



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date:	November 3, 2023
Subject:	Henkeeping Zoning Petition
Recommendation:	The Planning Board recommends ADOPTION

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On October 24, 2023, the Planning Board (the "Board") held a public hearing to discuss a Zoning Petition by the Cambridge City Council to amend Articles 2.000, 4.000, 5.000, and 23.000 of the Zoning Ordinance for the purpose of allowing henkeeping as a permitted accessory use to principal residential (excluding transient accommodations as defined in Section 4.31.i), religious, and educational uses; with limitations and subject to regulation and permitting by the Cambridge Public Health Department.

The Board heard a presentation from City Councillor Quinton Zondervan and received written materials prior to the hearing from staff in the City's Community Development Department (CDD). Following the presentation, public comment, and discussion among Board members, the Planning Board voted unanimously to forward a positive recommendation to City Council.

Board members expressed enthusiasm for the proposed change, noting the environmental and community-building benefits of henkeeping and urban agriculture more broadly. The Board acknowledged the overlapping authority of zoning and public health regulations over the design of henhouses and runs and recommended that CDD and the Law Department review the final proposed petition text to confirm the validity of the amendments and to make any clarifying suggestions before adoption.

The Planning Board voted 7-0 in favor of transmitting the above report. Two members were absent.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

H Theodore Cohen, Acting Chair.



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## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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**IRAM FAROOQ**

*Assistant City Manager for  
Community Development*

**SANDRA CLARKE**

*Deputy Director  
Chief of Administration*

To: Yi-An Huang, City Manager  
From: Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community  
Development  
Date: November 15, 2023  
Subject: Henkeeping Zoning Planning Board Report and Language Edits

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Following the public hearings held by the Ordinance Committee and Planning Board, Community Development Department staff in consultation with the Law Department, Public Health Department, and Inspectional Services Department have prepared the attached text revisions to the Henkeeping Zoning Petition. The revisions are intended to improve clarity and consistency with other provisions in the Zoning Ordinance and with the authority of the Public Health Department to promulgate regulations. Edits are shown relative to the original Petition. Staff recommends substitution of the attached text before voting on adoption.

## RECOMMENDED ZONING PETITION

To amend Articles 2.000, 4.000, 5.000, and 23.000 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance as follows for the purpose of allowing henkeeping, with limitations and subject to regulation and permitting by the Cambridge Public Health Department, as a permitted accessory use to principal residential (excluding transient accommodations as defined in Section 4.31.i), religious, and educational uses.

### ***Amendments to Article 2.000 – Definitions***

#### ***Add the following definitions:***

**Apiary.** A location or structure on a lot containing one or more beehives and associated beekeeping equipment.

**Bee.** Any life stage of the common domestic honey bee, *Apis mellifera*.

**Bee Colony.** An aggregate of worker bees, drones, a single queen, and brood living together as one social unit.

**Beekeeping.** The housing of one or more bee colonies on a lot for the purpose of collecting products including honey, beeswax, propolis, pollen, and royal jelly, and/or to support the ecological benefits of pollination.

**Beehive.** A structure intended for the housing of one Bee Colony.

**Chicken.** Any breed of the domestic species *Gallus gallus domesticus*.

**Hen.** A domestic female chicken.

**Hen Run or Pen.** An outdoor structure for the containment of hens that is enclosed on all sides and top by ~~a wire mesh but is otherwise open to the air~~ any material, to allow access to the outdoors while preventing contact with pests, predators, and other bird species but remaining open to the outside air.

**Henkeeping.** The housing of female chickens (i.e., hens) on a lot.

**Henhouse or Coop.** An enclosed, weather-protected structure for the shelter of hens and their nests.

**Rooster.** A domestic male chicken.

### ***Amendments to Article 4.000 – Use Regulations***

***Add the following paragraph “p.” to Section 4.21, Accessory Uses:***

- p. Henkeeping, conducted in conformance with the Standards for Urban Agriculture set forth in Article 23.000 of this Zoning Ordinance and all other applicable laws, rules, and regulations, shall be considered an allowed accessory use when conducted on the lot of and in conjunction with one of the following principal uses: residential (Section 4.31 a.-h., excluding transient accommodations), any religious use (Section 4.33 a.), and any educational use (Section 4.33 b.).

***Amendments to Article 5.000 – Dimensional Standards***

***Amend Section 5.22.1 to read as follows:***

- 5.22.1** Private Open Space. Private Open Space shall be open and unobstructed to the sky, except that up to fifty (50) percent of the total Private Open Space may be Shaded Area. Trees, plantings, arbors, fences, flagpoles, sculpture, fountains and recreational and drying apparatus and similar objects shall not be considered obstructions when located within a private open space. Objects or structures intended exclusively for bicycle parking, designed and located in accordance with Section 6.100, which may be uncovered, partially covered or fully enclosed, shall not be considered obstructions provided that such objects or structures are not used for motor vehicle parking, general storage or any other use, and further provided that any such structure exceeding six feet (6') in height conforms to the requirements for an accessory building in Section 4.21. Beehives, apiaries, henhouses, and hen runs conforming to the Standards for Urban Agriculture in Article 23.000 of this Zoning Ordinance shall not be considered obstructions. Structures or features that are necessary for a building to comply with the Flood Resilience Standards in Section 22.80, such as stairs, ramps, or window wells, shall not be considered obstructions. To the extent permitted in this Ordinance, balconies and roof areas may also be considered as Private Open Space.

***Amend Section 5.24.1 to read as follows:***

- 5.24.1** Every part of a required yard shall be open to the sky and unobstructed, except that the following features may be located within a required yard:
- (a) Awnings, arbors, fences, flagpoles, recreational, and laundry drying equipment and similar objects;

- (b) Objects or structures intended exclusively for bicycle parking meeting the requirements of Article 6.000, which may be uncovered, partially covered or fully enclosed, provided that such objects or structures are not used for motor vehicle parking, general storage or any other use, and further provided that any such structure exceeding six feet (6') in height conforms to the requirements for an accessory building in Section 4.21;
- (c) Beehives, apiaries, henhouses, and hen runs conforming to the Standards for Urban Agriculture in Article 23.000 of this Zoning Ordinance ~~shall not be considered obstructions~~;
- (d) Objects or equipment located in a required yard that are necessary for or appurtenant to a Public Bicycle-Sharing Station;
- (e) Open or lattice-enclosed fire escapes for emergency use only;
- (f) Projecting eaves, chimneys, bay windows, balconies, open fire escapes and like projections which do not project more than three and one-half (3½') feet and which are part of a building not more than thirty-five (35') feet in height;
- (g) Shade Canopies as defined in this Zoning Ordinance, provided that any Shade Canopy exceeding seven feet (7') in height shall be set back at least five feet (5') from a side or rear lot line in a residential district; and
- (h) Exterior steps, ramps, elevated walkways, porches, window wells, flood barriers, and other elevated features that provide protection or resilience from flooding on the lot, provided such features do not project more than twelve (12') feet beyond the line of the foundation wall of a building, are open to the air and are either unroofed or covered only by a Shade Canopy, and are not elevated higher than four (4') feet above Grade or the 1%-Probability Long Term Flood Elevation as determined by the Flood Resilience Standards in Section 22.80 of this Zoning Ordinance, whichever is higher

## ***Amendments to Article 23.000 – Standards for Urban Agriculture***

### ***Delete Section 23.20 (Urban Agriculture Definitions)***

### ***Create New Section 23.50 – Standards for Henkeeping***

#### **23.51 General Standards for Henkeeping.**

- a. Henkeeping is allowed as an accessory use pursuant to Article 4.000 of this Zoning Ordinance, according to the standards herein.
- b. A permit must be obtained from the Cambridge Public Health Department for all keeping of hens, and permit-holders must be in compliance with all

local public health regulations and state public health laws in order to keep hens.

- c. Only female chickens (i.e., hens) may be kept. No male chickens (i.e., roosters) are allowed.
- d. Care and disposal of hens must be in accordance with all local public health regulations and state public health laws.

**23.52** Number of Hens. No more than six (6) hens may be housed on a lot unless a permit issued by the Cambridge Public Health Department explicitly authorizes a greater number, but in no case shall more than twelve (12) hens be permitted.

**23.53** Enclosures.

- a. Hens must be kept within an enclosure consisting of a henhouse and a hen run.
- b. All hen enclosures shall be located at least five (5) feet from a property line, or may be closer to the property line if there is a solid wall, fence, or similar opaque barrier visually screening the enclosure from an abutting property.
- c. A hen enclosure shall not be located in a front yard.
- d. Freestanding henhouses shall not be more than eight (8) feet in height above the mean grade of the ground adjoining the henhouse and shall cover no more than fifty (50) square feet of lot area.
- e. Freestanding henhouses shall be designed, constructed, and managed ~~so as to prevent and deter access to rodents and other vermin~~ in accordance with any additional design standards required by the Cambridge Public Health Department.
- f. A hen enclosure shall be built in conformance with all other applicable building, health, and safety laws, rules, and regulations.