarily restrictive for beekeeping. The current zoning regulations, as passed by the County Council on November 15, 2016, CB-80-2016, broadly allow beekeeping in residential areas. The proposed regulations contradict this ordinance which was passed with input from, and reflects the will of, this county's residents.

The purpose of zoning regulations is to control growth, enhance the lives of the citizens, to rectify past problems and prevent future ones. These beekeeping restrictions do not enhance the lives of Prince Georges citizens; instead, it greatly reduces, for many of us, the full enjoyment of our property. The regulations do not rectify a current problem or prevent any foreseeable problems. Beekeepers safely and successfully maintain hives across a spectrum of property types: in small back yards, on large estates and on pick-your-own farms without incident. Even the White House maintains a bee hive within yards of the area where large public events are held, such as the Annual Easter Egg hunt. And there are no incidents.

Here are some specific reasons I believe the beekeeping zoning is poorly written and unnecessary.

{List some of the reasons provided in the newsletter, or your own.}

Thank you for this opportunity to express my concerns. I would appreciate your support to have the restrictive beekeeping language removed from the new zoning regulations.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)

## Zoning Contacts and Links

Look for updates on the BUMBA web page at [www.BUMBAbees.com](http://www.BUMBAbees.com)

### For more information about the Zoning Rewrite:

Call: 301-952-4944 | TTY: 301-952-4366

Email: [zoningpgc@ppd.mncppc.org](mailto:zoningpgc@ppd.mncppc.org)

Webpage: [zoningpgc.pgplanning.com](http://zoningpgc.pgplanning.com)

Facebook: ZonePGC Twitter: @ZonePGC

For questions or more information contact Chad Williams, LEED AP BD+C, who is serving as the Department's Project Manager. He can be reached at: [chad.williams@ppd.mncppc.org](mailto:chad.williams@ppd.mncppc.org) or (301) 952-3171

### PROVIDE REAL-TIME FEEDBACK

<https://pgplanning.civicomment.org/>

You can find your County Council District and member here:  
<http://pgccouncil.us/443/Councilmanic-Districts>

Your Council Member contact information is here:

All Council Members use the same physical mailing address:

14741 Gov. Oden Bowie Drive  
County Council, 2nd Floor  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Council Members by District

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David Morris, BUMBA Editor  
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**BUMBA Meets at  
 Watkins Park Nature Center**

**BUMBA** annual dues are \$15. Our regular meetings are held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the even months at the **Watkins Park Nature Center, 301 Watkins Park Drive in Largo**. From Route 301 or I-495 take Central Ave. (Rte 214) to the intersection with Enterprise Rd. (Rte 193). Turn south onto Watkins Park Dr. and go ½ mile to the park. Follow the road all the way to the back to the Nature Center. We thank the Nature Center Staff for their assistance. For information about the Nature Center, please call **301-218-6702**

**Club Calendar**

Put these dates on your **2018 BUMBA** Calendar:  
 February 1, 7:30PM, **BUMBA** Mtg.  
 February – April: BUMBA Beekeeping Classes  
 April 5, 7:30PM, **BUMBA** Mtg.  
 June 1, 7:30PM, **BUMBA** Mtg.  
 August 2, 7:30PM, **BUMBA** Mtg.  
 October 4, 7:30PM, **BUMBA** Mtg.  
 December 6, 6:00PM, **BUMBA** Holiday Party