



Frequently Asked Questions about the Bee Ordinance

1. Where can I find a copy of the bee ordinance?

Ordinance # 3666 can be found on the Village's website (www.vrf.us) under the Village Code, Title 8, Chapter 2. Or, you can request a copy from Village Hall by contacting Joan Espana at jespana@vrf.us or by calling (708) 714-3519.

2. Who can keep bees?

Almost anyone **over the age of 18** can keep bees as long as they have met the requirements set by the Village to establish and maintain a honeybee apiary. Beekeeping is permitted once a permit has been obtained from the Village.

3. I want to apply for a beekeeping permit. What do I need?

Anyone who wishes to keep bees in the Village will be required to register the apiary with the State of Illinois Department of Agriculture. Apiaries must be established and maintained in accordance with the Illinois Bees and Apiaries Act, 510 ILCS 20/1, et seq. and other applicable State, Federal, and Village laws, ordinances, rules, regulations and directives.

Additionally, anyone who wants to establish and maintain a honeybee apiary must obtain a permit from the Village. Here's what you'll need at the time you apply:

- i. Proof that the applicant is at least 18 years of age;
- ii. A description of the number of colonies requested to be kept on the lot (no more than two (2) colonies per lot);
- iii. A depiction of the lot on which the colony, or colonies, are proposed to be located, and a depiction of the location on the lot on which the colony, or colonies, are proposed to be located (plat of survey);
- iv. A twenty-five dollar (\$25.00) nonrefundable permit application fee; and
- v. Any other information or documents the Village may request.

4. How do I get a plat of survey for my property?

You may already have a plat of survey. A copy of the plat of survey is often required in order to close on a home purchase and is required for fence and other types of building permits. If a plat of survey for the property cannot be located, Village staff will be happy to check for a copy of your plat of survey in our building files.

5. Do I have to notify my neighbors that I am establishing a honeybee colony?

Yes, prior to applying for the permit, you must provide written proof that you served written notice (via First Class mail) no more than 30 calendar days and no less than 15 calendar days prior to submission of the application, to all adjacent properties, of your intent to apply for a permit. The Village provides the notification form to be sent. The notice will inform recipients of your proposed application for a permit and will provide an opportunity for the recipients to object to the application.

How do I provide written proof that I served written notice?

When you sign the permit application, you are attesting that you have complied with the requirements for notification to all adjacent properties.

6. What if my neighbors' object to my application?

Within seven (7) calendar days of receiving notice from the applicant, a recipient may file a written objection with the Village if:

Any recipient, a recipient's family member, or a recipient's employee (if the recipient is a business) suffers from anaphylaxis or a related life-threatening condition. If the objection includes documentation from a licensed physician, or medical professional who confirms an anaphylaxis reaction or a life-threatening condition related to bee-stings, the application shall be denied.

7. Is there a limit to the number of hives I can keep?

Yes. No more than 2 colonies shall be located on a lot.

8. How many permits are available?

Up to twenty-two (22) permits may be issued by the Village. Renewal applications will take priority over new applications. New applications will be considered on a first come/first served basis. If there is an excess of 22 permits requested, any remaining applicants will be placed on a waiting list.

9. Where on my property can I have my hive?

Hives shall be kept a minimum of five feet (5') away from all of the lot's property lines, and oriented so that flight patterns face away from the closest lot fence line on the lot.

- i. Hives shall be placed so that the general flight of the bees is in a direction and distance that will deter bee contact with humans and domesticated animals. If this cannot be achieved due to lot constraints, the beekeeper shall install a fly-wall of at least two feet (2') higher than the hive entrance, and no more than five feet (5') from said entrance. The fly-wall shall be made of vegetation or fencing material.
- ii. If the lot where a hive is located is not completely fenced in, the beekeeper shall erect a fence and/or barrier around the hives themselves that will be at least four feet high (4') and no closer than five feet (5') from the hive. Applicants must contact the Village's Building Department at (708) 714-3552 to obtain the proper fencing permit.
- iii. A weatherproof sign at least ten inches by ten inches (10"X10") shall be installed at either of the entrance(s) of the yard or the entrance to the fence erected around a hive in a non-fenced in yard. The sign shall read "State Registered Beehive(s) on Property" or similar language that makes it clear that bees are on the premises. The Village-issued permit number must be included and displayed clearly. Signs are available at Village Hall at cost (approximately \$8).

10. When do beekeeping permits expire?

Permits expire on November 30th of each calendar year. Permit holders must apply to renew their permit Annually by completing a renewal application, by paying a twenty-five dollar (\$25.00) nonrefundable fee, and by giving notice required to any new adjacent property owners, if any, since the date the last permit was issued.

11. If I am a neighbor who would like to object to a license/permit, what should I do?

Within seven (7) calendar days of receiving notice from the applicant, recipients may file a written objection with the Village if any recipient, family member, or a recipient's employee (**if the recipient is a business**) suffers from anaphylaxis or a life-threatening condition. The objector must provide documentation from a licensed physician or medical professional confirming an anaphylaxis reaction of a life-threatening condition related to bee stings. Mail the objection with the medical certification to the attention of the Village's Code Enforcement Officer, Tim Vaclav, at Village Hall – 400 Park Avenue – River Forest – IL - 60305.



If you have any additional questions, please contact Joan Espana at jespana@vrf.us or (708) 714-3519. The Village's Code Enforcement Officer, Tim Vaclav, is available to make home visits to advise on apiary placement and other code compliance issues. You can reach him at tvacav@vrf.us or (708) 714-3523.