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To: Champaign County Zoning Board

From: Rachel Coventry

CHAMPAIGN CO. P & Z DEPARTMENT

Questions for the board:

1. Homeowner Association Covenants—could this issue not be remedied with a HOA covenant that would subject the homeowners in those neighborhoods to their own covenants, conditions, and restrictions that would allow the residents to rest knowing restrictions are in place?
2. If a complaint is received and the beekeeper nearest to the source is found NOT to be in violation then what? It sounds like enforcement of this ordinance would create a tremendous headache for Champaign County zoning. What level of county resources do you plan to allocate in order to determine where the offending bees come from? Are your people trained to track bees? To determine if they are observing domesticated bees rather than native bees? All of these issues—bee poop, bees in bird baths, stings, etc. will likely still occur whether domesticated beehives are regulated or not.
3. You asked at the last hearing for a solution outside of an ordinance and it sounds like Leslie Deem with the U of I pollinarium regularly helps with such issues. Also, the bee inspector assisted with the removal of the bees from the property in question. Would it not be wise to list them as resources on your page instead of establishing an ordinance to restrict an essential insect responsible for pollination of essential crops and for the production of honey?

My name is Rachel Coventry and I have been the beekeeper at Curtis Orchard for 10 years. Prior to that I was trained in beekeeping while in the Peace Corps in South America. I worked exclusively with Africanized honey bees. While they seemed quicker to sting me while I was working with them, I can tell you they are not the murderous “killer” bees that the media has portrayed them. The other good news is that they have not established a stronghold in this area. In South America the bees don’t overwinter south of 34 degrees S latitudes which roughly corresponds to Atlanta, GA. Most Africanized honey bees are found in the Southwestern US.

Source:

<https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=B1290&title=Africanized%20Honey%20Bees>

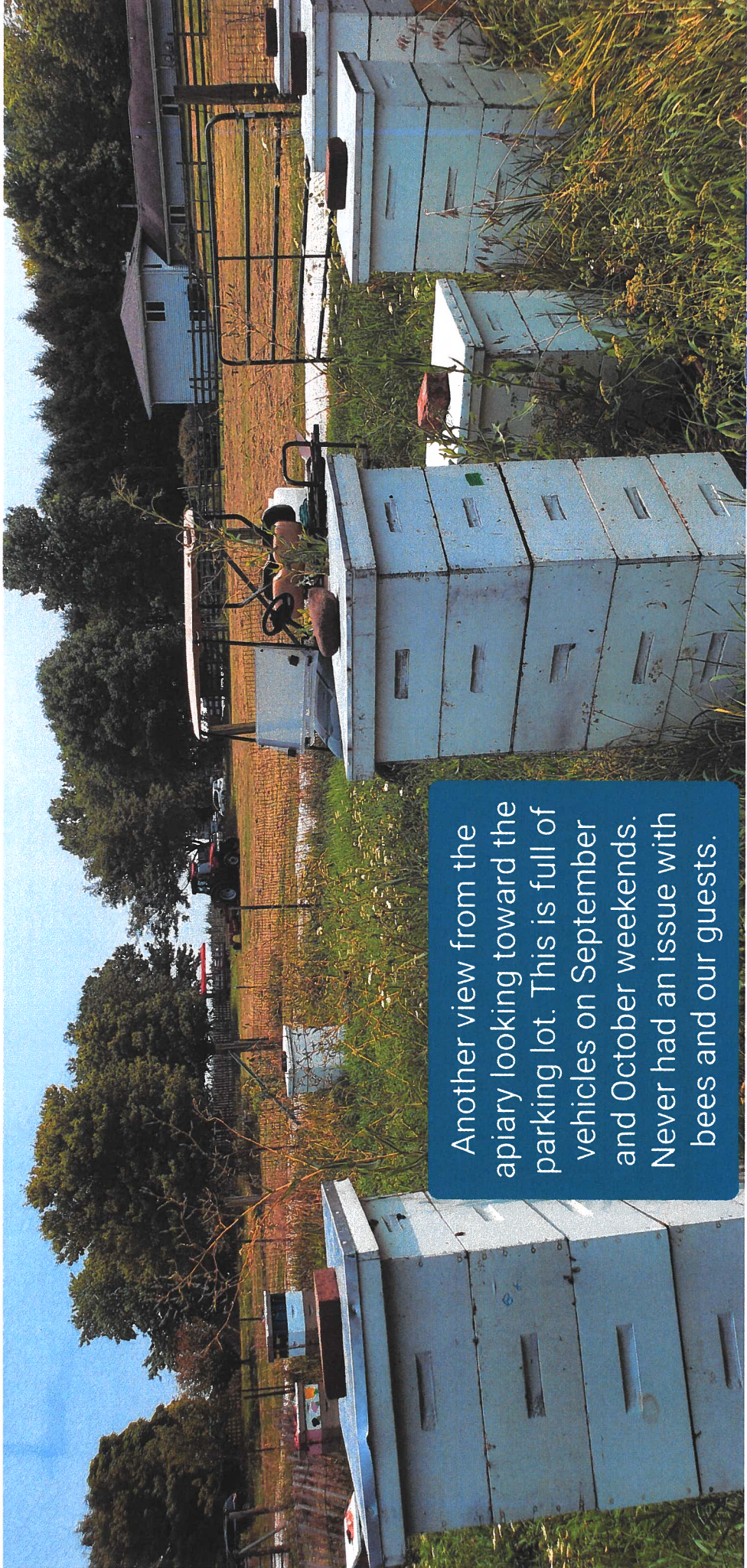
I currently maintain 13 hives at Curtis Orchard. The University of Illinois owns six of these and Maggie Wachter owns 4 of them. We have kept these hives in the same location within our parking lot and next to a driveway and walking path for the past 10 years. Hundreds of vehicles park near the hives and people regularly walk past as I am actively beekeeping. I have not experienced an issue and bystanders have not been stung. Over the years we have had hundreds of thousands of visitors and rarely have our guests been stung by any insect—I can remember maybe 6 stings in the last 10 years. I do provide 2 water sources near my hives, but don’t often see them drinking from it. One would assume they would be drawn to the cider and sodas that people drink throughout the property, but native species of bees are the ones drawn to these food sources. I’m thankful we are zoned agriculture since honeybees are essential to our business for their honey and the pollination services they perform. I would also like to mention that both my father and husband who work full-time on the property experience substantial reactions to bee stings. They take precautions to avoid stings, but realize that stings

are an inevitable part of life as there are many insects that sting and will sting whether we keep bees on the property or not.

Lastly, I live in a neighborhood that would fall under the new restrictions. I live within a quarter mile of the 23 hives I mentioned. I also have a pool. My pool is surrounded by flowers. In fact, I have many flowers throughout my yard because I want to attract all pollinators. While I see a honeybee occasionally, they are no more abundant than the frogs, crickets, flies, and other insects I find in my pool. Furthermore, there are at least 5 other pools within the same 1/8-1/2 mile of the 23 hives and I have not received complaints about bees in those pools either.

In closing, I do feel for the plight of Barney Bryson and the other neighbors who have had unpleasant experiences with honeybees, if indeed they are dealing with domesticated honeybees. I would encourage him and his neighbors to pursue his desire for restricting beekeeping with his HOA rather than pursuing this dragnet approach. A broad ordinance such as this will have far-ranging negative consequences at a time when the general population finally recognizes the essential work provided by pollinators, their declining numbers and the many threats they face. Who among us has not read the warnings from scientists about the decline of pollinators and the threat to our food supply? My recommendation for people who wish to avoid interactions with insects would be not to plant flowers that attract honeybees and stinging insects and if you put out a bird bath, recognize that you are providing water for many thirsty insects in addition to birds. I could get mad at the 2 frogs I pull regularly from my pool, but I know that to them it's just a big pond. How can I blame nature for doing what comes naturally? I also don't blame my next door neighbor who has a water feature that breeds these frogs, and how do I know for certain that banning my neighbors water feature would lead to no frogs in my pool.

This ordinance seeks to regulate an essential part of our ecosystem over a wide area. It would be unenforceable and would require resources we don't really have to make questionable and challengeable determinations as to when a violation has occurred and by whom. It has also been poorly and vindictively conceived because there is no proof that it would even remedy the problem it is supposed to address.



Another view from the apiary looking toward the parking lot. This is full of vehicles on September and October weekends. Never had an issue with bees and our guests.

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water source 1 of 2.
bees use it but not all so
bees will continue to visit
other available sources

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walking path

apiary near neighborhood, driveway, parking lot, and walking path. Have not experienced issues.

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