

Ban Birds in Connecticut? I don't think so!

A legal notice that sparked a National Alliance

By Concetta Ferragamo

Ban birds in Connecticut? A sleep-deprived local lawyer (Mr. Bennett) from the small town of Chester, Connecticut decided to do just that because he was furious with a neighbor's "crowing" rooster. His rage led him to file a proposal that would not only ban roosters but went as far as to include parrots and prohibit any animals "including fowl, which howls, barks, brays, bellows, calls, screeches, squawks, or makes other sound during the day or night at frequent and/or extended periods of time." (See official proposal). Keep in mind that ordinances like this are frequently copied verbatim and introduced into other municipalities across the United States. This petition set off a bomb mobilizing a chain of command in bird clubs and the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc. (AFA). It sounded something like this.

Cheryl Fullerton, a member of the Connecticut Parrot Society (CPS), an AFA affiliated bird club, saw a legal notice for a nearby town in her local newspaper. An ordinance was being proposed that would ban poultry, parrots and some other animals in the town of Chester, Connecticut. Cheryl then alerted the CPS President, Bob Cosgrove, of the pending situation. Barbara Cosgrove, his wife, is a board member of CPS and is also the AFA State Coordinator for Connecticut. So Barbara then notified Concetta Ferragamo, the AFA Northeastern Regional Director who got several of the AFA Board members involved in reviewing the proposal. AFA Legislative Vice President, Genevieve Wall, Esquire responded and her AFA legislative committee team went into action.

From there the AFA chain reaction was effective and played out perfectly. Kathy Heaton sent out notices far and wide spanning the entire United States and even internationally. From anywhere outside looking in, the teamwork was most impressive. National and local Bird club Presidents alerted their clubs, members posted on several social media networks and the notice of the proposed ban on birds went viral. There was an impressive alliance from breeders, pet owners, sanctuaries, rescues, shelters, trainers, authors, consultants, veterinarians and people who did not even own birds. Bird lovers pulled together and completely overwhelmed the town of Chester with piles of letters and emails objecting to the ban.

The hearing was scheduled for January and plans were underway to have several key people from bird clubs, the AFA, and many others present. A strong contingency of AFA members showed up and/or were in route for the January hearing when word came down that the fire marshal was forced to cancel



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOHN STACK SPIRITDOGPHOTOGRAPHY.COM
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Above, A crowd gathers at a hearing on where an ordinance was being proposed that would ban poultry, parrots and some other animals in the town of Chester, Connecticut. Below, parade participants dress up as "Chester Chicks" in opposition to the proposition.

and postpone the meeting. Apparently the gathering crowd exceeded occupancy limits for the venue with well over 500 attendees already present. Dr. Amy Hopkins (CAFA), Margaret Warren (CPS), Michele Parrott (CPS) accompanied Concetta, the AFA Regional Board member, and her husband Enzo Ferragamo to the hearing. Other AFA members were in route and were told to turn around due to the last minute cancellation and postponement. The meeting was tentatively rescheduled for February in a larger arena.

Additionally, the community of Chester had an outpouring of their own. The crowd was massive and even contained some entertaining characters. There was a large group of people wearing chicken hats that broke out in a chant to end the proposal right then and there. Their request was denied due to regulations and the proper way to proceed under law. The Bennett's were present as well and apparently humbled by the crowds. They escaped as quickly as possible. It was clear that there were more Chester residents that were opposed to the

proposed ban than in favor of it.

Concetta spoke with Zoning and Planning Commissioner Jon Lavy about the proposals and national responses that poured in from AFA and others. Lavy recognized the name of the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc. as a professional national education organization that often gets involved in these types of cases. Lavy stated that the stacks of letters were overwhelming and they had not had the chance to look at all of them yet. Lavy was reassured that there would be more letters to come. Commissioner Lavy was pleasant despite the tough predicament. Concetta and Lavy spoke about different alternatives such as helping the Bennett's with sound proofing techniques and Lavy and other members of the zoning and planning board seemed interested and asked questions. Concetta assured the commissioner and officers that the present group would be returning for the next hearing and that there would be more AFA friends joining along.

The Legal Notice That Triggered A United Alliance

Pet owners, farmers, breeders, veterinarians, rescues, sanctuaries, shelters and people that don't own birds all pulled together and worked toward the same goal! This example will hopefully turn on a few light bulbs and help people to realize that we are all on the same team after all—a team of many different facets of aviculture. A united coalition emerged that day and showed up in Connecticut to defend our livelihoods and our avian interests. It started from the consistent updates of Barbara and Bob Cosgrove. It spiraled into Dr. Amy Hopkins and Audrey O'Connor coordinating with the legislative committee of the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc., and included other important voices like the International Quaker Society, Avicultural Society of America, and more. Aviculture truly has a mighty team as a whole. In the end, the Bennett's withdrew their proposal. Now that's something to crow about.

LEGAL NOTICE
CHESTER PLANNING & ZONING
COMMISSION
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Chester Planning & Zoning Commission will hold a public hearing on Thursday, January 10, 2013, at 7:30 PM at the Chester Elementary School, 23 Ridge Road, Chester, Connecticut to hear the following application:

Petition submitted by John S. and Bonnie B. Bennet to amend the Town of Chester Zoning Regulations Section: Definitions, "Livestock" and Section 40R, Animals.

At this hearing interested parties may appear and be heard and written correspondence will be received and made a part of the record. A copy of the above petition is on file in the Office of the Town Clerk for public review.

Example of the Chester Legal Notice announcing public hearing

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Discount Bird Food & Supplies

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Lory League.org

A fun group of Breeders, Pet Owners, Exhibitors and more.

See us at events and shows.

Visit our website for more info.

Join our yahoo group

LoryLeague@yahoogroups.com

Julie at blconnection@hotmail.com

206-772-1730 or 206-501-7428

Come Join the Fun !



LoryLeague.org

Lory League is proud to host bird shows at the AFA Convention

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