



# BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations  
Gabriela Coletta, Chair

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## REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

March 06, 2024

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Government Operations was referred ***Docket #0169, Text Amendment to the Boston Zoning Code with respect to Honey Bees*** on January 24, 2024. This matter was sponsored by Council President Ruthzee Louijeune.

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### **Summary of Legislation:**

***Docket #0169*** is a petition to the Boston Planning and Development Agency and the Boston Zoning Commission to remove the regulation of keeping honey bees from the City of Boston Zoning Code. The Docket seeks to Amend the following: Article 2, Section 2-1; Article 89 Urban Agriculture, Sections 89-2 and 89-10; and Article 8 - Table A Use No. 76.

The Docket seeks to amend Article 2, Section 2-1. *Meaning of Certain Words and Phrases*, by Striking the existing definition for “Accessory Keeping of Animals” and replacing it with a definition that does not include the word “bees.” The Docket seeks to amend Article 89 Urban Agriculture, by Striking all definitions related to regulating bee keeping under Section 89-2. *Definitions*, and striking Section 89-10. *Accessory Keeping of Honey Bees* in its entirety. Finally, The Docket seeks to amend Article 8 - Table A Use No. 76. by Striking any reference to bees.

This Docket was filed in tandem with Docket #0168, which seeks to amend the City of Boston Municipal Code by adding Section 1.27 to Chapter 16 for the regulation and enforcement of keeping honey bees.

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### **Information Gathered:**

The Committee held a hearing on this matter on March 20, 2023 (Docket #0139). The Committee held a working session on February 23, 2024. Invited panelists included Christopher English, Chief of Staff, Inspectional Services Department and Shani Fletcher, Director of GrowBoston, testifying on behalf of the Administration. During this working session, Councilors had the opportunity to speak with the Administration to discuss their concerns and suggestions as well as any further questions still needing clarification. The Chair was joined by Councilor Liz Breadon, Council President Louijeune, Councilor Murphy, Councilor Fernandes Anderson and Councilor Flynn.

The Committee reviewed the language of the text amendment section by section, line by line.

It was explained that the text amendment seeks to strike any and all language related to bees and the keeping of bees. The Committee briefly reviewed the current regulatory scheme for bee keeping under the Zoning Code and it was explained that If a resident is restricted from keeping bees on their property pursuant to Zoning Code, they must submit a long form building permit application to change the “use and occupancy” of their property. Denied applicants are then issued a refusal letter and must seek relief through a variance or “conditional use” permit.

It was stated that Docket #0169 is step one in what was explained as a two step process to remove the regulation of bee keeping from the zoning code so that it can be added to the municipal code.

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**Recommended Action:**

The Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, to which the following was referred:

***Docket #0169, Text Amendment to the Boston Zoning Code with respect to Honey Bees.***

submits a report recommending that this docket **ought to pass**.

For the Chair:



Gabriela Coletta, Chair  
Committee on Government Operations