

Dear Acton Conservation and Commission Committee,

My name is Heather Beaudette, I'm fifteen years old and I've been riding at Hybrid Farm for three years. I'm currently a working student. My Dad has been unemployed for a while; without Hybrid's scholarship program I would not be able to ride. Working at Hybrid has helped me become more confident and outgoing. Hybrid has become my favorite part of my week. With horses and people that really care I could never ask for better place to be. Hybrid horses are happy and Hybrid people are happy. If Hybrid Farm were to be limited they would not be able to run their business; Rita McConnon would not be able to offer the scholarship program that gives so many people opportunity to grow and learn. A large piece of so many people's lives would be taken away. Hybrid is an asset to Acton, and Acton should be honored to have Hybrid in it.

Sincerely,

Heather Beaudette

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been riding at Hybid farm since I was ten years old and Rita and the horses literally saved my life. That may sound dramatic but it's true.

My parents divorced when I was four and my mom, a recovering alcoholic relapsed after moving in with a guy who was extremely emotionally to both my older sister and me. My real dad didn't do much about it because he trusted that my mom would eventually step up and take care of us. She didn't. By the time I was eight I was already thinking about killing myself. By the time I was ten I had a plan. I was so lonely, neglected and emotionally damaged that at ten years old I wanted to kill myself.

Hybid took this sad, damaged little girl and enveloped her in warmth, the warmth of ponies, of friends, and of Rita herself. It was the first place I felt safe, worthy, and even beautiful. Without Hybid I have no doubts that I would either be dead, in some drugged up haze, or in jail. I was encouraged, hugged and held to standards I had never been before.

Rita was the mother mine couldn't be. She held me to a higher standard than anyone ever had. She encouraged me, and she expected things of me. She expected me to be kind, helpful, and to be willing to learn. It never mattered if how much I learned or if it took me a long time to learn how to use one brush, as long as I tried. Because of Rita I began to value myself and want to live.

But it wasn't just Rita. It was everything. The ponies were gentle and were always cuddly, sweet and patient, no matter how much someone pulled on their mouths or who came running by screaming and spraying water at each other. They lived for the attention.

I have never been in an environment so full of love and safety. Hybid creates a place that anyone can come and be welcomed by everyone. Even in high school and junior high, when people are the meanest and can tear you to shreds just by looking at you Hybid had none of that. I have never been in a place where everyone gets along as well as we do at Hybid. Sure we fight, and argue but what teenage girl doesn't? The difference is that at Hybid it's not a hostile kind of fight. We fight the way that siblings do. I tell people at the college I go to that I have twenty younger sisters because essentially I do. We may fight, argue, and compete with each other but we love each other and watch out for each other when we aren't at the barn.

Hybid farm is a magical place for people and ponies who need somewhere to go, to be loved. It doesn't matter if your popular or a total outcast at hybrid you can be who you are at heart without ever having to worry about being called a loser or a bitch. Some times when people first come to the barn they create drama. But within six months at the very most it all settles and everyone is friends again. At hybrid we learn to love people we wouldn't normally. We learn compassion and responsibility.

It's not just people who the magic works on either. The Ponies that we get, many of them come and are mean and rude. They don't trust people, they bite, they spook, they were about to be put down, etc. between one week and one month there is a visible difference. Their eyes are brighter, they let you pet them, they come to you when they are scared. Within one year they are docile, loving, well fed, and live off of the attention they get. We even had a pony who went to someone else's home, escaped and tried to come back to the barn. Not once but three times he did that. My

favorite pony came and was afraid of everything. If you fell off you couldn't get back on because he was so terrified that you would be mad. You had to put his blanket on extremely slowly and all folded up so it wouldn't rustle, he was terrified. Just four years later, this past summer I took him to Kentucky for the Pony Club nationals in Dressage and was in the top twenty five people in my division. When I go out to the field to get him he nickers at me and walks right up to me. We have a horse, Ticket he is or is very close to forty years old. When we got him he was twenty something and was going to be put down if we didn't take him. Ticket is still doing lessons and whenever we stop giving him riders he stops eating.

Hybid Farm saves people and horses. Rita gives love and help to anyone who wants it. When I come home from college the first place I go is the barn, often before I even go home. When I ran away from my mom's house I started living with my dad. When he was laid off and we could afford my lessons anymore Rita let me work them off. Rita and her ponies have given me so much over the years. First, the will to live, then confidence and love and finally She gave me a job. When no one else was hiring she found a place for me. The friends I have made at Hybid, when I was ten years old are still my friends today. I met my best friend at Hybid and we are still best friends. It doesn't matter how busy we are or how long we are away we will always come back. I hope someday, no matter where I am in the world that I can send my kids to Hybid Farm.

Sincerely,
Kylie Harrigan

21 Kinsley Rd

Acton, MA 01720

To: The Acton Conservation Commission

From: Kate Ogle

I am writing on behalf of Hybrid Farm. I am a senior citizen who recently started riding lessons there. I find it hard to express how great a place it is. The people are wonderful and the horses and ponies are so well cared for. I am doing finally what I dreamed of doing as a child.

But more than my own feelings about how well I've been taken care of, I would like to say that it is a great joy to me to see at the end of my lesson the number of kids getting their ponies, grooming, tacking up, getting into the riding rings, and enjoying themselves (and doing what I couldn't do as a kid).

Riding is a skill that translates and learning about animals and what they can do for you is invaluable. We need more places like Hybrid that emphasize safety, learning, and skill.

I chose Hybrid because Acton friends whose daughters rode there were so enthusiastic about it. I feel that it was the best choice of all the stables in this area. I also talked to a mother who drives 30 minutes for her daughter's lessons because it has such a good reputation for safety

While I am not an Acton resident (though I was for 20 years), I feel strongly that you have a gem in Hybrid Farm

Kate Ogle
10 FarmRd
Stow, MA 01775



P.S. Just after I started my lessons Hybrid hired a young man with Down's Syndrome whose family I know from my church (Good Shepherd, Acton). This is what they will not be able to do, if they are required to reduce their programs.

Dear Conservation Commission for the Town of Acton,

I am writing to express my hope that you will reconsider your recent decision regarding limiting the number of horses and pony's allowed to stay at Hybrid Farm and further to allow the animals and riders to use the conservation land for lessons and trail rides. As someone who is not part of the Hybrid family I can understand why it might be hard to understand the positive impact Hybrid Farm on both the community both in Acton and beyond. Further with direct understanding of the concern for the land that the Conservation Commission is tasked with I would also like to point out the positive impact of Hybrid and all of its activities on the land and environment.

I have been a Hybrid farm parent and now an occasional rider for the last five years. I am also a clinical psychologist and I have have referred patients to Hybrid for programs as well having seen first hand the role Hybrid plays in integrating special needs students into the greater community. My own daughter began riding at Hybrid at the age of three for therapeutic purposes because she has sensory issues and other self regulation issues. I was blessed to adopt her from a Russian Orphanage at the age of ten months and this difficult start to her life has directly contributed to her challenges. Rita, Hybrid's Owner, was the only person willing to take on my daughter, Kira, at the age of three when she was wait listed at a number of formal therapeutic riding programs. Although Hybrid doesn't have a formal program it does have one instructor with experience in this area and she became Kira's instructor. My daughter has come so unbelievably far since that first lesson five years ago. I directly credit Rita, Kira's instructors and all the ponies she has ridden in that five year span with much of that improvement. Kira is now a thriving eight year old who still struggles with focus and attention to be sure but she no longer has the extreme emotional breakdowns that occurred multiple times daily when she first began at Hybrid. Kira just recently competed in the annual Hybrid Farm Horse Show and finished with a first and second in her two classes. She was competing with children who do not have the same special needs she does and many of these children are older than she is. To say that this was a huge confidence boost to Kira and a testament to the hard work of everyone that has taught Kira over the years would be a huge understatement.

One significant lesson in the eyes of the Commission that Kira has learned from Hybrid is an appreciation and respect for nature, land and the environment. Since she has in many ways grown up at Hybrid she has been able to explore and enjoy all that the conservation land has to offer throughout each of the seasons. Her most favorite thing to do at Hybrid is to take trail rides and explore the woods. She has learned and carry's the knowledge that nature is to be enjoyed with respect and not destroyed or abused to meet human needs. This is a lesson all the children at Hybrid are taught and to lose the opportunity to continue to teach Acton's children this lesson would have the opposite result that I believe the Commission is trying to obtain with its focus on limiting the number of horses at Hybrid.

The loss of half of its horses would also make it impossible for Rita to be able to continue to give scholarships to Acton children who would otherwise be unable to ride and who then might be left to make poor decisions in their free time. As a psychologist who works a great deal with children and adolescents I know only too well the value of a positive activity in a child's life. I don't know of any other barn or riding program that offers so many options to so many who would not otherwise have this opportunity due to the usually high cost of riding. I know my daughter would likely ride a great deal less

at any other barn as we could not afford what most barns charge for what have been 5 years of mostly private lessons for Kira. Rita also went out of her way to give one of Kira's friends a scholarship to ride when the child's mother was diagnosed with a rare terminal illness with no questions asked and not a moment of hesitation. I cannot begin to explain what a gift this was to not only Kira's friend during a trying time but to the child's entire family.

I could go on for days and days about all the wonderful things Rita and the entire Hybrid Family do for the so many others particularly the children of the town of Acton. I truly believe that the Conservation Commission would be hard pressed to find another situation for this land that would provide it with such ongoing protection from individuals who might not respect it or care for it the way everyone at Hybrid does. It may be counterintuitive but the horses being there keeps out those who might otherwise destroy the land. If the commission does not reconsider its decision I think it is possible Hybrid would move and if it did I fear that this land might be at greater risk. It could become the newest hangout for individuals who prefer to drink or smoke away their days, or it could be that whoever buys the farm builds up around the conservation land in way that further places the land at risk.

I sincerely urge the Conservation Commission to allow Hybrid Farm to keep all of the horses it currently has so that it can continue to provide the community and especially it's children with all the programs currently in place. I also urge the Commission members to continue to allow trail rides so that more people can see and learn about the land and learn to respect and care for our environment.

Sincerely,
Margaret (Peg) Freilich, Psy.D.

Pictured Below at Hybrid: Kira Freilich and Wesley



Jiliann Miller
7 Redwood Road
Acton, MA
01720

November 19, 2011

Conservation Commission
Town of Acton
Main Street
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Commission Members:

My name is Jiliann Miller, I'm 13 years old and I just wanted to tell you all the reasons why Hybrid Farm is the most amazing place EVER! It is very important to me that you keep allowing Hybrid Farm to use the Conservation Land. We use it in the middle of the spring to graze the horses. This keeps them healthy. Without the grass, they wouldn't be able to get the nutrients they need. The way Hybrid runs should never change.

1. The people who work there are really nice, and helpful.
2. The horses are AMAZING and we love them for that.
3. You learn a lot about horses.
4. You can make a lot of new friends

Some of the people I have met at Hybrid Farm are some of my good friends. All of the people I have met there are really nice and also have the same love as me-we all love horses! Also, Rita is one of the best people ever! She is funny, and loves all her students and horses.

I don't think you would ever learn as much information about horses as you do at Hybrid Farm. The instructors work really hard at making learning fun and creative. There's no better place to learn about horses than Hybrid. They have only three rules. They are:

1. Have fun
2. If you fall off you have to give your counselor chocolate (we at Hybrid all love food-especially chocolate and Kimball's Ice Cream.)
3. You can never say the word **can't** (we believe that you can always do the thing you can't do, even if you need help.)

An example of how much we love our horses is Wesly. Wesly got pneumonia at the beginning of the summer, 2011. When he was really sick, it was heartbreaking to see him get really thin and see his temperature spike to 103 degrees, the normal temp being 99-101

degrees. We put him in the front field so he could graze and not be as thin as he was. This helped dramatically. Now in the middle of November, he is a much happier and healthier pony. He still is recovering but he can do so much more now than he could when he first got diagnosed. Also, many of our horses are rescues, and if we didn't take them to come live with us, then no one would have and who knows what could have happened to them. Sometimes, they are sick or have no trust in people. Then, we make them into loving horses that all kids can ride.

No one at Hybrid would want to give any of the horses or ponies away. I hope you put my letter into deep thought, as you make your final decision.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jiliann Miller". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jiliann Miller

Elise Jandl
18 Samuel Parlin Drive
Acton, MA 01720

November 16, 2011

To the Town of Acton Conservation Commission:

I am writing to you to express my support for Hybid Farm, the horse barn down my road where I ride.

There aren't many good horse barns in this area that really support their students, horses, counselors, and instructors the way Hybid Farm does. Too many horse barns are private and are all about shows, posture, and dress codes. Rita McConnon, the owner of Hybid, doesn't emphasize these things. Instead, she chooses to welcome all children to her farm, capable or not of sitting on a horse.

When I first moved to Acton, I struggled to find a good horse barn. When I discovered that horses lived at a local stable just down my road, I crossed my fingers that it would be my dream barn come true. And boy, was it!

The riding instructors at Hybid might be strict, but they are horse specialists and teach new things every day. The counselors are mostly teenagers, laughing and looking after the horses. They can instruct the lessons by themselves and some teach Horsemanship classes to students.

A good thing about Hybid is that Rita McConnon always has a "spare" horse. This means that if one pony gets hurt, another will be ready to take its place. This way no riding lessons would have to be cancelled. I love visiting each and every horse at Hybid Farm—they're all amazing, and honestly, I don't know what we would all do without them.

One particular thing that I look forward to at Hybid Farm is seeing all the horses in the pastures. At riding camp, I remember being excited for lunchtime every day so that I could race my friends to the fence and feed the horses carrots from my lunchbox.

I don't think there is anything sweeter than seeing a happy horse in the pasture. When I ride Duncan, my favorite pony, each week, I never hesitate to volunteer to take him into the pasture (it *is* my job). He canters off and I am always reminded of the videos on Youtube of galloping ponies, running to the song "Born to be Wild".

I also think that a good school horse deserves nothing more and nothing less than a relaxing break in the pasture where he can do as he pleases. Horses shouldn't be cooped up in a stable all day. They need fresh air and sunshine just like we do! I've spent hours of learning all the things that ponies eat in Horsemanship classes, and grass is the most important, being at the top of their food pyramid.

Another great thing about Hybid is the horses (of course!). Every day, kids look forward to riding. They hope they are getting their favorite pony. But what would they do if their pony had to leave?

What would they do if their second, third, and fourth favorite ponies had to leave?

And what would happen to *them*, the students? If the amount of horses left was a small one, nobody could come to Hybid anymore. There would be no more riding, no more camp, no more Horsemanship Classes. What would be left of Hybid?

I hope you will think about everything I've mentioned in this letter. I mean every word that I say, and I believe in Hybid Farm.

Sincerely,
Elise Jandl
age 11

Elise Jandl

Dear Acton Conservation Committee,

I am a rider at Hybrid Farm and I would like to let you know that I think Hybrid should be able to keep all our horses and expand and get more if it means giving a home to an unwanted or abused horse. I have been riding at Hybrid for almost six years now and it is practically a second home for me. I can always rely on counting on Rita and the people at Hybrid to always support me in my riding and always believe that I can go further with the sport of horse riding. I love every single one of the horses there and if half of them had to go I would never have felt so sad in my life. Telling you that I would be brought to tears would be an understatement. I am always happy at Hybrid and around Rita and my friends, and those horses, and I certainly have my favorite horses there that bring me so much happiness, I just don't know how to describe it. I have so many hopes and dreams that I have with these horses. A few examples, go to pony club championships for games and eventing, passing my C2 in pony club, and many more. All of these things I couldn't do without these wonderful horses. I think the thing that saddens me the most would not being able to see Rita, and the many friends that I could call sisters that I have made there. I don't know what I would do without them.

I have also made my best friend for life at Hybrid Farm, Jordan Brofsky. We both have the same passion for horses, especially the ones we know and love at Hybrid Farm. I know I will always have someone to talk to when I have a bad day, and she always has me to talk to also. We lift each other up and push each other to reach our goals and dreams in life. Without Hybrid Farm, I wouldn't have the best friend I have today. Sometime I will go to a show and she won't, and vice versa, but we are always there for each other, cheering the other one on. I have met many other wonderful people who are practically sisters to me, including Meredith Long, Kylie Thomas, the list would go on for a while. I am writing this with tears in my eyes because the thought of life without my best friends, Rita, and the amazing horses, is well, I actually can't and don't want to think about it.

I am sure you have been told this, but Rita is truly the most supportive and inspirational person. She ALWAYS is helping me and everyone Hybrid reach their goals and do their best at the wonderful sport. I am not lying when I say I wouldn't be where I am today with the sport if it wasn't for her. Making her sell half the horses and tell half the riders to leave would be not giving others a chance to have know what it is like to have a truly inspirational person help you succeed and reach your goals. I am so grateful that I am so lucky to be a rider at Hybrid and be able to have someone as wonderful as Rita always greeting me with a hug when I walk in the door. Rita does so much for me and the riders at Hybrid so I hope this will do a little bit to help her. I thank you for taking your time to read this and I hope you take it into consideration that if you make her sell half the horses and tell half the riders that they can't ride there anymore you would be hurting many people and horses that are so happy being at Hybrid Farm. One last thing I would like to say is those horses that she would get rid of, could eventually end up at an abusive home and I can bet you that they wouldn't be loved anywhere else as much as they are at Hybrid. These horses love Hybrid and have just as much right so stay there as we do.

I hope this message helps you realize what you would be doing if you did make Rita sell half her horses.

Sincerely,

Olivia Ross

150 Barretts Mill Rd. Concord, MA

Natalie McMillan
72 Highland St.
Worcester, MA 01609
(978) 399-4402
nmcmillan@wpi.edu

Dear Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

I am writing to express my concern about limiting the use of the conservation land for Hybrid farm which will significantly impact the number of programs that they can offer and the amount of horse that will be able to reside on the property. In limiting the number of programs that they run, the commission will seriously be limiting the students that Hybrid Farm will be able to offer programs to and the lives that will be impacted by spending time as Hybrid Farm.

Hybrid Farm not only provides a large variety of horsemanship and riding programs but it provides a sanctuary for students of all ages. Rita McConnon has created a safe haven where students not only can learn all about horse care and riding but also learn vital life lessons.

For me Hybrid farm was a place I was not afraid to be myself, a place I could de-stress from school, and learn valuable leadership skills. Although I am no longer am a student of Hybrid, as I am now a Sophomore at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, the lessons I learned as a rider, working student, weekend barn hand, and counselor have made an incredible impact on my life. When I was in Junior High and High School, Hybrid Farm was the perfect and judge free environment for me where I wasn't caught up in conforming to the social norms but I could just be myself. I didn't care if there was mud on my face; I wasn't afraid to get dirty, muck stalls, and take care of the horses something that most 7th and 8th grade girls would never dream of doing. Hybrid Farm has taught me lessons about giving back to the community and helped me to find my true identity.

In reducing the amount of programs Hybrid can offer, the commission is limiting Hybrid Farm's opportunity to create an impact on students' lives like the barn did for me. I can't even begin to describe the feeling that came across me when I hear the news that they would potentially be limiting Hybrid's use of the conservation land.

I am asking you to please reconsider your initial notion to limit Hybrid Farm's use of the conservation land.

Respectfully,

Natalie McMillan
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Chemical Engineering 2014

To whom it may concern,

A well known saying at Hybrid is that there is always awesom in the awful. The horses and ponies that influence the very life at Hybrid demonstrate just that. You are right to notice that our horses are sometimes chubby and lazy. There are no fancy hunter jumpers, no 4th level dressage horses, nor does Hybrid have high-strung eventers, like other barns. Hybrid has horses that care. Horses that have the biggest hearts are more often than not, found at Hybrid. A good horse shouldn't be classified by the heights they can jump or the intense movements that they can pull off. A truly good horse, or pony for that matter, is defined by the smile he can bring to a child's face, one who has never had friends. On the outside, Hybrid's horses seem a bit raggedy, but on the inside they have the biggest heart and more compassion than you could ever dream for a horse to have. They are not just horses, they are truly a child's best friend.

I have ridden at other barns and, don't get me wrong, they were lovely. However, nothing, nothing on this entire planet, can compare to Hybrid. Yes, other barns are cleaner and probably have better organization skills, but Hybrid has a different feel to it. A feeling that does not come by often. When you step through the huge sliding barn door you cannot help but feel welcome. All the anger, frustration, and sadness slip away, left behind you, when you go to Hybrid. Some people do not understand why, but when I talk about Hybrid, I often use we, our, etc. For me Hybrid is a second family, we do anything and everything

together. Not everything we do at Hybrid is horse related. For nearly everyone who has ever slid their foot through Hybrid's well used stirrups believes that riding is not a chore, not something that they feel that they have to be amazing at so that one day they can be famous, though some will definitely be, it is not even a hobby. All, shall I call us Hybridians, Hybridians know is that riding is fun. Something we all just love to do no matter how many times we slip through the mud on a rainy day to get our horses and later endure the lesson with your shirt soaked all the way through and rain so heavy you can no longer hear the instructor, no matter how hard we may try, we cannot fight back the smile that instantly comes whenever we are at Hybrid. We love, I love Hybrid and everything that comes with it. I love every horse at Hybrid no matter how troublesome they are. I could never and will never be able to choose which I love most, they are all amazing.

Thank you for reading,
Bethany Hryniewich, 16
Newtown Road, Acton MA

Dear Acton's Conservation Commission,

Five years ago I began to take Lessons at the Barn down my street, Hybid Farm. I didn't have many friends at the time and going to the barn each week to spend time with all of the wonderful Ponies helped open me up to people to.

All of the Ponies their have a special place in my heart. I spend all my free time there in the summer and as much as I can during the year too. The first horse I ever rode was a fluffy little guy named Ticket. He is the King of the Barn and he loves all of his fellow ponies very much. This horse is almost 40 years old and many of the horses in this barn have been his happy companions for many years. Would you want to take this cute little guy's friends away from him?

With all of my time spent at the barn you really can see a lot. The smiles on the faces of everyone I meet can only result in making me a better person because who doesn't fall in love with people who are so blithe and love doing what they do?

Many of the ponies that come to us have been rescued from harsh or abusive living environments, Hybid gives them a refuge, even saving the lives of a few ponies who don't have lots of options. Hybid is the last chance of some of these horses, somewhere where they can relax and enjoy spending the rest of their lives in such an environment of love.

Because that is what Hybid is. Its a place to go to always be cheered up and to learn. Just an hour at Hybid and you'll see, you learn to care about things outside of yourself. You learn to love and most importantly what it is to be loved by these majestic animals.

Rita McConnan herself is the most kind-hearted lady you will most likely ever meet. She is always their to give you an encouraging word as you learn new things and always their to give you a congratulatory hug.

If I didn't have Hybid to use as a refuge, like all of the Magnificent horses sheltered their, I honestly don't know what I would do. I would feel lost. Hybid is a safe environment for me to interact with people who are outside my world. Maybe its someone from another town who I never would have met otherwise, and now we are best friends. Maybe its a kid from Boston who comes to Hybid on a Scholarship and would never again get the opportunity to be around such a loving, friendly environment if this one place was fractioned into a place half its size with a broken heart.

People have complemented my smile in the past, but would it ever be as bright if Hybid is cut in half? Would I be an outgoing person, always reaching out to meet new people? Would I still want to be a teacher if I can no longer interact with kids all the time? This all seems like too big of a gamble, one with my future, and the futures and smiles of lots of girls and boys, big and small, to be taken.

I love Hybid. It is my home, my heart and many other parts of me.

Sincerely,

Kristen Pantano, Hybid Student and Volunteer.

November 20, 2011

Dear Acton Conservation Committee,

I have been riding at Hybrid Farm since I was in fourth grade. Ever since attending the very first day of summer camp there, I have been in love with the horses and the all the horse-loving people. Each horse at Hybrid is special. I competed in my first horse show with Cody, one of the ponies and today Cody is still my favorite pony. Every time I approach him in the field, he picks his head up and pricks his ears forward, and comes over to me. He is by far one of my favorite ponies, and if he ever had to leave it would be like losing a very dear friend. Ticket, one of our oldest horses always makes everyone smile because he is so silly. We always think he is going to die soon, but he keeps pushing through each winter, never giving up because he loves this place so much and because we take such good care of him. Gracie is a "rescue horse." When she first came to Hybrid her she was extremely emaciated and gaunt. Now, after spending time at Hybrid under the loving care of Rita and all the kids, she is doing much better. You wouldn't believe she is the same horse. All the horses there are so sweet and unique in their own way. These animals have got me through some of my worst times - always there for me to hug and always looking at me with their kind eyes.

So many of the horses we have at Hybrid were rescued or no one wanted because they could no take care of them. Hybrid and Rita took them in, and now they have a great home, where everyone here loves them and learns from them. If you have never visited Hybrid you should stop by sometime. I think you would

see that what makes Hybrid special is all of its silly, goofy, mismatched horses and all of the equally sometimes silly and goofy, but always hard-working kids who enjoy riding them, feeding them and yes even cleaning up after them. Today, Hybrid Farm is my home away from home. I am a member of the Hybrid Pony Club Riding Club and I am a counselor at the summer camp program. I have learned so much about horses and people and what it means to work hard at something you love and with horses (and people) that you love and care about. In my opinion Hybrid Farm is what being a kid is all about.

Please consider letting us keep all of these horses and because losing them would affect so many people. Hearing that some horse may need to leave is so hard because I love them all to death and can't imagine how we would choose who can stay and who has to leave. Please let them stay.

Sincerely,

Kylie Thomas

6 Pleasant St.

Concord, MA

To: Acton Conservation Commission

From: Amelia Brandon

2 Heron View Road

Acton, MA

Hybid Farm was a very important place to me while I rode there, and even after I left. It is a warm caring place where people of all ages can go to be with horses and learn to care for another animal. I think it is important for all of the people who have spent time there and those who plan to- to be able to have the experiences I had. Although there are other riding farms in the area, the attitude at Hybid is less snooty. Everyone is relaxed and willing to pitch in with the farm work which I think is very important, especially for the younger kids. This is something I have not seen nearly as much at the other riding farms I have been to. Asking Rita to decrease the number of horses on her property and limiting the space available for her to use would mean fewer kids could have the wonderful experiences I had at Hybid.

Maddie Carey

Ms. Kuhn

English II AE

6 April 2011

A Barn

It's a big barn. My tiny five year-old self looks up at it with awe. Everything's perfect, the sloping green-blue roof, the weathered, dark brown boards, broken windows in the loft, peeling paint around the front door, the gently spinning bronze horse on the top, glinting in the sunlight. It's perfect.

The first day of camp, and there are people everywhere. The door is large and open, and there's a table to check in at. Right through the front of the barn is a large stall with a sign that reads "Adagio" that contains a beautiful chestnut horse that seems massive to me.

"Hi!" A smiling face "I'm going to be your counselor today!" She leads me through the barn and back outside, down a ramp dirt ramp from which dust rises in small puffs with every step, and into a cool basement, in which several other horses are standing in stalls. A beautiful rust-colored horse that can just barely get her head over the stall door looks out at us, her left eye is a cloudy yellow and she seems like the biggest thing I've ever seen, Adagio, the massive horse upstairs is wiped completely from my mind. "This is Molly," the girl says "You wanna get her ready to ride?"

I nod my yes, too shy to speak. Molly's brushes hang from a hook next to her stall, underneath her bridle. I do it all for the first time, learn how to curry comb, loosening the mud on her reddish coat. She teaches me how to hard brush, pushing away

all of the loosened dirt, then soft brush, getting the finest grains of sediment and bringing a glossy shine to Molly's summer coat. The last brush is the hoof pick, and I can't quite figure out how to pick up Molly's hoof, which appears massive. With a little help and a lot of effort, I successfully remove all the dirt from Molly's hooves.

Then the tack. My counselor shows me where the saddles are kept. They sit on colorful racks in the farthest corner, adjacent to a stone room with no lights. I can't see into the room and the air wafting out of it is cold against the warmth of the August day. A little light streaming in from a tiny window illuminates the cobwebs on the ceiling and the dirt on the floor. I reach up for Molly's saddle, even though it's on the lowest row of saddles on the wall, struggling with the inconceivably heavy weight. I watch in wonder as my counselor easily lifts the saddle up, and in moments it is on Molly's back.

"We've gotta get going if we wanna make it to your lesson on time," she says, deftly buckling the girth. It seems so fast to me, I can hardly imagine what it would be like to be so skillful at doing these things that seem so foreign to me. Without batting an eyelash, she sticks a thumb in Molly's mouth, tickling her tongue, she explains to me, so that she'll open her mouth and take the bit. I ogle at the way she doesn't seem to care about the spit now all over her hand. She shows me how to do up the buckles on the bridle so they aren't too tight, or too loose.

Riding is amazing. It's the first time I've ever even sat on a horse, and it's best thing I've ever done. I can't imagine ever wanting to stop. But at the end of the day, it's not riding that I remember best. It's being on the ground, learning what it's like to deal with an animal so much larger than myself that sticks with me.

Fast-forward ten years to this summer, where the roles are reversed. “Hi!” I smile broadly, greeting my camper at the circle of shavings bags at the front of the barn where we hold morning meeting. “I’m Maddie! Looks like you’re riding Rascal, let’s go get him.”

It’s my turn to make someone else wonder at what they are doing, the place that they are, the things that they see. Now, I’m the one deftly doing the things that once made me work so hard. The barn is a place of wonder. Ten years ago, the choice of what barn to ride at, one that seemed almost trivial at the time, because it seemed that a place didn’t really matter. This decision has had a profound impact on my life. Hybrid gave me confidence in my own abilities, and friends that I would never have otherwise known.

It’s a big barn. I smile up at it, then at my friends, waiting for me so we can go for a ride. Everything’s perfect, sloping green-blue roof, weathered dark brown walls, the horse, gently spinning in the sunlight. It’s perfect.

Dear Conservation Commission,

I am a rider at Hybrid Farm. When I ride at Hybrid it gives me the best feeling when I'm on the horse, because all of the instructors are so warm and nice, they help you every step of the way to being the best rider you can be. The horses at Hybrid haven't hurt me once and the thought of Rita having to give away six-teen horses/ponies, I can't bear. Grace is the horse that I ride. She is one of the rescue ponies at the barn and even though she has had a bad past, Grace has been helped by the barn so much, so have I. I have started off as a camper in the summer, I am ten years old and I have been riding at Hybrid for five. The first day I went to Hybrid I knew I would always come again, even if it means now just visiting on the weekends. I have learned so much about how to take care of horses from cleaning stalls to brushing them so they are sparkly clean. I have also learned how to walk, trot, and canter, I can also jump. Hybrid is a huge part of my life and it would break my hart if I could no longer go to have lessons, because I am a horse lover!

From Ella Mallinger,
24 clover st. Belmont Mass

College Essay written by Amanda Taylor December 2008

Over the past few years I have had the opportunity to be employed as a horseback riding instructor. First I worked to finish the required hours of supervised teaching, and once that was done I was able to obtain an instructor's license from the state of Massachusetts. As an instructor my job is to teach children of varying ages how to horseback ride and care for horses. During my time working at Hybrid Farm I've been able to see how one person can make a difference. One special example I'd like to share is my experience teaching a young girl named Caroline.

It was my first time ever teaching a mounted lesson; I was very nervous, but so was my student Caroline. Caroline was six years old, and I was only fifteen. I was worried about what I'd do if she fell off or cried or if I ran out of things to teach. Caroline was excited to learn how to ride but was very hesitant working around Tink, the black pony she was to ride. Caroline was hesitant to even brush Tink, and she was especially anxious when it came to working around Tink's hooves. While she was riding, Caroline proved to be a confident little rider and would do whatever I asked of her, but as soon as she got off Tink, her fear of animals settled in again.

Throughout the course of her lessons we worked on grooming Tink; each week Caroline gained more confidence. Her bravery was shown in little ways: one day in trying to bring Tink out of a stall by herself, and another day in brushing Tink while I was out of the barn. Some days she would cry when I asked her to do something she felt she wasn't ready to do. I found that the more confident I acted, the more confident Caroline felt. As she grew to trust Tink and me, Caroline came to understand that Tink wouldn't hurt her, and that I would never ask her to do anything that I didn't believe she could do. Once she understood that she was safe, she began to take giant steps toward overcoming her fears. She began putting the saddle on while I was busy with something else and began to help bridle Tink. Her riding improved and her efforts increased.

I've been teaching Caroline for three years now and she continues to progress. She is no longer afraid of animals and can get her pony ready on her own. Caroline has developed a greater self-esteem and confidence which is exhibited in her riding and how she treats others—animals and people—around the barn. She is now the one helping students to get their horses ready and groomed. Helping Caroline to overcome her fear of animals has been a great lesson to me, one I wouldn't trade for anything.

Through teaching Caroline I've found that as she grew and became a more competent rider, I grew and was able to become a more competent teacher. I have loved to be able to share the joy that I find in working with animals with the little girl who used to be scared of them. I've been able to feel the happiness that comes when I make an impact on another person's life, no matter how small. I know that when one person makes the effort and takes the time to care, it really can make a difference.

Dear Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

I am writing on the behalf of Hybid Farm. For 10 years now I have been riding at Hybid Farm, ever since I turned five. I am a member of the Hybid Farm Pony Club Riding Center. I have always loved horses. Coming from a very non-horsey family with no horse experience what so ever, Hybid Farm gave me the chance to live my dreams and do what I loved best. The environment is relaxed but safe, everyone is so nice and welcoming, and the horses are well cared for and very happy!

Ever since I was five years old and took my very first riding lesson, Hybid Farm has been a very special place to me. I have formed some of my most cherished friendships there, with both people and horses. Besides just teaching me about riding and horsemanship, Hybid also taught me about responsibility to myself and to others, and a lot about teamwork.

With Hybid Farm I have gone from being a timid five year old learning to steer to being a confident 15 yr old C1 Pony Clubber. Sometimes, it was tough. But I always knew that my instructors and friends supported me and were there to help me out when I needed it. One of my favorite things in the world is to spend my summers working as a counselor at Hybid's summer programs. It is such a joy to bring the love of horses and riding into other kids lives. Rita does so much to make riding accessible to everyone. I know firsthand how much riding can change people. There are many campers that, throughout their week at summer camp, become more outgoing and confident. One of the most amazing things in the world is to watch a little girl learn to trust a big pony! I feel so special to be a part of it.

Not only does Hybid do amazing things for people, Hybid also does amazing things for horses. At Hybid, horses live naturally and are many times given a second chance at life. The ponies are well cared for and greatly loved. Last year, a pony named Gracie arrived at Hybid Farm. She was very skinny and unhealthy. Her ribs jutted out, you could feel every notch on her spine, and her coat was matted and falling out due to her lack of health. The change from the day she arrived to now is so amazing.

I am so happy and proud to be a part of Hybid Farm and what it does for people and horses. I hope that Hybid Farm is allowed to continue on as a haven for both people and horses.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Sincerely,
Izzy Carey
11Guswood Rd
Acton, MA 01720

Dear, Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton

I am writing to you to tell you how Hybrid Farm has impacted my life in the best way possible. I love Hybrid Farm, and it makes my day every time I go. All of the horses and people at Hybrid Farm make me smile the instant I see them. It is a place filled with loving and caring horses and people. I have made so many friends at Hybrid Farm, and together we make up a family. We love our horses at Hybrid Farm, and without all of them it would not be the same. Hybrid Farm is always putting the others before them. They have taken in countless horses that their owners could no longer take care of or have neglected and have turned them into wonderful horses. They also offer scholarships for riding lessons. I have been going to Hybrid Farm for 9 years and they have been the best 9 years of my life. I do not have one bad memory of being at Hybrid Farm. I have learned so much from going to Hybrid Farm. Not only have I learned how to ride, but I have learned to be responsible and to put other first. Hybrid Farm is a place of learning and growing, and I cannot imagine my life without Hybrid Farm and their horses.

Sincerely, Julia Smith

16 Bishop Lane, Sudbury MA, 01776

Dear Acton Town Board,

My name is Maia Dinsmore. I am seventeen years old, and I have been riding at Hybrid Farm for over ten years. I cannot even begin to describe what Hybrid means to me. Hybrid is so much more than just a barn. It is a family of wonderful people and horses, a safe haven to escape to when life seems too complicated or hard. I have met most of my closest friends at the barn, and I consider every single person who rides there to be part of the "Hybrid family". Everyone who rides at Hybrid is extremely close; we support each other, cheer each other on as one big team, and have so much fun together. Even if we are going to a show where multiple riders are competing individually, the individual scores do not matter to any of us. If one Hybrid rider does well, then we are all as happy as if we had won ourselves. This team mentality helps our riders to do well at many of the events that we go to; for example, we have sent teams to Pony Club Championships in three disciplines: dressage, quiz, and games. Teamwork is vital in all of these, because the team cannot succeed if the riders do not support each other and cooperate. I cannot imagine what it would be like if many of our riders had to move to other barns. Every single rider at Hybrid Farm brings their own unique, individual strengths and wonderful personality to share with all of us.

Hybrid is not just a safe haven for people; it is a haven for horses as well. None of the horses at Hybrid are expensive show horses, in fact, many of them came for no charge at all. Some were given to us because their owners could no longer afford to keep them, and others were rescued, such as Amazing Grace. They are not all extremely well trained, high level horses, but each one of them has their place, and each one has a fan club of riders who love them dearly. My personal favorite is Dancing on Daisies, who is a wonderful appaloosa mare. Daisy came to Hybrid because her owner could not keep her anymore, and when she came, she was barely trained at all. She did not even know how to steer in English tack, and she had never used a bit before. This spring, a year and a half after she came, I took Daisy to my C1 rating in pony club, in which we had to jump a course of 2'9 fences, as well as multiple tests in flatwork, and we passed every part of it. This fall, I took Daisy to an event in Groton at the novice level, in which we had to do two courses of 3 foot jumps and a medium level dressage test. She did not have a single jumping fault, and her dressage was the best it has ever been. She is extremely honest and tries so hard to please her rider, and is willing to do anything that she is asked. Sadly, Daisy has a condition called chronic uveitis, and while she can see now, it means that she will probably go blind at some point in the future. I love Daisy more than anything, and she has shown a phenomenal amount of progress in the two years that she has been at the barn. She is so much more than just a horse for me; she makes me feel better whenever I am unhappy, and riding her, or just spending time with her, helps me to forget about all the stress of my junior year of high school. I have no idea what I would do without her.

The ten years that I have been at Hybrid have been the ten best years of my life. It is my home away from home, and even in the moments when everything else in my life seems to be going badly, I know that I will always have Hybrid to help me through. The amazing people and

ponies provide a support system like no other, a web to catch me if I fall. Hybrid makes riding much more than a sport. It is a social event, a stress reliever, a therapy for the mind, and it is always a learning experience. I qualified to go to nationals for my scores at quiz rally, which tests your knowledge on all aspects on horse care and riding. I would not have been able to do this without the wonderful instructors and clinicians who teach at Hybrid. My instructors are more than just teachers for me, however, they are my mentors, people who I can always look up to. I have learned so much from them throughout the years.

I cannot possibly explain how much Hybrid means to me in just one letter. It would take a thousand letters, and still that would not cover it. The way I feel about Hybrid cannot be described in words; it is far too important to me, in so many different ways. Hybrid is my life, my family, my friends, my escape. Please, let it continue to be all of these.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Maia Dinsmore

November 20, 2011

Dear Conservation Commission of Acton:

Hybid Farm has been an integral part of my life since I was six years old. I have made the half an hour trip from my home there more times than I can count. Although I am now a freshman in college it is one of the most important places to me in my life. The separation from it has only increased my love for it. When I got home for Thanksgiving break, Hybid was the first place I went to. It truly is my second home. We are a big and loving family there. It has always been there for me. When things get stressful for me in my live, Hybid is always I place I can go to laugh and have fun. Some of my most memorable memories have been made at Hybid and they have always been joyous ones.

Rita is one of the most incredible and kind-hearted people I have ever met. She accepts every person and horse with open arms. She has created such an amazing and save place for so many children to come have fun, be with horses, learn how to respect one another, and most importantly a place where everyone can be completely themselves. Hybid Farm has given me so much and it has also allowed me to give back to the community. I have been a counselor for the past eight years working with amazing young children. I love my job and am more than happy to do it as a volunteer. Because all of the counselors are volunteers it allows children who's families do not have enough money to send them to camp to get scholarships. Hybid is also a place where many a Girl Scout troop has come to have fun and learn about horses and young children have come for birthday parties. Most importantly of all though, it has been a place of healing for many young adults from the surrounding communities. Rita has created wonderful programs with the Victor School, Walden Street School for Girls and Germaine Lawrence. These programs help heal and change the lives of many young adults.

I cannot imagine any of the programs offered at Hybid ending. If Hybid were forced to get rid of more than half of our amazing horses and ponies and ask more than half of the students to leave it would be heartbreaking. It would be ripping a family apart that has been together for years. I cannot even begin to describe how upset people who go and work at Hybid are at the prospect of it being torn apart. Every horse and person is loved, respected and valued. It would be impossible for Rita to choose which people need to go and which horses need to go. I love nature and conservation but I am sure that there is a better way to satisfy both groups needs than to shut much of Hybid down. I just cannot imagine my life without Hybid Farm!

Thank you so much for your time,

Gisele Aubin
23 Eliot Road
Lexington, Ma.
02421

Catherine Czajkowski

15 Barker Road • Acton, MA 01720 • Phone: 978.505.7192
E-Mail: Catherine.Czajkowski@Colorado.edu

Date: November 20, 2011

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

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of every student, parent, and friend who has experienced the magic of Hybrid Farm. Recently, I was informed of the possibility that the Conservation Commission would no longer allow Hybrid Farm to use Conservation land for any lessons, trail rides, or birthday parties. Additionally, this would cause the number of horses on the farm to be decreases by nearly half. The resulting affects to riders and the community of Hybrid farm would be devastating.

I started riding at Hybrid Farm 15 years ago when I was in third grade. Due to a number of bad experiences at other local barns, I was terrified of horses. Yet, Hybrid provided a warm, welcoming environment that allowed me to overcome my fears and experience the joy of riding. The staff at Hybrid creates an atmosphere that allows young riders to thrive. They welcome riders of all skill levels and all provide opportunities for many children who would otherwise not have the ability to ride horses. Try walking into the barn on any given day and I can guarantee you that Rita will welcome you with a big hug, because that is Hybrid. Everyone there is full of joy and excitement. It is a place where children grow and where they experience the beauty that surrounds them. By taking away the woods and the trails, you are taking away a piece of Hybrid's soul. And, this simply is not right. Today we live in a world where children are constantly plugged into technology and trapped indoors. Therefore, I believe it is important to support places such as Hybrid Farm, which allows children to spend time learning and enjoying the outdoors.

I truly believe that by no longer allowing Hybrid Farm to use this land the Conservation Commission you would be making a huge mistake. The number of people this would affect and amount of pain that would result from this decision would be tremendous. Instead, please help Hybrid Farm, allowing them to continue creating joy for young riders in the future.

Sincerely,

Catherine Czajkowski (known as) 'Catie C.'

To Whom This May Concern,

My name is Alicia Lochrie and I'm 23 yrs old. I grew up in Acton and have lived there my whole life. When I turned 8 my younger sister and I told our parents we wanted to take horse back riding lessons. And that's when I found Hybid Farm. I then took lessons there till I was 18 and went off to college at SUNY Morrisville in NY to study Equine Sciences because of my many years of love for horses that came to be at this wonderful magical place and second family I call Hybid farm. The many horses there did wonders for me as a teenager. I grew up having to deal with difficult times in school that started in 3rd grade and followed me to my final senior year at ABRHS. It was being bullied by the students. And when these times were too difficult for me the place I felt safe to go was hybid. I would simply go on a day when i wasnt even scheduled to ride and would well just go hang with the horses and even confide in them knowing they would never spill my heartaches. To me Hybid has always been and always will be a magical loving place for me. And Rita mcConnon and I have become very close over these past almost 14 yrs. You can ask anyone I know and they well tell you that I consider Rita to be a second mother to me. Rita is an amazing woman. I know the economy is very hard right now and has been for a while but she provides a safe home and place for not only kids to learn but for horses in need. She has an enormous heart!! So I believe that if she has to cut her heard down by 16 horses Who are currently Living a happy and wonderful surrounded by kids who feel the same things will never be the same home I've know and so many young children will be devastated as I am now. To be totally honest me writitng this letter is very difficult cause is so hard for me to put the feelings I have in my heart for this magical place. And it makes me cry to think this could all disappear. So I ask you, where do you plan for rita to have to place these homeless horses in these hard economical time as we have now? We can't just turn them loose. So I beg you to please consider allowing Hybid to continue it's ways in touching young children who love horses as much as I do they have so much to learn and experience that I know from experience can happen at Hybid farm. Thank you for listening to my story.

Sincerely?

Alicia M Lochrie

November 21, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you to express my concern, and deep sadness, for the situation that Hybid Farm has been put in. I recognize the difficult position that the Acton Conservation Commission must be in, concerning the maintenance and proper use of its land. I sincerely ask, however, that you reconsider the decision regarding Hybid Farm. I have been associated with Hybid Farm for over fifteen years. As a student in high school it was my home away from home every summer. The program established by Rita McConnon is one based on commitment, honesty, and love.

Rita has been committed to her program for as long as I have known her. She is there to show children how to love horses, and progress in their development as a rider, but there is also a commitment to helping these children develop self-confidence. A community exists within the walls of Hybid Farm. I don't know too many teenagers that want to spend their summers in the throws of dirty stalls, yet she has kids lined up to be there.

Rita sincerely cares about her horses, and her riders. I have seen her on a number of occasions be in tears because of her concern for a sick horse, or the potential loss of a horse. Therefore, the idea of having to part from many of these horses is devastating to her. As a horse owner, I know the challenges of finding a safe home for your horse. Within the equestrian world there are many who place a weighty price on the care of another's horse. Rita is one that isn't seeking the money. I would confidently send my horse to Rita's, and my family has done so on a number of occasions.

Her farm is unique; it is special. I feel that it is an asset to the community of Acton, and the surrounding towns. Acton-Boxborough High School, for example, has a wonderful opportunity by utilizing Hybid Farm in their Special Education programs. Research has shown that equine therapy can be more beneficial than a number of other techniques. The town Acton-Boxborough School District is extremely fortunate to have this resource available to its students.

Hybid Farm is a wonderful organization built and run with love. Rita McConnon has devoted so much of her life to this program. Please understand that by reducing the number of horses on her farm, the many wonderful programs offered will be greatly impacted, if not cancelled. Rita is a respectful person, and I know she encourages all that work for her to respect the people, and land, that surround Hybid Farm. Conservation land is a wonderful gift to all those that stroll through its paths. Please continue to allow those from Hybid Farm to be amongst those that enjoy the peace and serenity that exists there.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue further. Please contact me should you have any follow up questions.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Quezada
21 Cortland Drive
Stow, MA 01775
(978) 897-1290

Members of the Conservation Commission,

I was deeply saddened to hear of your decision to limit Hybrid Farm's access to the Nagog Hill conservation lands. I began riding at Hybrid in 1998, when I was only 7 years old. Hybrid and their horses were the center of my life for the next seven years and hugely impacted the person I am today.

I've always thought that Acton's conservation lands were one of its greatest and yet least-appreciated assets, and my first introduction to our conservation lands came through trail rides at Hybrid Farm. I have many, many happy memories of wandering down the trails on a pony on a sunny spring day, with Rita McConnon pointing out to us "fairy rings" of mushrooms on the forest floor, or picking spearmint which we would rub onto our skin as a natural bug repellent. We would give the horses the length of our reins to allow them to pick their own way carefully over the stone walls that still criss-cross the conservation lands – walls built hundreds of years ago by farmers that remain as a reminder of Acton's agricultural past. Is this connection with nature and history not the entire point of our conservation lands? While I loved growing up in Acton and am proud to call it my hometown, it is growing increasingly sanitized and suburban. In our modern, technological society, we have less and less connection with the dirt and sunshine and animals and trees that children (and people) need to survive. Hybrid, and their use of the conservation lands, provides this in spades.

Fourteen years after my first visit, I still make a point to return to Hybrid Farm every time I am home from college – largely to visit Wesly, a pony I first rode when I was about eight and at this point could be considered one of my oldest friends. The story with Wesly is that Rita found him tied up at a horse sale, covered with welts. His owner was beating him because he was fighting with, and hurting, his other horses—horses twice Wesly's size. Rita bought him on the spot and brought him to Hybrid Farm.

While still a bit of a salty character, Wesly has now safely carried me and hundreds of others on his back and become one of the oldest and most beloved horses at Hybrid. Last spring, I found myself helping a tiny girl to tack him up. "How old are you?" I asked her, and she told me she was 8. I told her that's how old I was when I first rode Wesly, and that I was 20 now, and she looked at me with huge eyes. I hope that in a decade, she is there at Hybrid helping some other little girl tack up. Wesly was severely ill with pneumonia this summer but made a near-miraculous recovery, particularly for a horse of his age. I do not think this is a coincidence, nor was I surprised to hear that Rita would be keeping him despite the fact that he will not be able to be ridden for years. People and horses know when they are loved, when they are needed. One of the many things I learned at Hybrid is that we take care of each other; we take care of those that we love.

I attribute so much of the person I am today to horses, and riding, and Rita herself. Hybrid Farm taught me persistence as I rode a stubborn pony, compassion as I cleaned out a horse's wound, the value of hard work and the joy of getting my hands dirty as I mucked out stalls. Riding taught me independence and scrappiness that I doubt I would have learned in any other sport, and that has served me well throughout my life. On rough

days, I often tell myself “head up, heels down, keep moving forward” – three basic tenets of riding that apply to nearly every other aspect of life. The many horses I saw come from unsavory origins and transformed into good members of society by Rita (like my very own Wesly) taught me so much about redemption, about growth and change. About all lives being equal. About love.

After 30 years on Nagog Hill Road, I believe Hybid Farm is an Acton institution and should be allowed to remain one. Hundreds of horses and thousands upon thousands of people have had their lives positively impacted by Rita McConnon and Hybid Farm, a contribution that has gone largely unrecognized by the Acton community. Please, allow them to keep using the conservation lands. There is truly no other place like Hybid, and to ask them to curtail the amazing work they are doing would be devastating to so many— human and animal alike.

Sincerely,

Jessie Lochrie
57 Windsor Ave
Acton MA 01720

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a thirteen year-old student who goes to Raymond J. Grey Junior High School. I have achieved many things in my life, including straight A's in my first year in Junior High, a brown belt in Karate, and a part in the musical last year. But I am not writing this letter to brag. I am writing because one of the things that made me the person who I am today is being told do things that will surely ruin it. I am talking about Hybrid Farm.

At the age of five, my sister, Rebecca Sullivan, and I started riding. No, we didn't start riding at Hybrid, but that doesn't matter. Once we started riding at Hybrid when we were six, we fell in love with the ponies, counselors, and everything else at Hybrid. It was the first thing that I found I could love here in Acton, and helped me get over how upset I was when we moved.

Today, I have written several reports in school about Hybrid, and spend most of my Saturday at the barn. I enjoy working with the kids there, and still love riding. It's upsetting for me to think that even one of the ponies will be forced to leave. We do occasionally sell ponies, but only when we know the place they are going to is perfect for them. When a horse leaves, it's usually only because the way we work at Hybrid doesn't fit the way the horse has been trained. Most of the horses we have at the moment fit with the way we work perfectly. Also, at Hybrid we rescue horses, like Grace and Wesley. Not many barns would take the time to rescue a horse and train it so that a five or six year old can ride them. When we decrease the amount of horses allowed at Hybrid, we decrease the opportunity for those horses to be trained.

Another problem is trail rides. Not many kids who ride in the ring have the opportunity to ride the horse for pure pleasure. While riding is always fun, trail riding is relaxing for both the horse and the rider. Many of our horses get tired from constantly being ridden in the ring, because ring work is really hard work. Sometimes even our campers beg to be able to go out onto the trails. Taking that privilege away makes riding all work, as being in a ring requires you to constantly have your eyes open for other horses around you.

Riding at Hybrid has built my morals and work ethic. I have learned so much at Hybrid, and hope to continue to learn. Taking away privileges and horses from Hybrid may disable the advantage I get from Hybrid. Working at a barn has allowed me to see what hard work is, and allows me to do the same in my school work. If there are fewer horses at Hybrid, there will be less people who will be able to learn things from Hybrid like I have.

Please consider this carefully before doing anything to negatively affect Hybrid Farm's service.

Lara R. Sullivan
16 Walnut Street
Acton, Ma

Dear Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

My name is Sarah Kuranda and I have been riding at Hybrid Farm for almost 10 years. I just wanted to share a little bit of my story with Hybrid with you in hopes that you will change your mind and allow Hybrid to function the way it always has, because something like Hybrid should never be destroyed.

Hybrid has always been an escape for me. I started riding there in middle school (I am a junior at Boston University currently). Middle school was very hard for me. I went to a private school an hour away every day, and every day no one would even speak to me. I was extremely depressed and suffered with the beginnings of anorexia. I was completely lost. My mom signed me up for riding lessons at Hybrid because she had horses when she was little and thought I would like it. Every week when I walked into the barn, people were excited to see me. I felt good about myself at Hybrid and all of the problems at school didn't matter anymore, even though nothing there changed. It was the only thing I looked forward to for many years. In a world where children are killing themselves because they cannot find a place to fit in, we need more Hybrid Farms, not less of them.

Hybrid brings out the best in everyone. I have found a second mother in Rita. I have found confidence in myself. I have found a best friend who will be my maid of honor when I get married. I have found a horse that changed my perspective on the world. Hybrid is the first place I visit when I get home from college, and the thing I miss most when I am away. And it is not just me. Working at their summer camp for years, I have watched countless children find themselves through horses and through the loving environment that Hybrid provides. Older riders like me will go off to college, but ultimately we all end back up at Hybrid because it is home. And I don't think that anyone should take that away from us.

I know that Hybrid might just seem like another barn to you, but it is so much more than that. I know for sure that I would not be the person I am today without Hybrid. Honestly, I don't even know if I would be here at all if I hadn't found it. I am begging you to let Hybrid continue on in the same way. The children need it, the horses need it, and I need it to be there. And yes, you may say that all of these things will still exist if the changes you are mandating go through. I was lucky because my parents were able to pay for the lessons and all of the expenses that go along with riding. Many families are not so lucky, and they deserve to find the same things that I did. However, this cannot happen if you stop Hybrid from functioning as it is meant to.

Please. Please let Hybrid continue to be Hybrid. We need it here.

Thank you,

Sarah Kuranda
2 Nash Road
Acton, Ma 01720

November 21, 2011

Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing on behalf of Hybrid Farm, to request that you not require the farm to cut the number of horses on the property. Hybrid is such a vibrant community in itself, and benefits the larger Acton community as a whole. The ponies at the farm are what allow Hybrid to do what it does. The number is necessary in large part because of the number of people Hybrid serves and who are members of the Hybrid community! Hybrid has kids in various lesson programs, leasing programs, and is a USPC accredited riding center. Hybrid Farm provides scholarships to children for both the lesson and summer camp programs. It also works with Girl Scout groups, the local high school ODP, and at-risk youth. If Hybrid were to have to drastically reduce the number of horses, it would be very limited in its ability to provide these services to the community.

Additionally, Hybrid takes in rescue horses from time to time. These horses have done nothing to deserve their poor lot in life, and I'm very happy and proud to be part of a barn that helps to care for them. One recent example of a rescue horse is Amazing Grace – my friend Izzy made a video chronicling her return to health (<http://www.hybridfarm.com/?s=amazing+grace>). Once again, if Hybrid were required to drastically cut the number of horses on the property, it would not be able to take in rescue horses like Gracie.

Hybrid is a welcoming community bound by the horses we all love. Each with his own personality, preferences, and quirks, the horses of Hybrid Farm are each hardworking and much-loved members of this community. If the number of horses at Hybrid were to be cut in half, the number of riders at Hybrid would drop by half – with half the horses gone, half the riders would need to find a different barn at which to ride. This would be a big loss on both the equine and human fronts – so many friends would simply no longer be able to ride at the barn.

I truly, truly love the Hybrid Farm community, and hope that it will be a vibrant, full place for years to come. Please take this letter into consideration, and allow the farm to keep the horses, and allow more if necessary. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Rachel Ehlers, 17
81 Farmers Cliff Rd
Concord, MA 01742

11/18/11

Dear Acton Conservation Commission,

I am writing to you as a rider from Hybid Farm on Nagog Hill Road. I have been riding at Hybid since I was seven years old, and as I am now sixteen I have been riding there for over half of my life.

Hybid has been an amazing place for me and all the other people that ride there. When I first started riding, I always looked forward to the day every week that I had a riding lesson. Now that I'm older, I participate in Pony Club at Hybid. Hybid is a Pony Club Riding Center, a system that allows us to participate in Pony Club without owning the horses that we ride. We have a massive Pony Club, and are extremely successful in the Pony Club activities we participate in. We attend D-rally, quiz rally, games rally, and dressage rally (rallies are Pony Club competitions). We have sent people and ponies to Pony Club championships, which take place in Virginia and Kentucky, for quiz (horse knowledge), dressage, and games. We send multiple teams to every rally, and are well known for our good teamwork and sportsmanship. Our Hybid teams ignore that they are on different teams, and help each other out at the rallies. In short, our Pony Club is amazing. It is also something that will be destroyed if half the horses have to leave Hybid. Because Hybid is a lesson barn, most of its horses must be beginner horses, and many are small. We don't have many horses that can do higher-level Pony Club activities. As such, our Pony Club would struggle if half the horses left the barn. We wouldn't be able to support the same number of Pony Clubbers, and our teams wouldn't do as well. In addition, the amazing camaraderie that we have in our Pony Club would be crushed.

Hybid is not a barn full of fancy show ponies and grooms that do the work for the riders. From the moment kids begin to ride at Hybid, they learn how to take care of their pony before and after riding. When we go to shows, we are the kids on the fuzzy, scruffy ponies that are probably whinnying for their friends in the middle of the competition. But no matter how well or poorly we do, at the end of the day we are all happy to have spent a day with our ponies. I have been to many a show where I didn't do anywhere near as well as I wanted to. I've also been to rallies where my team came in first. Either way, I had a fantastic day of riding. Hybid is an incredibly important place to all of the people who ride there. Please let it continue to run as it has for years, so that it can keep helping kids like me reach their horsey dreams.

Sincerely,

Isabella Caruso

109 Grove Street, Concord, MA

November 13, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

Hybid Farm has been my second home for over ten years. Notice I say it has been my home, not that I have ridden there for this past decade. I am currently a senior in high school at ABRHS and this is the time to reflect on my life. I have come to realize that this barn is truly magical. High school is tough, not only academically but socially; it can be a prison to even the best. Every week for as long as I can remember, Hybid has been my escape. The people who belong to Hybid do not just go there to ride, but also to bask in its charm. The horses are not just wonderful animals, but animals who have been given a second chance. Despite any hardship that had affected me during a given week, I would go to Hybid and be absolutely cured. Rita McConnon made Hybid farm a safe haven for humans and horses alike and her intentions and actions have never been anything but in the interest of others. I won't lie to you when I tell you that I am crying right now while writing this letter because I cannot imagine a world without this barn. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that it has saved my life. Every child or teenager needs somewhere that will make them feel whole again, makes them feel like they belong somewhere. At Hybid, we all feel like we are working to better ourselves while making a difference in the lives of the extraordinary animals we work with. If it means anything, I have written about some aspect of Hybid in every MCAS writing and at least once in every English class per year without fail. I named Rita my hero in 4th grade and named Hybid my favorite place another year. The following year we were prompted to write about our best friend, and I chose one of Hybid's horses. My dreams have come true at this barn and every year I watch new children arrive to find their dreams coming true. We are different than other barns; we care more than you could imagine for the horses and for each other. I have made lifelong friendships with other kids I would never have met and it has taught me not to judge others. This place brought us together because we have a common yearning to be in the environment it provides for us. Through the quirky horses, I have learned to be patient with those who have been damaged and that all they need is love. I have learned how to truly get back up and try again if I have failed (a task previously difficult to me because I did not take well to criticism). Hybid has shaped my personality so greatly and brought out the most compassionate side of me there was to find. I pray I will be able to show my children this place one day and somehow express to them what it has meant to me. I guarantee that the people you will find who have come from Hybid will be of the kindest people you will meet. We help each other, support each other, and love each other. And I believe therein lies the true magic of Hybid farm.

Sincerely,

Emily Parker

328 Joseph Rd
Boxborough, MA 01719

Dear Conservation Committee,

The barn, Hybid Farm, means everything to me. The only way I get through school is by knowing that I will be able to go to the barn. It is like my family. The only place I can go and know that everyone will like me and that I can be myself. Some of my best and only friends are from the barn, and I cannot even imagine not being able to be there.

It is like my heaven. I can go there all the time and spend hours in the field with my favorite horses and people. There has never been such a great group of people I can spend time with. We are all working towards the same goals with the same interests and passions. And most of all, we all help each other with everything all the time.

The best thing I have is my favorite horse. When I am having trouble in school or with family I know that I can visit him and he will be there for me. I just brush him for hours on end.

If we had to get rid of half the horses, he would probably be one of the first to go because he is young and not very useful in the lesson program. I don't know what I would do. It would be like losing my best friend. Please do not let this happen to me or any other kids from the barn. I work hard in school so that someday I can save a horse. I do all my homework long before its due just to be able to go to the barn on extra days. If I did not have this, I would have nothing to look forward to.

I have been at Hybid since I was 7 or 8, and I cannot even remember life without the barn. I have seen girls come in, unfocused and uncaring, change into hard working, concentrated, and loving kids with the help of the horses. I can remember the perfect, therapeutic horses we have now being rescued: some scared, some sickly and usually untrained. Now they are happy, hardworking, and helping their riders. And I can see the horses that have only recently been given this chance. If we have to get rid of them, they will not even be given a chance. They have nowhere else to go.

I really hope that you can find a way to allow Hybid to keep the horses. Without the horses, people can't come, and it ruins the family, the community, and the opportunity. Please give the horses a chance to get better and a chance to help others get better. It would hurt so many beings if they were forced away.

Sincerely,

Maddy Werth

8 Fern Way

Bedford, Ma 01730

Dear Town of Acton,

I really hope that you consider how much Hybrid Farm means to so many of us. When you walk through the big wooden, sliding door, you automatically have this mood shift. As if everything in the world does not matter, because you're at Hybrid now. You are completely hit with feelings of love, care, friendship, trust, safety and many others, and I would hate to have all of those go away. Hybrid is a special place, it is a rare gem to all the people who get to saunter through the farm. Sometimes it almost feels as if there is a protective bubble around the property that does not allow the negative in. We truly are a close-knit barn, with a loving atmosphere, family values and a place where responsibility is put upon every age. At home, if one doesn't do the dishes, then oh well, the dishes do not get done. But, at the barn, if you don't feed the horses, then you know that something bad will happen. This is just one of many examples of situations where I have personally learned responsibility and what can be the possible consequences of my actions. I have also learned initiative and gained a greater independence after realizing how much that I, just one person, can accomplish. I started going to Hybrid Farm a few years back and I was immediately welcomed in with a smile. Everyone works together to make the farm run and we do it happily because there is a fantastic satisfaction knowing that today, I helped teach a camper how to accomplish a goal that they have had. Knowing that you have just made someone else's day a little bit happier is a chain effect that carries on for many links. Other people are inclined to offer a lending hand and it just has this effect, especially at Hybrid, where everyone is willing to help and offer suggestions.

Horses have this quality that almost seems magical. I think that I could try to describe it with an abundance of adjectives, but really, the best way to understand it is by experiencing it yourself. There is this bond, a trust, that is felt between horse and rider, which is especially important because every time you get on a horse, you are putting your life in their hands, or rather, their hooves. The horses at Hybrid have taught me to get over some of my apprehensions, which have carried through to my everyday life.

I truly hope that you really consider how much the barn means to everyone who has the pleasure to experience it. By closing the business, many of us would lose a place that we truly call home. As human beings, it is very difficult for us to comprehend mass numbers, but, we can easily accept the sentiments of one person. So, I hope that you read this knowing that this is only a minuscule taste of what Hybrid is really like and how much it means to me. The barn is a safe haven for people and horses, and without it my life, and I know the same for many others, I would not have been able to take back all of the lessons that I have learned and all of the ones that I will learn in the future.

Please really think about your decision, because I would not be writing this if it did not mean something, and in this day and age where technology is consuming people's lives, a place like Hybrid Farm means everything.

Sincerely,

Nina Binns
19 Birch Ridge Road
Acton, Ma 01720

Dear Acton Conservation Commission,

My name is Robyn Stix and I have been riding at Hybrid for eight years. All the people and horses at Hybrid are my second family, second only to my family by blood. I only get to see these people and horses when I go to Hybrid so if something happened to Hybrid I would lose my second family. Not just that but these people and horses have helped me so much with who I am. I would not be the same if not for Hybrid.

I was bullied pretty bad last year. It got to a point where my mood was black all the time. I wasn't very happy and was upset all the time. It became so that a smile was a muscle memory from what seemed like ages ago. A lot of the time it felt like I had no reason left to live. There was one thing that kept me alive, and kept me from going into complete depression. That was going to Hybrid. Each week I would go at least once to Hybrid, and the people and horses there that have the biggest hearts and love all kept me from being a walking robot. The fact that knowing that I had a place that loved me, a place that I was a part of, kept me from being depressed. No place that I have ever been to can rival or get anywhere close to being as loving and supportive as Hybrid. If I didn't have Hybrid to go to, I don't know where I would be now, what with being bullied last year but I know I wouldn't be where I am now, which is basically fully recovered. I know many people at Hybrid have a story similar to mine, and we all needed Hybrid to help us out of that rough time.

Being with the horses and people of Hybrid is the only real place I can clear my head. At Hybrid I was able to get my thoughts out and free myself from what was troubling me everywhere else. Hybrid has also made me a better person. The people and horses at Hybrid have taught me to be more outgoing, as I was very shy when I first went there. Hybrid has changed me in ways only Hybrid's horses and people could. I don't know where I would be without Hybrid, and I know many people have similar viewpoints to mine. This is my story of how Hybrid has helped me, as it has helped others and I hope that you will understand that all of Hybrid's horses and people are so special that they save lives, and make people better people.

Sincerely yours,



Robyn Stix

Dear Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

I first started riding at Hybid when I was eight years old. I have always loved animals and begged my mother to let me ride. I still remember my first time at the barn. When my mother and I pulled up Rita's son Andrew was out front hosing down his horse. I had never seen a horse that big, and was nervous about riding for the first time. But I got to pat his neck, and then I had the courage to walk past into the barn, where I was welcomed by my instructor. It has been eight years since that day, and I now have the pleasure of welcoming new campers, girl scouts and birthday girls.

Over the years I have grown and changed, and so has Hybid. I have been lucky enough to ride through the woods as the leaves change colors, and when they are filled with snow. I have walked through the back field to get a horse early in the morning, when everything is still, and the sky is a bright blue, the air crisp, and I get to be there to experience it. I have sat in the barn, and watched purple lightning flash through the sky, and the herd, as one body, hit their butts to the ground and bolted to the other end to the paddock. I have even raced around the field in the dark, water gun in hand, silently creeping past horses in the warm summer air playing assassin. Each of these moments has been special in its own way, and while I have mentioned some of my favorites there is no way to describe what Hybid means to me. The girls and horses there are like another family. Its a special place, like no other barn in the area.

In the winter, when the ground is so snowy and icy to do anything in the ring, trail rides are so... magical. The snow on the branches, the silence that seems to fill the air. When the sun hits snow in the cold air, and it sparkles, it is like something out of a fairytale. I am so glad that I have been there to see it, and I think that other kids deserve to be able to experience that magic. The trails and conservation land behind Hybid are so beautiful, in all the seasons, and exploring them with your friends and favorite horses is so much fun. I feel that the little girls coming to camp this summer who are so excited about riding for the first time, or getting back on a pony they rode at a party, or the girl scouts coming for their badges, they all should have the opportunity to see what I have seen.

In addition to the trails, the field behind Hybid is so important to me. Over the summer I was lucky enough to practice cross country in the back field with Corrine Ashton. It was so amazing. It was hot and sunny, a beautiful day. Some girls had built us a beautiful new round top, 2"6", and a fence that was set to about 2"6". Corrine yelled at me, but by the end I got it and I don't think I have ever been so happy, or tired, as I was when she said, "Good job, girly." It made my day. Cross country is so much fun, especially when you take the jump just right and it feels like you are flying. It isn't something you can do in the rings, and while some of us get to go up to New Hampshire with Rita in July for a week, getting to ride in the field is important. It gives kids a chance to experience riding in the open, with out the long drive, and expensive trailering fees.

As a rider at Hybid, having access to the trails and back field has been a pleasure. I would be sad to lose those riding venues, but I am lucky enough to have parents who are able to afford for me to go to shows where I can do some of the same things. The biggest reason I hope you allow Hybid to continue to use the land, or even expand it, is for the girl scouts, campers, birthday party kids, and other riders for whom the trails allow a glimpse of some of the best parts of riding. I hope you allow us to continue to use the conservation land, for the sake of the riders and the horses.

Sincerely yours,

Clare Bannon
22 Grove St
Concord, MA

November 12th, 2011

Dear Town of Acton Conservation Commission,

Hi my name is Aly Werth and I am a resident of Bedford MA. I am writing because I heard about the problem with horses grazing on the conservation land at Hybrid Farm on Nagog Hill Road. I understand that a decision will soon be made that may result in horses having to leave the property. As I took a major in AP Environmental Science last year during my senior year of high school I understand the troubles associated with overgrazing. However I strongly believe that the disservices to the community that would result from limiting the number of horses at Hybrid Farm, reducing the business capability of the farm would greatly outweigh any toll on the land.

In an effort to show how much of an impact Hybrid Farm can have I want to share my own personal experiences. I am 18 years old and have been riding, teaching, learning, socializing, and loving my time at Hybrid Farm since I was ten years old. In these eight years the barn has become unimaginably big part of my life. As a high stressed student with a hectic schedule between sports, homework, and school I know for a fact that I would not have made it through high school with any sort of composition without the barn. Hybrid provided for me a place to unwind and decompress, a unique but completely necessary concept in my schedule. The barn was also my constant, a place that stayed the same throughout my crazy life. No matter how bad my day at school I always knew that I could go to the barn and recover with some awesome friends and ponies. Any drama at school would be absent at the barn allowing me to get away from any social or academic struggles in my town. Finally, like many teenagers in a stressful high pressure academic world confidence was hard to come by for me in high school. As a member of the Hybrid Farm Pony Club I was able to compete and find success in a separate area. I know that this is also the case for my sister and many of my friends at the barn. Having something that you are good at and some place where you can be successful is a crucial part of learning where you fit in the world and I honestly think that without Hybrid Farm I would be lost as to what I want to do for the rest of my life. Throughout the past eight years of my life Hybrid has given me a place to grow and to fit in supplying me with clarity and peace of mind.

While Hybrid has given me so much this is something that I know for a fact is not unique to me and to my life. The barn environment and atmosphere provides many people in our community with several unique services. First of all in our developed world it is not commonplace for there to be a farm where people can go and interact with such big and magnificent animals. There really is not much open land left for people to have horses especially in the north east. Interacting with such impressive and loving animals does many good things for people. Taking care of horses teaches responsibility and care. Riding horses and learning about them teaches people how there is always something more to learn in this world and that with hard work you can get better. Finally being around horses and learning to understand them teaches people acceptance because nobody is more accepting than a horse. Horses don't know if you don't look like other people or if you are not wearing the right clothes. Horses only know how you treat them, and if you treat them well they will do the same in return. I strongly believe that this teaches people good values and how to be less superficial. I know that the barn's horses have supplied many people someone to talk to with a kind listening ear. I know for a fact that I would not be

the person I am today without having horses in my life and I also know that this is true for many other people that go to Hybrid Farm.

I also know from my many hours in the horse world that hybrid is very unique among barns. At Hybrid Farm you don't just go and ride your horse like you would ride a bicycle. Rita McConnon and the other instructors make sure that instead of just learning to ride people that go to the farm learn about horse care and knowledge as well. This is unique as I know many barns don't allow people to get mixed up with this and only let you come for the one hour in which you are scheduled to ride. At Hybrid you can come and stay and work and interact providing the riders with the opportunity to get all from the horses I described in the previous paragraph. Furthermore my hours helping at the barn have also showed me how much work the barn does for the community. Rita McConnon runs many programs for the community in the form of girl scouts, residential girls, and scholarships for lessons and camp for those that would not normally be able to afford it. This allows people that would never be able to afford lessons at any other barn to benefit from being around the barn.

In addition to supplying unique and wonderful services to the human community, Hybrid Farm also provides a very important service to the equine community in Acton and the surrounding towns. Hybrid Farm truly is a place for second chances for horses. In the past several years Rita has rescued several horses that were unable to be taken in by animal shelters in the area due to overflow caused by our struggling economy. These horses are individuals that were never given a chance to succeed in life and due to the amount of horses in the area in the same situation there are not many options left for these horses. Hybrid takes these horses and gives them chances when others are unable to. This helps ease the burden on animal shelters providing a service to the community unique in this area. A video example of this can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDA-1rQOZol> and I invite you to watch so you can see for yourself the kinds of miracles that happen at Hybrid Farm. These horses are given proper care (sometimes for the first time in their lives) and once they recover emotionally and physically they can contribute to the highly positive atmosphere described earlier.

Despite the wonderful services to the community that Hybrid Farm provides I understand that you still will make a decision regarding the land. I only ask that you consider all the people that will be worse off and not disconnect yourself by neglecting to talk with and understand those that will be affected. Because if you do make this decision you are splitting up a family and taking away a safe haven for those that have trouble feeling accepted.

Finally, I just wanted to share my personal success with the committee so that it can be understood how much opportunity Hybrid Farm has provided me with. When I walked in the barn at age 10 I knew nothing about horses. In fact the horses made me nervous to the point that I would jump with every stomping hoof. Over the years I learned and changed and grew. Everything I learned allowed me to get to accomplish many things that I never even dreamed of. In 2007 I placed second in our regional Central New England Pony Club Quiz Rally, a competition about horse knowledge. This qualified me to compete nationally in Kentucky where my team placed 17th. In 2008 I placed first in my division at the regional rally again qualifying me for the national competition. Here my team placed 11th. In 2009 I placed second in my division at regionals once again qualifying for championships. This

time my team placed third! I was also surprised to find out that I had individually placed 2nd in the country which qualified me to compete internationally in Vancouver Canada. Here my American team placed eighth! In 2010 I turned down a first place qualifying spot in quiz rally to accompany my mounted games team to championships in Virginia following a win at the regional rally. At championships we became the first riding center team (team of members who do not own their own horses) to place in advanced mounted games, we placed 5th with a 1st place national finish in horse management. In 2010 I was also lucky enough to participate in the International Quiz Exchange in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Here my mixed nationality team placed first in both Canadian National Quiz and International Exchange Quiz. Individually I placed 6th in the international exchange and 7th in Canadian National Quiz. This placing allowed me to become the first American to ever place at international and Canadian National Quiz. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the support and encouragement of all the people at Hybrid Farm.

Thank you very much,

I wish you the best,

~Alyson Werth
8 Fern Way
Bedford MA 01730

November 20, 2011

To: Conservation Committee, Town of Acton
Re: Hybrid Farm

My name is Kimberly Hurwitz and I writing to you in support of Hybrid Farm.

I have lived in Acton for 13 years and have always appreciated its rural character. One of the *main* reasons my family chose to move to this town was the visible farm-like, rural atmosphere that continued to exist here. Regrettably, that character seems to be dwindling each day. Acton had a long history as a farming community, with wide open spaces, dotted with farms.

While I am a strong advocate for Acton's conservation land, both the preservation and the continuing acquisition of, I feel that much of the existing land is not put to good use. Large swathes of land are wooded and brush-filled, which makes them nearly inaccessible to the public. Unlike Concord, which mows much of its conserved land to adhere to its farming heritage, Acton does not mow much, if any, of its conservation land, and that farm feeling is, therefore, lost.

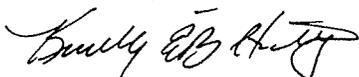
Hybrid farm currently leases a *very* small portion of the town's conservation land for its horses. Thus, this land is, in essence, helping to retain that farming part of Acton's heritage. Specifically, with regard to the land usage, it is also clear that very quickly after horses were off the property, the land would revert to those piney woods that would again be *barely* accessible to Acton's townspeople. Many, many families have benefited from this farm, not to mention the overall town of Acton which saw this land saved from continued development by the McConnon's high bid for the property over 30 years ago.

While my daughter and I have just begun to ride at Hybrid farm, we've always been charmed by these and other horses that have dotted our town's landscape. Though I am only beginning to know Rita McConnon, I have long seen and heard of the value of her farm and horses to this town. Rita is a civic-minded individual who has done and continues to give back to this community. It is a special farm in its informality, its warmth, its size and its road-side character -- not to mention the fact that very few horse farms continue to exist in Acton. It's illustrative that the community education department has in the past sent riders to the town of Bolton because of the scarcity of riding opportunities here.

I encourage the committee to work with, not against, the McConnon family, in the use of this land. As the land use now stands, it benefits so many more townspeople than the proposed restrictions ever could.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter,

Sincerely,



Kimberly E. B. Hurwitz
Minot Avenue

Dear Action Conservation Commission,

I have heard that Hybrid Farm is going to be required to reduce the number of their ponies by half. This would mean that I would be unable to take lessons there with my school. Ever since I was small, I have loved horses, but my family has been unable to afford lessons. However, when Horseback Club was started at my school, I suddenly found myself able to pursue my dream.

The people at Hybrid Farm have always been so kind, and I love all the ponies there so much!

I couldn't fathom having half of them sold. Please do not reduce the number of horses able to graze on your land!

Sincerely,

Zoe

Dear Acton Conservation Commission,

My name is Hayley and go to a School for special needs. I love going horseback riding. Horseback riding made me feel less alone and makes me feel happy. I love the horses I rode a horse named lucky charm and he was such a kind and loving horse. Please don't take horseback riding club away
Hayley

Dear Conservation commission,

Please do not take horse back riding club away. It means a lot to me because being around horses makes me calm and helps to regulate my emotions and helps me build my self esteem and makes me very happy. I do not have any riding places near my house so horse back riding club is very important to me. Please try to understand that.

Thank you,
Sarah

Hybid Farm

Riding at Hybid has been one of the best experiences I've ever had in my entire horseback riding life. All the instructors, staff and Rita are so friendly, and welcoming. They also know what they're doing. They love and care for each and every one of their students.

Every single horse is special in their own way. There's a that **one** horse for everyone. There are more than 25 horses at Hybid. They are all well cared for and loved. Selling any of them would be heart breaking; for the whole Hybid family.

Going on trail rides has always been one of my favorite things to do while riding. The trails near Hybid are absolutely wonderful. In the summer, during summer camp, a lot of the kids have never been on a trail before. You have to see their faces just to see how happy they are. It's the best thing in the world. Banning Hybid from the conservation land would be taking away one of the most special and unique parts of Hybid.

Lastly, if Hybid has to close down, a part of me will die (I'm not exaggerating). It's the best place to be if you love horses, and riding. So please take this letter into consideration. Think of all the kids reactions if they find out there won't be summer camp anymore.

It would mean the world to me, and everyone at Hybid if you let us keep using the conservation land.

-Nina [REDACTED]

November 14, 2011

RE: HYBID FARM

Dear Acton Conservation Commission,

My name is Elizabeth Hayes. I have been riding horses since I was 6 years old. I have ridden at many other stables but the one I really love the most is Hybid Farm. I first started coming to Hybid Farm when I was sixteen and have ridden here for nearly ten years. I knew it was the right match for me because the environment was friendly, including the riders, horses, the instructors, most of all Rita and her family! At Hybid, I have had lessons, worked as a camp counselor, helped with birthday parties and girlscouts. And I have leased a few horses over the years there. Everybody has to be kind to each other at Hybid Farm including to the horses. I loved the rules I learned about Human safety comes first, horse safety is second, and everything else is third.

Please allow Hybid Farm to have lessons, offer trail rides for students or birthday parties and girl scouts on your conservation land! Also, we can't reduce the number of our horses even by at least half. Horses are amazing animals and deserve to live and live a happy life at the perfect place at Hybid Farm! Most of these horses have been there for most of their life! And it is not fair to take that away from them. You wouldn't like that to happen to you and your families would you?

It is really important to keep Hybid running as it has been for 31 years, using the conservation land. The Acton Conservation Commission must understand that abandoned and abused horses need a home and people to love them, and that children learn and thrive here. And need to realize the magic that happens here and the wonderful family that is Hybid Farm. We should be allowed to continue running Hybid as we have been, and even to be able to expand if needed.

Hybid Farm is not only like my home, but its home to all the students and many of the other visitors who come! Whenever I come to ride or even help out, I am SO happy and I forget all of my troubles! Hybid Farm cannot imagine choosing any ponies to leave!

Please, don't take this wonderful special place away along with any of the horses! Hybid Farm is truly the perfect stable and home, for not only the people, but the horses who live there as well. So please don't take any of this away from us!

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Hayes
26 Highland Street
Concord, MA 01742

I can't afford a horse. Does that mean I shouldn't get to ride even if it is my passion? Rita has made it possible for every rider at Hybrid to enjoy the sport of horseback riding without the tremendous cost. Not only do we get to ride all of the amazing ponies but we learn to take care of them and form bonds with the ponies and the wonderful people we are surrounded by at Hybrid. Throughout the 5 years I have been riding at Hybrid I have grown so close with so many girls and calling them my sisters would be an understatement. With memories from our first horse-shows and ratings to an everyday lesson with Sara I cannot imagine what my life would be like without this second home. I am also a member of United States Pony Club, and I am currently a D-3. Hybrid has allowed me to set goals I never would have thought about including continuing to move up in the USPC levels, become an instructor, go to USPC championships and many many more.

If you cut the number of horses and riders in half I don't think you realize the grief you would be causing. My days would no longer be brightened in the same way it is when I walk into the barn and see my favorite people and ponies greeting me. My favorite pony is Mac. If I try to imagine him no longer at Hybrid I just can't. Even thinking about it brings tears to my eyes. We have been through so much together including going to USPC games twice and competing at shows. I will never forget our first show where we got 6th place. I have plenty of ribbons and even though it is not the best score I have gotten it is and will always be my favorite, because we won it together. If you took away ponies you would be preventing experiences like this one to happen to more Hybrid riders.

Throughout my years at Hybrid I have made so many friends, including my best friend Olivia Ross. Before Hybrid we were both shy kids who didn't have much to say but from the minute we met we knew this friendship would last. We have sleepovers almost every weekend and I don't know what I would do without her constantly cheering me up and making me laugh. Every week we look forward to seeing each other in our lessons. We have grown as riders and people together and I cannot imagine a life without her. This is the kind of friendships Hybrid makes-- life lasting.

Rita McConnon is the nicest person you will ever meet. From day one at Hybrid I enjoyed listening to Rita's tales of all of her past ponies. She has taught me to love horseback riding and horsemanship more than anyone else ever could, but more importantly she taught me what it means to be a good friend and a good all around person. Our world needs more people as great as Rita. By decreasing the number of people at Hybrid that is half as many people Rita can inspire to be like her, just like she inspired me.

I hope you sincerely consider keeping Hybrid just the way it is, because it is perfect and I can't imagine a life without it.

Thank you, Jordan Brofsky

Concord, MA

November 21, 2011

Dear Acton Conservation Committee,

My name is Caroline Kielar, and I have been horseback riding at Hybrid Farm for ten years. Now I am almost seventeen years old, and I could not imagine my life without Hybrid Farm. My time there has immensely helped me grow as a rider and as an individual. I have formed the strongest friendships of my life at Hybrid Farm, with both the horses and the people who share my love of this magical farm. For me, Hybrid has become part of who I am as well as a second home. I have learned responsibility, leadership, friendship, politeness and so much more throughout my years at Hybrid Farm.

A common love of horses brings us all together at Hybrid Farm. I came to Hybrid Farm in second grade because I like horses, but wanted a supportive environment, unlike my previous barn. From the moment I stepped into the sweet-smelling barn, I felt a welcoming presence of a huge family of kids and horses. There is a bond that can be made with a horse that cannot be made with another human and cannot be put into words. It is a bond so indescribable because it has a certain strength beyond what our human words and experiences can achieve. Horses have always been there for me regardless of any troubles I am having in school or other parts of my life. It is as if the entire world melts away and you are left alone with the horse – two beings in a silently understood unison. In particular, my time spent with the horses at Hybrid Farm has helped me cope with my Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, or OCD.

Hybrid Farm is a truly unique place that brings people together from so many backgrounds. Everyone at Hybrid Farm is kind and welcoming, which has helped shape who I am today. I have gained confidence and leadership through my experiences at Hybrid and am now lucky enough to help teach what I know to younger kids who come to experience a little bit of Hybrid's magic. The horses at Hybrid are all amazing friends to me, and I have formed unbreakable bonds with a few very special horses here. My friends at Hybrid expand beyond the horses though, and include all of the amazing people that I am privileged to spend my time with at Hybrid Farm. These friends have been at my side through all the happy and difficult times in my life, and I know I could count on them for anything in the world. I have made several friendships that I know will last forever. I would be truly devastated and heartbroken to see Hybrid Farm have to give away many of its horses and riders. I have had so many terrific experiences at Hybrid Farm and really hope to make more in the future and I hope that other kids can experience this too. Hybrid Farm has given me a place to feel relaxed and safe and I hope to spend many more years at this terrific place. The horses and people from Hybrid are like family to me and I could not imagine my life any other way. **Please allow Hybrid Farm to continue to use the land that it currently occupies and keep all of the dedicated and loving ponies!!!** Words cannot explain my deep love for Hybrid Farm and my gratitude for all that I have learned there. I truly hope that you will listen and understand how privileged I have been to grow up at Hybrid Farm and the vital role this farm has played in so many people's lives. **Please allow the horses, people and magic continue to flourish on the beautiful land that it occupies.** I know it would mean the world to me as well as all those who have also been touched by the love and compassion at Hybrid Farm.

Sincerely,
Caroline Kielar, age 16
185 Hunters Ridge Road
Concord, MA 01742

November 18, 2011

To the Conservation Committee of the Town of Acton:

I recently learned that you are planning to severely limit the land Hybid Farm can use for its horses and programs. You must consider otherwise!

Hybid Farm is a haven, a place where a person of any age and background can come to learn and grow. I practically grew up at Hybid---Hybid was a second home to me. When I was young, I spent every moment I possibly could at the barn, caring for the horses and learning to ride. I spent my summers there working at summer camp. When the summer was over, I spent every day I could after school working at the barn. And in the winter, even in the bitter cold—I would still come. I came because I loved everything about Hybid—I loved the people, I loved the horses, and I loved the way it felt to be apart of such a loving community. It is thirteen years later, and I still feel the same way.

At Hybid, it is taught and believed that everyone has something to offer, and everyone deserves a chance. The barn has rescued countless horses over the years. Many that had been horribly abused in the past, even sentenced to death at slaughterhouses. For these horses, Hybid Farm was their last chance at life.

It continues to rescue horses from abusive backgrounds. It continues to welcome as many as who want to come and learn. I can personally say that in my time at the barn growing up, what I learned extended far beyond just horse care---Hybid Farm taught me how to be a compassionate, loving human being.

If Hybid Farm's use of the conservation land were to be cut back, Hybid Farm could not continue all of its programs. The result would be devastating to the kids and horses that call Hybid home. Scholarships and special programs would no longer be a possibility, and the barn would no longer be able to offer sanctuary for those horses that truly have no where else to go. Even worse, the amount of individuals who could come to learn would become severely limited.

Please do not do this to Hybid Farm! Hybid Farm needs to be allowed to continue to bless the lives of as many people and horses as possible. It needs the freedom to be as it has been for thirty years. Such a beautiful place needs to be allowed room to grow and thrive. Please give it the chance it deserves.

Sincerely,
Natalie Durham

18 Kylemore Dr.
Westford, MA

I have been riding at Hybrid for 3 years and I have learned so much.

Andrea, my instructor has been so nice and kind and she is such a good instructor that I think she should keep on instructing at Hybrid lots of kids. I love Hybrid, I was always in a very good mood whenever I was there. I especially liked the trail rides because I was out in the peaceful woods, on a horse, and having a wonderful time.

That's why I think it is very important for Hybrid farm to keep on running like it has been for the past 31 years.

From,

Gaby Grant

Dear Conservation Commission of Acton,

Please don't make Rita McConnon get rid of her horses!! I started riding at Hybid Farm when I was 9 years old, and now I'm 13. I love Hybid Farm sooooo much! Without 16 of those amazing, talented horses, Hybid Farm wouldn't be the same. These horses and ponies are so talented and well behaved; they don't deserve to be taken from their home. If you take these horses away, everyone at the farm, big and small, will be heartbroken. How will we ride our favorite horses when they're gone? How will we not be able to relax on a trail ride if it's taken away? Please don't split Hybid Farm.

Sincerely,
Mariah J.



Hybid Farm

My 2nd Home

A Place I Love And Worship

A Place Where People Come To Ride

My Favorite Place To Hang Out After School

My Favorite Place In The Whole Wide World

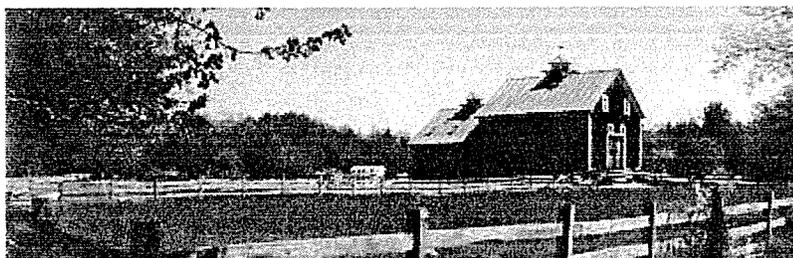
Rita

My Fearless Idol

The Role Model Of My Life

This Owner Of A Great Place Might Have To Sell Half Her Horses

I've Only Been Riding For Two Years But Hybid Has Made It's Way Into My Heart



Please Let Rita Keep Her Land
It Would Mean So Much To All Of The Hybid Riders

Olivia Castro, 11 Years Old

November 2011

Dear Town of Acton

Please save Hybid Farm!!!

Every little girl grows up dreaming of owning a horse. Unfortunately, most little girls will never have the opportunity to own their own horse.

I had my fourth birthday party at Hybid Farm and starting riding lessons a week later. I was totally in love. I have ridden and worked with horses ever since. I have spent so many hours at Hybid Farm with Rita and all of her amazing horses.

Rita saves horses that no one else would take. Rita takes such good care of them. But more importantly Rita takes care of kids like me. Rita is one of the nicest most caring people I have ever met. So many kids owe so much to Rita and Hybid Farm.

Thanks to Rita and Hybid Farm and all of my years there, I am hoping that I may be one of those lucky girls who grows up to own her own horse. I am hoping and hoping that my dream that started when I was 4 may come true soon. I am turning 14 next month and hoping that all of the experience I received from Hybid Farm and that all of the love for horses (and people) that I learned from Rita might soon make my dream come true!

Please don't take this dream away from other kids.

thanks for listening

Molly Clark
grade 8 RJ Grey JHS
3 Forest Road
Acton

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end. Below the signature is a small, dark circular mark.

Anna Dawley

Mrs. Royce

Period 6

19 September 2011

My home is not where I am go after school. My home is not where I lay my head and dream at night. My home is not where I see my family members when I wake up in the morning and when I eat diner in the evening. I started going to my home in first grade. The air was warm, the birds were chirping, the sun was shining, the sky smooth and crisp. Like a sip of fresh cider on a fall day.

I was silent on the short car ride, sitting in the back of the car, my tiny hands sat on my lap, tightly intertwined together, it seemed like glue held them there, inseparable. Scared. Completely unaware that this place would change my life. My sister was not scared though, I could tell. She chattered the whole way there, as if someone wound her up and she would not stop talking until time ran out.

As soon as I walked through the giant doorway I all my fear flew away. I was free. Like a bird soaring above the treetops for the first time. I quickly became comfortable. I fit in, I felt like single puzzle piece in a set 1,000 that was finally picked up and placed in its rightful spot. Everybody there was happy, I could tell. Not because of all the laughing and talking and smiles. But, by the way they treated each other. At this special place, everyone if part of one giant family. We go to our special place to hang out, to work, to get away from "the real world". Here we never worry what other think about us. We are our own selves. Nobody else.

My home is somewhere I feel like nothing can get in my way, there is no stop sign. I fly down the dirt road, free. We create memories together, same story, different outlook, I know these memories can never be recreated, but, they will not need to be. Because they will always be remembered.

My home is not my house. My home is the barn. My home, is Hybid Farm.

I have been going to Hybid Farm since I was in the first grade, now I am in ninth. Please don't take something that has become a huge part of so many people's lives away from them. This paper is one of MANY I have written for school. I have poems, projects, and essays about Hybid, the people at Hybid, and the horses at Hybid and I know I am not the only one. I can be the person I really am there and if that gets taken away, then I don't know what I will do. Hybid gives so much back to the community; I see absolutely no reason to even think about stopping their business. I hope you all will consider this.

Thank you,
Anna Dawley
5 Huron Rd. Acton, Ma

Dear Acton

I have only been riding at Hybrid for two months but I love the horses and I can't imagine the barn having 16 less horses. None of the horses that Hybrid deserve to be sent somewhere else and they are all so sweet. I think that if Hybrid has been able to have all of those horses why change that now. As far as I know it has never been a problem before so why is it such a problem now? I would be very upset if you make Hybrid give away all of those wonderful ponies and horses.

Lauren Harmon

118 blueberry Lane Concord

Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton

Even though it has been several years since I have been back to visit Hybrid farm, it still holds a very dear place in my heart, and I think of it often. I first came to know Rita and Hybrid farm when I attended summer camp there when I was perhaps 8 or 9 years old. I was absolutely in love with horseback riding and horses from then on. I attended the camp, and weekly lessons for several years before I began working as a counselor in the summer for several more years. Though I was never the best rider, it didn't matter because the whole community of the barn was so accepting and friendly. There was camaraderie among riders of all levels and experience. I was never particularly athletic in my life, but I had a confidence while riding that I had never felt doing any other sport. At Hybrid I learned from the very start how much work goes into taking care of horses and that only a small portion of your time is spent actually riding. That is why I believe Hybrid is so invaluable as an institution. When kids come to the barn, they are given responsibility for the care of another living creature. They do chores that they probably never imagined doing in their life (picking up poop) and if they are like me, are happy to do it just to spend time around the horses they love. Without the available land, Hybrid would not have the opportunity to rescue horses that no one else wants, and work with them to become amazing school horses that kids build a lasting and loving bond with. I have no doubt in my mind that were it not for Hybrid farm I would not be the person I am today. Rita gave me the opportunity to be a leader among my fellow counselors, and eventually to be the art director of the summer camp for a year before I left for college. Hybrid kindled my love for animals, and helped me decide that I wanted to work with them as a career. I now take care of elephants at one of the best facilities in the U.S., and I owe much of my drive and commitment to animal care to the hours spent mucking out barns in my childhood. Hybrid deserves the opportunity to continue to make an impact on the lives of countless kids, teens, and adults who are better people for having been there.

-Sarah Sanderson

Conservation Commission
Town of Acton

12 Nov 2011

My name is Erica Skye Schaaf and I attend Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School. I have ridden at Hybid Farm in Acton since I was 6 years old. I am writing in support of the McConnors and asking that you work with them to continue the wonderful riding programs they offer at Hybid. There are a large group of us teenagers who have grown up together at the barn, learning to take care of the horses and each other. Although we come from a large number of towns in the surrounding area, we have all become very close friends and thoroughly enjoy getting together and visiting each other's high schools and events. Furthermore, although many of us participate in pony club and compete very successfully at local horse shows, Rita has taught us to always put the happiness and safety of our friends (and our ponies) above all else. I now try to use these skills at the Friends for Tomorrow Therapeutic Riding facility in Lincoln where I volunteer once a week with the Pony Partners program to help grade school aged girls who are experiencing learning and social difficulties learn to interact with each other and with the horses.

Although many of us are now learning to drive, getting jobs, taking SATs, and applying to colleges, we all still find time to come to Hybid to reconnect for our lessons and to volunteer during the summer. As we move on, we hope that Hybid will still be there for the younger kids coming along behind us.



Erica Skye Schaaf
583 North Rd
Sudbury MA 01776

November 21, 2011

Dear Acton Conservation Commission,

I am writing to you to tell you about the positive impact Hybid Farm has made on my life. I have been riding at Hybid Farm for eight years and it truly is a second home and family to me. I'm sure you will understand how wonderful the community is by the letters you are receiving; however I would like to tell you how cut backs would affect us. I have heard that the Acton Conservation Commission would like Hybid to reduce the number of horses and not use the conservation land behind the farm for riding. Since I have been able to ride on the conservation land I have become more conscious of the greater community. Because Hybid has had such a large variety of horses I have become a thoughtful, responsible person. On top of that I have learned how to care for and ride horses to the point that I am now the captain of the dressage team at the University of Vermont as a sophomore. All of this is due to what Hybid has taught me.

Being able to go out on a trail ride every once in a while was always fun growing up and as I got older I saw other people walking their dogs in the trails, running, etc. Then as I took my own students on the trails being Hybid Farm I was able to teach them about how these woods are not just for us but for the larger community too. I was able to teach them that if we take care of the trails and do not mistreat our privilege everyone can enjoy being out in the woods. The conservation land is something that people with many interests should be able to share and enjoy. Riding with Hybid on the conservation land has shown me that there is a larger community and we are all a part of that and need to be respectful and helpful whenever possible to take care of the land.

I have also become a more responsible person because of Hybid Farm. Over the years I have been Rita's barn manager on the afternoons and have learned the responsibility of taking care of thirty horses on a daily basis. Then there are special cases of responsibility, there are many horses that have been just put in people's back yards and not taken care of. As a community we have taken these horses in and nursed them back to health. Typically, a twelve year old is not able to do this but because Hybid teaches so well many young students were able to take some responsibility in helping these horses. I have learned responsibility through having so many different horses at Hybid.

Hybid Farm has helped not only me but many other students as well. Each of us come to Hybid looking to learn how to ride and end up learning so much more from the land we are able to use to being a responsible person. For these reasons, I encourage you to allow Hybid Farm to continue to operate the way that it does.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Michele Russell
80 Inches Brook Lane
Boxborough, MA 01719
michele.russell@uvm.edu

November 20, 2011

To Acton Conservation Commission,

Hybid Farm is not just a barn that people go to just to ride. Parents do not just send their children there so they will learn how to ride. Hybid Farm is a whole lot more than just that. Hybid Farm is a place where kids go to learn about horsemanship, ride, make new friends, care for the ponies, feel safe, feel wanted, and a place where we can go when our lives are not the best otherwise. Hybid Farm offers so much that most other barns do not. Hybid Farm is a place where no one is picked on or bullied. It is a safe environment for anyone and everyone. It is a family and everyone is loved and treated equally no matter what. The horses that we have are loved and cared for from rescue shelters, abused homes, slaughter houses, and have been through a rough life. These horses have finally found a home where there are hundreds of people who will love them, take good care of them, and know that they will never be abused or abandoned ever again.

I have been at Hybid Farm since I was 7 years old. I am now 16 and have grown so much at Hybid. Everyday there is pressure to do drugs or to drink alcohol. I do not do that stuff because I have Hybid. Whenever my friends ask me to do illegal things with them I think, "I cant because Hybid has taught me better and if I do than I might lose the barn." That may sound stupid and that how can doing drugs or drinking alcohol make you lose the barn well the answer is: my parents. If my parents ever found out that, I did drugs or have drinken than they would take the barn away from me forever. So I have never done either because Hybid means the world to me. Hybid has taught me how to be confident and to be the girl I want to be and that I can do whatever I want in the world if I just try. The reason I go to Hybid almost everyday is that I have a tough life at home and friends that just do not understand. Hybid is a home to me. I know I can always go there whenever I want to no questions asked. No one at Hybid judges me or treats me badly. We all love each other and have grown up together over the years. Hybid is just so important to me that without it, I would probably not be here right now writing this letter to you. If Hybid ends than hundreds of people will be lost. If you make us sell half or all of our horses, hearts will be broken. Rita is an amazing woman and is such a great mom. She has an amazing family and such a huge heart. She does not care just about herself. She cares about every person who comes to her barn. She cares about every single horse she has had during the 31 years at Hybid. She does not get horses just because she wants more, she takes in horses because they have been abandoned, neglected, abused, or on their way to the slaughterhouse. She cares about every single detail in life and is inspirational to all of us at Hybid Farm. She is truly an amazing person and without her, I would not know what to do with myself. She has the only barn where people are aloud to come in, feed the horses, watch the lessons, and enjoy a barn without any permission. There are no signs on any fence or wall that says "Members Only" or "No Trespassing". She LOVES the company and loves when people come in to see her barn. Hybid is the happiest barn ever. She offers so much to people. She has birthday parties, girl scouts, lessons for different schools and programs, has an amazing summer program, and SO much more! The Hybid Family is a family who grows bigger each year and we welcome everyone. No one is rejected or left out. We treat each other with great respect and love

spending time together. Everyone always has smiles on their faces at the barn and are so nice to each other. We laugh together, cry together, go to movies together, and so much more. Hybrid is like The Brady Bunch. Rita and Wick are the parents with TONS of children who are truly unique in their own way. Hybrid is somewhere special and is treasured by every single person who comes there.

Hybrid means the world to me. It is a place where I can go to relax and not have to worry about reality at home or at school. Hybrid is a place where I feel safe and somewhere that I can go to if I ever need to in a tough situation. I feel like I can be myself at Hybrid and that I do not have to hide anything from anyone. I do not have to worry about being yelled at or bullied by anyone there. Hybrid is a special place to me because it is basically my home. If I did not have Hybrid, than many things would be different with me that I could not imagine of. Rita keeps me grounded and is a role model to me. Rita is a mom to me and without all the love she gives me, I would feel less confident in myself and not love who I am. I would be less courageous to take chances in life and to step up in the world. Hybrid is everything and is always going to be a huge part of my life.

Thank you,

Kristina Elizabeth Nelson

7 POPE road
Acton MA, 01720

Dear Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

Some people might think that Hybid Farm is just another horse barn, but to those who have experienced the love of Hybid Farm know otherwise. I am writing to you to support this barn, where I spend four days of my week. Hybid Farm is not just another barn; it's a family and a community. Taking away Hybid would be taking away a second home to so many people. I am also a counselor at their summer camp program. With around thirty counselors, minimizing the program could mean that many of these horse-loving youths may be asked to leave, including me. Hearing that this program may be hurt, it makes me think of all of the friends I have made at Hybid I could lose. Reducing the number of horses would do all of this. I believe with all of my heart that Hybid Farm should be free to grow and expand as needed. Being one of few horse barns in our area, it would be such a shame for our town to hurt one of the most loved places on earth for so many. I have ridden at other barns and I know that there is no place like Hybid Farm. Making Hybid smaller would be taking away opportunities, not only for those who love it, but for the horses as well. If Hybid Farm were to become smaller, it would mean they could no longer rescue horses in need, up for slaughter, or whose owners cannot take care of them any longer. Those horses would just suffer without anyone to love and care for them, unlike at Hybid Farm. Once again, Hybid Farm is not just a barn. It's a community and a home where many spend more days in the year at than not. Thank you for taking the time to read this and please put my thoughts into consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin Hall, 14 (7 Heritage Road, Acton MA)

11/21/11

To whom it may concern:

Hybrid Farm has been a haven for myself and countless other children for years. Rita and her staff, her students, and her horses made up a tight knit family that supports all who join. Having spent quite a lot of time at Hybrid, I must emphasize the prevalence and the genuinity of the community that thrives there. Hybrid offers an array of different contacts. From it's friendly people to the fun and excitement of learning how to ride, I must bring to your attention not only what Hybrid provides, (a safe, comfortable setting for riders of all ages, gorgeous horses and scenery, concaready and ~~stability~~ teamwork, etc.) but also what spending

The importance of

time there teaches; ethics, hard work, compassion and understanding for fellow humans and animals, discipline and determination, sportsmanship, the list goes endlessly on. In my personal experience, ~~before~~ I started out at Hybrid at the age of fourteen I was passionate about riding but could find nowhere within traveling distance that offered affordable riding lessons. I was lucky to be recommended Hybrid Farm by a fellow equestrian, and to my great surprise and pleasure, not only did Rita welcome me, but also helped me by discounting my lessons and ^{intensely} essentially taking me under her wing. It was during the following years that I learned everything I know.

(3)

about horses and riding, and consequently blossomed from a shy, inhibited adolescent into a stronger, more capable, and more lively young woman. I am wary to think of what may have become of me over that period of time had I not had the good influence of Rita and Hybrid. Hybrid Farm's helpful reach goes beyond it's students and into the lives of many others as well, including children and teenagers of all ages, (such as Girl Scouts groups or programs involving teenagers from the city who are at risk and need a safe environment) ~~and~~ their families, etc., who would all be devastated to see Hybrid stripped of many things that make it what it is. Such a course of

(1)

action would not affect the people in Hybrid's family alone, but would leave several horses without a home and put our special comrades at risk for being placed in a setting much less comfortable or safe. ~~That~~ That said, the riders would also be losing an enormous part of their life if forced to find a new barn to ride at, or may stop riding altogether. In conclusion, I am compelled to leave you with a question; is it truly worth destroying a loving community, impairing the ambitions of dozens of children and teens, leaving numerous horses homeless, and most importantly, robbing what is essentially a family of each others company and a sanctuary, all in order to preserve some land that

(6)

isn't being harmed in any fashion in the first place? The Hybrid family would be immeasurably grateful and relieved if you would take our sincere opinions into consideration. Please help keep Hybrid capable of remaining the wonderful place it has been for over 30 years.

Thank you for your consideration,
Brianna Buckley



Jordan Brofsky
Session 1: April 16-20, 2012

I am very interested in attending the AVM Middle School program because I love animals and hope to be a veterinarian some day. I think that this program will provide me with a great experience and will give me a taste of what being a veterinarian is all about.

During my life, I have had two dogs and multiple small animals including gerbils, fish, and guinea pigs. However, my favorite animals are horses. I love everything about horses from their individual personalities to the amazing feeling you get after accomplishing a great dressage or stadium round. My home away from home is a barn in Acton called Hybid Farm, which has 30 horses that I ride and help take care of. Hybid Farm is a very special place because most of the horses are rescued from abusive homes or places where they are no longer wanted. Some have come straight from the kill pens and were one step away from being slaughtered. I have watched the vets, dentists, chiropractors, and farriers help us nurse our rescue ponies back to health so they can become the amazing well-loved school ponies our barn is made of. I have learned so many things from these professionals taking care of our animals, and have witnessed them ease the pain of these hardworking creatures.

Recently the amazing owner of Hybid Farm, Rita McConnon, rescued a horse named Amazing Grace. She had been very badly abused. Scars of hatred shown towards this horse were all over her malnourished and beat up body, but Rita saw the amazing potential this horse showed. Grace's health improved tremendously after about a year of Hybid Farm's special kind of love and care. Now she is fully recovered and one of the most grateful and sweet horses anyone will ever meet.

Over the past summer, another one of Hybid Farm's loved ponies became very ill after choking on his breakfast one morning. His lungs filled with fluid and he developed pneumonia and was in desperate need of regular vet care. During the long process of his recovery, I watched as the vets and Rita never gave up hope and fought to keep Wesley alive.

My black lab had joint problems since she was a puppy. She is now 5 and has had two ACL surgeries and has to get monthly shots for the rest of her life to build up her cartilage. She takes painkillers to keep her as comfortable as possible when she has trouble walking. It is so hard to watch my dog suffer. Everyday I come home from school to see her tail wagging. She is always excited to see me and seems eager for a long walk, which she can't always handle anymore. She takes regular trips to the vet's office, where their great staff is very determined to find a way to make her as comfortable as possible. I can see the trust in her eyes when she is with these professionals and I hope one day I can have this same kind of trust with an animal who's life and comfort would be in my hands.

I want to be like Rita and these amazing people who help animals in need, like Grace and Wesley and my dog, Lucy. I hope that by attending this program, it will open my eyes to new knowledge and experiences beyond what I can even imagine. I also hope it will expand my knowledge even further on the animals I encounter on a daily basis so I can care for them to an either larger capacity.

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in regards to the Conservation Commission's recent decision preventing Hybid Farm from utilizing conservation land for recreational riding purposes and requiring them to reduce the number of horses in their possession by half. As a college student who grew up riding at Hybid Farm, I credit Rita McConnon and her instructors, horses, and riders, for a substantial amount of my personal growth; without the guidance of these individuals, I am confident my life's trajectory would have been substantially different from that of the successful college student I am today. The lessons horses teach, especially when accompanied by such fantastic people, are invaluable. They instill in students the importance of generosity and humility, of kindness and persistence, and the result of hard work. In other words, horses, and the bond students at Hybid form with them, can and do change a child's life in tangible ways, ways that are obvious to the parents who raise riders, schoolteacher's who instruct them, and many with whom they connect with throughout their lives.

If Hybid Farm were asked to cut its equine and student population in half, hard (and frankly, heartbreaking) decisions would have to be made, decisions that would force the farm to compromise its mission to instill these values in youth. As a rider, I can attest to the importance of riding outside the ring as both a confidence-builder and a chance to engage with the very environment that the Conservation Commission strives to protect. In an age where electronic screen time dominates the lives of so many children, I can assure the Commission that the students of Hybid Farm would likely have a profound appreciation for conservation one that their peers may lack. If the Commission's decision were to stand, Hybid would be rendered unable to introduce children to the trails, field riding (a crucial skill for students who wish to *safely* compete in competitions off farm property) and would limit the amount of children and horses Hybid is able to help. This would have huge ramifications for the disadvantaged, (both of the human and equine variety), who Hybid helps, preventing them from offering scholarships to students, and helping at-risk students, and rescuing the increasing number of horses that have fallen by the wayside during this economic downturn. To deny Hybid Farm 16 of their horses would also diminish their summer camp operations significantly, preventing both children and young adults from learning crucial life lessons as they learn from the horses and each other.

I sincerely hope that Hybid Farm and the Commission can reach an agreement on this issue. I hope that the Commission will be able to restore Hybid's ability to use the land it has had access to for the past 30 years, and hopefully the two parties can arrive at consensus, for the sake of Hybid's future, and in honor of its record of service to the community.

Sincerely,

Corinne Adams
19 Overlook Dr.
Acton, MA
01720

Acton Conservation Commission

November 14, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Catherine Allen, and I am a rider at Hybid Farm. I am writing to you about Hybid Farm and the possibility that the owner, Rita McConnon, may not be able to keep using the land for as many horses, and for running a riding school.

Rita has helped many different horses by taking them into her barn over the last couple of years. She has saved two different horses from continued mistreatment and starvation as well as having taken in others whose owners could no longer afford to keep them. All of these horses would be much worse off if it were not for Rita and all that she and others at Hybid have done for them. If Rita were not allowed to keep these horses at Hybid, they could be harmed in many ways.

Rita also gives riding lessons to underprivileged kids who could never afford to pay for riding lessons otherwise. This helps teach them respect, responsibility and gives them something that they enjoy doing. Some of these kids even get to work as part time counselors with the campers during the summer, which also gives them something to do, and helps them learn how to help others.

The regular students also learn a lot from being able to ride at Hybid. They learn responsibility and riding skills while having fun and helping others. Rita is able to give so many people something to enjoy, and an opportunity to learn and grow, that without the horses and land she is allowed now, she will not be able to provide.

Finally, I believe that this is the best possible use of the conservation land. The horses and people who get to be around them are much better off here, and they are not hurting the land. Without the ability to use the land many people (and horses) will suffer. Both the horses who will no longer have a place to stay and the people who get to be with and take care of the horses will be negatively impacted.

Please let Rita continue to use the land as she has been.

Thank you for your time,



Catherine Allen
17 Agawam Road
Acton

Dear Acton Conservation Commission,

My name is Laura Cogan and I take riding lessons and participate in Pony Club at Hybid Farm Riding Center owned by Rita McConnon. Though I have only been riding at Hybid Farm for a few years, it has become a home to me in that short amount of time. Having had experience horseback riding at other farms, not one has ever come close to making me feel the way I do when I turn onto Nagog Hill Rd each time I go to ride, work, or hang out at the most amazing place on earth.

The thing I take away most from Hybid Farm is the many things I've learned there whether it's a skill having to do with horses, or a lifelong lesson that changes me as a person. You learn much more than just how to ride at Hybid Farm. Time at Hybid Farm molds you into the person you are going to be for the rest of your life. Rita holds such a high standard of politeness, friendliness, and workmanship on her riders and workers. The people there are taught more than just how to ride. We learn that horsemanship is not all about your performance on the horse, but about your responsibility and desire to seek the skills to care for a horse whether you ride it or not.

Hybid Farm offers the older riders and pony clubbers the job of being a counselor who works with girl scout troops, birthday parties, and the summer camp. It is amazing work experience and working with the kids and teaching them about horses is a much better way to spend my summer than sitting at home with nothing to do. The two summers I have spent at Hybid Farm as a camp counselor have been the best two summers of my life. I have learned and accomplished so much in those two years more than I have in all the years combined that I have spent riding at other farms.

Hybid Farm has changed me as a rider and a person. It is more than a place to ride horses, it's a home to me and many other riders. It has a certain magic that we all share and even if the place itself is taken away from us, the Hybid Family is together forever. I know that if I ever had to ride at another barn, it wouldn't even compare to the amazing times I have had at Hybid Farm. I wouldn't know where I would be without this special place.

Sincerely,

Laura Cogan
65 Mossman Rd
Sudbury, MA 01776

Dear Acton Conservation and Commission Committee,

My name is Heather Beaudette, I'm fifteen years old and I've been riding at Hybrid Farm for three years. I'm currently a working student. My Dad has been unemployed for a while; without Hybrid's scholarship program I would not be able to ride. Working at Hybrid has helped me become more confident and outgoing. Hybrid has become my favorite part of my week. With horses and people that really care I could never ask for better place to be. Hybrid horses are happy and Hybrid people are happy. If Hybrid Farm were to be limited they would not be able to run their business; Rita McConnon would not be able to offer the scholarship program that gives so many people opportunity to grow and learn. A large piece of so many peoples lives would be taken away. Hybrid is an asset to Acton, and Acton should be honored to have Hybrid in it.

Sincerely,

Heather Beaudette