



TOWN OF NORTHBRIDGE BOARD OF HEALTH

Aldrich School Town Hall Annex - 14 Hill Street
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The Northbridge Board of Health approved these minutes at a meeting held October 17, 2022.

MEETING MINUTES - OCTOBER 4, 2022

This meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Mr. Chris Cella, Vice-Chairman. Other members present were Ms. Linda Lermond, RN, Mr. Steve Garabedian and Ms. Erin Meagher, NP. Absent was Ms. Lani Criasia. Also present was Daniel Chauvin, Animal Control Officer for the Town of Northbridge and Jeanne M. Gniadek, Board of Health Administrator.

Meeting Minutes: This matter was tabled to the next meeting.

HEARING: Revocation of Permit to Stable Farm Animals & Poultry / 1316 Hill Street:

Present for this hearing was Mr. Mustafa Harrati, owner of the 1316 Hill Street property. Mr. Harrati requested a hearing after the Board's revocation of his permit on September 19, 2022 to stable farm animals and poultry at this location due to his failure to abide by the regulations of the Board of Health, specifically not allowing his animals to roam off the property unattended.

Mr. Cella stated that the Board is aware of recent issues with animals escaping from this property. Most recently a cow and a Boer goat, noting that the cow was found a couple of towns away. Mr. Cella also noted that it looks like, from a recent inspection of the property, that there is slaughtering of animals occurring at this location.

Mr. Harrati stated that he currently raises chickens and sheep. He wanted to add goats and cows. Mr. Harrati stated that he has had goats in the past and did not have any issues with them. Mr. Cella stated that the Board is in possession of numerous reports where the chickens and sheep were getting out of this farm. Police were called to get the animals out of the road so there is a significant history of issues at the farm.

Mr. Harrati stated that that was back in 2016 and that he had worked on that and has had no issues since. He stated that he spent over \$10,000 to keep the chickens on his property, contained in a trailer he built.

Mr. Harrati stated he wanted to start production of goats and cows. He stated that he had gotten two cows. He had kept them inside the barn and then slowly started exposing them to outside in a fenced area and he had no issues. Ms. Meagher asked what type of cows were these. Mr. Harrati responded that one was a black angus cow, the other was not a pure angus cow, a mixed breed.

He stated that the black angus cow escaped when it went through a gate while he was working on the property; he was unable to stop it. He noted that the 1st and 2nd fences are not strong and are not designed to contain the animals. The 3rd fence is steel and wire.

Mr. Cella asked Mr. Harrati if it was his responsibility to make sure the animals were in an area that could properly contain them. Mr. Harrati responded of course. He stated that he has fencing but that the cow escaped due to a gate being open that he was unable to secure before the cow got

out. Mr. Harrati stated that he was not working on the gate, he was working on the property in this area and the gate was open which is how the cow got out. He was by himself and could not control the cow. Mr. Cella questioned how he didn't notice a large cow sneaking up on him and then get the gate closed before it could escape.

Mr. Cella stated that it is the Board's understanding that this cow was gone for a month and that the Board of Health was never notified of this. Mr. Harrati stated that he called the police to let them know. Mr. Cella asked if he had tried to go after the cow. Mr. Harrati stated that he did. He went out several times to find the cow and that whenever the police called him with a sighting of the cow he would go out but by the time he got there the cow would be gone again.

Mr. Harrati stated he did everything possible to get the cow. He stated that it is impossible to run faster than the cow. Mr. Cella responded that the cow maybe should not have been allowed to roam in this area or he should have had another enclosure for situations like this. Mr. Cella stated that he didn't think he did everything possible to prevent the cow from getting out in the first place.

The Board noted that the Boer goat had also escaped. Mr. Harrati stated that the goat was returned to its previous owner and is no longer at the farm.

Ms. Meagher asked if this was Mr. Harrati's first farm. He stated that it is. Ms. Meagher then asked what his profession is. Mr. Harrati stated that he was a software engineer but that he is now doing this full-time. Mr. Cella asked if he lives on the property. He responded that he does not. Mr. Cella asked if he has someone that maintains the property for him, watering and feeding the animals. Mr. Harrati stated that he is there every day from 7/8 AM until 5 PM or so depending on how much work he needs to get done.

Mr. Cella commented that Mr. Harrati either has the worst luck in the world or he's not a very good farmer. He then asked Mr. Harrati about the pictures taken during the inspection on September 28, 2022 that look like there are animals being slaughtered. He stated that the Board of Health is unaware of any areas designated for the disposal of the blood, carcasses, etc.

Mr. Harrati stated that he is not slaughtering any animals. He stated that the customers are doing that. He stated that he sells live animals. Mr. Harrati stated that he does not slaughter the animals but that his customers have the right to slaughter the animals at the farm. The inspection report notes that Mr. Harrati stated that the customers take all the waste with them. At this meeting Mr. Harrati stated that the waste is composted at the farm.

Ms. Meagher asked if the animals were being slaughtered in a religious manner such as Halal. Mr. Harrati stated that not just Halal people are coming to his farm, he also has other religions and Asian, Chinese people coming to his farm. He reiterated that the customer has the right to process the animal on his property. If anything is left, he places it in the compost pile.

Mr. Cella noted that the pictures show slaughtered meat in the freezer on his property. Mr. Harrati stated that is correct – that once a year he processes a couple of animals, 2-3 sheep, that he shares with his neighbors. Mr. Cella asked him where he places the blood, carcasses, etc. from what he slaughters at the farm. Mr. Harrati stated that he composts it. The meat is shared with 10-15 of his neighbors.

Mr. Cella asked if the composting area was clearly marked. He stated it is not.

Mr. Garabedian asked why the meat in the freezer was not wrapped or labeled. Mr. Cella asked how long this meat has been in the freezer, when was this animal slaughtered. Mr. Harrati stated it was probably the first week in August or late July.

Ms. Meagher stated that she comes from a family that slaughters meat and that is not the way it is done. Everything is packaged and labeled. Mr. Harrati stated that is because she sells the meat. Ms. Meagher stated that the meat is for their own consumption it is not sold but they still mark everything with dates and lot numbers, etc. She stated that it is very highly regulated how they process their meat. Mr. Garabedian stated that you just don't cut up a lamb and throw it in the freezer and call it a day.

Mr. Cella asked how many animals get slaughtered each day by friends, customers, etc. at his farm. Mr. Mustafa responded 40-50 chickens per month.

Mr. Cella asked Mr. Harrati why he felt the Board should grant his request to get his permit to stable animals back. Mr. Harrati stated that he is making improvements. He stated that he made improvements back in 2016 and has not had any further issues with chickens and sheep. This was a new experience for him so he is making improvements. He showed the Board how the goat had broken out of its stall, actually breaking the wood in the stall.

Mr. Cella stated that he has a history of problems at this farm, losing animals. That he is taking animals in without being fully aware of how to take care of them. He noted that a car could have easily hit that cow and caused significant injuries.

Mr. Garabedian questioned what types of improvements are needed and how does someone go about learning this. He asked Mr. Chauvin if he was aware of how this could be accomplished. Mr. Chauvin responded that most of the farms he has been to have been passed down through generations and are traditional working farms. He stated that the farm the missing cow ended up at in Upton is state of the art.

Mr. Cella asked Mr. Harrati how long before the improvements are made. Mr. Harrati responded probably this week or next week. Mr. Cella asked what exactly is he doing to improve the functionality of the farm. Mr. Harrati stated that the fencing directly adjacent to the barn will be improved. He did not think the outside fence could be improved upon. Mr. Harrati showed pictures of fencing at another farm noting that it has 4 wires where his fencing has 6 wires.

Motion was made by Ms. Meagher to maintain the revocation of the permit to stable farm animals and poultry until the facility meets the requirements and satisfaction of the Board. Motion seconded by Mr. Garabedian; the vote was all in favor.

Mr. Cella informed Mr. Harrati that the Board had voted to maintain the permit revocation until he has satisfactorily made improvements to the barn and property and the Board of Health has been out with Animal Control to inspect the barn to ensure that it is safe for the animals and the animals can be controlled within the property. Mr. Garabedian noted that no animals are allowed on the property at this time.

Mr. Cella also informed Mr. Harrati that there shall be no slaughtering of animals at this property either at this time.

Mr. Chauvin noted that the first question asked when adopting an animal is whether the person has ever been charged with cruelty to animals. If the answer is yes, then the interview is over, and that's with a domestic animal that has some intelligence, not livestock that do not know any better. Mr. Chauvin expressed concern that Mr. Harrati doesn't know what he's doing and that he's experimenting with a 1,000-pound animal.

Correspondence: None

There being no further business, motion to adjourn at 6:03 PM was made by Mr. Garabedian and seconded by Ms. Lermond – all in favor.

Attested by,

Jeanne M. Gniadek, Administrator

Next Meeting scheduled for: Monday, October 17, 2022 @ 5:30 PM

List of Documents utilized by Board of Health
Meeting Date: October 4, 2022

A. Approval of Minutes

- 1) September 19, 2022 DRAFT Meeting Minutes

B. HEARING: Revocation of Permit to Stable Farm Animals & Poultry

- 2) Hill Street, 1316
 - a. Letter to Harrati from BOH regarding Hearing
 - b. Email to Harrati regarding Hearing
 - c. Email receipt
 - d. Harrati letter requesting Hearing
 - e. BOH Letter (9/20/22) Revocation of Permit Notice
 - f. Report of Barn Inspection (9/28/22)
 - g. Application for Criminal Complaint (Animal Cruelty) (10/18/21)
 - h. Police Log Report (10/14/2021)
 - i. Police Log (8/30/2018)
 - j. Telegram & Gazette article (9/25/2018)
 - k. Summary of Police Log Entries (2018-2022)
 - l. Police Log of Complaints (2015-2016)
 - m. BOH Regulations 201-11 – Minimum Standards for the Keeping of Farm Animals & Poultry

C. Citizen's Forum

D. Correspondence – *No documents*