

PHOEBE M. CONANT
151 NAGOG HILL ROAD
ACTON, MA 01720
pmconant@verizon.net

November 29, 2011

Conservation Commission
Town of Acton
VIA EMAIL

To the Members of the Commission,

It has come to my attention that the Conservation Commission is in the process of renegotiating the terms of use of the Quin Land by Wick and Rita McConnon, the owners of Hybrid Farm.

I believe that the McConnons are doing the town a service in their stewardship of the property on Nagog Hill Road. In keeping the land open for pasture and fields, the McConnons are helping to preserve some of the agricultural character of this town. My family has lived in Acton since the 1700s, and has seen first-hand how the land which was once completely cleared for farm- and pasture- land has disappeared. Some has been sold and developed as housing or shopping plazas; some (as is the case for much of our own property) has reverted to woodland. Open (non-athletic) fields have become increasingly uncommon.

Several years ago my husband and I decided to clear the land around our home for fields and orchards. We took down the trees back to the fieldstone boundary walls. These walls, found deep in the woods, were walls which had originally been constructed (by my family) years ago as the land was cleared for pasture. Prior to beginning the work, I happened to speak to someone from the state Office of Fish and Wildlife about our project. The person I spoke to was pleased at the idea, feeling that there is not enough open field habitat in this area. (In particular, this type of habitat is very important for many species of birds.) My husband and I are still in the process of working with a landscape architect to create our vision, but it is worth noting that even since the cutting took place, the cleared land has already been entirely covered in oak seedlings thanks to two years of substantial acorn crops. The re-establishment of open fields will be an active, not passive undertaking.

The natural tendency of undisturbed land in this part of the country is to revert to forest. Certainly, forests are an important part of a healthy ecosystem, but the existence of open, non-forested land is equally important. The environmental challenge we face now is that land in this area tends to be either developed (houses with yards, businesses with asphalt) or left as undermanaged woodland. To keep undeveloped lands open is no small chore, but it provides a diversity of habitat that is beneficial not only to a large number of animal species, but also to Acton residents.

I feel strongly that the McConnons, in their willingness to keep the land open for grazing and pastureland, are doing us a tremendous favor at no cost to the town. They are helping to actively preserve the disappearing agricultural character of the town, and in doing so are providing us with a more diverse ecological environment. I would hope that the town would continue to allow them to use the property as they have been doing, and would further recognize their contribution to preserving part of Acton's rural and agricultural heritage. They should be commended for their efforts, and encouraged to continue them.

Sincerely,
Phoebe Conant

Anne McCarthy Forbes
25 Martin Street
Acton, Massachusetts 01720
978-263-2227 978-263-7545
anneforbes@verizon.net

November 27, 2011

Acton Conservation Commission
Acton Town Hall
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Commissioners,

I was concerned to learn that a recent decision by the Conservation Commission may result in severely curtailing the use of Acton conservation land by horses from Hybid Farm.

I realize that local policies often must address conflicting desirable goals. I have read the 1989 Hybid Farm license agreement, and I hope that, while the Commission considers goals related to land conservation, the terms of the license may be revised, if necessary, to take into account the benefits that a horse farm of this type contributes to the community. Not only are horses ridden on public lands in many Massachusetts towns, but some conservation lands, even in Acton, have been preserved precisely *because* of their association with horses. Would Morrison Farm, for instance, have the open-space character it has today if it had not been a horse farm?

I understand that horse manure is a potential pollutant, but it also nourishes the soil. And although grazing may at times expose soils and eliminate certain plants, in recent years grazing animals have been welcomed on conservation lands in many Massachusetts communities as a means of maintaining the "open" aspect of open space.

I would be dismayed if Acton's conservation policy had the effect of barring horses from conservation land or of compromising the economic viability of any of our existing farms. Such a policy would present a serious impediment for potential grantors of conservation land or restrictions. Why would the owner of a horse farm, or even the owner of a wooded area used for horse trails, be likely to convey a permanent restriction if the terms of the restriction agreement might prevent use by horses in the future? Or if the constraints of an agreement with the Town might make it difficult for an agricultural enterprise to continue in operation?

Please note that in 2006 local participants in a study that was part of the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program specifically identified all of Acton's horse farms as important heritage landscapes worthy of preservation. The study resulted in the **Acton Reconnaissance Report** published that same year by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. I hope that the conclusions and recommendations of the report are regularly factored into the Commission's decision-making.

If Hybid's present license agreement has been violated, I hope that the Commission can find a way to craft a new agreement that will make it possible for the farm to continue its valuable service to the Acton community.

Sincerely,

Anne Forbes

11/17/11

To the Members of the Acton Conservation Committee,

Hybid Farm is one of Acton's many jewels.

It has *respectfully* provided countless hours of pleasure for the kids who have the privilege of time spent on this *amazing* farm. The facility and the horses are an integral part of the Nagog Hill landscape and have been for 31 years.

Having been a resident of Nagog Hill Road, I spent time hiking throughout the plentiful conservation land with my family and dogs. I would often encounter the **Hybid Farm** riders on the numerous trails. They were ALWAYS respectful and considerate and the big smiles on the rider's faces could not be ignored. Being so close to Boston, you can still find trails, horses and young riders all managing to experience the great outdoors. This impressive farm has kept kids outside, away from the mall sprawl and most importantly, AWAY FROM THE TV AND VIDEO GAMES. The lessons and skills the students gain from **Hybid Farm** will last throughout their lives.

The horses are very well cared for by the staff and countless volunteers. To lower the number of horses *or* access to the conservation land will hurt absolutely everyone involved in this beautiful farm. Please, let's keep Acton's **Hybid Farm** functioning at it's fullest capacity, for everyone's continued benefit!

Thank you for your consideration.

Julia Evans

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Whitney Newey
Jane Berkowitz Carlton and
Dennis William Carlton Professor
of Microeconomics, Department
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November 20, 2011

Conservation Commission
Town of Acton
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Commissioners:

I am a resident of Acton living at 7 Rose Court. I have lived in Acton for over 21 years, have had four children graduate from Acton Boxborough High School, and have participated in Acton conservation projects.



I am writing in support of Hybid Farms. Over many years Hybid Farms has been a wonderful place for youth activities. For several years I have helped organize a Math and Science Merit Badge Expo that attracts about 250 Boy Scouts. As a community service Hybid Farms has hosted the Animal Science merit badge for that Expo. The many young men that have come there to work on that badge have a great experience with the instructors. We would hate to lose them! They render an excellent service.

Over the years they have allowed us to have many other Boy Scout activities there, including campouts (with town fire permits). Many young men have had great experiences there, with wandering through the woods and sheltering from storms in the barn. It is a great place for Boy Scout activities and Hybid Farms has been generous with their facilities.

Those are just a few of the positive first hand experiences we have had with Hybid Farms. I know second hand of many, many other positive experiences young men and women have had there. It is a great place for youth to be, one of the best around.

Hybid Farms provides great service to the Town of Acton, bringing youth from all around to have fine experiences. It would be a bad thing if they could not continue the wonderful things they are doing. Acton could lose one of the best opportunities it has going for young people to have a good experience when they come to our town. I recommend in the strongest possible terms that they be allowed to continue.

I am happy to answer any further questions and appear before the commission if requested. I can be contacted at wnewey@mit.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Whitney Newey'.

Whitney Newey

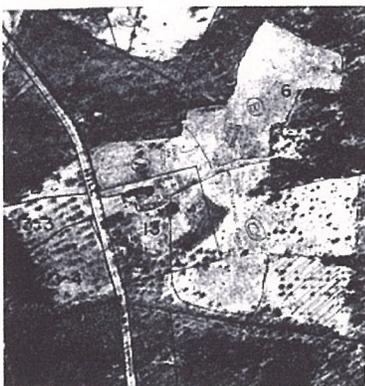
To Members of the Acton Conservation Committee:

I am writing in response to the proposed Conservation Commission action against Hybrid Farm.

I have read all the documents posted on the town's web site. It's interesting that the most recent lease you have posted is for 1989, which means that 21 years of leases are missing - why is that? The only recent documents are the 2010 Arnold-Tidman memo (complaining about the number of horses), and the 2011 Guba - Snyder Grant - Abbott memo (charging the McConnors with "destruction" of the land and "disregard of their agreement"). To substantiate their alleged "disregard", you'd have to provide a copy of the current agreement. To establish "destruction" you'd need to show *before and after* pictures.

The existing documents do show that from the beginning, residents were in favor of the presence of horses and ponies on the Quinn land. One of the earliest letters mentions that the farm was auctioned with the promise that the buyer of the farm would be able to *use* the adjacent conservation land.

Horses and ponies obviously have an impact on the land. But it's exaggerating to say that their presence constitutes "destruction." I have copied below the original aerial view, from Wick McConnon's 6-12-82 letter; an aerial view taken in 2005 that shows what the paddock looked like when it extended to the road; and a 2010- 2011 view that shows what it looks like with the fence pulled back from the road - it's *grassy*. The land was clearly not "destroyed" by the horses. One could argue that it looks better now than it did in 1982.



1982 Aerial view from 06-12-1982 Ltr. - McConnon.



2005 Bing flyover (CR copy)



2011 Google Maps view (CR copy)

While it's the Conservation Commission's mission to protect the land in its trust, consider this issue from a larger perspective: Does Hybrid Farm benefit the community? If so, at what cost? How does that cost compare to the benefits? I would like to argue that the benefits outweigh the costs - but the benefits are in an entirely different realm than the costs.

What are those benefits? The first is as a second chance for abused animals. The ponies and horses Rita buys are predominantly abuse victims. Many of them are "middle aged" or older. After horse slaughter became illegal in the US, and especially after the beginning of the recent recession, the incidence of "backyard" neglect and abuse skyrocketed. Rita's ponies and horses have been given a reprieve - along with great veterinary care, good food, and the companionship of other animals and people. When they finally attain good health, they work and earn their keep. Working around them, I had a sense that some of them were proud of the work they did (they didn't avoid being tacked up, but rather seemed eager for it). Each pony or horse works 2-3 hours per day (while Rita and her instructors work 8-10 hrs/day). All that work provides a living for the horses & ponies, for the McConnors, and for the instructors who teach at the barn. Hybrid

indirectly funds the vet, the farrier, the feed supplier, and the tack stores and suppliers of horse-related "gear" purchased by the riders.

That's sort of a baseline impact, the "demographics" that any decent riding barn would have on its community. What is far more important, at least in my opinion, is the human benefit that Hybrid Farm provides.

Op-Ed pages frequently feature articles on how stressful life is these days, especially for kids. The influences of drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, porn, foul language are all decried, but there doesn't seem to be any real "safe haven" from these influences - that's "just how it is" and "there's nothing we can do about it" seem to be the prevailing conclusions.

Rita doesn't believe that for a minute - to her, it's a choice. She has behavioral rules that apply to everyone who sets foot on Hybrid Farm. Everyone has to be nice to everyone else, and certain behaviors are absolutely not tolerated: smoking, drinking, drugs, 'bad language.' In every way she possible, Rita promotes positive interaction among all the humans and equines on the Farm.

The animals work hard all week, and then get Sundays off; the only work done on Sundays is by the caretakers - those who water, feed, groom, and watch over the animals and clean their stalls. Every other day, the barn is busy. The kids and adults who take lessons are taught to take care of the ponies and horses, and are expected to do so each time they are there, even if they're there only to "hang out." They bring them in from turnout, brush their coats, clean their feet, and get them ready for lessons. They also take turns cleaning out the stalls, spreading fresh bedding, and checking to be sure the water buckets are full. Everyone is responsible for the well-being of the ponies and horses. Kids who have been there longer check the work of newer kids; they all learn teamwork by working together to handle larger tasks.

There are decades worth of research confirming that spending time with horses is excellent therapy. Stressed-out kids (and adults) get their relaxation at the barn - for some, it's the only place they really unwind. I know this is true - for several years, I was one of those adults. Rita is quietly generous: many of us get a "free ride" - time to ride, take lessons, and hang out with the horses and other folks, free of charge - just because she knows it will do us good. Those who can afford to pay, do. Those who can't afford it generally love to spend time mucking stalls. Being around the ponies and horses is incredibly therapeutic.

The Conservation Commission "in its wisdom" has decided that all of this has to stop. The reason? Apparently, because the horses and ponies kill the grass. As the photos show, the grass *will* grow back if the horses and ponies aren't allowed on it. But if you forbid access to the trails, and if you insist that the "work crew" be cut in half, you are decreeing that Hybrid is out of business. The kids will have to find either other things to do, or other places to ride. All the kids and adults who have been given access to horses and lessons *gratis* will have to *do without* - there is no alternative. The instructors who have earned a livelihood there will be jobless; and because they're independent contractors, they will have no unemployment benefits. Closing down Hybrid Farm will make life poorer for many more people than appears obvious on the surface. All that for grass ... that the town will have to pay to mow.

That seems an excessive reaction to a little extra dirt. A little power, run amok. I urge you NOT to do this.

Caroline Rumsey
23 Sandy Pond Rd#1
Ayer MA 01432

XFINITY Connect

± Font Size ±

Hybid Farm

From : carolyn platt <cwplatt3@gmail.com>

Sun, Nov 20, 2011 11:22 PM

Subject : Hybid Farm**To :** [REDACTED]**Cc :** [REDACTED]

To members of the Conservation Commission,
We are writing to express our dismay that the Conservation Commission wants to reduce the size of Hybid Farm. We live on Newtown Road and often take bike rides or walks on Nagog Hill Road. We enjoy going by the beautiful farm, one of the last rural spots in our town. We urge you to let it remain as is.

Carolyn and Andy Platt
100 Newtown Road
Acton MA 01720

November 21, 2011

Conservation Commission, Town Of Acton, MA

To whom it may concern:

I'm writing in support of Hybrid Farm on Nagog Hill Road. I understand that after 31 years of Hybrid Farm and the town agreeing on Hybrid's use of abutting conservation land, there are now difficulties in agreeing. Of course I can't know all the details surrounding the town's concerns. However, I'd like to comment on the bit I've heard around town, and also let you know how highly I think of Hybrid Farm and the services they provide having known them for over 4 years, since we moved to Acton.

First, I've heard the town is concerned about a small area of land that Hybrid has its ponies on. Specifically, a concern is the inability for residents to walk on this small parcel. As a dog owner, I walk Acton's wonderful conservation trails all over town almost daily, including the Nagog Hill conservation trail that abuts Hybrid Farm at least three times a week. I often meet others walking on this trail who have a child, like I do, who's taking lessons riding lessons at the barn. There are miles of marked trails to walk here. I don't feel I'm missing out on anything because the ponies are on a very small bit of land, and therefore I don't walk through this specific small parcel, but instead on miles of trails accessible from this parking lot. I've also heard around town that the commission is concerned about the 'look' of a parcel some ponies are on, that it is dirt as opposed to grass. I can assure you that many of us residents appreciate the natural beauty we have in Acton, and for there to be a small parcel that one can barely even see from the street, which is dirt instead of grass, doesn't bother us. In fact, it's naturally beautiful and peaceful to see these gorgeous ponies in the field. It's a heartwarming location to see the barn with its surrounding fields complete with many ponies that otherwise might not have a home and a life. I mention this because I know that Hybrid takes in homeless and sick ponies. Lastly, I know that Hybrid provides opportunities for struggling youth who otherwise would never have a chance to learn about horses and riding them. (Riding is expensive because it costs to keep ponies.) Some of these troubled youth find great comfort in connecting with a beautiful animal that doesn't judge them, and serves them. For some, it's an opportunity they might never have to learn to be responsible for something living, and to receive unconditional love.

Lastly, my 12 year old son has gotten tremendous joy and self-confidence from learning to ride at Hybrid. It's a huge responsibility for Hybrid to keep many children safe while teaching them to ride and to care for an animal, and they do an absolutely top-notch job. Their instructors exude caring and competence. They're absolutely fantastic with children. And Hybrid's owner cares deeply about the kids who ride at Hybrid, and their families. This is such an exceptional group of people that they're a blessing for kids in this community. If you looked into it, you'd be find that so many kids grow into adults and stay with Hybrid. They go off to college, and when they either visit or return to Acton, they frequent Hybrid Farm.

I appreciate as a resident your desire to keep our town lovely. I ask that you please work with Hybrid to meet your needs and theirs, as Hybrid is such a special place with exceptional people that it would be devastating to not have them operating here. Please call me if I can help in or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Marisa Olson

41 Minuteman Rd., Acton #978.274.2745

24 Liberty Street
Acton, MA 01720
November 20, 2011

Conservation Commission
Town of Acton

Dear Members of the Commission,

I am writing in regards to the future use of Hybrid Farm. I can not speak highly enough about Rita McConnon and the wonderful work she does. Her barn is a safe and wonderful place for kids to go after school and on the weekends. By learning to take care of and ride a horse, a child feels empowered and at the same time becomes aware of the gentle manner a rider must have to be successful with a horse. As a horse owner myself, I know what joy a horse farm brings to a wide range of people, both clients and passersby. I feel that having Hybrid Farm continue to use town land will benefit the town. Having the open space used and kept open by live stock enriches the town by helping preserve our agricultural heritage. Anyone who drives by a horse farm always enjoys seeing the horses.

Through her farm, Rita has given so much back to the Acton community and the larger community. Her help with troubled children, disabled children, scholarships for financially needy children have been very generous and always done so as not to draw attention to herself. I think most people do not know all the wonderful work Rita does through the operation of her farm. It would be a loss for all the people she helps now and could help in the future if she can not continue to run her farm.

Please do the right thing for Acton and renew Rita's lease.

Sincerely,

Carol Stone
24 Liberty St.
Acton, MA

To Whom it May Concern-

This letter is to express my concern that Hybrid Farm's business and community service would be extremely negatively impacted by the non-renewal of their agreement with the Town of Acton's Conservation Commission.

As you may know, this impact on Hybrid Farm will cause a direct and proportionate ripple effect on all the other organizations doing business with them. Specifically, for Graphic Connections, it will cause a direct reduction in our business, since we have come to rely on our substantial revenue from Hybrid Farm.

Further, and perhaps even more importantly, it should be noted that Rita McConnon has, whenever possible, chosen to do business locally in support of the Acton Community, even though it might have been less expensive to conduct her business either on-line or out of state.

A decision to reduce the presence of Hybrid Farm will have a direct and negative impact on the business community and economy of Acton.

Moreover, it will reflect negatively on the relative value the Town of Acton places on the kind of services provided by Hybrid Farm.

Please continue to support the presence, and even the growth, of Hybrid Farm in our community!

Perhaps putting this matter to a vote at Town Meeting will give you the opportunity to hear directly from the people in Acton, even those not necessarily directly involved with Hybrid Farm, regarding their opinion on this worthwhile, beneficial use of otherwise unused town land.

Paul J. DerBoghossian
President & Owner
Graphic Goods, inc.
dba Graphic Connections
590 Massachusetts Avenue, Rt. 111
Acton, MA 01720
978.266.1155

Andrea Ristine

Subject: FW: Hybid Farm / Conservation Land access

From: Deb Matthews [mailto:debcmatthews@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, November 17, 2011 10:36 PM
To: Conservation Commission
Cc: rita@hybidfarm.com
Subject: Hybid Farm / Conservation Land access

To the members of the Acton Conservation Commission

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to you to beg that you continue the longstanding lease that Hybid Farm has had with the Town of Acton, allowing their access to graze ponies and trail-ride over Acton's conservation land.

My 10-year old daughter has attended camp there the past few summers, and it has been a wonderful, caring, responsible environment. My daughter has learned to care for ponies, and has gained self-confidence in her own skills as a rider. She hopes to one day be a camp counselor there herself, and was devastated when she heard that Hybid might have to let go of half of its ponies, and curtail or end some of its programs. Hybid Farm itself is picture perfect, and I think it is something special to have a working farm still in Acton, as it was many decades ago. There's a lot to be said for holding on to history.

I've also been impressed by the outreach that Rita has done with special needs kids. There have been several special needs kids at Hybid camps with my daughter. Not only can horse-riding be very therapeutic for those children, I think it is great that my daughter and other campers can make friends with other kids who may have a wide range of abilities. Horses are a wonderful bridge between kids of different backgrounds and abilities.

I recently reread a letter you received in 1983 from one Mary Smith, in which she supported Hybid's access to grazing lands. I was struck by how many of her points are 100% relevant today, almost 30 years later. To pull out some of the phrases that resonated:

"The McConnon's home is one of the historic landmarks in Acton. The open fields in their present condition help to preserve the authenticity of an eighteenth century farmhouse. There are few of these remaining and anything we can do as a community that will not have any adverse effects on our citizenry should be encouraged. In our opinion the present conditions that surround the area do that. Natural maintenance of the fields via grazing animals is environmentally sound, financially advantageous, and contributes aesthetically to the community."

and

"having the open fields allows for a different type of recreation and wildlife than the more heavily wooded land."

Acton has had much development over the past 30 years... if anything, Mary Smith's comments from 30 years ago are even more urgent and meaningful today. To echo Mary Smith, I too encourage and urge the Conservation Committee to continue the present usage of the land. I think a horse farm is a perfect use of conservation land, and Hybid Farm in particular is an important part of the fabric of life in Acton. To lose Hybid's programs would be a major blow.

Sincerely,
Deb Matthews
11 Lincoln Drive
Acton MA
Resident since 1998

Town of Acton,

I am writing to you because I have heard that you are thinking about downsizing Hybid Farm. This would be a terrible mistake. Hybid Farm has become a home to so many people from age 5 to age 50 and above. As riders we became a family and the horses are apart of that family. We have rescued many and provided homes and love for all of our horses. Splitting up this family would be unthinkable.

I started riding when I was 7 years old, at Harmony Horse Stables in Littleton. I then moved to Volo Farm when I was about 10. It wasn't until I was 15 that I started riding at Hybid Farm, yet the sense of community and family there was so much more than I had ever had. Being able to be a counselor at the summer camp and help teach new riders was an experience that I will never forget. I made friendships at Hybid Farm that I will never lose and I conquered fears and found some place that I will always belong. Even now that I am 20 years old and haven't ridden at Hybid for over a year, I can still go back and be accepted by both Rita, the owner, as well as the other riders. That's the beauty of Hybid, we all grow up and have to leave the camp to get a "real job" or go to college and have to stop riding, but we will never be too old to go back and see the barn.

Horseback Riding is such a great skill to learn. It teaches perseverance and courage, while keeping us active and caring. At Hybid we don't just ride; we learn to care for our horses. We learn about feeding, and illnesses, and how to ensure they are living happily. Shouldn't this opportunity be open to anyone who wants to be apart of it? Hybid creates opportunities for children with special needs, at risk youth, girl scouts and so much more. Hybid promotes the idea of community and gives back to the Acton community as well as to surrounding areas everyday.

Our town always seems to be having problems with teenagers using alcohol and drugs and getting into trouble. Honestly, most of the problems arise from boredom. Why would you downsize Hybid if it's offering a safe place for teenagers to go and spend their time? Acton has already once replaced a movie theater with a liquor store don't make Hybid downsize too. If we lose our space and horses we will have to send half of our riders to other barns and all of our community service projects would not be possible.

Haven't you ever had a place that made you feel like someone special, and allowed you to feel safe and at home? Well imagine that place kicked you out because they didn't have enough room. That's what it would feel like for us.

Please don't change Hybid.

Thank you,

Sarah Minkoff
12 Jefferson Dr
Acton, MA 01720

Scott A. Kessloff
40 Newtown Road
Acton, MA 01720
(978) 877-0191

November 18, 2011

Town of Acton
Conservation Commission
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Members of the Commission:

I am writing to express my strong support for Hybrid Farm. I have been a resident of Acton since 1994. I consider myself fortunate to reside in such a wonderful community.

In my opinion, Hybrid Farm is one of Acton's finest jewels. Here's why:

1. It is a place of community, recreation and real life education, and the Town did not have to fund a school, library, park, or community center to make it so.
2. It is a place of compassion, where horses many people were willing to throw away are given a home, a job, and a child who loves them.
3. It is a place where the children of our Town, and other communities, can build confidence and grow.
4. And, it is a place where our children can go to smile. You can't miss this point. All everyone does at Hybrid Farm is smile!

In a world where so much seems to be going wrong, Hybrid Farm is a place that gets it right. Sure, some of the grounds can be muddy at times (which the kids love as well!), but I'd gladly trade my yard full of grass to preserve what Hybrid offers to our community.

I am aware of the Commission's many efforts to do well by our Town. It is in that spirit that I urge you to support Rita and Wick McConnon's selfless efforts to continue to offer Hybrid Farm's extraordinary gifts to our residents. They cannot do this without their horses or without access to land. Please collaborate with them to preserve this Town jewel.

Respectfully,



November 21, 2011

To: Acton Conservation Commission

From: Jo-Ann Berry, 2 Heron View Road, Acton
978-263-4373

I am writing in regard to your upcoming discussion and action on HyBid Farm. My daughter was a rider and camp counselor there for several years. Since then I have driven by HyBid numerous times always enjoying the view, walked through the abutting conservation land, and seen Rita McConnon at various community events and heard of the activities at HyBid through her, riders, and parents.

I understand that you, as a commission, must comply with the relevant laws and make a decision that is in the best interests of the town as well as the environment. I feel that you can come to a win-win outcome in this situation to allow this successful small business that contributes to Acton and surrounding communities to continue its operation in a very similar manner as it is today while protecting the town's interest in the conservation land. This private-public partnership could benefit both parties and help maintain Acton's reputation as a community that is creative and forward looking in its approach to governance and preservation of its values.

If features of HyBid as a small business and community member are applied to the Goals and Objectives of the Acton 2020 plan, there are strong correlations:

- **Preserve Town Character:** While there are many things that make Acton's town character, one thing that is often noted is the "rural" aspect, which many would agree include farms and open space. Both are part of this discussion and both are worthy of preservation.
- **Ensure Environmental Stability:** It is my understanding the HyBid area has been a farm for decades. Despite particular changes over that time, maintaining this area as a farm will provide stability to the Nagog Hill environment.
- **Provide more Opportunities for Community Gathering and Recreation:** Hybid provides a recreational venue that is used by people from Acton and surrounding towns through its horseback riding programs. In addition to the horseback riding, the abutting and nearby conservation lands are used by parents while waiting for their children during lessons and become more familiar to them as a readily accessible natural resource to visit at other times.
- **Support Inclusion and Diversity:** HyBid is different than other horseback riding programs and venues in the area by providing a family-style atmosphere for its riders to learn horseback riding skills and responsibility that for many riders develops into a long-term commitment to the horses and other riders in an inclusive community. HyBid has many partnerships with area organizations, including those that serve girls and young women of all ages and abilities, schools that serve students with learning, behavioral and other issues, as well as the Acton Recreation Department. All the participants benefit through the caring and discipline provided through HyBid's programs. Finally, HyBid's tuition is more affordable than other area programs, allowing more families to provide this experience for their children.

- **Preserve and Enhance Town Owned Assets:** The town owned conservation land is indeed an asset and should be preserved – but preservation does not necessarily mean only to let people walk on it.
- **Maintain and Improve Financial Wellbeing of the Town:** As a successful business, HyBid contributes to Acton's tax base and supports other local businesses necessary for the maintenance of a farm and care of its animals. If HyBid's operation were to be constrained to the point that it could not maintain its bottom line, then it is easy enough to consider that the property could be sold and divided into several house lots, which are a greater strain on municipal budgets than this farm business.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of all the factors related to this decision.

14 November, 2011

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my support for Hybrid Farm's continued use of conservation land for equestrian activities.

I am an Acton resident and voter, frequent recreational user of the town's conservation land, and a strong supporter of the town's efforts to maintain public land for the public good especially for recreational purposes. It is my fervent belief that Hybrid Farm's use of the land near their barn on Nagog Hill road is very much in keeping with these values and that it should be allowed to continue unabated. Acton has an agricultural tradition and ensuring that this tradition is maintained by keeping barns and farms active adds to the bucolic feeling of our town and enhances the desirability of the town, thus increasing the value of town to all of its residents.

The keeping of horses and conducting lessons on the conservation land and the use of the conservation land for trail rides in no way detracts from the use of the land. In fact, when hiking on the nearby trails I have enjoyed passing the horses and find that they are a pleasant sight, making the hike more enjoyable.

While I see no downside to allowing Hybrid Farm to continue to use town conservation land at its present levels, or at even greater levels, I believe restricting the Farm's use of public land would be very detrimental. The barn provides a valuable service to the town and surrounding communities, bringing joy to many, and giving people opportunities that they would not have if Hybrid were not able to continue to operate at its present levels.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Allen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tim Allen

17 Agawam Rd.

Acton, MA 01720

35 Dean Road
Wayland, MA 01778-5023
November 13, 2011

Town of Acton
Conservation Commission
472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01712

Dear Conservation Commission,

Please consider allowing Hybrid Farm to continue to use the Conservation land for their horses and the children that love them.

I visited Hybrid Farm this past summer and it was a beautiful sight to see how the boys and girls loved the horses and how the horses loved them.

It is such a healthy activity for the children.

It would be a terrible shame for them not to be able not to continue at Hybrid Farm.

I hope that I will hear in the positive that Hybrid Farm will be able to continue the use of the Conservation land.

Thank you for your thoughtful and kind consideration to this important matter to all involved especially my granddaughter Juliana DiCesare.

Sincerely yours,


Pauline M. DiCesare

16 November 2011

Dear Members of the Acton Conservation Commission,

We are writing in support of Hybid Farm and to encourage you to allow them continue operating their stable in conjunction with the conservation land, as they have for over thirty years. The town of Acton is fortunate to have a unique asset in the McConnon Family and Hybid Farm. It is unlike any other stable in the area in the way it welcomes young people who ride there. It provides a haven for those who want to spend as much time as possible doing what they love: being around horses and other people who share their love and passion for horses and riding. Hybid Farm gives them the opportunity to do this in a kind and caring setting where the only requirement is respect for everyone. All of this is due to Rita and her family and their belief in including everyone in their love for horses.

To limit their ability to continue to do this will be unfortunate. Hybid Farm should be able to use conservation land and trails, and should not be required to reduce the number of horses. Restricting their operations in any way will be a loss to all the young people who come to Hybid Farm. The McConnons and Hybid Farm have given so much to the community and its extended family over the years and are eager to keep doing so. For the benefit of Acton and surrounding communities, we sincerely hope that Hybid Farm is able to keep its current situation.

We appreciate your willingness to listen, and we thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Christine and David Hayes
26 Highland St
Concord, MA

Dear Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

I have heard that you are planning on limiting the amount of horses Rita McConnan is allowed to maintain at Hybrid Farm. Please let her keep all the horses she currently has. Without them, Hybrid would be drastically different and our little family would not be the same.

Hybrid Farm is one of the best places in the world. Horses from it come from all sorts of backgrounds. Not only does Rita buy some of them, but she rescues some of them from dangerous situations. One horse, Gracie, was in terrible condition, so skinny that no one knew for sure if she would make it. Now she is healthy and happy, all thanks to Rita and the ability she has to rescue horses like Gracie. Hybrid Farm has also taken in horses from owners who can no longer afford them.

Everybody who goes to Hybrid makes up a huge, happy family. We all love each other and the horses. If Hybrid is forced to get rid of half its horses, we would no longer be able to enjoy the creatures that brought us all together. Some of us would not be able to come to Hybrid anymore, because without enough horses for everyone, there would be no point. If you force Rita to get rid of a lot of horses, you would not only be splitting up the herd of horses, but also splitting up the family of people who love them.

Hybrid Farm teaches responsibility to children. The camp Rita offers during the summer not only teaches them how to ride horses, but also to take care of them. In learning how to take care of horses, they learn how to take care of themselves. It also provides a place for people of all ages to go where they are not pressured into doing things they don't want to do. At Hybrid, everybody respects each other and cares for one another.

Please reconsider your decision to make Hybrid Farm shrink. All of us, the horses and the people, need Hybrid to save us, keep us out of trouble, and provide a family that will stay with us forever.

Sincerely,

Samantha Bircsak

11/14/11

Yvonne Phillips
20 Washington Dr
Acton MA
01720

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing this letter because I think the Acton Conservation land is being used wisely. Sharing the land with Hybrid farm is adding richness and beauty to the land.

As a dog walker I enjoy seeing the horses both in the wooded pen and on the trails. Please let them stay.

Thank you,
Yvonne Phillips