

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ❖ ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Administration Building, 15 Charter Road, Acton, MA 01720-2995 Phone: 978-264-4700 Fax: 978-266-2529

Pupil Services

To whom it may concern,

The Occupational Development Program, a special education program at Acton Boxborough Regional High School, has had an ongoing working relationship with Hybrid Farm since 2005. Students from O.D.P. receive work training and vocational skills at Hybrid by helping out in a variety of ways while developing confidence, independence and a sense of responsibility.

O.D.P. students typically work at Hybrid one to two days a week for a period of approximately two hours. Tasks at Hybrid include mucking stalls, grooming, assisting with lessons, bringing horses in from outside and bringing out hay to the fields. An open line of communication is kept between the Hybrid staff, the O.D.P. staff and the students themselves regarding work performance, progress, strengths and weaknesses. Teamwork, compassion and organizational skills are just some of the areas where the students develop as workers.

Hybrid Farm has been a critical part of the Occupational Development program since becoming involved and we look forward to continuing this positive relationship in the future. Please feel free to contact me should you need any more information.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin M. Lane". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Kevin M. Lane
Vocational Coordinator
Occupational Development Program
Acton Boxborough Regional High School

Dear Conservation Commission of Acton,

I have had the pleasure of working with Hybrid farm for two years and I am writing to you on their behalf to request that their access to conservation land continue.

As a clinician at The Victor School, I have worked with Hybrid Farm to coordinate therapeutic horseback riding lessons for our students. Every year Hybrid Farm provides discounted riding lessons for our students, who struggle with a variety of diagnoses, including but not limited to, schizophrenia, autism, post traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety.

Horseback riding lessons have made an incredible impact on our students. Through riding, students gain self confidence, experience joy and learn new skills. Exposure to horses gives students a relief from the stressors they constantly experience and a chance to grow and love an animal. Students have become attached to their horses and look forward to their lessons.

Please do not limit the access Hybrid Farm has to use the conservation land abutting their property. The farm staff does a tremendous service to the community through sharing their skills and resources. If cut backs are made, it is highly likely we will be unable to continue horseback club and our students will lose an amazing life experience.

Best wishes,



Katherine Cunningham, LICSW
Clinician
School Adjustment Counselor/School Social Worker
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November 16, 2011



Germaine Lawrence
Incorporated

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germainelawrance.org

Board of Directors

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Executive Director

Dear Conservation Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Germaine Lawrence Board of Directors in support of the wonderful programs and services at Hybrid Farm.

Hybrid Farm has been an important part of the recreational program for Germaine Lawrence for over 5 years.

Germaine Lawrence is located in Arlington, MA and is widely recognized as the premier residential treatment center for adolescent girls in New England. Girls live at Germaine Lawrence while receiving special education; individual, group and family therapy; psychiatric and primary medical care; and a wide variety of therapeutic activities and interventions. One of those therapeutic recreational activities is the opportunity to go out to Hybrid Farm – to ride and to groom the horses. They learn how to care for another living creature and how to take healthy risks. Perhaps most importantly, the girls have fun. One girl said, "It's the first time in my life that I have felt like a child."

The girls at Germaine Lawrence have a wide range of serious emotional and behavior problems. Most of the girls we work with have experienced significant abuse or loss in their lives. We help them believe in themselves and others, by supporting them and their families, and by teaching the girls the skills they need to be successful in the community.

The loss of the opportunity to be at Hybrid Farm would be very difficult for the girls at Germaine Lawrence. It is our understanding that should Hybrid lose horses and the ability to sponsor lessons and trail rides, they would be unable to welcome Germaine Lawrence girls. It represents another loss that we hope the girls from Germaine Lawrence will not have to endure.

Sincerely,

Janet Glidden

Chairman

Conservation Commission
Acton, MA

To Whom It May Concern:

November 18, 2011

I am writing this letter in regards to Hybrid Farm. It is my understanding that Hybrid Farm may need to undergo some discouraging changes in the near future. These changes would be detrimental to the students at the Victor School, who have been coming to Hybrid Farm for years. Two times a year, a group of Victor School students are able to come to Hybrid Farm for therapeutic horseback riding lessons during the school day. The lessons are at a reduced fee, which allows our students to be able to participate in this exciting opportunity. Students that normally show depressive symptoms are smiling as we drive to Hybrid Farm and begin our one hour of joy at the barn. To see the students smile as they touch the horses, is something I couldn't imagine telling them they can no longer enjoy. Each student is assigned a horse in which they grow close to. These horses are talked about as if they are part of the Victor School family. Horseback riding club at the Victor School has become a vital part of our treatment. Please reconsider and allow Hybrid Farm to continue doing what they do best- allowing the Victor School students to smile, laugh, learn, and grow.

Sincerely,



Jill Moores, LICSW
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Andrew Lapin

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To The Acton Conservation Commission:

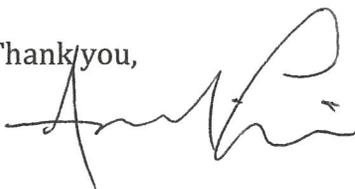
I have been working with Hybrid Farm for that past year to create the Hybrid Farm Educational Foundation Inc. and the response has been powerful. I have been privileged to many interactions from the community and surrounding area of parents and children in great need who are desperately seeking programs like Hybrid. To alter the function of Hybrid Farm would be to alter the lives of families throughout the state and to destroy a radiant thread in the tapestry of diversity that is Acton. To suggest that Hybrid Farm limit operations would suggest a great injustice to the scores of families who rely on Hybrid as a safe haven for their children.

Hybrid Farm Educational Foundation has been established with the goal of becoming a member of the mental health community; a goal, which has already come to fusion with the inclusion of The Victor School and other facilities. Hybrid Farm Educational Foundation endeavors to reach out to families of children with autism. The studies showing the positive results of children with autism interacting with horses are astounding. Some of those insights are highlighted in the book *The Horse Boy* (Rupert Isaacson). Modern mental health recognizes the need for traumatized children to form attachments and many mental health professionals recommend equine related therapies as a healthy source of building those attachments.

Hybrid Farm is not only a bright star of the community with great promise for the future, it is a shining example of that which Acton represents. Acton is home to inspiring figures like Isaac Davis, Samuel Prescott, and William Dawes. Acton should be proud to add Rita McConnon to the list of town heroes who have fought for the well being of the families in the community. She has worked relentlessly to bring a positive force into the town which would be sorely missed if she had to move her operations elsewhere.

The conservation commission aims to develop the town's natural resources. By limiting Hybrid Farm you are limiting our greatest resource, our children. Children come here as a place of tranquility to find respite from the trials of the world and to develop their talents. Please do not take away such a precious resource from our town. Allow the children to enjoy Acton's natural resources by riding the trails, not on a bicycle or a motor-bike, but on a horse. There is nothing more splendid than a child discovering the world the way his/her ancestors discovered this land, on horseback. Please do not take away these opportunities from our children and please recognize that this town needs Hybrid Farm.

Thank you,



November, 20, 2011

Conservation Commission of the Town of Acton
471 Main Street
Acton, MA

To Whom It May Concern,

Hybid Farm is a caring haven for people and animals. It is one of those rare places that still exist in today's world where kids, adults, and animals can grow and learn together. The simplicity of caring for animals and being in the outdoors is what makes Hybid. Having visited other farms in the area, Hybid has a sense of family, an ability to make everyone feel like they belong and they are important. Not only is Hybid dear to me, but also to my clients.

For local victims of complex trauma, Hybid Farm is tremendously impactful. A decision to reduce or eliminate services to this population would be extremely detrimental to the community as a whole. Hybid Farm is a place where many adolescent girls living in residential care have discovered that they can be great. Sadly, for these teenagers this may be their first encounter with success of any type and the connection they feel when they are paired with a Hybid rescued horse is the deepest feeling of acceptance they have ever known. The time spent with Hybid's gentle and loving horses in the fresh air cannot be underestimated.

I have witnessed uniquely powerful identities as "Horseback Riders" being born at Hybid. Prior to Hybid, many of these clients claimed they were "no one," had nothing going for them in their lives, had no one in "their corner," and in some extreme cases had no reason to live. This new belief in themselves created at Hybid can carry a child over tremendous obstacles and becomes a great force in their life. Additionally, for these girls,

the joy of riding becomes the reason to continue the difficult work of therapy and assists them on their journey in reaching their treatment goals.

The dangerous outcome of eliminating support structures, such as Hybrid, for children in residential is many additional years of state care and hospitalization for these children. The financial and social costs for the community are staggering. Please consider these children without a voice and allow Hybrid Farm to continue to serve Acton and the surrounding communities.

Sincerely,

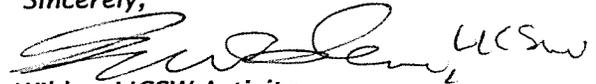
Rebekah Roulier
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November 13, 2011

Dear Conservation Commission Representatives,

This letter is to express my plea to your committee to continue to allow Rita McConnon of Hybid Farm to maintain her ponies and riding programs on your pastures. I have been working with Rita and her staff since 2006 as a program administrator from the Germaine Lawrence School and current activity coordinator to plan and organize riding lessons for the girls at the school. The girls at the school come from disadvantaged homes and have mental health issues related to trauma and psychiatric illness. Staff members from the school have taken girls over the years numerous times to have series of riding lessons at Hybid. These lessons have been critical in building self-esteem and confidence for the girls. I have been coordinating grant monies over the past year for the school and have sent girls from 3 different houses to Hybid to enjoy lessons on a weekly basis. Of all the activities that I have coordinated for the girls the staff members who take them riding continue to say just how special it is to see the girls ride. One staff told me that the girls "are just different kids when they are on the horses". The staff report it's incredibly rewarding just to see the change that comes over the girls who are up on a horse and riding. For many of these girls it will be the only opportunity to ride ever in their lives. The experience for the kids and staff has been tremendous and I know our school would be devastated to lose the opportunity to send more kids to Hybid. If Rita has to down-size she will no longer be able give our girls the discounted rate she gives us and we would cease to be able to send kids to her riding program-certainly if it became out of our reach in terms of price. Please let Rita keep her program and her ponies. This program has been one we have counted on each year to put in place for our at-risk, vulnerable girls. Please consider this plea. I'm attaching pictures to show you just how excited our kids are to be riding the ponies. I'm including my address and the address of the school in the event you would want to contact and talk further with myself and anyone at the school.

Sincerely,



Susan Wilder, LICSW-Activity
Coordinator for The Germaine Lawrence
School

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617-285-2834

Representing Germaine Lawrence
School interests:

The Germaine Lawrence School
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