

TO: Chairperson, Bart Pacekonis, South Windsor Planning & Zoning Commission
FROM: Anthony Duarte, Chair, South Windsor Democratic Town Committee
SUBJECT: Proposal for a Housing Moratorium in South Windsor
DATE: November 23, 2020

At a recent meeting of the South Windsor Democratic Town Committee (October 22, 2020) we discussed possible proposal for a Housing Moratorium to be considered by the South Windsor Planning & Zoning Commission. As a result of our discussion we would like to communicate with you about our position on this possible proposal.

The South Windsor Democratic Town Committee has voted to OPPOSE any proposal for a Housing Moratorium in South Windsor. This resolution resulted in a UNANIMOUS vote to oppose any potential housing moratorium.

We believe that any type of housing moratorium is a discriminatory restriction against families, against new economic development, and an attempt to 'limit' or 'regulate' the many different types of housing in town. It is our belief these housing opportunities should be made available to those who would choose South Windsor as a place to live, work, learn and play.

In addition, these are facts that should be considered:

1. A moratorium would hurt South Windsor's economy at a time when we cannot afford it. There are many businesses struggling, and people out of work because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.
2. A moratorium would send a message that the town is anti-development, countering recent efforts to promote smart growth and economic development with new commercial and residential development.
3. A moratorium will reduce the housing supply in a town such as South Windsor that is considered a desirable place to live (#12 in the Top 50 Places to Live in America/rated by Money Magazine). This will artificially drive real estate prices up and would create a housing affordability crisis in South Windsor.

We believe, instead of enacting policies designed to slow or halt housing, our town government should work in this community to expand housing supply and choices for families. Housing goes hand in hand with a strong economy and vibrant community.

Best Regards

Anthony Duarte
Chair, South Windsor Democratic Town Committee

PZC Advocacy Letter - for Public Comment at tomorrow's PZC Meeting

Samantha Petgrave [samantha.petgrave@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, November 24, 2020 3:49 PM**To:** PlanningZoningComments**Attachments:** PZC Advocacy Letter_09.29.~1.pdf (83 KB)

Hello,

I hope all is well.

I slightly modified my original letter sent back in October and would like it read into the record at the PZC meeting tomorrow night during public comment. Most of the information is repetitive from the original letter, but I feel it should be read during the public comment part of the meeting as a means to advocate and educate our community on the importance of chickens and honeybees.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Best Regards,

Samantha and Hugh Petgrave

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September 29, 2020

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Samantha Petgrave and my family and I are beekeepers and chicken owners. My husband, Hugh Antonio Petgrave, and my son, Kyson Petgrave, started beekeeping earlier this year. My family and I have been residents of South Windsor for the past 7+ years and my entire extended family grew up in town over the past 50+ years. Additionally, we have strong ties to and are very active in the community. I am writing to you regarding the special discussion tonight on proposed, new, Home Animal Agriculture regulations. In June, our beehives were intentionally drenched in pesticides and bee killer in an attempt to kill our honeybees. As a result, a complaint was filed with Planning and Zoning related to beehives and chickens. Given the timing of this special meeting, I am inclined to believe that this proposed regulation is a result of that one complaint. As a chicken owner and beekeeper, I wanted to provide some information on the extreme importance of honeybees and chickens.

South Windsor is known for its agricultural heritage. My father and uncles grew up working in broad leaf tobacco fields and on vegetable farms some 45 years ago. Families in town relied on farms and farm animals to sustain their families. South Windsor's roots are deeply embedded in agriculture and it seems that as the years go by, we are losing that same sense of agricultural heritage that our town is built on.

The benefits of honeybees and chickens far outweigh any detriment. Honeybees are crucial to our survival as humans. Over one third of the food we eat relies on pollination by honeybees. The FDA states, "It's their work as crop pollinators. This agricultural benefit of honeybees is estimated to be between 10 and 20 times the total value of honey and beeswax. In fact, bee pollination accounts for about \$15 billion in added crop value. Honeybees are like flying dollar bills buzzing over U.S. crops." Millions of dollars are spent renting hives to pollinate farmers' crops as they increase yields. There are three significant threats to honeybees: pesticides, the varroa mite, and habitat loss. The disappearance of honeybees would trigger an inevitable chain of events that could actually impact our health and nutrition. Losing honeybees could lead to a lower availability of crops, which are an integral part of our food intake and that provide essential micronutrients for human diets.

There are many misconceptions about honeybees. Of all the common misconceptions of honeybees, the most widespread is that they sting humans. While some bees do in fact have stingers, it is more complicated than one would think. First of all, male honeybees do not have stingers at all. Female honeybees have stingers, but they are not aggressive. Most of the time, honeybees only sting when they or their hive faces a threat. If you do not provoke or pose a threat to them or their hives, they will leave you alone. Another common misconception is that if you are allergic to bees, you are allergic to all species. This is highly inaccurate. I personally live with a severe, life threatening allergy to wasps and hornets, however I am not allergic to honeybee stings. According to the British Medical Journal, "Bee and wasp venoms are different, each containing distinct major allergens, which are well defined. Phospholipase A2 and melittin occur only in bee venom, and antigen 5 only in wasp venom, but both venoms contain hyaluronidases. Patients allergic to wasp venom are rarely allergic to bee venom... sensitization to wasp venom requires only a few stings and can occur after a single sting. In contrast, allergy to bee venom occurs mainly in people who have been stung frequently by bees. Thus, almost all patients who are allergic to honeybees are beekeepers and their families..."

The importance of allowing beekeepers to continue to maintain their beehives, regardless of lot size, is crucial for all the reasons given above. More so, requiring beekeepers to own at least one acre of land could be viewed as prejudicial, as one could argue that if you are not wealthy enough to own at least one acre of land in town, that you are not worthy of being a beekeeper. The proposed ordinance up for discussion only favors our town's wealthier population and it should be an opportunity afforded to anyone that would like it. Moreover, the proposed number of beehives is unattainable. Beehives require the need to be split when they are overpopulated and this needs to occur frequently as it is their nature. Not splitting a beehive that is overpopulated could cause the honeybees to swarm. Swarming is when most of the bees leave to find a new home. That new home could be a tree, or any other structure the honeybees feel would make a good home. It is not best practice or in the best interest of the honeybees to not split a hive when it is warranted. This ultimately results in a beekeeper now having 2 hives when they started with one. It is the responsibility of the beekeeper to responsibly maintain their beehives and the number of beehives they keep. It is such a detailed and

intricate process that oversight from our town is not necessary. In our case, we follow state statutes and our hives are registered and inspected by the state.

Our current regulation allows for 32 chickens on one acre of land. I am assuming that the necessary agencies were consulted to determine that 32 chickens could humanly and safely be kept on one acre. This would reduce to 16 chickens per ½ acre of land. The current proposal to add a limitation of 8 chickens per ½ acre does not coincide with the current numbers in the current regulation. Please also see the attached letter of recommendation from Professor Michael Darre, Ph.D., P.A.S., Emeritus Professor of Poultry Science at UCONN, stating that a ¼ acre lot would be sufficient for 8 hens, ½ acre lot for 16 hens, etc.

My family and I have kept chickens for the past 4+ years. As “veteran” chicken keepers, we are knowledgeable about chickens and what keeping chickens entails. The benefits of keeping chickens far outweigh the detriments. Studies have shown that a flock of chickens can eat between 3 and 331 ticks in 30-60 minutes with the average chicken eating over 80 ticks. They also eat grubs and other pests. Chickens can eat as many as 2 pounds of insects per day. Chickens provide multiple sources of protein (i.e. chickens lay eggs that provide an excellent source of protein in human diets and we can also eat chicken). Chickens create excellent fertilizer allowing our gardens, grass, and plants to flourish. Contrary to popular belief, they are low maintenance and do not smell if their coops are maintained. Additionally, our chickens are my children’s’ pets. The average chicken will live for approximately 5-7 years. Their egg production drastically reduces once they turn about 3 years old. It is important to allow those older hens to live out their lives humanely, but in order to sustain egg supply needed to feed our family, it requires purchasing more hens. This is a major contributor to why 8 hens are not sufficient. Chickens are flock animals and require being in a flock to maintain their health and well-being. Chicken owners have to rely on cycling in pullets (young hens) to compensate for older hens’ decrease in egg production.

To conclude, honeybees and chickens are an extremely important part to our success as an agricultural town and to our success as a human population. An attempt to govern honeybees which fly within a 5-mile radius is not attainable and is frankly detrimental in so many ways. Honeybees are such an important part of agriculture all around the world and there are simply not enough of them. We continue to develop land and they are losing their habitat. As long as beehives are registered and beekeepers are beekeeping responsibly, they pose no threat to anyone nor are they a nuisance. The town has processes in place to address nuisance complaints and those processes are sufficient. Backyard chicken keeping is growing in popularity exponentially. Backyard chickens provide an opportunity for families to be self-sustaining and to bring a little bit of agricultural lifestyle back into our homes. It provides a wonderful opportunity for children of all ages to be educated in agriculture and that is so very important to the future of our town. We respectfully ask that you reconsider adding additional regulations on beekeeping and also ask that you consider allowing a maximum of 8 hens on ¼ acre and 16 hens on ½ acre.
Thank you for your time and understanding.

Best Regards,

Samantha and Hugh Antonio Petgrave