



Proposed Text Amendments to the Beekeeping Ordinance
(SSFMC Section 20.350.007.C)
July 8, 2026

Background



Image: Damien Tupinier via Penn State News (2024)

- Beekeeping is permitted as an accessory use to a "detached primary residential unit"
- Minor revisions are being proposed to language contained in SSFMC Section, 20.350.007.C ("Beekeeping") to expand the permissibility of beekeeping citywide.
- Proposed requirements for hive orientation, siting, and screening have been included to minimize potential nuisance behavior and create conditions that support healthy hives.

Animal Keeping SSFMC § 20.350.007

- Animal keeping is allowed as an accessory use to a primary residential use, with the exception of beekeeping, noted in Section C below. To permit the keeping of animals and ensure that their presence does not create an undue burden on neighboring ~~residents~~ properties, the following standards apply:

Beekeeping SSFMC §20.350.007.C

C. Beekeeping. Beekeeping is permitted in all zoning districts, subject to the following standards:

1. It shall be the duty of every person or entity on whose property bees are kept to adhere to good management practices and maintain bees, which include conducting regular inspections of hives for parasites, pests, diseases, inadequate nutrition, overcrowding, and inadequate ventilation, that will reasonably prevent disease, swarming, and aggressive behavior.
2. It shall be the responsibility of the person or entity on whose property the bees are kept to provide adequate water and a natural food source such as pollinator-friendly flowers, trees, and shrubs for foraging to prevent bees from swarming, or seeking food sources in neighboring lots, community open spaces, or water in swimming pools, birdbaths, ponds or other community bodies of water.
3. A maximum of two beehives per lot are permitted on a parcel of land less than 10,000 square feet.
4. A maximum of ~~four~~ six beehives per lot are permitted on a parcel of land with an area over 10,000 square feet. In residential districts, beehives must be located in rear yards.
5. Beehives are restricted to rear yards. Beehives shall be adequately screened by trees, hedges, or fencing to minimize contact between bees, people, and animals.

Beekeeping SSFMC §20.350.007.C

7. ~~In order to ensure the appropriate height of the honeybee flight path:~~ In order to manage the direction and angle of the bee flyway from the entrance of hive, the following siting and orientation measures shall be implemented as applicable:

~~a. The beehive entrance will be directed away from the neighboring property and situated behind a solid fence or hedge that is six feet in height running parallel to the property line; or~~

a. Residential Districts. The beehive shall be a minimum of 25 feet away from the property line. The beehive entrance will be directed away from the neighboring property and situated behind a flyway barrier such as a solid fence or hedge that is six feet in height running parallel to the property line.

~~b. A beehive will be located a minimum of 25 feet away from the neighboring property line.~~

b. Non-Residential Districts. Hive stands shall be a minimum of 25 feet away from property lines, public seating areas, and pedestrian areas, and shall be screened by a flyaway barrier, such as lattice or dense vegetation. Hives located on a rooftop at least eight feet above grade do not require a flyway barrier.

Planning Commission Recommendation

- Planning Commission held a public hearing on May 21, 2026, to review the draft ordinance.
- Public comments supported allowing beekeeping citywide.
- Planning Commission requested staff develop written guidelines on beekeeping siting, orientation, and requirements for applicants.
- Planning Commission recommended approval to City Council.

Findings and General Plan Consistency

GOAL ES-1: The City supports nature in South San Francisco to encourage healthy ecosystems, improve air and water quality, improve public health, and adapt to a changing climate.



Image source: Sign Hill Park Wildflowers, City of South San Francisco (2023).

Staff Recommendation

- **Staff Recommends that the City Council conduct a public hearing and take the following actions:**
 - Move to determine that the proposed Zoning amendments are exempt under CEQA pursuant to PRC§ 21000 et. Seq. State CEQA Guidelines §15308 (“Actions taken by regulatory agencies for the protection of the environment”); and
 - Move to adopt the attached Resolution recommending that the City Council adopt an Ordinance amending Title 20 (Zoning) of the South San Francisco Municipal Code Animal Keeping Regulations, making changes related to beekeeping.

THANK YOU



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Ordinance (SSFMC Section 20.350.007.C)

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Hive Health and Native Bee Populations



Image: Kathy Keatley Garvey via [UC ANR Bug Squad](#) (2018)

- Expanding domesticated honeybees to city-owned parklands and other areas of the City can pose some ecological risks that require mitigation.
- Natural "pollinator-friendly" food sources would be required on site would reduce food competition with native bees and promote healthy hive conditions

Anatomy of a Hive

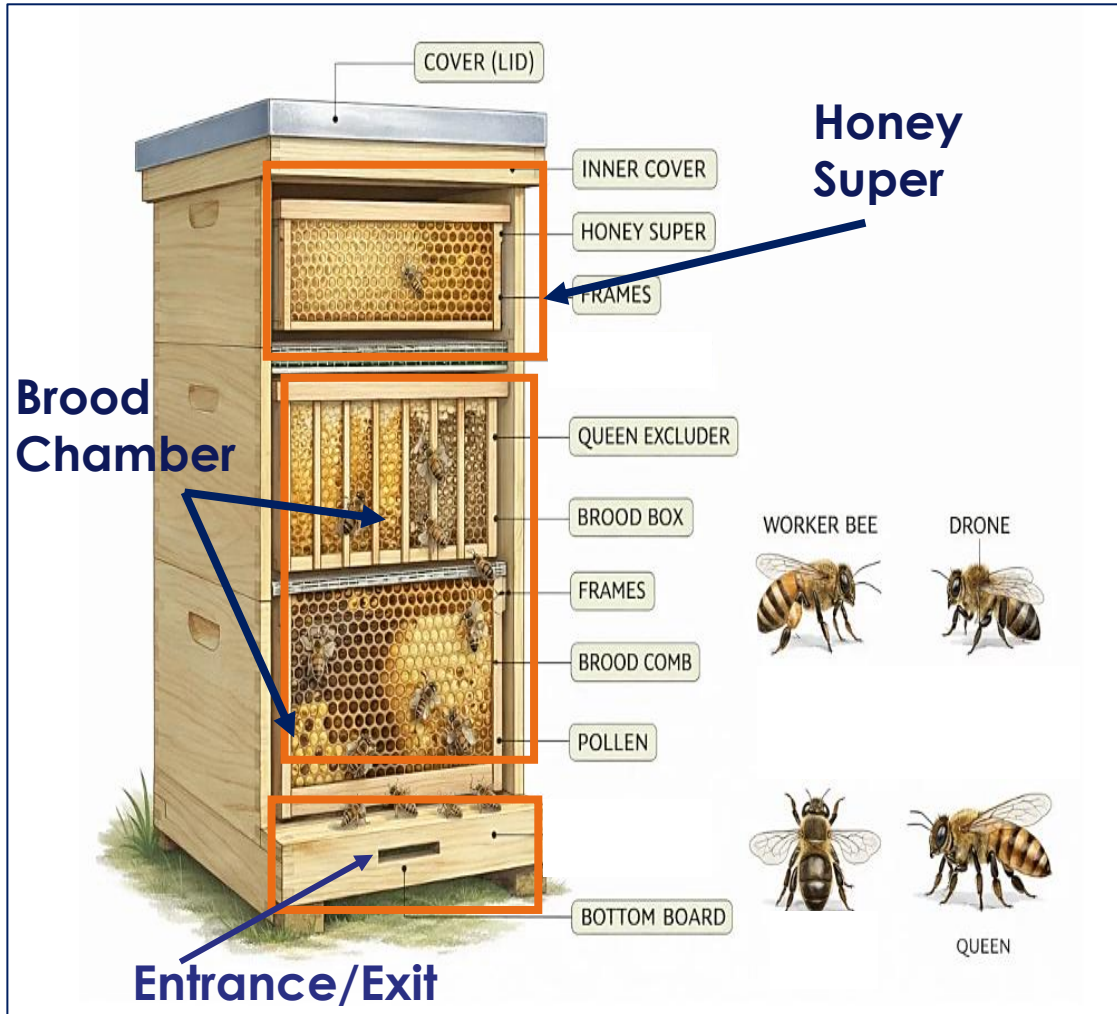


Image: Honey Buzz (May 2025)

- **Honey Super** - Where surplus honey is stored
- **Brood Chamber** - A temperature regulated environment where the queen lays eggs, food storage for larvae, and acts a nursery for developing bees
- **Entrance/Exit-Primary** - gateway that provides a two-way pathway for foragers to enter and exit the hive, a security checkpoint that bees patrol to the protect the colony again invaders and helps with ventilation and climate control.

Hive Placements



Image: Daniel van Niekerk via [Alamy](#) (2021)



Image: [Honest Bee Ltd](#) (2026)



Image: [The Best Bees Company](#) via [Jamestown LP](#) (2022)