



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 15-0580, **Version:** 1

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Recommendation to request City Attorney to bring an ordinance within 30 days to amend Title 6 of the City's Municipal Code based on previous draft language developed in consultation with members of the community, Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine, Office of Sustainability and City Attorney's office.

In October 2011, City Council's Environmental Committee began discussing changes to the City's existing rules governing the keeping of chickens, goats and bees based on a recommendation from the Sustainable City Commission. Over the next two years, the Environmental Committee worked with staff from Parks, Recreation and Marine, Office of Sustainability, City Attorney's office and the urban agriculture community to develop draft language for City Council consideration. In addition, the Committee directed staff to host community meetings to receive input from residents. Finally, in March 2013, the Committee recommended draft language for City Council consideration.

In July 2013, after much discussion and public testimony mostly in favor of the recommended changes, City Council voted 4-3 against the draft language with 2 members absent.

Long Beach has made strides to become a more livable city thanks in part to policies and initiatives relating to bicycling, pedestrianism, sustainability, conservation, emissions reduction, beach water quality and healthy food choices. Offering more residents the opportunity to be closer to the food sources in their diet is another sustainable, healthy and socially just policy that City Council should reconsider. Along with fruit & vegetable gardens in yards and community plots, urban agricultural options involving animals are an important solution for people who wish to gain access to secure, affordable and nutritious food.

City staff painstakingly researched numerous municipal ordinances and interviewed staff from other cities to learn about the positive and negative impacts of implementation. The Environmental Committee also dedicated a great deal of time and consideration to the policy.

The attached draft amendments to the Municipal Code protect neighbors, animals and personal property while providing residents with appropriate sized properties and facilities the opportunity to pursue a particular lifestyle. For Long Beach to allow residents to own up to four large breed dogs without regulating their living quarters, but not allow residents to own animals such as goats or chickens within acceptable parameters is inconsistent. There are policies and procedures for enforcement of animals on private property in place already and Animal Care Services staff believes this policy will not have a significant impact on their enforcement, public safety and adoption resources.

More so than goats and chickens, bees received the most attention from Council and concerned residents during the last discussion of urban agriculture. However, anyone with flowers, fruits or vegetables in their yard can thank the bees visiting their garden on a daily basis. Whether from wild or domestic hives, bees serve a beneficial role in our community and their well-documented decline is cause for concern among allergic and non-allergic residents alike. Despite their incredible contribution to our daily lives, bees have a much-maligned reputation. Indeed, the perception that a hive of bees next door equates to hundreds of bees in a neighbor's yard is inaccurate; bees are sophisticated and social animals that approach nectar and pollination like campaign workers streaming out to all parts of a community. Bees travel through a community on an aerial street grid system sometimes stretching as much as 4 miles from their hive. Some bees in the hive have short routes, others much longer. To bunch up around one group of flowers in a neighbor's yard would not be efficient or productive. With proper requirements for screening around the hive, bees will take a path well above the immediate area to their intended destination. In fact, it is more likely that most neighbors aren't even aware that a hobby beehive is located nearby. Additionally, most calls to ACS are the result of wild bee swarms or hives located in trees, walls and attics. So while the fear of being stung by a bee is certainly real for residents with an allergy, it is clear from our prior discussion of urban agriculture that a public education campaign about bees and their behaviors would benefit residents, city leaders and perhaps most importantly, bees.

One noteworthy change has been made to the attached draft ordinance in Section 6.20.180 (Goats -Dehorned). Based on conversations with the community and livestock experts, Animal Care Services recommends language that requires all goats to be dehorned should be removed from the ordinance.

According to staff's analysis in a prior report to the City Council, additional workload associated with the implementation of this policy is expected to be minimal and absorbed within current budgeted resources. The anticipated revenue generated from the proposed new fees is expected to be minimal. There is no impact to jobs associated with the recommended action.

Approve recommendation.

VICE MAYOR SUJA LOWENTHAL, COUNCILMEMBER  
SECOND DISTRICT

LENA GONZALEZ, COUNCILWOMAN  
FIRST DISTRICT

DARYL SUPERNAW, COUNCILMEMBER  
FOURTH DISTRICT

DEE ANDREWS, COUNCILMAN  
SIXTH DISTRICT