

PRESS RELEASE

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OUR EXPERIENCE WITH BAINBRIDGE ZONING, FIRE & HEALTH

A Clarification of Recent Events with Local Authorities

[BAINBRIDGE, OH 11/22/19] — We would like to clarify some issues in what has been a very confusing series of recent events at Kelly's Working Well Farm.

From the first visit by assistant fire chief Bill Lovell in late September, and his return later that afternoon with Fire Chief Louann Metz and Zoning Inspector Karen Endres, and throughout the subsequent weeks, now months, we (Kelly Clark, founder, and other staff members) have been asking what actions we should take to allay their concerns. We were repeatedly told by the assistant fire chief that our only course of action was to seek a license (from what agency?) and to pursue a conditional use change in our zoning status. Our efforts to hire an electrician were rebuffed. Now we are being accused of refusing to take action to mitigate safety issues. Yet the fire chief acknowledged that we had taken such steps in spite of the lack of cooperation of the assistant fire chief. The efforts of Bainbridge fire and zoning personnel have been overly aggressive. They have taken what could have been a cooperative, win-win situation, and turned it into a chance to demonstrate the full power of their bureaucracy, bringing in several government agencies and using expensive resources like paramedics, ambulances and a school bus.

On November 21st, an article in the Chagrin Valley Times reported the results of a surprise health department inspection of our farm. The report makes observations that would need to be corrected if we were to become licensed as a school. We are not a school. We are not accountable to the state for the academic progress of our program participants. We do not cook and serve meals to program participants.

Yes, we have a cob (made of straw and clay) oven that we use on occasion to make pizza.

Yes, we own 2 stainless steel tables used for chicken processing that we store by the animal feed shed and some dog/chicken crates.

Yes, we have an outdoor refrigerator that is used to store expired dairy and other food for our dogs and cats..

Yes, individuals use that refrigerator to store their own lunch food.

Yes, there was sodium hydroxide in the kitchen where we were making soap at the time.

Yes, we have free range chickens.

Yes, we are a farm!

Our lives have been upended by this episode. We are working to keep our community together, continue to maintain the farm, and get a decent night's sleep on occasion! We hope that when we eventually have the chance to present our position to an objective authority, be it the Bainbridge Board of Zoning Appeals, or a judge of the Court of Common Pleas, they will understand us to be a farm with educational programming as allowed for, and in fact encouraged, by Ohio law, and treat us thus, fairly. In the meantime, your support has been invaluable. Thank you.

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

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