

Talia Jalette

From: Lucas Marsh <lmarsh80@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 28, 2021 5:37 PM
To: : Stephen Moffitt; Alfred W. DiOrio; Sharon Davis; Bob Marvel; Scott Bill Hirst; Michael J {FLNA}; Emily Shumchenia; Keith Lindelow; Ron Prellwitz; Carolyn Light; John Pennypacker; Elizabeth Cook-Martin; Brian Rosso; James Lamphere; Talia Jalette; Stephen Sypole; James Marusak; Margaret Hogan
Subject: A Farmers support for the Farm Viability Act

Dear Respected Town Council Members,

Over the past few years I have noticed as I drive my tractor along the roads of Hopkinton a sticker on passing cars that would make me smile. That sticker said "Keep Hopkinton Country". I naively believed that the sticker meant keep Hopkinton farmers farming.

To those who don't know me, I am Lucas Marsh 5th generation Dairy Farmer on my family's farm. (Elmrock Farm in Ashaway). Let me explain to you why that smile is gone and why I was naive.

It has come to my attention that the very people who want to keep Hopkinton country want to eliminate or change the farm viability act in a way that will harm us farmers. Upon reading pages of bullet points and opinions, worded as fact I see a group of people with no clue what the farmers of Hopkinton face or realize the value we bring to the town. This group has never reached out to learn about the issues we face and has just labeled us as liars and greedy. What makes it scary I believe is the town is afraid of this group because the group will not hesitate to sue the town therefore the attitude is to appease them.

The issue I speak of is the ability for farmers to rent land for small solar systems. Which we are allowed to do through the farm viability act. We are in no way asking to turn our entire farms into solar fields.

Farming is complicated because of regulations we face, farming is hard work, and farming is rarely profitable. Most farmers I know have other jobs to keep the farm going. I personally work as a cabinetmaker so I can farm. I have never been able to just farm. The farmers in Hopkinton need cash flow to continue farming. That's what the small scale solar systems were meant for. These systems provide cash we need to operate and are vital to our survival. From a business standpoint it doesn't make much sense to continue on. Many people have suggested we team up with a developer and turn Elmrock Farm into housing and then use the profits to move to a farm in another state. This is no threat, this is business. We love Hopkinton but if we can't make a livable wage then we need to take our family elsewhere to farm.

Best Regards,

Lucas Marsh