

November 2011

Dear Conservation Committee--

Please save Hybrid Farm!!!

Rita and Hybrid Farm have been a huge part of my family's lives for almost 9 years!! Both of my daughters, now 11 and 14, have spent countless hours at Hybrid. They have learned to love animals. They have learned courage and self-confidence. When my very shy 5 year old daughter told me that she wasn't shy when she was on a horse--I knew we were at the right place. They learned that rescuing animals was the way to go! They do not believe in breeders or pet stores, but rather rescuing animals who need help. Two rescue dogs later, we are grateful for that lesson. They learned how strong they could be. They learned that hard work makes you feel great. They learned what it is like to have a very special place in your life--a place where you can leave everything else behind. That place is Hybrid Farm.

My daughters are not the only ones to benefit from the experience that is Hybrid Farm. Over the years I have developed a very special friendship with Rita. We might go for awhile without seeing each other, and then when we do the connection is immediate and so strong. Rita is one of the most inspiring women I know. She makes me want to be a better person, a more devoted mother, she makes me want to give back. She gives to countless individuals and to the community as a whole. She helps women who are in trouble and need rehabilitation to find their way--the horses and Rita together can do this. Rita helps children with special needs, children who need a safe place and children who are just looking to have fun. She even hosts beautiful weddings for brides and grooms who would rather be married at Hybrid than any where else. She is a hero. That is not a term that I use lightly. I have met only a handful of true heroes in my life and Rita is truly a hero. She is an angel. She sees the world differently than a lot of us. She has a vision. She has dreams. Unlike the rest of us, her visions and dreams revolve around others. She is always on a mission to branch out and grow so that she can help others. There are children who have ridden there who can't afford it--that is not a problem with Rita.

When you walk into Rita's kitchen or office, you feel transported into a safe, more wonderful world. She always takes time for everyone. I don't know how she does it.

Please let Rita continue with her goodness and her dreams. If you take Hybrid Farm away from Rita and Acton--Rita will continue!! You will not break her spirit or her determination. She will start again, she will rebuild and she will continue her good. Countless people will still benefit from the force that is Rita. It may not be on Nagog Hill Road in Acton, but it will happen. The tragedy however, in that conclusion will be the cost to the town of Acton. We will no longer have the pride of calling Rita and Hybrid Farm our own. We will miss driving past one of the most beautiful, awe-inspiring sights in Acton. We will lose jobs and revenue. Some students who bus to the farm will no

longer be able to be a part of the farm, if it has to move in order to continue. If Hybrid Farm is forced to move or reduce in size and number of horses, Rita will be fine in the end. She has such strength and determination that she will not be knocked down for long. She will make it work--maybe even bigger and better. It will be Acton that suffers the loss.

Please do not take this away from us. Do not make Hybrid Farm downsize, or change or force it to move elsewhere. We, as a community, will suffer. I am so proud to be a part of Hybrid Farm. I am proud to have it as a part of my community. I am so grateful that it has touched my life and my family's lives. But I am mostly grateful for Rita--no matter what you decide you cannot take that away from us.

thanks for taking the time to consider this matter and please decide with your hearts

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbie Clark". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Barbie Clark  
3 Forest Road  
Acton

11-21-11

Hello,

I am writing in regards to Hybrid Farm and what Hybrid Farm means to me and my daughter. If we had not found Hybrid Farm when we did (5 yrs. ago) then I can assure you that my daughter would have chosen a different path in life to go down and it would not have been the best one. She was able, through Rita's generosity and Scholarships, to get lessons at a discount and she was able to learn a lesson about earning things she wanted because she was able to help out at the barn to earn a lesson and it kept her busy and out of trouble when her peers were getting into trouble. She was able to be at the barn getting lessons, going on trail rides, etc instead of just hanging out doing nothing. It gave her something to look forward to and something to give her much needed self-esteem. She always had a positive experience there and learned so much good from all those involved at Hybrid. They are all such great people and role models for so many young people who count on

Hybrid staff to help them gain positive life experiences and confidence building. Many youth will suffer if not able to access Hybrid farm because so many areas at Hybrid will have to be diminished and

this will directly affect many kids who really need this beautiful place in their lives. We would have been lost without it. It has been nothing but a positive place for our daughter to be and we are and always will be thankful for Hybrid farm <sup>staff</sup> and Rita for their endless, selfless efforts given to benefit others. Please do not take away the areas needed. It will affect so many young people that truly deserve and need such a positive place to spend time instead of out on the streets roaming around. Please let them continue to be a positive, loving and wonderful place for many to go and learn about horses and learn valuable lessons about life and keeping on the right path. I pray that you will make the right decision and help Hybrid stay the same great place that they are for so many. Sincerely, Deborah Buehler

To the Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton

My son, Alex Zhu joined the summer camp in hybrid farm in this summer, though he is the only little boy in the camp, so he felt awkward in the beginning, but the horse riding is so fun, he like it very much, annouced to us that he would like to join it every summer. In addition he learned how to treat horse as his friend.

Especially, he was so excited to tell me that they could parade on horse back in the land trail, not just make cycle riding in the farm.

Currently, the roads are for cars, and horses are kept strictly in the farm for safety reason, but it is absolutely a wonderful experience that there is a trail without car, and people could ride horse on it. Hybrid farm provide such great chance for us.

As a resident in A-B area, I wish Hybrid farm could continue their horses camp for kids.

Thank you sincerely

Kaiping Fu

44 coolidge farm road,

boxborough, MA 01719

Cell: 978-760-3373

Town of Acton, Massachusetts  
Conservation Commission

RE: Hybid Farm, Inc.  
217 Nagog Hill Road  
Acton, MA 01720-3227

13 November 2011

Dear Conservation Commission,

I am writing you in support of the request by Hybid Farm to renew the previous year's agreement with regard to land use for grazing and trail riding.

My daughter has been attending Hybid Farm for the several years. Hali has learned to respect and care for several horses over the years and is eager to return. For me as a parent, it is Rita's love of the farm and the animals she has adopted, and most importantly her ability to teach respect and care of animals to the girls, that keeps us returning year after year.

I hope you will seriously consider renewing Hybids agreement as there is no other similar facility – a working horse farm that not only adopts those animals in need but also accepts new or beginner riders wanting to explore the world of horsemanship.

Sincerely,

Pamela L. Slatcher  
75 Blueberry Ln.  
Concord, MA 01742  
978-371-8227

November 15, 2011

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of Hybrid Farm. My daughter has been riding horses at Hybrid Farm for over ten years. She started riding at the age of seven. This place has been a constant for my daughter over the years. Hybrid has always been a place to go for comfort and to feel welcome and needed by Rita and her wonderful horses.

One of the most difficult experiences in my daughter's life was when Rita had to get rid of a horse for reasons I will not go into. My daughter was devastated to find "her" horse gone when she arrived at the barn. Unless you have experienced this kind of pain, to watch a child go through this, is heart-breaking. I can't imagine this happening all over again if Rita is forced to remove her wonderful horses from this property that the town of Acton benefits from so dearly. All of the wonderful assets a horse can bring to a child; responsibility, discipline, empathy, the positive traits go on and on.

Hybrid Farm's various programs that are offered have allowed my daughter the opportunity to achieve greatness. From taking riding lessons and learning on a variety of different kinds of pony's and horses to in turn be able to counsel younger children. To volunteer her time to the many Girl Scout Troops that have come to experience what this barn is all about, and to see a child's dream birthday come true when she rides a horse for the very first time. To help the disabled be able to feel what it is like to be free and ride on a horse rather than a wheelchair, and all the many therapies horses can provide to the disabled population.

Pony Club is another wonderful addition to Hybrid Farm. This is the only riding center around to offer this program. The need for many horses for this program is a must. The assets of having a pony club are numerous. It is not just a pre-teen club, its' education spans to adulthood and many go on to be accomplished veterinarian's, barn managers, animal scientists, etc.

Rita has made Hybrid Farm a very special place. As my daughter goes off to college in the fall, I hope she will have the chance to come back and visit all of her dearest horse friends that have helped her blossom into the wonderful young lady that she has become.

Sincerely,

Betsy Parker  
328 Joseph Road  
Boxborough, MA 01719  
978-264-4107

**170 Split Rock Drive  
Acton, MA 01718  
978-263-3244**

November 12, 2011

Acton Conservation Commission  
472 Main St.  
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Commission Members:

I write in strong support for the preservation of Hybrid Farm as a resource for my family and our community. My 13-year-old daughters, Lara and Rebecca, have been part of the Hybrid "family" since shortly after we moved to Acton in 2002.

Hybrid is the center of my girls' social and recreational lives. My daughters started riding at Hybrid as soon as they were big enough to sit in the saddle safely. They take lessons during the year and participate in Pony Club. Both my children now assist with the younger children during Rita's summer camp.

More than just entertainment, Hybrid is a vital part of the formation of my daughters as contributors to society. By participating in care for the ponies and the farm, my kids are learning how to plan a project and work with others, and how good it feels to do a job competently. In a town that tends to value the life of the mind over the efforts of one's muscles, Lara and Rebecca are learning to value the contribution that manual labor – and those who do it for a living -- make to society. By participating in competition, my children learn the benefit of setting high standards and striving to achieve them. And by helping with small children and those who are differently abled, my girls have gained invaluable lessons about responsibility, patience, and compassion.

Perhaps more than all of this – Rita McConnon and her family are exemplars of everything I want my daughters to be: hard-working, caring, compassionate, community-spirited adults. *I can think of no better role model for my girls than Rita.*

I am a strong supporter of open space conservation and protection. In 1998 my family joined with neighbors in donating six acres of beautiful meadow land with ocean views worth hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Town of South Kingstown, Rhode Island, to prevent it from being divided into house lots. My adjoining property has a conservation

easement that I actively manage. I am a donor and participant in the South Kingstown Land Trust, working to maintain the precious open space in that area. I therefore am cognizant of the important resource that open space provides to Acton, and the challenges you face in protecting it.

I urge the Commission, however, to take every step possible to prevent Hybrid Farm's mission with our community from being harmed or diminished. Severely reducing the number of ponies at the farm is not a realistic or viable solution. I am confident that you can work with Rita and with those of us who support her work to find an acceptable resolution to any issues, and I call upon you to do this.

Very truly yours,

Kathleen M. Sullivan

Dear Rita and Hybrid Farm Family,

My 8 year old granddaughter, Juliana Dicesare, has been taking riding lessons for a couple of years at Hybrid.

I have witnessed a change in Juliana since she has been riding. This very "active" young lady is relaxed and focused around these animals. She has told me the history of Gracie and many of the other horses on this farm. Her knowledge of these animals baffles me. When I asked her "where did you learn all of this?" I was told "From Hybrid". Frankly, I believe that if she had her choice of living at her house or living in the barn with the horses, she would chose the barn.

Hybrid Farm offers a healthy environment for children of all ages. Children are not sitting in front of a video game or watching TV. They are outside in the fresh air, getting exercise. They learn responsibility, respect, and compassion for the animals and for each other.

I have learned that the Town of Acton has asked you to remove 16 of your horses. Who could chose which horse has to be removed from the farm? Where would they go? Removal of these horses might cause you to decrease the number of classes you have, leaving Juliana and a number of children without the opportunity to continue to ride at Hybrid.

It is my hope that the Town of Acton will reconsider their request that you remove 16 of your horses. I would be willing to help you in anyway that I can to keep these horses at Hybrid.

Sincerely,

Marianne Eubanks (grandmother of Juliana DiCesare)

Box 349 - 293 Oakmont Road - Cummaquid, MA 02637

508-922-8023 (cell)

To the Conservation Committee of Acton.

We are extremely disheartened to hear the news that the conservation committee is considering actions that will severely limit the immense benefits that Hybrid farm has provided to the community, kids at risk and to horses that are in need of a good home. We moved back from Toronto last year and my daughter was extremely excited to participate in Hybrid's summer camp. The involvement of teenage girls in helping to teach my daughter Grace as well as the gentle nature of the horses made this an amazing experience for my daughter. Hybrid offers a unique opportunity for teens to be involved in a program such as this and learn how to teach and learn responsibility. With jobs for teens at an all time low, severe cutbacks in Hybrid's operations will only hurt teens and the kids who rely on Hybrid for scholarships and the opportunity to learn in a such a great environment.

Finally, I would hope that the purpose of conservation is not only to preserve the land in its natural state but allow nature to thrive and people to enjoy the nature around us. Allowing horses or ponies that are part of that very nature we seek to conserve to graze on the land should go without question. I understand the need to preserve the land but if we preserve it at the cost of limiting our ability to enjoy it than it is like the scene in the Indiana Jones Movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark" where the government puts the rare ark treasure in a box in a large warehouse where no one can ever enjoy the beauty of this treasure. Please reconsider your actions and at a minimum don't force Hybrid to reduce their number of horses. This only harms the horses and those kids and teens who look to Hybrid as such a valuable experience.

Sincerely,

Jodi and Grace Gernon

[jodi@gernon.com](mailto:jodi@gernon.com)

h- 978-610-6152

c- 978-494-2350

56 Pilgrim Road  
Concord, MA 01742

November 20, 2011

Conservation Commission of Acton  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720

Subject: Hybrid Farms

Dear Commission members,

I am writing to plead with you to find a way to allow Hybrid Farms to continue running its excellent establishment. My nieces, Maddie and Izzy Carey of Acton, have greatly benefitted from the time they have spent at Hybrid. I have observed them in the barn, interacting with the other team members, and the wonderful horses. Each of the girls have learned a strong sense of responsibility, which has translated into improved school work and social skills. And don't we want kids to find life-enhancing activities outside of a computer?

Hybrid Farms is accessible to a broad range of kids, and a haven for wonderful horses. Please keep this wonderful place in Acton.

Best Regards,  
Mary Carey  
17 Village Way  
Natick, MA 01760  
508-655-0807



November 21, 2011

Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton  
Acton, MA

To whom it may concern,

Our nine year old daughter, Nicola, has been riding at Hybid weekly for the past two years. We researched all the local barns in the Concord and Acton area and immediately fell in love with Hybid and knew that this was the right place for our daughter. For the past two years, Nicola has thrived at Hybid eagerly looking forward each week to caring for and riding "her" horse, Little Man. She feels at home at Hybid and a part of a special and caring group of girls and women. She has learned independence, responsibility and empathy for the riders and the horses.

Rita's compassion and dedication to the community she has nurtured at Hybid is inspiring and listening to her speak from the heart about the outreach she does around the community, and as far as Boston bringing in disadvantaged youths and exposing them to the beauty of horses and nature, is inspiring. Rita is a wonderful person who is providing a much needed and much appreciated service to our community and beyond. If she was not allowed to continue doing the amazing outreach work she's doing, it would be a heart breaking loss for so many people, and our community would be the worse off for it. We hope that you will support Hybid farm in its current location and recognize that the philanthropic presence of such an operation is commensurate with the conservation needs of our community and deserves to be acknowledged and encouraged to continue.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dariane Hunt

November 19, 2011

Dear Acton Conservation Commission,

We are asking you to please renew your agreement with Hybrid Farm. Our daughter has been riding at Hybrid for over ten years. Hybrid is the only local riding center. Hybrid offers so many wonderful programs at affordable prices. They also offer many volunteer opportunities. Our daughter has earned many community service hours by volunteering for programs such as Girl Scouts.

It would be a terrible disservice to the riders and the community if Hybrid Farm were asked to reduce the number of horses or be prohibited from expanding. Hybrid Farm nurtures not only our children, but the rescue horses as well. They take pride in the wonderful care of the children, horses and the land necessary for their programs to thrive.

Sincerely,

Diane and Rick Hryniewich  
176 Newtown Rd.  
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Conservation Commission of Acton,

I am writing to ask that you please carefully consider the consequences of reducing, limiting or altering Hybrid Farm Riding Center in any way. For it is a treasure of enormous value to the families it serves, as well as the community at large.

Through her warmth and love of children, Rita McConnon has created a place that children adore. For 31 years Hybrid has peacefully operated as an educational center and home for countless youths. It is viewed by both students and parents as a safe haven for children to learn not just riding skills, but about hard work, responsibility, caring for animals, helping others and respecting property.

Hybrid's contribution reaches beyond the children and families it directly serves. Families throughout Metrowest come to Acton to participate in Hybrid's programs. In doing so, they also bring revenue to numerous other businesses in town, whether it be grocery stores, gas stations, coffee shops, clothing stores or garden centers. Limiting Hybrid's operation would have an economic impact on the community as well.

Rita is truly a very special person with the remarkable ability to nurture children through the love of horses. Please do everything in your power to support her efforts.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Judy Cogan  
Parent of a Riding Student  
65 Mossman Road  
Sudbury, MA 01776

November 21, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing this heartfelt letter to you in regards to Hybid Farm. My beautiful sixteen year old niece Kristina Nelson has been part of the Hybid Farm family for many years. We have watched her grow up with this wonderful establishment. It taught her the obvious things that you do in the equestrian field such as how to ride, compete, groom, care and protect the horses. However, it has taught her much more than that.

We have watched her develop in so many areas throughout the years. We know it is in greatly part of Ms. Rita McConnon and the Hybid Farm. Our niece now knows the meaning of responsibility, respect, hard work and dedication. It is refreshing to see a sixteen year old these days not involved with the peer pressures of life such as drugs and alcohol but to be involved with such a positive and creative organization.

If you take away any part or area of this farm it would be a disservice to the community and to the dedicated kids, teenagers and adults who are trying to make a difference in their lives and in the world. These horses are not just animals they are an important and crucial part of this farm. It would remove the heartbeat of this loving special place that has meant so much too so many people. Please reconsider this decision in the name of humanity.

Best Regards,

Mireya Pagoaga  
Henry Paul Berlied  
(A loving aunt & uncle)

87 Shore Drive  
Concord, MA 01742

November 21, 2011

Dear Acton Conservation Commission,

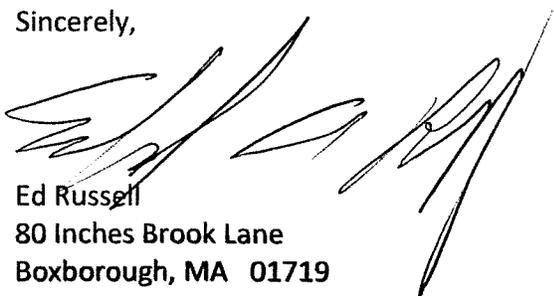
I wanted to take this opportunity to express my concern at the news that Hybrid Farm in Acton may not be able to use the Conservation lands as extensively as it currently does. While I certainly understand and respect the Conservation Commission's goal of protecting conservation land, I know it is also their goal to have the land used and enjoyed by the people of Acton. To that end, please know that we have gained the utmost respect for conservation land through Hybrid Farm.

My daughter has enjoyed and worked with the barn for 8 years. She has gained incredible self-confidence, skills working with young children, and appreciation for balance between people, animals, and land. Thanks to Hybrid Farm and the conservation land it has been allowed to use, my daughter has enjoyed the trails, helped many young riders learn an appreciation for nature, and worked with horses who need special attention and training to get them to the point they may be enjoyed by others.

I am fearful that if Hybrid is forced to reduce the number of ponies it has at the farm or is forced to limit its use for lessons on conservation land, a number of youth in Acton will miss out on an incredible growth experience. Please continue to allow the conservation land to be used for a greater purpose that helps everyone in Acton thrive.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Ed Russell  
80 Inches Brook Lane  
Boxborough, MA 01719

Former Acton resident - 22 yrs.

November 17, 2011

Dear Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

Our daughter has been riding at Hybrid Farm for the last four years, since she was in Kindergarten. Hybrid in a unique barn with a riding program unlike any I've been able to find in the Boston area.

Rita's program is as much, if not more, about teaching character and confidence as it is about teaching technique. There are few opportunities for children around here to experience what Rita brings to her program

- deep understanding of hardship and true commitment – Rita rescues horses in dire condition, and shares with the girls how they have suffered, and the hard work, patience and persistence that goes into rehabilitating them. The girls experience firsthand the commitment it takes to truly help a being in need.
- work and cooperation – part of every program is the nitty-gritty of taking care of a horse including grooming, equipment care, mucking out stalls and general barn work.
- positive rather than competitive environment – There are no formal “horse shows” at Rita's barn. Our daughter is not the most athletic girl, and has had a hard time with competitive sports. Hybrid has allowed her to develop at her own pace, emphasizing the importance of working hard and consistently over the speed to reach milestones.
- being outdoors in a natural setting – So many children's activities these days take place indoors, or in an artificial outdoor setting like sports fields or pools. The great value of the Conservation land adjacent to Hybrid is that it allows the children to experience real nature. I often walk in the Conservation land while Anna rides. Mostly, the people I see there are walking dogs. Very occasionally, I'll pass another adult. But never have I seen a child walking in the Conservation land. Horses are a compelling way to get the children out into the land, and introduce them to the joys of being in true nature.

Rita McConnon brings a unique approach to the communities in and around Acton. I urge you to support her program.

Sincerely,

Ellen Whitney  
315 Lexington Road  
Concord, MA 01742

*Susan Lerner and Aaron Watman*  
*25 Black Horse Drive*  
*Acton, MA 01720*  
*978.263.0045*

November 12, 2011

Dear Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

We are writing to you on behalf of Rita McConnon and Hybid Farm and to let you know how important Hybid Farm is to our family and the community.

Our daughter began riding at Hybid Farm four years ago. We were instantly struck by what a special and unique farm Rita has created. Rita's warm, caring personality helps make children feel instantly comfortable. She teaches them a respect for the horses, themselves and others. Rita hires staff that exemplifies all the values important to her. We have seen children, including our daughter, grow in confidence as they learn to ride, care for the horses and develop compassion for others and the horses.

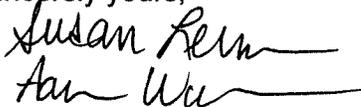
Rita's passion to rescuing abused, neglected and unwanted horses is unparalleled. It has been amazing to watch her love, nurturing and respect, turn scared, un-socialized horses into horse that are gentle and those that become the riders favorites. For the children, and parents, to see what love, structure and consistency can offer these damaged horses, is real and touching and offers important life lessons.

Hybid Farm offers so much to the community. While there are other farms in Acton, we haven't seen and felt the kind of commitment Rita has to the children and community anywhere else....which is why we are at Hybid. We feel so lucky to have a place that offers so much to Acton.

It would be a huge loss to the community to have the programs at Hybid change in any way. If anything, we would love to see more programming at Hybid. The need is great as the waiting lists for lessons and camp prove.

Please help keep part of what is so special about Acton by maintaining, if not helping grow, Hybid Farm.

Sincerely yours,



Susan Lerner  
Aaron Watman

November 15, 2011

5 Taggart Court  
Ashland, MA 01721-1098  
(508) 641-2556

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

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to let you know how much the Hybid Farm has meant to my children, Lianne and Courtney. Lianne is 9 years old, and has found a better sense of self-esteem since she has been coming to the Hybid Farm for her horse riding camp and lessons. She has set out to be a camp counselor, and for her, this is a big goal. She just gave a speech at school last week and part of that speech involved her experience at Hybid Farm and how it has made her strive for helping others. My kids live with me in Ashland, and their father in Lexington comes all the way to Ashland every Tuesday to bring them all the way back to Acton to come to the Hybid Farm. My daughter Courtney also loves the horses, and both of them find this is their main out of school activity.

Please, I most humbly request that you can allow the Hybid Farm to keep its grazing and activities going, for the children and for the sake of the horses. The horses help those children that may not get help otherwise. This relationship is so important. And the thought of animals that would have to be moved, or worse, for the sake of political reasons is heartbreaking. **Please understand that abandoned and abused horses need a home and people to love them, and that children learn and thrive here. Please don't take away the magic that happens here and the wonderful family that is Hybid Farm.**

Sincerely yours,

  
Patricia B. Herzog

Stefanie S. Jandl  
18 Samuel Parlin Drive  
Acton, MA 01720  
978-429-8112

November 12, 2011

Town of Acton Conservation Commission:

I am writing to urge the Conservation Commission to renew and expand the agreement with Hybid Farm that allows horses to graze and be taken on trail rides on town Conservation land. Hybid Farm is a vital community resource and neighbor that depends on our support.

I write from the perspective of a new community member whose 11-year old daughter now rides at Hybid. My family and I moved to Acton from Berkshire County one year ago. We left behind numerous working farms and a much-loved barn where my daughter had ridden for three years. We looked at several communities in this area and ultimately chose Acton because of the excellent schools and the presence of several horse farms. We knew that a community that could support barns with open riding programs (where you don't have to own or lease a horse) would be a place where we would want to live. In particular we had heard great things about the culture and successful Pony Club program at Hybid Farm and so we purchased a home near by. We could not be happier with our decision to locate in Acton and to have our daughter be part of the riding community at Hybid.

We love Hybid Farm for numerous reasons. As a horse barn, it really shines for offering kids and teens top-notch riding and horsemanship instruction for all levels. Unlike many other barns, Hybid riders learn how to tack up their horses and how to care for a horse and a barn. Visit the barn and you will see mature, hard-working and team-minded young people who know how to take care of another living creature and how to treat it with respect and responsibility. These young riders develop critical know-how and confidence with this experience that translates into success in many other aspects of their lives.

The culture that Rita McConnon and her staff cultivate at Hybid Farm deserves particular attention. Having looked at numerous barns I was immediately drawn to Hybid's culture of inclusivity, non-pretension, and full involvement. Riders here don't have to own a horse, be wealthy, or put on airs to feel included. Hybid riders of all stripe, regardless of economic level, are welcomed into a friendly, inclusive community that challenges them to be a better rider and to be their personal best. Over time riders can become junior counselors which gives them the opportunity to lead, mentor, and give back to a community. My daughter can't wait for this responsibility. This is what riding is all about!

Hybid Farm would not be able to succeed as a barn, as a vibrant community member, and as a small business if it were not able to continue at its present operational size. Having a variety of horses and ponies for all levels of riders is critically important as it allows students to move up smoothly in riding ability and to learn from many different kinds of horses. It allows lessons to carry on in case a horse is injured or sick. And having a good-sized stable of horses allows Hybid to offer group lessons, which makes their riding instruction more affordable and more fun for community building.

Beyond our personal engagement with Hybid, we recognize it as a valuable community resource. As a working farm it contributes to the beautiful landscape and character of the town, reminding us all of Acton's origins as a rural farming community. We walk down Nagog Hill Road most days and always enjoy the beauty of horses grazing and the buzz of a busy barn. And on days when we hike into the nearby woods we like nothing more than to encounter a horse and rider enjoying a trail ride. Hybid makes Acton a richer place.

We love Hybid Farm and all that it stands for. It is a very special and dedicated member of the Acton community, one that helps our youngest citizens learn and grow. I am alarmed that Hybid may not be able to continue operating as it presently does, and I urge you not to let this happen. I can't think of a better use of our town conservation land than putting it back to work as a horse field. Please continue to allow Hybid Farm to graze their horses on town Conservation land!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stefanie Jandl". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop on the 'S' and a long tail on the 'l'.

Stefanie S. Jandl

November 18, 2011

Acton Conservation Commission:

I am writing as a concerned Acton resident and parent regarding the decision disallow Hybrid Farm use of the town's conservation land. I do not understand the "cost" to letting Hybrid Farm continue with this agreement, but unfortunately I do understand the consequences of this loss.

My daughter, Miryam, absolutely loves horseback riding, thanks to Hybrid, and has learned so much about caring for horses. It is amazing how this experience of learning to ride and care for an animal so much bigger than herself can boost a child's self-confidence. I don't want to have to tell her she can't take lessons anymore at Hybrid without a justifiable reason.

It is such a wonderful opportunity for Acton residents to have this beautiful treasure right here in our own town. I feel Acton should support businesses as much as possible, especially those like Hybrid that give so much back to the community, as well as the animals. Several of these horses have been rescued and Rita and her staff take such good care of them. The town of Acton should support them in their efforts to save more horses and provide all of their horses with the care and attention they need. Rita also donates her time and money to many good causes/organizations in town, giving back to the community in appreciation for what she has received.

Hybrid Farm also adds to the beauty of this town and is one of the highlights of my bike route along Nagog Hill Road.

I hope you will reconsider why you are making this choice and whether this course of action is the only option. In this economy, we should be encouraging the growth of our businesses rather than hindering it, especially businesses that provide so many wonderful benefits for our children as well as the non-human residents of this community.

Thank you for your time,

Sharyn Gilfix

Nov. 18, 2011

the reward of hard work; mentoring

To Whom It May Concern:

I could go on. It would truly be a shame to lose this from Acton.

I am writing in support of Hybrid Farm, as a plea to keep this business in our town. My daughter has taken riding lessons at Hybrid for years, and participated in the Pony Club program.

They have attended summer camp there, both as campers and as counselors. I brought a girl Scout troop there to earn a horsemanship badge.

Hybrid is an example of a wonderful youth activity that keeps girls interested, involved, and active. It teaches responsibility; mentoring;

Thank you,

Karen Biresak

Karen Biresak

12 Lexington Dr., Acton

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

November 19, 2011

Dear Members of the Conservation Commission,

If you drive down Nagog Hill Road, you will see that Hybrid Farm is a horse farm because you will see horses residing there and you will see children riding there. What you can not see from the road is that Hybrid Farm is a haven.

I am a resident of Sudbury, MA and the parent of a child who has been riding at Hybrid Farm for 9 years. As a former equestrian, I put a great deal of time and thought into choosing the place where I wanted my daughter to learn to ride, and far more importantly, to learn the joy, passion and responsibility of taking care of horses in a safe and nurturing environment. Hybrid Farm stood out from a multitude of choices in the surrounding area as the clear winner and has continued to be the right choice for every one of the last nine years.

Rita McConnon has the biggest heart of any person I know and that single fact is reflected in every aspect of Hybrid Farm, from her care and nurturing of the community of riders who participate there to her care and nurturing of the horses who reside there. Hybrid Farm is a haven because of Rita's philosophy of running the barn, which is and has always been safety first. What comes second? Joy, passion, love, hard work, responsibility, care, generosity and helping others; these characteristics imbue every aspect of the barn.

I considered reporting a long list of accolades next including riding victories, prizes for both horse management and horsemanship knowledge, and numerous other successes Hybrid Farm riders have been awarded, but I assume you have been well informed of these externally recognized measures of success. I wanted to share with you the victories that do not come from performance on a single day at a single event. These are the victories of grooming and tacking up a horse by oneself for the very first time, of learning how to steer, post at the trot and navigate a pony over poles on the ground, of cleaning a stall and scrubbing water buckets, of watching the vet, dentist or farrier administer routine care, and of lending a hand to anyone in need. These are the victories that have made me such a fan of Hybrid Farm and these victories will stay with my daughter, and all the other Hybrid Farm riders, throughout their lives.

In an age where most parents worry about their children spending too much time in the virtual world, Hybrid Farm is very real treasure offering kids an opportunity to immerse themselves in the "old-fashioned" accomplishments that come from hard work and responsibility and because they are at Hybrid Farm, it is wrapped in a blanket of nurturing. Hybrid Farm is an invaluable asset to the town of Acton.

It is my sincerest hope that each member of the Conservation Commission will consider the issues before them, with regard to Hybrid Farm, in the context of the big picture that this horse farm offers to all of the students who ride there (residents of Acton and of many other locations). These students are future adults who are learning the value of being a good citizen with each day spent at the barn.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Andrea Kozol  
25 Wadsworth Road  
Sudbury, MA 01776  
978-443-8826  
ajkozol@comcast.net

John M. and Carol L. Pavan

63 Windsor Avenue, Acton, MA 01720

Telephone: (978) 264-4370

jm.pavan@verizon.net

c.pavan@verizon.net

November 20, 2011

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

Re: Hybid Farm, 217 Nagog Hill Road, Acton, MA

To the Members of the Commission:

We are writing to ask the town to work with the McConnon family, owners of Hybid Farm, toward a positive outcome which allows Hybid Farm to continue to do the great work it has done in Acton since the 1980s.

As commissioners you are charged with ensuring the town has ample opportunity for recreation. As such, and given the unique resource Hybid Farm provides to the town, I would challenge you consider this -- if Hybid Farm were significantly reduced in size, how and where could the benefit to the town be replaced?

We understand that no issues are black-and-white. However, as a commission representing the town we have lived in for 25 years, we ask that you weigh the issues and favor preserving an amenity that has done so much for so many families and animals.

Our daughter, Tracey, blossomed as a young child due to the caring manner which Hybid Farm treats all of its riders. She developed moral and valuable life skills starting with something as simple as having Hybid Farm as a place where she felt welcome, loved and confident.

In the "Open Space and Recreation" section of the *Acton Master Plan*, which this commission is charged with implementing, are many strategies and actions which would support the Conservation Commission maintaining a good working relationship with Hybid Farm. We ask you to use every effort to do so.

Thank you.



John M. Pavan



Carol L. Pavan

To the members of the Acton Conservation Commission

Dear Commissioners:

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

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

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

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

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

and

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

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

Sincerely,

Deb Matthews  
11 Lincoln Drive  
Acton MA  
Resident since 1998

22 November 2011

To Acton's Conservation Commission,

I am writing on behalf of Hybrid Farm. My daughter attended a week of summer camp at Hybrid Farm and had the most wonderful time. Rita was holding a session of summer camp that only had one younger girl enrolled in the class. Rita approached me to ask if my 7-year-old daughter could attend that week of summer camp for free so the girl would not be alone with a bunch of older kids. My daughter attended that week and she and the girl had a fabulous time together.

Unfortunately, we do not have the means to regularly attend classes or camps at Hybrid Farm but that one week made a great impression on my daughter. I was very impressed with Rita and Hybrid Farm that they are so concerned that those attending have a good experience that they were willing to offer free summer camp to my daughter. It shows a dedication and of love of what they are doing there that transcends just doing a job to make money. If their license agreement were not renewed, Hybrid Farm would not have been able to offer a scholarship to my daughter for camp.

I strongly urge you to renew your license agreement with Hybrid Farm. This is a wonderful business that clearly loves what they are doing. It would be a great loss for the community if they had to cut back on their programs, many of which directly benefit community programs such as Girl Scouts, local school fundraisers and helping at-risk youth to name a few. Please help them continue the wonderful work that they are doing by renewing your license agreement with them. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea Bleak

**ANTHONY AIN  
16 WALNUT STREET  
ACTON, MA 01720**

**November 22, 2011**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support Rita McConnon and Hybid Farm. I understand that the Conservation Commission is considering the impact of Hybid Farm on certain conservation land that belongs to the Town of Acton. I believe that it would be a grave mistake for the Conservation Commission to restrict Hybid Farm's operations.

I've known Rita for more than a decade. She is one of the nicest, kindest, most genuine people you will ever meet.

But this isn't about Rita. This is about what is best for the Town of Acton. And allowing Hybid Farm to continue to serve the community is what's best for the Town of Acton.

I'm sure you've heard about the many ways in which Rita serves the Acton community, without ever asking for anything in return. Hybid offers scholarships to children who cannot afford to ride elsewhere. Hybid offers therapy programs for special needs children. The things that Hybid does cannot and will not be replicated elsewhere. If Hybid cannot do it, no one will, and our community will be the worse off as a result.

I'm sure you've also heard about how much the children of Acton love Hybid Farm. Hybid is simply the best place for children to ride horses in the Boston area. Hands down, no question.

You probably know that, in many elementary school classes, students are asked, at some point, to do a project about their favorite place on earth. Many of them, my children included, use that project as an opportunity to write about Hybid Farm. They love Hybid. They love the people, they love the horses, they love the atmosphere, and they love the freedom and responsibility they have there.

For me, however, the real issue is that Hybid offers the children of Acton a unique, irreplaceable life experience. My children have been riding horses at Hybid for eight years. They have learned many important lessons and life skills there. They've learned to care for horses and to ride horses, but that's the least of what they've learned. They've learned responsibility. They've learned respect for other people. They've learned the importance of doing a job properly. They've learned diligence. They've learned how to work hard and how to love what you're doing, even when it's hard work. They've learned how to work as part of a team, with and without supervision. They've been given an opportunity to be counselors, and they've learned how to care for younger children. And, despite my enormous respect for the Acton school system, they've learned these lessons far more effectively and in a far more lasting way than the school system can ever hope to accomplish.

My children's experience is not unique. I have watched dozens of children at Hybrid Farm, and they all transform when they are there. They grow, and they mature, and they become responsible citizens. The Town of Acton actually owes Rita and Hybrid a great debt for the public service that she performs, every day, for the children of Acton.

Forcing Hybrid Farm to curtail its operations would be a terrible, terrible mistake. It would have profoundly negative consequences for my family, and, for the reasons I've described above, it would have profoundly negative consequences for the Town of Acton, too.

I understand that you believe that the character of conservation land must be preserved, and I share that goal. I also understand and respect the importance of establishing rules and maintaining compliance with those rules. In doing so, however, you cannot and must not forget that you are supposed to serve the greater public good. Forcing Hybrid to restrict or cut back its activities is not in the interests of the Town of Acton. There are many possible solutions to this situation that would not involve changing the character of Hybrid Farm's operations. Please explore those alternative possibilities. Please do not use your powers to do a greater harm to the Town.

The welfare of many Acton children depends on your decision. Please don't let them down.

Sincerely,

/s/

Anthony Ain

Dear Rita,

I am happy to tell you why Hybrid Farm is important to our family. My six year old daughter, Caroline, first went to Hybrid for a birthday party. She had a wonderful time riding on the ponies and learning about their care and how they live in the barn. Hybrid Farm continued to be a frequent topic of conversation for the rest of the school year.

When it came time to make choices for summer activities, camp at Hybrid Farm was Caroline's first choice. She absolutely loved all aspects of being at the barn; grooming, cleaning out stalls, feeding the ponies, riding, putting things away in the tack room. It proved to be great for her self-esteem to be an important part of the care for the animals. She cried when her week at camp was done and told me it was the best week she ever had. This is not a statement to be taken lightly since there are many activities Caroline has tried that really are not a fit.

Caroline has continued with lessons this fall while we work on finding her activities that make her feel good about herself, important and empowered. Hybrid Farm provides all of that for her; not only is the staff nurturing and patient, but the opportunity to spend time with the animals has been very fulfilling for her. Caroline's siblings also love visiting the barn and Caroline is very proud to be able to show them around and tell them about each pony. She knows something about every single animal living there. Lessons were the favorite part of her week. One of the special treats for her was when she was able to go on a trail ride outside the rings.

Hybrid Farm has become an important place for Caroline and our family. I was so relieved to find a place and activity that make her so excited, something she truly looked forward to each week. I can tell that she feels good about herself and self-confident from what she has learned there. We would be truly crushed if the farm were forced to limit its capacity for lessons, programs and ability to care for the ponies (including giving a home to animals which needed rescuing).

Sincerely,

Beth Thut  
369 Elm Street  
Concord, MA



November 15, 2011

Dear Members of the Acton Conservation Committee,

I am writing a letter to you today to express my sadness over your consideration of altering your current agreement with Hybid Farm. **I strongly urge you to keep the agreement in its current state.** At a time when the economy is affecting so many people, and so many need help, I am baffled why the committee would consider impacting a program and facility that benefits so many animals and people in a constructive way.

Hybid does fantastic work – every day – that impacts the lives of needy animals and many people. What Rita and her team do, through their actions, demonstrate important values. They

- Care for the most needed in society, animals or people
- Demonstrate that every child/person can help, and in doing so, find they are better because of it
- And what we love, so much, is that Hybid, does all of this in such an unassuming way

In a world where so much seems to be based on how much you have and “What have you done for me lately” ---- there is Hybid. They focus on putting their endless energy and minimal dollars into what they can do now for animals and kids. This world needs more of that and we need to support people who act in this way.

For us personally, Hybid has had a huge impact on our daughter’s life for over 9 years. Rita and her counselors at Hybid farm have taught:

- Respect – The children learn about respect. Respect instructors, other girls, your environment, and animals
- Responsibility - At a very young age, my daughter was given the responsibility of taking care of horses, tacking them up, and leading them out to pasture.
- Confidence – By giving Melissa responsibility, she has gained confidence. She also knows help is available when needed. This has benefited Melissa is

school situations as well. She learned it is OK to ask questions, to seek help when needed.

- Friendship – Hybrid has provided a safe haven of friendship. When clicks form at school and other girls may turn against her, my daughter knows she can go and spend time with her Hybrid friends in a caring and supportive environment.

For all they do, I would hope that you will allow Hybrid to keep all of their horses and to use our open conservation land. This would be in the best interest of our community. It has worked for 31 years, and influenced and helped so many. Lets continue the tradition.

Finally, if my words cannot convince you to keep the current agreement, please review the following pictures. After all, a picture is worth 1000 words.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

*Cindy Kennelly*

Cindy Kennelly  
26 Tavern Circle  
Sudbury, MA 01776

These are the brownies my daughter made for the end-of-week camp celebration:



November 13, 2011

Acton Conservation Commission  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Commission Members:

I'm writing to express my strong support for Hybrid Farm and the work that it does with the youth of our community. I have two daughters, AB graduates (now 22 and 19) who spent several wonderful years riding at Hybrid more than a decade ago. Their experiences were nothing short of incredible. Rita has an uncanny ability to identify the areas in a child that most need strengthening, and she uses riding as the vehicle to inspire confidence, passion, caring, responsibility and empathy. My children each gained an enormous amount from her care and attention, and will remember the many life skills they learned in the barn forever.

My older daughter rode Lottie, a beloved adoptee. Lottie was already well beyond her expected lifespan when my daughter rode her. She was a gentle tutor to scores of kids and provided wonderful lessons in loyalty, persistence, compassion, and patience. Once Lottie finally reached the age where she could no longer accommodate riders, Rita kept her on as a beloved mascot and lawn mower.

My younger daughter originally rode Pepper, a perky small pony. Before long, much to our surprise, Rita assigned her to ride Chase, a huge former racehorse. This occurred shortly after my daughter recovered from a serious injury unrelated to riding. She was very tentative about her strength and skills. Watching my 7-year-child overcome her fear and ride, care for, and tack this enormous animal was more than inspiring. I can't begin to describe the confidence my daughter gained, or imagine anything else that would have allowed her to earn that satisfaction.

There are few experiences in a child's life that provide such wonderful learning opportunities as Hybrid. At the barn, caring for the horses is as important as riding them, and the kids rise to the occasion. Rita and the other teachers believe the best of each student and animal, and each delivers.

Hybrid was a major part of my children's childhood in Acton. It is one of a precious few experiences that has left such positive lasting impressions and taught such valuable skills. The farm's beautiful location and access to riding trails is an essential part of its character.

Please do everything you can to support the work of Hybrid. It is truly one of the very special things that makes our community great.

Sincerely,  
Judy Patel  
16 Juniper Ridge Road  
Acton, MA 01720

Re: Hybid Farm/Rita McConnen's License Renewal Request

November 12, 2011  
46 Massaoit Ave.  
Sudbury, MA 01776

Dear Acton Conservation Commission Members,

We are writing in support of Rita McConnen's request to renew the license agreement between the Acton Conservation Commission and Hybid Farm to allow Rita to continue to graze horses on that land and offer lessons and trail rides on said property. We were quite honestly shocked to hear from Rita that the Conservation Commission was considering not only not permitting these uses to continue, but also, perhaps, requiring Rita to reduce the number of ponies on the farm by at least half. What could possibly be the good of doing so? Our guess is you would be putting her out of business, and for what gain? Acton would lose a real treasure.

Hybid Farm is an asset to the Town of Acton. Every summer we willingly make the round trip from Sudbury to Acton twice a day, nearly two hours of driving each day, because Rita offers our daughter Laura a unique and truly wonderful experience. There are horse riding farms closer to us, but none can match the caliber of Hybid Farm.

Under Rita's watchful and loving eye, the girls at Hybid learn, through caring for the horses and working together, lessons that reach far beyond the farm yard. They learn what it means to be responsible for another living creature, they experience first hand how to work as a team, and they also feel terrific about themselves. If you ever visit Hybid Farm in full swing you can't help but notice how confident the girls are. They look so at home as they go about tending and riding their horses together. Where else in this fast paced modern world can these girls go to replicate the magic that is Hybid Farm?

What better use for the fields around the farm than to continue the rural tradition of grazing and riding horses? Hybid Farm is a real asset to the Town. We ask that you renew the license agreement with Hybid Farm in full. Hybid Farm is a real jewel. Please act in support of Hybid farm so that our daughter and so many other children can continue to benefit from all that Rita and Hybid Farm have to offer.

Sincerely,

Cathy and Roger Manwaring

Acton Conservation Commission  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720

November 13, 2011

To whom it may concern:

It has come to our attention that you are considering reducing Hybrid Farm's use of the conservation land. My daughter has been riding with Hybrid Farm for over 8 years and we wanted to let you know how devastating that news was to us. First, because of all the good that Rita McConnon and her associates do for riders and horses and second, the acclaim Hybrid has brought to the town of Acton.

I don't know if you are aware of how unique Hybrid Farm is and what a gem Acton has. We have looked at other barns and my daughter has friends at numerous barns closer to us, yet we have chosen to travel half an hour to get to Hybrid because of what is taught here. It is much more than horse riding. The riders learn numerous life lessons including how to get along with others including those not as fortunate as themselves or how to care for horses especially ones that have been mistreated/rescued. Hybrid has been a refuge for my daughter, away from bullying, back-stabbing competition, and other stresses. Instead, Rita McConnon has taught her riders to be mentors of each other, to cheer each other on even when in competition, and to take responsibility for their actions. We could find riding lessons much closer to home but the lessons taught at Hybrid are much harder to find.

In addition, Hybrid Farm is known outside of Acton as a leader in Pony Club – an international organization. Pony Club stresses knowledge about horses as well as the riding. Hybrid piloted a program for riders who do not own their own horses and as a result of this pilot, Hybrid in Acton became one of the first "Pony Centers" in the United States! The riders at Hybrid have quickly risen to the top within the Northeast region and have gone to Nationals several years in a row – this is remarkable especially since Hybrid horses are ridden by all levels of riders and many of them are rescued horses. Also, many people outside of Acton know Hybrid for its good work with residential girls and at-risk youth, as well as its willingness to take on rescued horses.

In your decision, you should also take into account the business that Hybrid brings to Acton. I spend several hours at least 2 times a week in Acton waiting for my daughter during her lessons. I take this opportunity to buy groceries, shop, buy gas, eat at restaurants, etc. in Acton. I certainly wouldn't be spending this money in Acton if Hybrid wasn't here and I know many of Hybrid's students come from out of town, so I expect their parents are spending money in Acton also.

Again, I would like to express our distress over Hybrid having to curtail its programs. With all the good that Hybrid does, isn't there some accommodation that could be agreed to?

Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,



Michelle L. Roman  
58 Juniper Road  
Weston, MA 02493

To Whom it may Concern:

I am writing to share with you what Hybrid farm has meant to my family. We first found Hybrid 10 years ago when my daughter was looking for an affordable farm to ride at. She quickly was welcomed into the barn community. She learned how to care for the horses and that it important to take responsibility for the health and care of your horse. She has embraced this philosophy and has worked hard not only to care for the horses but also to learn as much as possible about horses in general. These are values she has learned at Hybrid, and I appreciate how she has learned to consider the welfare of the horse.

Through the years of riding she has also learned the value of striving to be the best you can be. She has been encouraged to compete in a wide range of competitions that have led to trips to Kentucky, Virginia, and Canada. She has had the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life and to experience competing as an individual and as a team. Most importantly, the Hybrid members are very supportive, even when competing with each other they have learned to celebrate each others accomplishments.

Hybrid brings together a nurturing environment. Many of the Hybrid riders are Junior and Senior High School age. This can often be a particularly challenging period for kids. Hybrid gives the girls a safe place for them to be themselves. For the girls they share a common love of horses and they are accepting of each other in a way they don't seem to be able to be accepted at school.

Hybrid is a special place, a place for kids to learn about themselves, about the world around them, and how to be responsible. It has been an extraordinary experience, and I am so thrilled that we have had this opportunity. I sincerely hope other kids will have the same.

Respectfully

Janet Werth

November 18, 2011

To: Acton Conservation Commission  
Re: Hybid Farm

Dear Conservation Commission,

I'm writing on behalf of Hybid Farm, who is currently leasing some town land for trail rides, lessons, Girl Scouts, etc. As the parent of a child who has ridden there for the past nine years, I'm deeply concerned with the changes you are asking of Hybid. I can't tell you how much my daughter, personally, has benefited from being there. She has learned self-control, empathy towards animals, responsibility, and teamwork, in addition to developing her riding skills.

Rita McConnon not only gives kids a welcoming place to learn about riding and horsemanship, but she provides an amazing community service by giving teens a safe place to hang out and be productive, kids with special needs a place to relax and be their best selves, and kids who love horses a place to truly shine. Her barn is a Pony Club Riding Center, meaning the kids who love horses and want to be a part of this national organization don't have to own their own horses. And her Riding Center is unique among other Pony Club groups in that the kids all work to help each other, in a truly empathetic and nurturing fashion, instead of simply competing to win.

One other thing: in this economy, many people are trying to get rid of their horses, and finding a place for them is becoming increasingly difficult. Rita has taken in several abused horses, and cared for them and revitalized them such that they are now shining as school and competition horses. How great is that??

Taking away Hybid's ability to use the land, and requiring them to cut their horses in half, will cut away the heart of this endeavor. And it will make a lot of local kids very, very sad, leaving them no place to continue to feel accomplished and welcomed and nurtured. What Rita has been doing at Hybid has worked for many years; please let her continue to provide this community service for many years more.

Sincerely,

Stefanie Cloutier  
109 Grove Street  
Concord, MA 01742  
stefanieac@comcast.net

November 20, 2011

To: Acton Conservation Department

From: Julie Greenspan

8 Overlook Dr.

Acton, MA 01720

I am writing regarding the possible reduction in number of horses and use of conservation land by Hybrid Farm. Hybrid Farm has been a very special part of our family for the past 8 years. Our daughter Annie was very interested in taking riding lessons and when we moved here eight years ago. We won a week of summer riding camp at Hybrid Farm, donated by Rita McConnon, at the McCarthy-Towne school auction. Many people at the auction and others who we told about winning the week at camp told us what a wonderful place Hybrid Farm was. Annie loved her week at the camp and started riding lessons there the follow fall. Since then Annie has been riding at Hybrid practically year round. She continued going to the summer camp for several summers after her first week there and then volunteered as a camp counselor for 3 or 4 summers when she was old enough. Hybrid Farm has become her second home. Rita McConnen provides a safe, instructive, warm, caring environment for all children and teens who come to Hybrid to learn to ride and take of horses. Everyone is welcome and Rita provides oportunites for under privileged children to experience horseback riding through Girl Scouts and other programs. As a parent, I am so thankful that my child who has always loved being around animals, has had such a wonderful place to be with horses, learn the values of taking care of horses, working with others as well as becoming a proficient rider.

I want many other children to have the same opportunities and experiences as my daughter did at Hybrid Farm. Therefore I ask that the Acton Conservation Commisision allow Rita McConnon and Hybrid Farm to be able to renew the agreement with the Town and be able to maintain the number of horses at Hybrid Farm as well as use the land for grazing and trail rides that surrounds the farm. I am always meeting people who know of Hybrid farm either as having been a rider there or having a child who was a rider and we always have one thing to say about the farm; that Hybrid Farm is a very special part of Acton.

Dear Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

I am writing to ask you to please continue to license the conservation land to Hybrid Farm with appropriate updates so that they can continue to provide the wonderful programs and opportunities to our children and our local and surrounding communities.

I can tell you first hand how my children and my family have benefitted from being a part of the Hybrid family from the very first week of summer camp my daughters attended when they were a shy five and six year old to now, a freshman and junior in high school confidently riding year round.

Through Hybrid's programs, my daughters have learned not just about riding and handling horses safely and correctly, but everything there is to do with the care of the horses from health and nutrition to what it takes to manage and keep the barn safe for everyone.

Hybrid's programs have helped my children realize that they are capable and able. My daughters got their first jobs as summer camp counselors there. It was a wonderful opportunity for them to apply and re-enforce the things they learned and to help their campers enjoy the world of horses as they do. Hybrid has also given them many community service hours through volunteering in the Hybrid programs made available to the Girl Scouts, residential girls from Boston and Concord, and in the rescue of horses.

Because Hybrid is also a US Pony Club riding center (the very first in our region, and one that other centers are modeled after!), my daughters have participated in many mounted and unmounted activities where they are part of a team just like other organized sports. They have learned how to cooperate and help each other achieve their goals whether it is an individual endeavor or a team competition.

As a parent I am so happy that my neighbor introduced us to Hybrid. My daughters learned the joy of working hard at something they love, to respect the people, the horses and the land that allows them to pursue this passion. Through the many programs my daughters have participated in they have found great happiness and confidence that will help them all through their lives.

As a family, we have made many close friends at Hybrid - not just with the kids, but also with their parents as we watch and support our children together striving to achieve their goals. We also got to enjoy the trails around Hybrid as we waited for our children to complete their barn chores. We have had fun volunteering and participating in the many events that Hybrid has held or participated in. We have introduced and recommended Hybrid to many friends and neighbors looking for good children's programs. It is a great community!

I think it would be a terrible loss to our children and our community to reduce the programs we have at Hybrid. Please continue to allow Hybrid to bring these great opportunities to meet the ever increasing need to give our kids a great place to come and connect with nature and be outdoors, to grow and learn, and give back to their communities.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration!

Sincerely,

Stella Ko  
11 Guswood Rd.  
Acton, MA  
978-929-9921

November 14, 2011

To the Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing this letter to support Hybrid Farm and its priceless contribution to the physical and mental health of many children and adolescents.

My daughter has had a passion for horses since she was very young but I always hesitated in allowing her to pursue her dream. Four years ago I finally decided to introduce my then 8 year old daughter to horseback riding when a friend recommended Hybrid Farm. At Hybrid I found an amazing, unique environment that nurtures, teaches, promotes self confidence and allows generations of youngster to grow into mature and responsible young adults.

One of the specific characteristic of the programs that are offered at Hybrid, is that children, not only learn everything about horses and how to ride, but learn how to respect nature, how to live in equilibrium with animals and the environment, how to cooperate within the Barn, how to care for the animals and the land.

As a pediatrician, I am very invested in children's health, and along with many other colleagues, I have been touched by a book recently published about the disconnection of children from nature, which has been linked to mental/behavioral and physical adverse long term outcome. The book is "Last child in the woods: saving our children from Nature-Deficit Disorder" written by Richard Louv. This book describes the phenomenon that in the past 30 years has driven children away from nature and had drawn them into technology and virtual relationships. The effects of this life-style changes has lead to a substantial increase in anxiety disorders, behavioral problems, cognitive impairment, obesity, allergies and asthma. The author voices a call to pediatricians, parents, teachers, administrators and everyone invested in the health of children, to promote a return to nature which will be the greatest investment for the health of future generations.

Hybrid Farm serves this purpose in a very substantial way. It provides opportunities to live and respect nature to a very wide range of children and young adults through lessons, camps, Girl Scouts, joint programs for youth-at-risk and therapeutic riding. It is also able to rescue horses that have been abandoned or neglected.

My daughter's life has been deeply touched by Hybrid Farm. My daughter has suffered from anxiety since she was a little toddler and was unable to join a group sport or activity. Anxiety has adversely shaped her self confidence and the image of herself within the world. Since she started riding at Hybrid, my daughter has had a smile on her face, has been able to regain confidence and most of her symptoms of anxiety have disappeared. I still remember her words, one day driving our 12 miles back home: " Mommy, when I am at Hybrid and I ride and care for the horses I finally feel no fears, no heart pounding in my throat, no sadness ever! I finally feel happy".

It is with the power of my daughter's words that I ask for Hybrid Farm to continue to run its programs and be able to expand to allow more children to experience this wonderful encounter with nature and horses.

Sincerely yours,

Silvia Patrizi M.D.  
42 Asbury Street  
Lexington, MA 02421

50 Parker Street  
Lexington, MA 02421  
November 12, 2011

Dear Conservation Commission of Acton,

I am writing this letter as I just heard that Hybrid Farm's current understanding with the commission may change and the renewal of their current agreement may be in jeopardy.

I don't know how to express what an amazing place Hybrid Farm is and how it has positively impacted the life of my daughter and so many other girls. My daughter Isabelle Troutman first went to Hybrid as a 6 year old for a week in the summer camp program. She was timid and she did not make friends easily. She was terrified of dogs. A friend told me what a wonderful summer camp program Rita ran at Hybrid Farm and so I thought I would give it a try, as we modern mothers want to empower our girls! I was astounded...after a week at camp my daughter was a changed person...she had found her passion...horses. And she could not wait until the next summer. The next summer she spent 3 weeks at Hybrid and so on and so on, eventually becoming a counselor at the farm, where she learned to care and support the younger girls, and how to teach as well.

Hybrid has been an amazing place. The opportunity to learn to love and care for large animals teaches children how to love and care for our world and our environment. Additionally Hybrid is a community of girls who love and support each other. Rita always said that she felt good that she knew she was providing a place for girls to go that wasn't the mall, because really where do our girls go, especially when they get a little older? I have always been grateful for Hybrid because, unlike many other barns, it is not about what girls can ride the best, or who can afford the best riding clothes, or who can afford their own horse. Hybrid is about love. That may sound corny, but those girls learn to love those horses that only have one eye, the ones who have been starved and abused, and through the love of the girls and Rita they see for themselves what the power of love can bring. Additionally my daughter, and the other girls, truly learn to love and respect each other. Hybrid does not foster competition, like other barns, but teaches girls to work together to take care of the horses and each other.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have had my daughter at Hybrid. I don't know how Rita does it, but I have incredible admiration for her barn and her program. We live in Lexington so we need to travel to go to Hybrid, and once we tried a barn in Lexington. My daughter Isabelle quickly assessed that what she loved more than anything about Hybrid, was not just horseback riding, as that can be found in other places, but the community of girls and the support of the program that Rita has built. I never questioned our commute to Hybrid again.

Acton is lucky to have such a gem in its community, and if you do not let Hybrid continue as it has you are losing something that is special and can't really be seen from the outside...but can only be experienced by our girls. Most importantly you are losing the opportunity to continue to educate girls to be stewards of the environment and the animals that make up an integral part of that environment.

Sincerely,

Terry Dankel  
(mother of Isabelle Troutman)

11 Putter Drive

Acton MA 01720

November 15 2011

Acton Conservation Commission

Town of Acton

Acton, MA 01720

Dear Sirs/Madams:

I am writing on behalf of Rita McConnon and Hybid Farm here in Acton in order to preserve the running of the farm as it has been for over 30 years. I have two daughters, multiple friends and family, and myself who truly enjoy, and endorse, the running of the Farm.

Hybid is one of the things that makes Acton unique and adds to the town's character. The farm obviously allows multiple recreational opportunities but almost more importantly, teaches the riders, observers and friends of the people who use Hybid, about the importance of caring for living things, helping those less fortunate, and working together collectively. The farm teaches kindness, responsibility, respect and self reliance...all extremely valuable qualities that we need more of.

Please continue to allow Hybid to use conservation lands as they have in the past. I would advocate to allow the farm to grow rather than shrink!

In the times we live in, we continue to see more and more housing developments that greatly reduce the character of Acton. Town surveys have shown again and again that the people of the town want more recreational opportunities, not less. Let's keep and expand one of those opportunities that distinguishes and adds to the character of Acton.

Sincerely,

Bridget McKeever Matz

8 Marlborough Street  
Boston, MA 02116  
November 14, 2011

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

Dear Conservation Commission Members:

I am writing to express my support for Rita McConnon and Hybid Farm and to urge you to continue to allow their horses to use the land that surrounds Hybid Farm. Riding at Hybid has been the weekly highlight for my daughter Katie for the last year and a half. Riding there has not only improved her strength and balance but has helped her develop patience, confidence and responsibility in a way that other afterschool activities have not.

We came to Hybid Farm because the other barns we contacted would not start lessons until children were 8 or 9 years old. Because Hybid has taken in some of the smaller ponies like Tinkerbelle and Mac that other barns would not, Katie was able to start just before she turned 6. If Hybid had to send away these smaller ponies, it is quite possible that Katie would have to give up riding for a year or more. This would absolutely break her heart.

I realize that I am not a resident of Acton and that my daughter benefits from the use of Town land. I am tremendously grateful that my family can enjoy the country every week, despite living in Boston. We regularly patronize businesses in Acton during our weekly trips and hope to continue visiting Acton regularly for many more years.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

Pamela A. Baker

Dear Rita,

I am happy to tell you why Hybrid Farm is important to our family. My six year old daughter, Caroline, first went to Hybrid for a birthday party. She had a wonderful time riding on the ponies and learning about their care and how they live in the barn. Hybrid Farm continued to be a frequent topic of conversation for the rest of the school year.

When it came time to make choices for summer activities, camp at Hybrid Farm was Caroline's first choice. She absolutely loved all aspects of being at the barn; grooming, cleaning out stalls, feeding the ponies, riding, putting things away in the tack room. It proved to be great for her self-esteem to be an important part of the care for the animals. She cried when her week at camp was done and told me it was the best week she ever had. This is not a statement to be taken lightly since there are many activities Caroline has tried that really are not a fit.

Caroline has continued with lessons this fall while we work on finding her activities that make her feel good about herself, important and empowered. Hybrid Farm provides all of that for her; not only is the staff nurturing and patient, but the opportunity to spend time with the animals has been very fulfilling for her. Caroline's siblings also love visiting the barn and Caroline is very proud to be able to show them around and tell them about each pony. She knows something about every single animal living there. Lessons were the favorite part of her week. One of the special treats for her was when she was able to go on a trail ride outside the rings.

Hybrid Farm has become an important place for Caroline and our family. I was so relieved to find a place and activity that make her so excited, something she truly looked forward to each week. I can tell that she feels good about herself and self-confident from what she has learned there. We would be truly crushed if the farm were forced to limit its capacity for lessons, programs and ability to care for the ponies (including giving a home to animals which needed rescuing).

Sincerely,

Beth Thut  
369 Elm Street  
Concord, MA

32 Mohegan Rd  
Acton, MA 01720  
978-929-9440

November 18, 2011

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

To the members of the Acton Conservation Commission:

My daughter Elsa has been attending programs at Hybrid Farm for the past three years. Her time at Hybrid has been a very positive experience. The Farm offers a friendly, nurturing environment with amazing horses and devoted staff/owners with a true passion for teaching horseback riding.

But my daughter gets so much more from Hybrid than just learning to ride horses. There is a strong emphasis on responsibility at the farm. Everyone is expected to take part in the daily chores. Mucking out stalls, grooming and tacking horses, and sweeping the barn are just a few of the regular chores. These responsibilities help the riders to feel not only competent on the farm but also more confident in their personal lives.

My daughter especially enjoys the trail rides so it is our hope that the agreement Hybrid Farm has with the Conservation Commission will continue. I do not know the McConnon family personally, but I've always been very impressed with how clean and well organized the farm is. In my opinion, the use of the conservation land is a perfect fit—nature at it's best.

Hybrid Farm truly does feel like a second home to Elsa and she has said on several occasions she wants to be Rita when she grows up. Her time at Hybrid is an experience she will always remember she looks forward to riding there for many more years.

Sincerely,



Rebecca MacNeill

cc: Rita McConnon

Nov. 20, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the owner and director of The Cannon Theatre in Littleton. My daughter used to ride at Hybrid Farm, and also helped Rita with the horses several years ago. She had a great experience there and Rita was more than just an instructor, she was so personable and helpful with her---- she became a good friend to her. We absolutely love Rita and what she is doing with her farm. Her programs are amazing and the kids have a good positive time while being there.

Rita has also been helping with me at my theater. She donated riding lessons this past Sept., when we had our benefit for the theater, which is a non-profit theater. She was also a member of the board for about a year, and volunteers to sell tickets and handle front of house for me. She is very giving in her volunteer work, with her farm, as well as around the community.

She is a very positive influence in the community of Acton, as well as surrounding communities, and it would be a shame to see her have to move her barn and business. She has affected so many kids positively, and been such an inspiration for so many of us, as she gives of herself and her facilities to help others out.

I hope that you will consider working with her and keep her where she should be-----at Hybrid Farm. It will be a positive win for the town of Acton, as well as a positive outcome for her students!

Sincerely,

Shawn Cannon

Director, The Cannon Theatre

[www.thecannontheatre.org](http://www.thecannontheatre.org)

**Jennifer Pohlig  
Post Office Box 126  
Concord, MA 01742**

Acton Conservation Commission  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01742

Re: Proposal to reduce size and scope of Hybrid Farm's program

November 15, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you today to let you know what Hybrid Farm means to me, a parent, former resident of Acton and current resident of Concord.

Hybrid Farm is a very special place with responsible owners who care about their horses and the students who ride them. We have been impressed with the quality of the program and are looking forward to spending more time there in the future. It is, also, one of the most beautiful farms I've been to. It is photogenic and inviting and I always enjoy looking at the horses, the barn, and the golden light shining on the pretty stonework and paddocks.

Our two daughters started riding this fall at Hybrid Farm and we have been impressed with the teachers' attention to rider safety and the care of the horses. Our girls have enjoyed their lessons and learning how to care for the ponies.

Our girls are both hearing impaired and require some modifications for them to be able to hear. The teachers have been amazing about accommodating them, helping them feel good about themselves, and making sure they understand all that is going on.

I have been impressed with how the girls have grown in maturity since taking riding lessons, how they have learned to care for these giant gentle animals, and how they are now competent walking and trotting by themselves. It's like watching your child take her first steps, but now they're taking their first steps with a large animal. My seven year old recently brushed, tacked up, and led her (rather large) pony out to the riding ring all by herself (with a little bit of help to get the saddle on). It was amazing to see her be given the chance to take responsibility for her pony and to see how she rose to the occasion.

My five year old feels so proud when she is able to take care of her pony, then get on and walk and trot all by herself. We are looking forward to seeing how continued positive experiences with horses will reinforce her feeling of competence and pride.

Hybrid Farm is a very special place. We are so grateful to Rita and the staff at Hybrid for providing a safe place to learn about horses and horsemanship.

Please take the time to consider the ramifications of restricting Hybrid's access to Conservation Land and also reducing the number of horses at the farm. This farm helps so many children and young adults in so many ways. Please don't take away the opportunity this farm has to help young people.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer B. Pohlig

November 21, 2011

Dear Conservation commission,

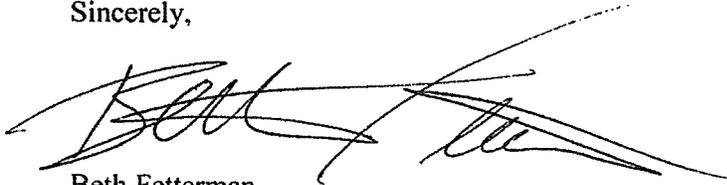
I am a resident of Boxborough and I have three daughters who ride horses at Hybid Farm. I am writing today to try to give you a sense of the importance that this barn has played in the life of this community. Often, horseback riding is an expensive activity reserved only for the rich. Through the decades of historical support that the Acton Conservation Commission has provided, this barn has made riding and horses available to many in the local community that otherwise would have had no access to this sport.

But, Hybid Farm does much more than just teach horsemanship and riding skills. Hybid Farm teaches kids to respect one another, work together, put others first, notice and care about those around them, work hard, try again, and listen to those with experience. Through Girl Scout programs, birthday parties, United States Pony Club, summer camps and weekly riding programs, this barn has touched the lives of hundreds of families in the area.

Even outside the riding programs the barn has inspired award winning writing, drawing, and photography by the students who participate in the programs at this barn. Many college essays have been written about experiences and life lessons learned at Hybid. What other sports program currently operates in town with such lofty goals and such breadth of influence?

Sometimes a balance needs to be reached between needs of the land that people use and the needs of the communities who preserve these lands. I urge you to take a look at the big picture, at the needs of this community and at the importance of the impact of your decision on the future of the town of Acton.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beth Fetterman', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Beth Fetterman

Dinny & Bruce Roberts  
38 Orchard Street  
Cambridge, MA

November 21, 2011

Dear Terry Maitland et al.

We have a little granddaughter riding at Hybid Farm and are aware that your Conservation Commission is debating its position regarding the use of conservation land with particular concern for Hybid.

We have been giving some serious thought to the future of your relationship to Hybid Farm and would like you to know our feelings in the matter.

We have land in Westport, most of which is under a conservation restriction. We plan on giving it eventually to the Westport Land Conservation Trust, and so are personally concerned with the future land use, both from its remaining undisturbed and to sharing its value with others. We understand that decisions made by conservation commissions are important both for the land and the community. There is, interestingly, consensus about allowing horses on most of the conservation land in Westport, including ours.

In the case of Hybid Farm, we know that you have been going along together for 30 years, so a very strong precedent has been set. It's probably fair to say that everyone connected directly with Hybid Farm cares deeply about its future well being. Not all riding stables are created equal. Surely Hybid is among the best in terms of quality of care for the riders and horses. Our daughter, Amy Oliver, has written you about her experience of this care.

We have watched a featherweight eight year old granddaughter gain in quiet competence as she sits her small self on one huge animal and learns to work with him. This will last her all her life. She knows Hybid rescues ponies and horses. She would expect the Commission to be a friend to Rita McConnon and Hybid Farm.

We hope you will continue to appreciate the farm and all it contributes to your town and the Commonwealth.

Yours,  
Dinny & Bruce

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

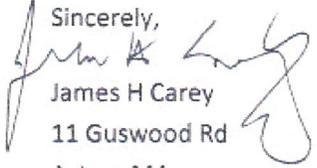
Subject: Hybrid Farm

Dear Commission Members:

My two daughters have been associated with Hybrid Farm programs for over a decade. We have loved participating in Rita McConnon's programs and my girls have learned about much more than horses. When my daughters first started riding, they were 5 and 6 years old; we noticed that they were immediately taken under the wings of more grown up riders (girls maybe ten years old?) that showed them about horsemanship and shared their love for the animals and the sport. Right then, we knew that is was a special community.

Over time my daughters grew into the older girls sharing their joy and experience with the newbies. They volunteered at every opportunity to support community service lessons that Rita has long sponsored, and spent all of their allowance money on things that only a horse could love. They rode many different horses in all kind of weather; they worked as summer camp counselors in hundred degree heat; they joined Pony Club and competed from horseback in numerous events. Through it all, the Hybrid community has fostered in them a love for horses, a sense of responsibility for themselves and the horses they work with, and bonds of friendship that are stronger than their other school and sports ties.

We went to Hybrid because my daughters wanted to learn to ride horses. We have stayed with Hybrid because Rita McConnon has created a community of learning and sharing where every rider and every horse are special and loved. My daughters' most treasured memories are all about the things they have done at Hybrid Farms. I hope that an accommodation can be reached so that more children can share in this unique environment.

Sincerely,  
  
James H Carey  
11 Guswood Rd  
Acton, MA

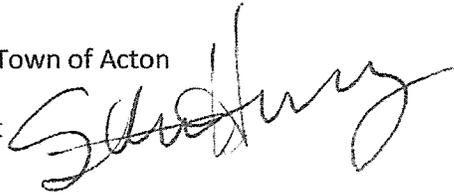
Nov 20 2011

To: The Conservation Commission, Town of Acton

From: Stephen Hardy, Acton Resident

Date: November 21, 2011

Re: Hybrid Farms



All three of our children have ridden at Hybrid Farms. However, our oldest daughter, now 23, was particularly involved there: She rode at Hybrid Farms several times per week from the age of six until she left for college. I would have to say that Hybrid Farms played an important and even an essential role in the development of her character and values. I am sure that when she reflects on her childhood in Acton, Hybrid Farms will be among her most cherished memories. She grew up there.

The warm, welcoming, professional, and overall wonderful staff at Hybrid Farms has provided, for years, an environment for young riders that is hard, even impossible, to find elsewhere. Our children adored "their" horses. They always identified most strongly with one particular horse, and we enjoyed (and endured) many stories about the horses and their antics.

I am discouraged to understand that Hybrid Farm may have to severely cut back on their lessons because of the potential loss of access to Conservation Land. As an Acton voter, and as an environmentalist, I support the buying of Conservation Land. I have always understood that Conservation Land would be available for a variety of purposes, and horseback-riding surely is one of those uses.

Hybrid Farms plays an important role in the over-all character of our town, and I would be very sad to discover that we do not have room for their riding programs. Please, I urge you, be creative and flexible in working with Hybrid Farms, remembering that it is institutions such as this make life in Acton so highly desirable.

Janis Rotbard  
23 Eliot Road  
Lexington, Ma. 02421  
781-860-9789

November 20, 2011

To: Conservation Commission  
Town Of Acton

Re: Hybid Farm

My daughter, Gisele Aubin, has been a member of the Hybid Farm family since she was six years old. She is now 18 and a freshman in college. In her college applications, she wrote about the formative role that Hybid played in her personal development. She described Hybid as a place where deep friendships with people and horses flourished, where she learned riding and horse management skills, where she was given meaningful chores, responsibilities and leadership opportunities, where she performed hours of community service each year working with girl scouts and at-risk youth. All of these aspects of life at Hybid have shaped my daughter's character.

As importantly, her experiences at Hybid have connected her deeply to nature and animals. Riding outdoors in the rings and on the trails in the beautiful conservation land in all seasons was magical for her. It imbued her with an incredible sense of freedom and awe for the natural beauty around her. Being at one with a horse in a natural setting like Hybid offers is a truly moving and thrilling experience, especially for children living in urban and suburban areas.

Hybid Farm is so much more than a barn with a riding program. It is a place, a home where children like my daughter grow and thrive. I will be forever grateful for all that Hybid has given to my daughter and cannot image her life without Hybid in it. For her, Hybid has been a wonderful retreat from the pressures of daily life, a place which feeds her soul, a place where she feels at peace. I was therefore not surprised when she arrived home from college Friday night and announced that the first thing she wanted to do was to go to Hybid. She came back from Hybid elated from having seen friends, riding her favorite pony bareback in the dark under the stars, grooming some horses and doing some chores. She had come home from college not only to us, her parents, but to Rita and her Hybid family.

I support Rita McConnon's case to continue running Hybid Farm as she has for many years so that many more children in the future can have the same formative experiences at Hybid Farm as did my daughter. I trust that the Conservation Commission of Acton will work in good faith with Hybid Farm to find mutually beneficial solutions to the issues at hand.

Sincerely,

Janis Rothbard

To the Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton,

I am a parent of three little girls who absolutely adore Rita McConnon, Hybid Farm and all the wonderful horses who live there. Whenever we go to Hybid Farm there is a warmth that I almost cannot describe. Rita has created such a warm, welcoming and nurturing environment for children to learn about horses and the nature that surrounds them. It is a place my oldest daughter fondly calls her "home away from home." As an 11 year old who just entered the confusing world of middle school, nothing gives my daughter more pleasure or peace than going to Hybid to care for the horses, take lessons and ride the beautiful trails. She looks forward to it every week and wishes she could be there every day. The thought of losing access to the Conservation land which would limit their area to ride and the possibility of having to remove many horses from living in the barn absolutely crushed her. For years Rita has been teaching children to love and respect horses and all the nature that surrounds them.... why would you ever want to take that away from these children and from this community? There is absolutely nothing but good that comes from this barn and from using the Conservation land to teach children. This is a changing world that is moving fast where children spend less and less time with nature and more and more time on their computers, video games and phones. This is a changing world that can't afford to lose people like Rita or places like Hybid. Please, on behalf of the hundreds of young people who have so greatly benefitted from Hybid Farm, I implore you to reconsider your decision and please let Hybid Farm renew its' license agreement so that the beautiful Conservation land that we all know and love can continue to be used and enjoyed by the children of our community.

With Sincere Concern,

Leslie Bergman

333 Lexington Road

Concord, MA

Dear Acton Conservation Commission:

I am writing you in support of Hybrid Farms located at 217 Nagog Hill Road, Acton, MA. The horse program that Ritan McConnon has developed is not only a superior program for learning about horses and riding, it is also an asset to the Town of Acton.

Nearly ten years ago, we were introduced to Hybrid Farms through a silent auction at a co-operative day care in Cambridge Massachusetts. Our six year old daughter had recently been diagnosed with dyslexia and we were looking for an "outlet" for her as she had a negative self image of herself; she felt she was not as smart as the other kids in her class.

In September 2001, we came to Hybrid on a cool autumn afternoon; excited, but nervously hoping our daughter would find some solace from her relentless struggles. Rita welcomed us as if we were family. She provided an overview of the program, that the girls will learn as much as they desired, that they would be expected to handle all aspects of horse care and responsible for their horse. My daughter immediately was hooked by the experience. She fell in love with not only the horses, but with the farming lifestyle that was far different from city life of Cambridge and the other families that participated in the program.

Hybrid Farm provides a nurturing, educational experience that cannot be measured anywhere else. The young women who have been part of the program have always been independent, intelligent and exceptional people. They provide a wonderful foundation to the new kids coming into the program.

Now, ten years later, our daughter is a sophomore in high school, still in Cambridge, has overcome her early struggles and is now on track to become a veterinarian, specializing in horses. Her work ethic was enhanced by her experience at Hybrid. Her renewed self esteem developed with her weekly trips to Hybrid Farms. Her current success comes, in large part, to her introduction at Hybrid Farms. Rita's program has and always will be focused on her love of horses and the young people (her adopted sons and daughters) that want to learn about animals and farm life. Rita takes on the responsibility of a second parent to these kids.

We still trek out to Acton each week, battling traffic, rain and snow to go to my daughter's piece of Nirvana. "It takes a village to raise a child." There are few times when you can state a famous quote and feel a direct connection due to experiencing it; we have at Hybrid Farm.

Acton, you have a valuable treasure with this program, one that makes a huge difference in the lives of many young people. Embrace this program. Feel pride in this program that is on your Town. Make a commitment to this quality program that many other communities wish they had.

Mark Gardner

Shireen Jyawook

155 Walden Street, #1,

Cambridge, MA 02140

617-492-2337

**Francis P. Harrigan II, P.E.**  
21 Kinsley Road  
Acton, MA 01720

November 21, 2011

Acton Conservation Commission  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720

RE: Hybid Farm  
217 Nagog Hill Road

Dear, Members;

I am writing in support of maintaining the level of activity at Hybid Farm. About 10 years ago my daughter, Kylie, troubled by her parent's divorce and problems with her step father decided she would like to try horseback riding. Today, estranged from her mother she is a student thriving at Northeastern University.

Hybid Farm became my daughter's second home, and the horses her saving grace. For five years, she and I fed, watered, and hayed the horses and cleaned the barn on Saturday and Sunday mornings. She has learned responsibility, honor, and respect. She was taught, nurtured, and loved by everyone at the barn, including owners, instructors, trainers, and fellow riders. It is one of the few places I would leave her and not worry about her. The atmosphere is one of the most supportive I have ever witnessed and has helped many young girls to be confident young women.

The awards Hybid Farm has earned have many, with numerous representatives of Acton and surrounding communities participating in the United States Pony Club at Regional, National, and even International Championships since Hybid Farm Pony Club Riding Center's inception. Hybid Farm's young ladies have led the Central New England Region of Pony Club to several very high rankings at National Championships.

Hybid Farm Riding Center is truly unique to the United States Pony Club. Only one horse is owned privately. It was going to be taken by a young girl, but is on hold as the girl's other pony died unexpectedly. The rest belong to Hybid Farm. This is especially important because most of Hybid's members, would never be able to own, and, therefore, ride, a horse without Hybid's system. The wide variety of horses available for riding allows riders from beginner to National Championship qualifiers.

My daughter has qualified for National Championships twice, once for Quiz, which is purely knowledge of horse care and management, and, once, just this year, for Training

Level Dressage. Her Dressage team even finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in Barn Management at this year's Championships.

Of course, I have not even touched on the availability of lesson to Acton residents through Acton recreational summer programs, visitation by ABRHS special education students, Girl Scout classes for equestrian badges, and other programs that Hybrid Farm has done and continues for the community. These should also be included when weighing Hybrid's value to the community.

In conclusion, I am confident any reduction of services at Hybrid Farm would degrade the Acton and the surrounding communities. Reducing any aspect of the facility will cause discontinuity and reduction of one of the greatest communities I have witnessed. It would be a mistake and a shame to see Acton lose any of the benefits it receives from Hybrid Farm.

Support Hybrid Farm to its fullest.

Very Truly Yours,

Francis P. Harrigan II

Dear Acton Conservation committee,

Please reconsider your decision not allowing Hybrid Farm to use conservation land in the manner in which they are currently doing so. It would be a death sentence to many of those horses and a loss to this community and many others.

My family has wonderful memories of the years that my daughter rode there. I have seen the compassion that the children have for the horses and each other. I have watched children who don't fit in at school really blossom at Hybrid and feel part of a group. I have seen them feel competent at something when nothing else is going right. They may be helping a younger child brush and saddle a horse, feeding or putting a horse in the pasture.

Even though my daughter no longer rides I love driving by or walking the conservation land by the farm, hoping to catch a glimpse of a horse.

I have seen Rita buy and bring home horses that have been skin and bones and with sores because they have been neglected and overused at another farm. I have seen the same horse 6 weeks later fattened up and healthy. By restricting the number of horses she can keep will force her to look at each horse from a business stand point instead of her heart. It will be a death sentence for many older, temperamental or neglected horses.

I worry that if you restrict Hybrid's use of the conservation land that she will longer be able to stay in business and at some point the land will be developed. Didn't we all move to Acton for its rural nature? If you restrict horses from conservation land you will next restrict dogs.

This kind of decision would be consistent with the attitude of those who move to a rural town for its agricultural ambience and then complain about the smell of the farm. A working farm, which is paying rent to the town, is much more beneficial than a 40B. If we do not encourage farming business in Acton, we will soon have none left.

Sincerely,

Sharon Logan

4 Guswood Rd. Acton

cc: Acton Town Manager

Acton Board of Selectmen

November 20, 2011

Kimberly A. Groff  
109 Hayward Road  
Acton, MA 01720

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 number of horses 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 number of students that Hybrid Farm will be able to offer programs to.

Both my daughters took riding lessons and attended Hybrid Farms summer camp. The programs and experiences that Hybrid Farm offered to my daughters have been invaluable. While attending camp and after school activities both my daughters benefited from being a part of the Hybrid community. They learned how to take care of large animals, work in a team, and experience the satisfaction in mastering a skill. Hybrid Farm is a stress-free antidote to the electronic age. It is a place where kids can be themselves; learn valuable leadership skills, and lessons about giving back to the community.

Hybrids' contribution to the community extends well beyond the bounds of the property. Hybrid Farm is a community leader by offering riding scholarships, making fundraising donations to the local schools, sponsoring teams in *Relay for Life*, collaboration with the High School's ODP Department, and provides the facility for Girl Scouts to work toward merit badges.

One of the most moving programs that Hybrid offers is the program for youth-at-risk from Boston and Concord. Hybrid partners to provide programs for inner city youth. The students from Boston benefitted from the organic experience and therapeutic environment. Local girls were able to pair up with the students which provided many of them with an awareness of their privilege and duty to give back. Hybrid has been a member of our community for 31 years. Please don't impair their ability to continue to provide these programs that make available a place for children to learn and thrive.

Kimberly A. Groff  
109 Hayward Road  
Acton, MA 01720  
[Kim\\_groff@comcast.net](mailto:Kim_groff@comcast.net)  
(978)263-0362



Karen Economopoulos  
6 Pleasant Street  
Concord, MA 01742

November 20, 2011

Dear Acton Conservation Committee,

I've thought for a while now what I would like to share in this letter to you on behalf of Hybid Farm. Should I write about how I've watched my daughter grow into a responsible, young woman who is leaning towards a career in Equine Studies because of her experiences at Hybid Farm? Should I tell you how as a parent I chose Hybid *specifically* because of its philosophy of caring "for the whole horse" (and I mean the *whole horse*) as a way of nurturing and taking care of "the whole child?" Should I tell you about how as a parent, I love watching how hard kids of all ages work, and they do the *real* work of caring for animals including the natural environment in which they exist. Should I tell you about the relationships that I have watched develop at Hybid Farm...relationships with animals, relationships with the environment but especially relationships among girls of all ages, the younger ones looking towards the older ones for direction, guidance, instruction and encouragement all with the intention that they too will grow up and be the same mentor to the next group of younger girls?

I could easily tell you about all of this but what I've decided to tell you about is how Hybid Farm is a community that Acton should be proud to have as a part of their town. Hybid Farm is a place where children and families from surrounding towns and not so-surrounding towns, come to learn and grow. Hybid Farm is the "neighborhood" that many kids will never experience. I recall this past summer when one muggy Thursday night, about eighteen girls ages 12 to 18, dressed up in dark clothing, armed themselves with water guns and ran around Hybid Farm playing a good old fashioned game of "tag." When I arrived to pick up the gang that was sleeping over at our house this particular night, I smiled to myself, happy to know that how you look and how you smell, was far from the thoughts of this group

Karen Economopoulos  
6 Pleasant Street  
Concord, MA 01742

of girls...they were just having some good old-fashioned fun. The sort of fun so many of their parents used to have a generation before when the world was just a little slower, a little safer and a little more “neighborhood-like. It’s this kind of fun that creates memories that last for a lifetime.

I struggle to understand why Hybid Farm in its present state and with all of its current residents (those with two feet and those with four), would not be considered the pride and joy of Acton Massachusetts. I urge you to consider all of the ways that Hybid contributes to its community and all of the ways it provides community...for people and animals as well.

Thanks you for considering how Hybid Farm in its present configuration is a place to “conserve and preserve” now and for years to come.

Sincerely,

Karen Economopoulos  
6 Pleasant St  
Concord MA

November 21, 2011

Jennifer Derkazarian  
810 Curve Street  
Carlisle, Massachusetts

Hybid Farm  
Nagog Hill Road  
Acton, Massachusetts

To Whom It May Concern:

My daughter has ridden at Hybid farm for a year and I started riding as well about 3 months ago. You must know two things: 1) Rita McConnon is an amazing champion for the youth of our world. 2) Her horses and farm are a priceless asset to the community.

I grew up on a farm in Maine and have enjoyed the grounded heritage and background that comes with that. My daughter and I looked at and trialed many "barns" in the Concord, Acton, and Chelmsford area and when we walked into Hybid farm, we knew our quest was over. Hybid is a place of gentle nurturing, solid values, and core beliefs that stem from the fact that the bond between a horse and a human can lead to greater things.

Youth, especially in today's world, face extraordinary pressures to fit in, look a certain way, have certain things, and be a certain "something". There are often very few shelters from these pressures and as we know, this can lead to anxiety-driven behaviors such as eating disorders, substance abuse, promiscuity, and depression. When you climb on the back of a horse it is not only a sanctuary from such pressures, it is also a place where you are in control of your own destiny. The outcome rests between the rider and a two thousand pound animal. It is in this moment that you can develop self-esteem and confidence, the two most important tools a young person can have.

Rita McConnon has developed a program that promotes these healthy behaviors, and she is a mentor to these girls and boys. She is on top of their every move, and tolerates only the most polite and respectful behavior in her program. The most magical part is that she offers this to anyone who walks in the door, regardless of socioeconomic status, or the ability to own and care for a horse. She has allowed participants to compete all over the country in dressage, eventing, and gymkhana (games on horseback).

It would be a great loss to the equestrian community, as well as the community at large to loose even a part of this program. There are things in this world that are expendable...and things that are not. Rita, and Hybid Farm are not!

Respectfully,  
Jennifer H. Derkazarian  
978-371-1644

To whom it may Concern,

I am writing to express my unequivocal, wholehearted support of Rita McConnon and the Magical World she calls Hybid Farm.

Rita is not just any person with a barn. And, Hybid is not just any Farm. Rita is, plain and simple, magic not only with horses but also with people. I was tempted to say “children” but it’s not just them, it’s everyone who comes into contact with her. She has a strong moral character, a solid value system, dynamic interpersonal skills , loves people, lets them know it and loves to laugh... often at herself!

She is an outstanding role model not only in her dealings with people but also in her clear expectations on how both riders and her horses are to be cared for and treated. She is fair, kind, honest, compassionate, open-minded, and affectionate. She’s a born teacher, leader and mentor.

Although she very quickly became a close friend, I am not speaking as a friend. I have two daughters who are now 23 and nearly 21 who, themselves, along with many of their friends, rode at Hybid Farm for many, many years. They spent hours mucking stalls when they didn’t seem to have time to clean their rooms. They loved being there so much, they’d spend time just helping out and learning at the same time , having farm experiences of all kinds that many kids don’t seem fortunate enough to be exposed to today.

Rita, and her personal mission with children, families and horses, is a gift to the people in Acton and the surrounding communities who are lucky enough to cross paths, (or should I say trails), with her. Is there is a “better” use being contemplated for the land? It’s difficult to imagine another use better than growing and nurturing strong, moral minds and bodies of our children while at the same time caring for, and giving quality life to all horses with which she is charged.

If I have said too much, it’s only because I feel I cannot say enough to support who Rita McConnon is and what she does at Hybid Farm!

Annette M. Lochrie  
57 Windsor Avenue  
Acton, Massachusetts 01720

November 11, 2011

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to ask you to do the right thing. Allow Hybid Farm to continue to operate using conservation land as they have for over 31 years and remain a wonderful community business.

My niece has been riding, taking lessons, and caring for horses at Hybid Farm for over 10 years. During that time, I've watched her grow from a shy adolescent to a kind, caring, and confident young woman who loves animals. I am positive that her experience at Hybid during these important years contributed greatly towards her becoming the special young woman she is today.

Hybid Farm has been a valued member of the Acton community for many years. They have provided riding lessons to countless area youth. In addition, they have saved the lives of horses who might otherwise not have had a chance. I ask you to take a moment and think about what might happen should you decide to prevent Hybid Farm from continuing to operate as they have been.

**1. Fewer horses can be saved.** Hybid has continually rescued horses from abusive situations, or have taken in horses whose owners could no longer care for them. You may or may not be aware that thousands of horses are slaughtered each year. They are sold at horse auctions for meat to be used in Canada or Europe or they are just sent to slaughter because there is no place for them anymore. Think of what a beautiful animal the horse is. Now imagine those innocent animals being sent in a truck, for days of transport, without food or water, only to stand in line waiting to be slaughtered. Such a beautiful animal, such a sad fate. It is places like Hybid Farm who help to reduce the number of innocent horses sent to slaughter. They take in animals, give them proper care, and provide a life long home to them. In turn, these animals provide our youth with fun, love, animal companionship, and help them to develop confidence. If you refuse to allow Hybid to act as they have been, they will be forced to reduce the number of horses they currently have and prevent them from taking in more horses.

**2. Area youth who ride at Hybid Farm will be emotionally affected.** Imagine you have a son or daughter who has been riding at Hybid Farm for years. Your child is responsible for the care of a certain horse or horses. He or she rides particular horses as well. Then, one day, they come to Hybid only to learn that the horse that they have cared for and loved for years is no longer there. Why? The town of Acton said some horses had to go. How might you explain that to that young person? What could one possibly say that would make him or her feel better? Make them not fear for the safety of their horse? Would you want that on your conscious? I know I wouldn't.

As a tax paying Acton resident, I am asking you to do the right thing... for the horses, our children, Hybrid Farm, and for the Acton (and surrounding towns) community. Allow Hybrid Farm to operate as it has been doing or even better, allow it to expand.

Sincerely,

Maureen M. Parker  
16 Wampus Ave. , Unit 34  
Acton, MA 01720

978-429-8285

Nov 18-2011

To whom it may concern.

Hearing about closing Hybrid farms really makes me angry - here is a place that teachers about love of horses and getting along with other people - not just going up to ride, they do it all, clean stalls keep the barn clean - and also keeping up the grounds. ~~It~~ Having family members going to this place for many years I have seen what it teaches. Please think about this before you take away a place for people to go to, and keeps them off the street. Think about it hard.

Glenn

7A POPE ROAD  
ACTON MA, 01720

Nov. 18 - 2011

To whom it may concern.

I'm writing this because of hearing about Hybrid Farms, and you wanting to close it. That is a big mistake, Rita who runs it does more for the girls than you know she teaches them a lot. My granddauther has been going there for years, taught her respect, and keep these girls and keep off the streets. You better think hard about it, you have more problems elsewhere than closing a farm that helps keep these children grounded, and wanting to go there.

Jean Valera

7A Pope road  
Acton MA, 01720