

1915 Erwin Road, Apartment H
Durham, NC 27708

November 14, 2011

Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton
472 Main St.
Acton, MA 01720

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Anne Dietterich, and I am writing to you concerning the agreement between Hybrid Farm, Inc. and the Acton Conservation Committee. I would like to express with the greatest forcefulness possible the importance of Hybrid Farm to me and to many close friends. I will try to keep this brief since I expect that you have received many letters on Hybrid's behalf.

I am a senior at Duke University, where I compete on the Equestrian Team. While I have been studying far away from Acton during my four years at Duke, I still consider Hybrid to be my home. I visit the barn whenever I come home. I began riding at Hybrid when I was seven years old, and consider the "Hybrid family" created by Rita McConnon to be an integral part of who I am. Growing up at Hybrid encouraged me to become a confident leader. It taught me the importance of respect, especially through the respect that Rita affords her horses. Most of the horses at Hybrid came to us either as rescues or because their owners could not afford to continue caring for them. Animal neglect, particularly regarding horses, is a large challenge in areas with limited agricultural land such as Eastern Massachusetts. Part of what makes Hybrid so intrinsically good in my mind is that we have never been forced to turn down a horse in need. Being forced to reduce the number of horses owned by Hybrid will place many of our horses in uncertain situations and prevent us from saving horses in the future. I have witnessed many Hybrid students learn important lessons about responsibility in the face of abuse and neglect through these horses we rescue, and I would hate for that to no longer be possible. Hybrid is a truly wonderful place, and even though I am many states away, I am still proud of what Hybrid is and what it has done for me.

In terms of the role Hybrid plays in the community, I think it is important to remember how much Hybrid serves. Often, stables seem to be very profitable businesses open only to those who can pay for lessons. Hybrid is different. It taught me the importance of serving my community in the most positive way possible. Many of my friends and I earned President's Volunteer Service

awards for our work at Hybrid during high school. Rita places a high premium on doing the right things for the right reasons. She offers numerous scholarships, works with at-risk youth from a variety of programs, and helps out with Girl Scout programs. The community service done by Hybrid students is what makes these services to the community, and to people in Acton, possible. Because of the current agreement that the Town of the Acton has granted Hybrid Farm, Hybrid has been able to, in turn, serve Acton and the surrounding community.

I understand that there are concerns about the relationship between Hybrid and the conservation land that we border. This land is important to the Acton community; Hybrid Farm is also extremely important to the Acton community. I hope that Hybrid will be allowed to continue to operate in the fashion it has been for as long as I can remember, serving as a loving home and a family in which students can grow, gain confidence, and learn important life lessons. I cannot imagine who I would be without Hybrid, and I hope that others can continue to experience Hybrid as I did: as a barn that welcomes, teaches, and cares for anyone, human or equine, that enters its doors.

Sincerely,

Anne Dietterich

To the Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton:

Honestly, I don't know where to begin when it comes to writing a letter to you about how Hybrid Farm has completely changed my life for the better. I don't know where I'd be or what my life would be like if I hadn't been introduced to Hybrid Farm when I was thirteen.

I was invited to ride at Hybrid Farm when I was thirteen; Rita McConnon offered me a scholarship to take lessons as a working student at her barn. My dad has struggled with unemployment for several years and I come from a large family, without having been given a scholarship to ride at Hybrid Farm I never could have participated in anything having to do with horses, or any other extra-curricular activity. My family simply could not afford it.

At the time that Rita offered me the scholarship, I knew nothing about horses. I had only been able to be around imaginary ones when I was little; that was the extent of my experience with them. The people at Hybrid Farm taught me how to work at a barn and manage the horses. At the time, I didn't have many friends as my family had moved around a lot in my dad's search for work, but Hybrid provided a constant place in my life where I knew I had friends and I knew I could go to. I've made many life-long friends at Hybrid from being taught by some and teaching others.

After getting enough experience, I had the opportunity to begin teaching indoor lessons during Hybrid Farm's summer program. I also had the opportunity to manage the counselors who help out with the many programs Hybrid offers. Eventually, I worked towards getting my instructor's license so that I could teach mounted riding lessons. I had the opportunity to work with children and adults, at-risk youth, handicapped children, and people my own age. At Hybrid Farm I've gained experience that has been invaluable in getting the jobs that I have today.

My work at Hybrid Farm has made it so I could have the opportunity to go to college. I've always wanted to be able to have the opportunity to go to college. Before working at Hybrid, I didn't know how that would be possible, as my parents couldn't afford to help support me financially. By working at Hybrid Farm I was able to save up enough money to entirely support myself through college and I've helped support my family as well when they've needed it.

The experience that I've gained at Hybrid Farm has made it possible for me to find work at a level 14 residential treatment center as a therapeutic riding instructor. At Heritage School, where I currently work, I teach classes of teenagers about horses and horse care. I also provide mounted instruction for the youth as part of the school's Therapeutic Recreation program. I also assist in the training of the school's horses. This is the main job supporting my husband and I while I'm in school. It would be impossible for me to write all of the ways that Hybrid Farm has benefitted and continues to benefit my life.

On behalf of Hybrid Farm I would ask that you extend a renewal of the license agreement to allow Hybrid Farm to graze their horses on the land that surrounds the property. Hybrid Farm has offered and continues to offer valuable contributions to the community of Acton and the surrounding towns. I know that I am not the only one whose life has been changed for the better by being at Hybrid Farm.

Thank you,

Amanda Taylor

Provo, Utah

November 18, 2011

Conservation Commission
Town of Acton, MA 01720

RE: Hybid Farm, Inc.

We are writing this letter on behalf of Hybid Farm and our granddaughter, Juliana DiCesare, a riding student at Hybid Farm.

It has been brought to our attention that the license agreement that Hybid Farm has with the Acton Conservation Commission, which allows access to the adjacent conservation land, may not be renewed. The impact of this would be huge, as it would affect the lives of many children. Not only would the farm no longer be permitted to graze their horses and give riding lessons to children on this land, but many of their other programs would be severely affected.

Hybid Farm would have to significantly reduce its many programs including:

- scholarships for riding lessons and camp
- offering donations to the local schools for their fundraising auctions
- working with the High School's ODP Department to offer programs at the farm
- offering lessons to Girl Scouts working towards merit badges
- teaching residential girls from Boston and Concord
- offering reduced fees for at-risk youth from the various programs with which they partner

Furthermore, Hybid Farm is also being asked to cut the number of horses that they own by 50%. This is particularly disturbing to us because our granddaughter, Juliana, will be heartbroken. Juliana, and the other children, have become attached to many of these ponies, some of which they have witnessed being rescued from abusive owners, and then nurtured back to health from the love of each child and the excellent care of the staff.

Hybid Farm is a magical place. It's important to the local community, and to the children who benefit from the love of these horses, while learning to respect all animals.

Please reconsider your decision and allow Hybid Farm to continue to run their farm as they have been for 31 years. Please renew the license agreement that you have with them so they can continue to serve the community and do great things for children.

Respectfully,

Michael J. Kish
Patricia A. Simeoni
2239 Pacific Avenue
Costa Mesa, CA 92627

November 12, 2011

Town of Acton, MA
To Whom it May Concern:

Re: proposed action by the town of Acton to reduce the activities and land usage at Hybid Farm on Nagog Hill Road

I was incredibly disheartened (to the point of feeling physically ill) to learn that the Town of Acton is considering a proposal which will limit the usage of available conservation land by Hybid Farm. I am told that this proposal could mean many things from the reduction of horses on the property to the elimination of riding on the conservation land which abuts the property owned by the McConnon Family and Hybid Farm.

I would like to voice my **STRONG** feelings regarding Hybid Farm and its horses and its owners. I feel that this proposal is a fundamentally and morally wrong consideration by the town of Acton. Taking any land or land usage away from Hybid Farm will be incredibly hurtful to dozens of sweet, deserving, rescued creatures, and **HUNDREDS** of local youth who depend on Hybid as a lifeline.

I moved to Stow, MA in 2005 as a young mother with no family or friends as I followed my husband for his first job and we left everything we knew 2000 miles away in Utah. Rita McConnon met me the second week I lived there, scooped me up, gave me a job doing something I **LOVED** (teaching riding lessons,) and welcomed my tiny children into her barn with such love and immediate acceptance that I still can't believe her kindness.

My daughter, Grace, was 2 years old and immediately fell in love with one of the recently rescued horses named Tinkerbelle. Rita and this sweet pony got us through the toughest 5 years of my life. My daughter Harriet was born during these 5 years and became part of the Hybid family immediately upon entering the world. My kids have literally been riding the horses at Hybid since they were babies and continue to do so whenever possible.

I worked for Rita for 5 years as a riding instructor and as her barn secretary. During this time, I interacted with **ALL** of the parents who brought their children to Hybid for lessons, birthday parties, girl scout adventures, summer workshops, or just a simple experience to meet a pony. I did all of the book-keeping and facilitated all communication between parents and Rita. I was able to watch Rita's interaction with each of these people from behind the scenes. She **ALWAYS** erred on the side of being too kind and too generous, and looked the other way when people offended her, didn't pay her, or couldn't pay her. She has given and given and given to this community - to hundreds of families each year. She has allowed every single child, who wanted to ride at Hybid, a chance to ride; no matter their physical, mental, or financial ability.

The children who have found themselves at Hybrid Farm have found the most amazing place to grow up and learn to be good human beings. Rita not only teaches good horsemanship, she teaches kids how to be good people. She insists upon good manners, kind words, thoughtful service, integrity, and hard work. The children I have watched grow up at Hybrid have become beautiful people who put the needs of others, including animals, before their own. Hybrid is a haven for kids and families. It is the only place of its kind, possibly in the whole country.

I have been in the horse world my whole life. I grew up at various horse farms in many places. I have NEVER experienced a horse farm like Hybrid. Most of the places where you can learn to ride a horse are not fit for the ears of a child. But, I would leave my children at Hybrid Farm without thinking twice about the environment. I know that they will hear only good and positive things and will come away being uplifted and better people.

Our family left Massachusetts nearly two years ago to move to New Mexico. Hybrid Farm was the SINGLE most difficult thing we had to leave behind. We have shed many tears over leaving. My kids still haven't gotten over leaving Tinkerbelle. She is so important to them, as are Peppe, Wesley, Tucker, Ticket, Littleman, well, if we named them all, we'd have to name every pony in the barn. Each is extremely precious to us whether we have ridden them or not. I have never met a group of horses like the ones at Hybrid. Every single horse I know there is a kind and gentle and giving creature. I never have to question the safety of my kids at Hybrid. Most horses have been rescued from terrible back-grounds. They have brought into the Hybrid "horse spa" and have been rehabilitated, given proper veterinary care, top-quality feed, hoof care, shelter, winter blankets, and more love than any animal could ever dream of. I have never known horses to live as long as the horses do at Hybrid in such great health with such wonderful dispositions. They know they are loved and valued and so treat their fellow humans with the same love and respect. We miss those ponies with a dreadful sorrow.

We also miss the older riders who do so much to help the younger riders. These incredible kids have taught my children the Hybrid Farm values as they have learned them themselves. I keep in touch with many of these kids, even 2 years later, and most enjoy watching the incredible things they do and learn at Hybrid from afar.

It has been so painful to be away from Hybrid that we, as a family, had to make a trip back this last summer. There are few joyful moments which could compare with the moment my kids saw Tinkerbelle in the barn for the first time since leaving her. And, we spent two hours saying good-bye to the ponies in the pasture as we prepared to come back home. It was awful to have to leave again.

I plead with you as a person who was rescued by Hybrid Farm, a former employee of Hybrid Farm, and a parent of Hybrid Farm riders to please reconsider this action against this wonderful place. Please allow the McConnon Family to continue to

graze the Hybrid horses on the conservation land. Please allow the Hybrid Farm riders to go out on the conservation land trails. Please allow the girl scout groups to keep coming to earn their horsemanship badges. Please allow Hybrid to continue to be the incredible place that it is and do not punish their rescued and gentle horses. Please don't punish the local families who depend on Hybrid as a place where their children can learn and grow and develop into honest and decent human beings.

My young children have also drafted their own letters as I am sure hundreds of other children will do and wish to do.

Sincerely,

Michelle M. Chapman
10448 Oso Ridge Pl NW
Albuquerque, NM 87114

formerly of Stow, MA

home phone: 505-274-7252
cell phone: 978-257-6141

11/12/11

Dear Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

I am writing you after hearing your proposal to change your agreement with Hybrid Farms. I understand that you are proposing that Hybrid Farms can no longer offer riding lessons, trail rides and charitable work involving the Farm while on conservation land, and that Hybrid Farms must reduce the number of horses they have by half. This is outrageous.

My sister, Michelle Chapman, and her daughter, Grace, moved to Boston a few years ago from Utah. Being that my sister had ridden horses her entire life, it was very hard on her to make this change. She did not know if she would be able to find a barn to call her own, and she also wondered if her daughter, Grace, would be able to grow up with the same love of horses that she did.

My sister's prayers were answered when she met Rita. Rita accepted my sister like family and offered her a job as a trainer. My sister was able to move on with her life, and she was able to offer her daughter, Grace, the wonderful experience of loving a pony named Tink. This was very therapeutic for Grace because she was two thousand miles away from relatives and did not have one single friend. Grace's eyes would light up at the mention of Tink, and Tink would light up at the sight of Grace.

I am urging you to reconsider the impact of your decision. The horses at Hybrid Farms are like family members to the children that ride them, and children and horses will never be able to understand your decision. To be honest, I don't know if they will ever recover. I sincerely hope you can look past your needs and see theirs. Hybrid Farms is a magical place and it deserves your support.

Sincerely,

Emily Mitchell, Utah

From: Melissa Barnhisel

To whom it may concern,

I was told about the situation regarding the future of Hybrid Farm, and felt like I had to write a letter. I am a mom of two, and have been riding horses since I was 13 years old. I currently live in Utah, but have been visiting Hybrid Farm for over 3 years. Out of all the barns and stables that I have ridden horses, there is something so much more magical about Hybrid Farm. The atmosphere is so peaceful and they have the most kind, caring, sweet horses I have ever had the pleasure to meet. There is a connection between the kids and the horses like no other.

All of the other barns I have ridden at are driven by money, owning horses, trying to own the most expensive, most competitive horse, and winning horse shows. The trainers are strict, and they take out most of the enjoyment that comes with the connection between horse and rider. However at Hybrid Farms, there is a deeper connection with the animals, the children, and nature. Many of the horses have been rescued and they pay back their rescuer by providing love and devotion to any child that wants to ride them. There are so many children that have ponies that are "their pony," regardless if they could ever have the opportunity to own a horse. The surrounding area is what make the barn so special. All the nature that the kids get to ride through really takes them out of the hustle and bustle of life and gives them a chance to learn and grow.

Hybrid Farm is a place that cannot be recreated. It is so special to so many. It is home to so many wonderful ponies. I can't imagine it not existing exactly as it is today. I can't imagine the owner, Rita, having to choose what horses get to stay and who must go. I can't imagine my nieces going to the stable without seeing their pony, Tinkerbelle. Please consider how many lives will be affected by this decision, adults, children, and ponies.

Sincerely,

Melissa Barnhisel

2400 Gregson Ave
Salt Lake City, UT 84109

To Conservation Commission of the Town Acton,

My name is Taylor Baski and I just have to speak my heart. For starters let me explain my story. I moved to the town of Acton during the year of 2009 from a small city in Colorado. To tell you the truth I did not want to move somewhere new at all. The first day I even came to Hybid Farm my whole life changed. I am really shy as a person and what Hybid taught me was that you should not live your life regretting, you should live your life to the fullest. You get so much learning experience and social skills that you just start to think of your life as a great opportunity. If I hadn't found Hybid my life right now would certainly not be the same. I know I am only 14 years old but this place means everything to me. In the summer when all the children come to take lessons their smiles just make my day. They are so happy and you cannot take that away from them. Without Hybid Farm, I would not have my very own horse and I would not have a goal of becoming an Equine Veterinarian. I wouldn't have any dreams without this wonderful place. It's not just a place for horses but it is also a place for family. There are so many great people that spend everyday that they possibly can out at Hybid. If that doesn't mean anything to you than I don't know what will. From my experience I have learned so much and became a better person. Horses deserve as much of a chance at life as you do. They are living creatures just like us. In fact they are beautiful beings that you just can't take away. They deserve a voice in this world too. Please don't take away what we have. I don't even live in Acton anymore but I love that place so much it hurts. My point is not for you to feel bad for me but for you to give these horses and children a chance at what they love. We are all that they have. It would just kill all of us to see some of our horses being taken away. It would devastate us to see some of our children that love and adore Hybid having to take lessons at another barn. This place wouldn't be the same. Please just before you say no try to think about these horses and children. Thank you very much for reading my story.

Sincerely,
Taylor Baski

5 Erica Court
Pueblo, CO 81001

To Whom It May Concern:

Horses have always been a part of my life. Rita McConnon taught me how to ride when I was young and my sister rode there all the time and leased a horse named Cory. I can honestly say riding saved my sisters life. My sister had depression and it was amazing to see how much better she would do when she had a horse in her life to ride and take care of. I know a lot of people need help with their lives and horses really help them overcome their challenges. Horses really have a special way of communicating with people and comforting them. Horse back riding is very therapeutic and it has made been a huge impact on people. Hybid Farm has impacted people in so many ways. It has helped people to work hard, helped them be strong physically and mentally, confident, sensitive to people and horses feelings, and it has taught them how to communicate well with others and to respect animals and people.

When I rode horses at Hybid Farm I loved it! Everything I have experienced there has made a positive impact on my life. Some of my favorite memories of Hybid are the long trail rides we would have in the conservation land in the back of Hybid Farm. I would always feel free riding in the woods and it was exciting riding outside the riding ring. It was always fun watching the cross-country jumping kids ride out in the field. I think it's important to continue that training for students because outdoor jumping is a really big sport in Massachusetts and if Hybid can't continue that, a lot of students would be heart broken.

I really hope that Hybid will be able to continue to impact peoples lives for the better like it always has and continue rescuing horses who need a good home with people around to love them.

Best regards,
Emily Hanson
542 S. 400 E. APT B. Brigham City UT, 84302

this letter was written exactly as dictated by Grace Chapman, age 8, of 10448 Oso Ridge Pl NW,
Albuquerque, NM

Dear Town of Acton,

I really love the ponies at Hybid. I really love Tink. I also really love Littleman. I love all the ponies there. I really want to go back to Hybid next summer. Hybid is really awesome. I miss being able to go there all the time. I hope you will help Hybid.

Sincerely,

Grace Chapman

Dear Rita,

I love the ponies so much. I love Tinkerbelle and Peppe.

I love going to camp with them. I love trotting with them.

I want to be able to see them again. I miss them.

Love,

Harriet