
LEGISLATIVE ACTION MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 8, 2009

TO: Council Members

FROM: Council Member Carlton Christensen

SUBJECT: Legislative Action – request to amend the Salt Lake City Zoning Ordinance to permit beekeeping in Salt Lake City

CC: Mayor Ralph Becker, David Everitt, Frank Gray, Mary De La Mare-Schaefer, Wilford Sommerkorn, Pat Comarell, Cindy Gust-Jenson, Jennifer Bruno, Janice Jardine, Quin Card, Cindy Lou Trishman, Nick Tarbet, Sylvia Richards, Jan Aramaki, Lisa Harrison, Joyce Valdez, Michael Stott

In order to accommodate the practice of beekeeping, and to combat the issue of a decreasing bee population, I ask for the Council's support on the Legislative Action requesting that the Administration amend the Salt Lake City Zoning Ordinance to permit beekeeping in Salt Lake City.

Bees, via pollination, are responsible for 15 to 30 percent of the food U.S. consumers eat. But in the last 50 years the domesticated honeybee population—which most farmers depend on for pollination—has declined by about 50 percent, scientists say. (National Geographic, October 5, 2004)

This decline in bee population is largely attributed to Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Although little is known about the actual causes of CCD, bee populations seem to be more prone to diseases and parasites as a result, which may be avoided by good management practices by beekeepers. Until the 1980s, Salt Lake City allowed apiaries (beehives) in agriculturally zoned areas. Because of the killer bee scare, the use was no longer permitted. As a result, Salt Lake City does not currently allow people to keep bees, because it is not listed as a permitted use.

Cities such as Seattle, Washington, Vancouver, British Columbia and Denver, Colorado have amended their code to allow for beekeeping in residential areas, and have been effective in creating an ordinance allowing beekeepers to responsibly and reasonably manage their apiaries in an urban environment. The State of Utah has in place, a registry of beekeepers in the State. Currently, there are 53 registered beekeepers in Salt Lake City.

Thank you for your consideration of this Legislative Action request. I would appreciate your support.