
Adventures in Learning Inc

313 Cedar St
Ashland, MA 01721
508-395-8345
ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com

RECEIVED

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**Town of Ashland
Board of Health**

23 October 2020

Town of Ashland Board of Health

Ashland, MA 01721

I am writing on behalf of my business which is located on my property at 313 Cedar St to request a waiver from the Board of Health for the Keeping of Animals, Property Restriction 8.2, to keep 6 goats and 32 poultry which reside here as part of the educational programming offered. When Adventures in Learning opened in 2006 existing bylaws* were researched to determine which animals could be incorporated as part of the educational program. The size of our property at that time had very different bylaws regarding the amount and types of animals allowed without a permit. Unknown to us, the bylaws were changed.

During the time we have kept these animals on our property as part of Adventures In Learning, we have done so without incident or complaint from our neighbors. Quite the opposite, our neighbors often visit the animals and this was especially the case starting March 13th. Our neighbors with small children took it upon themselves to make a path from the street to allow them to visit our goats, chickens, and ducks through the fence. They checked in to ensure we had no issues with their visits and were thanked on numerous occasions for having the animals, and for the distraction and joy it gave them during the unsettling times since COVID began. We only recently increased our number of goats because of the positive feedback from neighbors and students attending Adventures in Learning. I began the process of researching becoming a nonprofit corporation providing educational programs in Massachusetts and hired a lawyer to complete this process. Once I have all of the information from him, I will be happy to share it with the Board of Health.

Our family takes great pride in the way we care for our animals, and the families who have attended the preschool and school-aged programs for years chose Adventures in Learning for the agriculture based educational opportunities. The animals are well cared for and receive veterinary care (all of our goats have been vaccinated and received rabies vaccines which is not required, but was recommended by our vet). Our neighbor, Stephanie Samrout across the street at 15 MacArthur St has been our vacation caregiver and emergency location for years and views the animals as her own. We have never been visited by animal control and no noise complaints have ever been made.

The size of our property and its location to neighbors also makes our setup unique. We border Daggett St/MacArthur Rd with no other house on our side of the street. The animals live in a 50 x 70 foot pen which was part of the property when we purchased in 1998. There is a fence which extends up most of Daggett St/MacArthur Rd. One other property on Cedar St (James and Kathy Brennan) runs parallel to our land and the house is near the top while these animals are housed down near the woods. The other two properties touch the end of our land from Eliot St and the wooded space between is substantial, and 14 MacArthur Rd borders the very back of our property.

We would welcome the opportunity to have you visit and speak with all of our neighbors. Our closest neighbors, James and Kathy Brennan have shared repeatedly that since Covid reduced the opportunity for them to participate in their normal activities the animals, Winnie one of our ducks especially has made them smile everyday and they so look forward to seeing and feeding her. We have also included letters and a document with signatures from several neighbors which we are happy to add to if you request we do so.

I look forward to working with the Board of Health to ensure all information you need to consider this request is collected and submitted. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or requests.

Sincerely,



Courtney Arseneault

Resident since 1998

Owner of Adventures in Learning since 2006

*I continue to try and locate these bylaws and based on my understanding of my research back then the bylaws stated for over an acre of land 200 poultry or rabbits and 2 farm animals. There was no reference to a permit requirement for over an acre of land. If the permit piece is an error in memory I have no issue paying the permit fee for the years missed.



C Arseneault <ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com>

All set!

Meagan Coffey <meglmiller@hotmail.com>

Thu, Nov 5, 2020 at 9:01 AM

To: C Arseneault <ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com>

"My children (3 boys) have been fortunate and lucky enough to know, learn from, and endure the amazing TLC of Ms. Courtney in many different fashions/ways over the years. She started off as my oldest son's preschool teacher, and right away, I knew my children were going to learn so much from her and her love for science and education. I am an educator myself so I know an invested educator when I see one! After she sadly stopped teaching preschool as her full time job, she had the brilliant idea to teach children in the her own magical backyard, using animals as a way to teach children empathy, how to care for others, and simply to love life outdoors! I'm not sure if she has any idea how much she has taught my children about life—life outside of school, life outside of our own house, and more about animals than I have ever known myself! Her love for nature has inspired our family to love it too. We take many nature walks, and I am always blown away just how much my own children can teach me about the outdoors and all the special critters that live out there. When I ask them where they learned their facts, 99.9999% of the time it comes from Ms. Courtney and the hands-on experiences that they have had just in her backyard. Courtney and her animal family have brought joy, comfort, and laughter to our whole family—something we all need in a time like this. Her program truly has been some of the BEST experiences my boys have had, and being outdoors with her is top notch in their minds! She (and her furry friends) understand the need for outdoor education, and I have seen first-hand the impact and lasting impressions it has made.

From my 6 year old:

"Going into the goats is my favorite because they hop with me, let me pet them, and they make me laugh! The bunnies are my second favorite. The animals are all so snuggly."

From my 3 year old:

"Goats be me favorite because of petting. Them pull my shirt with thens mouths and it's so so so funny!"

From my 8 year old:

"My favorite thing is the goats because they're sometimes really funny, I like to pet and brush them, and they're really cute. I like being in her yard because there is so much to explore, and I get to feed her animals. I wish I could go to her house everyday instead of school."



C Arseneault <ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com>

Request for help

Brendan and Christina Hannigan <bandsiege@gmail.com>

Tue, Nov 3, 2020 at 9:22 PM

To: C Arseneault <ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com>

Hi Courtney,

You definitely have our support. Feel free to use the following in your request for a waiver. Don't hesitate to let me know if you want anything changed.

Christina

Mrs. Courtney Arseneault is the best teacher my children have ever had! My oldest child was lucky enough to attend Adventures in Learning, when it was operating inside of Mrs. Courtney's home. It had an outdoor component where the kids had the opportunity to care for animals. It was a gem of a preschool, which left a huge impression on my daughter! This year, with COVID, we jumped at the opportunity to enroll our youngest in Mrs. Courtney's farm school. The biggest priority for us this year was safety. We are so grateful that Mrs. Courtney is offering an outdoor program where kids can wear masks and maintain a safe distance from one another. Furthermore, what she offers is truly unique. Not only is it very special to be able to interact with animals, but Mrs. Courtney is also a phenomenal educator who really cares about the social-emotional well being of her students. In the midst of a pandemic, her students get to have a very normal school experience. That's extraordinary! We're so grateful for the opportunity that our son is getting to learn and have fun outside while caring for animals. The animals seem really well taken care of and the grounds are kept so clean. We don't have pets at home and both my kids have learned to love animals at Mrs. Courtney's school.

On Mon, Nov 2, 2020 at 12:29 PM C Arseneault <ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com> wrote:

[View original message](#)



C Arseneault <ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com>

Request for help

Meredith Desrochers <meredithdesrochers@gmail.com>
 To: C Arseneault <ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com>

Thu, Nov 5, 2020 at 2:47 PM

I hope this helps! Feel free to tweak as necessary.....)

I'm proud to say that my children all began their education journey in Courtney's backyard-surrounded by nature, animals, and so much love. Courtney (and her program), are one of a kind, and my kids (and quite frankly my entire family), have benefited from attending it in so many ways.

Why we love Barnyard Adventures:

- Her program is entirely outside (key for covid days) where the kids get plenty of fresh air, exercise, and Vitamin D. Sadly, kids don't spend nearly as much time in the outdoors as generations before them did, so we are grateful for this.
- Her program is play based, allowing the kids independence to roam freely and explore what interests them. This is another nice change to the modern, structured ways of raising kids.
- The group of children is small (10 and under), and therefore they receive plenty of attention in a calm environment
- Courtney instilled a love for science and nature through her various STEM activities and experiments. If you have a child who is scared of insects, or doesn't like to get dirty...send them to Courtney's to make mud pies in the outdoor play kitchen!

The animals at Courtneys are as special as she is, and have clearly benefited from the love and attention that they receive from Courtney and her students. Her animals are social, gentle, and so well cared for. My kids enjoy raiding my produce bin for treats for them. The animals provide a calmness, and sense of purpose for the kids as they enjoy their jobs of feeding, brushing, and playing with them.

But the biggest strength (in my opinion) of Courtney's program is the respect that it teaches the kids for ALL living creatures big and small, especially the ones who may appear different than the others. For example, Courtney often takes injured animals, or those that were discarded due to special needs. Those animals fit right in, and are a great way to teach the children to embrace everyone's uniqueness.

The town of Ashland is so fortunate to have an early childhood program like Courtneys.

Meredith Desrochers

On Mon, Nov 2, 2020 at 12:29 PM C Arseneault <ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi C,

Thank you for

reaching out.



C Arseneault <ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com>

Review of Program

Serena Lillie <sbtillie@gmail.com>

Wed, Nov 4, 2020 at 4:31 PM

To: C Arseneault <ailbarnyardadventures@gmail.com>

Dear Courtney

We are writing to support your request for a waiver from the Ashland Board of Health to keep all of your school animals for Adventures in Learning/Barnyard Adventures Programs. Our family, in particular our child, has benefited greatly from your programming. As you know, we have a 7 year old daughter who attends Homework Club on Wednesday afternoons from 1pm - 3pm.

We chose the program for the following reasons: the opportunity to have a learning environment with a professional educator outdoors during a COVID-19 and the limited options available, the involvement of the animals to enhance engagement and provide additional benefits

The experience has been wonderful for our family. Our child thrives when she is with you and your animals. To have an outlet right now where she can learn, get her school work completed, have her heart full and happy, and safely socialize with children of similar age and interests is invaluable right now. Even if we weren't in COVID-19 we would want to participate in the program as our child is very interested in caring for animals, especially farm animals, enjoys being outdoors, and likes having tasks to complete that are important to others (such as feeding and caring for animals).

The animals all appear to be well loved and cared for. They seem safe and secure and well fed. They are all very friendly and tame to the kids, while also seeming to be vibrant and thriving (for example the chickens lay eggs the same as other small farm chickens would, the goats climb small structures as I've seen petting zoo and other small farm goats do, etc).

Our child is learning compassion, responsibility, and different ways of working when she's with you and your animals. You seem to be an expert educator and small farmer - you know your stuff when it comes to both! This is a unique program and experience that we are so happy to be a part of.

Please let us know if we can help in any other way.

Serena & Brendan Lillie
13 Boulder Hill Lane
Ashland, MA