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May 4, 2015

Warren Berbit, Village Attorney
Village of Montebello
One Montebello Road
Montebello, New York 10901

Re: Osterberry Farm, 133 Spook Rock Road

Dear Mr. Berbit:

The Village of Montebello prides itself on its “rural character” leaving me perplexed why it seems so determined to thwart Mr. Oster’s efforts to grow blueberries and keep two small bee keeps on the above-captioned property.

In an effort to preserve Rockland’s agricultural heritage, the county has spent of millions of dollars over the past twenty years to preserve farming. The demise of Rockland’s once proud agricultural tradition is being revived on this lot- at a time when every other property conceivable is being claimed for large scale development. As you can see from the attached photos, the Oster Family has a passion for nature. But their love for nature is no match for municipal bureaucracy.

A lifelong resident bought a beautiful property to foster his family’s love of the threatened Rockland landscape and rather than applause, he faces harassment.

Last month, Mr. Oster received a violation for keeping two small beekeepers on this property, alleging this use not a permitted use in the Village of Montebello.

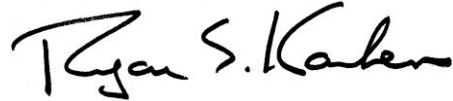
According to the Environmental Protection Agency, since 2006, as much as one-third of bee colonies in the United States have disappeared. According to the Back Yard Bee Keeping Association, urbanization has radically decreased the area available to bees to forage. Bees are needed to pollinate fruit and vegetable crops, and benefit as much as one-third of all food and beverages. Some foods, like almonds, are entirely dependent on bee pollination.

The value of bees is so manifest that President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama placed a beehive on the South Lawn of The White House in 2010. The bees pollinate the grounds’ flowers while providing honey for official functions.

The stop work order interposed by the Village is a hysterical overreaction to the innocent interaction of man and nature and is an immediate threat to botanical and other life on the property.

The presence of the bees and the blueberry plants is such a welcome respite for longtime Rocklanders. I respectfully suggest a meeting between the relevant authorities. While the Village of Montebello required 10 acres for a formal farm, there are strong policy objectives in favor of fostering farming wherever it is possible. These natural and innocuous uses of land are not “prohibited uses” and the small scale blueberry cultivation should not require municipal approval.

Very truly yours,
LAW OFFICE OF RYAN KARBEN

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan S. Karben". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'R' and 'K'.

By: RYAN S. KARBEN





