

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: April 27, 1998

FROM: CYNTHIA J. KURTZ, ACTING CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: AMEND P.M.C. 8.28 TO PROHIBIT A PERSON FROM MAINTAINING A BEEHIVE, NEST, OR SWARM ON PRIVATE PROPERTIES TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY FROM STINGING INSECTS AND VENOMOUS ARACHNIDS

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council direct the City Attorney to amend P.M.C. 8.28, Fly and Rat Control, to prohibit a person from maintaining a beehive, nest, or swarm on private properties to protect the public health and safety from stinging insects and venomous arachnids.

BACKGROUND

During 1997, the Public Health Department responded to more than 30 complaints from residents about stinging insects and venomous arachnids, with most of the complaints related to swarming bees and their hives. The City has procedures which direct staff in the handling of these type of insect complaints; however, current procedures rely on voluntary compliance by residents. Amending the current ordinance will strengthen the City's ability to prevent stinging incidents and enforce property owner compliance with insect control regulations.

Stinging insects are generally beneficial to man but can also be a nuisance, and sometimes a serious health hazard, due to their stings. Stinging insects include the following from the order *Hymenoptera*: yellow jackets, wasps, and honeybees. Venomous arachnids in the class *Arachnida* found locally include the Black Widow and Violin spiders. When complaints are received, staff may recommend that a property owner hire a licensed pest control operator to exterminate the insects or use a beekeeper to remove a beehive or swarm. In the case of honeybees, whenever possible, a beekeeper would be called first to attempt to move a hive or swarm to another location where it could continue to benefit the ecology without causing a problem for nearby residents. The Public Health Department maintains a current list of businesses that will assist residents in the removal of honeybees, wasps and yellow jackets on private property.

The Africanized Honeybees – unfortunately called “Killer Bees” – are expected to arrive in Los Angeles County this year after a 40-year migration from South America. These bees will establish themselves fairly quickly by breeding with the native European honeybee. The dominant characteristics of the Africanized Honeybees will be exhibited by all offspring. The Africanized Honeybees' appearance and individual stings are almost identical to those of the

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Ordinance to Prohibit a Person from Maintaining a Beehive, Nest or Swarm

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native bees, yet they are more aggressive in defending their hives and will pursue a victim and continue stinging over greater distance in larger numbers and for longer periods of time. There have already been more than fifteen multiple stinging incidents in Imperial, San Diego and Riverside counties where the Africanized Honeybees are now established. Staff from the Public Health, Public Works and Fire Departments are working together to formalize certain responsibilities between the departments to handle complaints related to Africanized Honeybees.

The Los Angeles County Africanized Honeybee Task Force, under the direction of the County of Los Angeles Agricultural Commissioner, is recommending that all cities in the county: 1) review their local ordinances; and, if needed, 2) adopt more stringent ordinances that will restrict property owners from keeping beehives and apiaries before the Africanized honeybees arrive in the county. Some cities, such as Burbank and Glendale, already prohibit property owners from maintaining a beehive. The Pasadena Municipal Code does not restrict property owners nor businesses from keeping beehives, nests, and swarms on private property.

It is recommended that the City Council direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance amendment that would prohibit property owners from keeping beehives, which are a potential threat to public health and safety. The absence of such an ordinance has, in the past, made enforcement difficult because staff must rely on the property owner to voluntarily remove the hive, nest or swarm from their property. An amendment to the ordinance would allow the Public Health Department to respond more effectively to a citizen complaint that could endanger the public health and safety by requiring a property owner to immediately abate the problem before a stinging incident could take place.

FISCAL IMPACT

This action by City Council will have no fiscal impact on the Health Fund nor on the General Fund because no new staff nor other resources are needed to enforce the proposed amended ordinance.

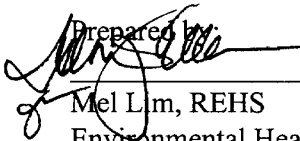
Respectfully submitted,



CYNTHIA J. KURTZ

Acting City Manager

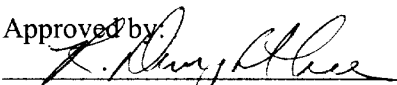
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