

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Kelly's Working Well Farm d.b.a. Chagrin Valley School

16519 South Franklin Street

Chagrin Falls, OH 44023

Chagrinvalleyschool.org

Ian Mungall

chagrinvalleyschool@gmail.com

RELEASE DATE:

11/12/19

CONFLICT WITH BAINBRIDGE ZONING & FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Our Response to the Recent Actions taken by Bainbridge Township

[BAINBRIDGE, OH 11/12/19] — Kelly's Working Well Farm and Chagrin Valley School have been engaged in what has turned into a significant conflict with the Bainbridge Township zoning and fire departments. Rather than work with us to come up with a solution, they have chosen to close down all farm buildings and stated that we will not be able to satisfy the requirements to remove the order until we achieve a conditional use permit, thus losing our agricultural designation.

At Kelly's Working Well Farm we have created a unique agricultural education program of farm immersion for children and adult visitors. We have no formal curriculum but rather provide the context of a working farm and farm market in which children and adults spend their days interacting with their surroundings and each other, developing their hearts, minds and hands in their own direction and at their own pace. The care of the animals; the use of natural buildings heated by highly efficient wood fueled systems; the permaculture techniques, including swales to control and utilize stormwater and perennial polyculture plantings; and the ability to range freely over the farm property, cook in an informal outdoor kitchen, set up a mint tea stand, learn to chop wood, harvest fruits and vegetables, make jam, etc., are all intrinsic to our program.

We call our program Chagrin Valley School, but in reality it is an "unschool." We do not try to prepare children to meet academic standards and offer no traditional trade school education to adults. We conduct no evaluations of "student growth". When families decide that self-directed learning on a farm is something they want their

children to experience, they are completely aware of and accountable to the state's education requirements for their children as home-schoolers.

Recently, the Bainbridge zoning board and fire marshal effectively shut down our use of the farm because they want to classify the farm as a school which comes with a debilitating range of regulations. We are a working farm, not a school, and the parents of children who frequent our farm are quite aware of this distinction. While we accept an elevated need for safety based upon our unique nature, we want to be treated fairly, and cooperate to find workable solutions. We have repeatedly expressed our willingness to work with the fire marshal to develop a reasonable set of safety criteria, above and beyond the requirement of an agricultural establishment. But our efforts to work with the township have been blocked by their insistence that we change our zoning status from agriculture and apply for a conditional use permit to operate as a school. This we will not do. Since our inception in 2012, our mission has been agricultural education. We will be appealing the decisions by the Zoning Inspector to revoke the agricultural use status of one of our buildings and by the Bainbridge fire marshal to shut down all of our buildings until we receive conditional use permits which would require changes that would erode the nature of our agricultural identity.

We will continue to post updates about this situation on our social media as well as more press releases on this as it develops. To support us you may communicate your feelings with Bainbridge officials and support our Holiday Craft Fair on November 23rd held at the United Methodist Church in Chagrin Falls. We are confident that once the community fully understands our farm and mission, they will support us, our appeal, and the assets we bring to the community.

About Kelly's Working Well Farm d.b.a. Chagrin Valley School

Founded in 2012, Kelly's Working Well Farm is a non-profit 501(c)3 permaculture farm, school and community center. Summer camps for children have been held at the farm every year since 2013, and in 2016 our school was created. Chagrin Valley School is a full-time self-directed learning "unschool" run by student democracy on a farm setting. The goal of Kelly's Working Well Farm is to help create a thriving & resilient local community & economy through education (workshops, summer camps & alternative schooling), earth care (permaculture practice), and entrepreneurship (our farm store, events & other business ventures). Learn more at chagrinvalleyschool.org

###