

From: **Lisa Burleson** <lisa.s.burleson@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Sep 15, 2020 at 1:37 PM
Subject: Cape Elizabeth Child Care crisis
To: <penny.jordan@capeelizabeth.org>
Cc: <file@capeelizabeth.org>

Dear Ms. Jordan,

My name is Lisa Burleson. I am a Cape Elizabeth resident, born and raised on the same farm my husband and I decided to raise our young family. I am the owner and operator of String Bean Farm School and Child Care at 1043 Sawyer Road. It has been a dream of mine to operate a farm based preschool that is why I left my career in medicine in 2019 to open my business. My mission is to provide an environment that allows children to thrive socially, emotionally and academically through exposing children to all the wonderful things farming and nature has to offer.

While meeting the prerequisites to obtain a license I discovered that Cape Elizabeth is one of two towns in the state that adds additional restrictions to your license limiting your capacity from twelve to six (and your own children factor into that ratio). This was extremely discouraging. I met with Maureen Omera to learn more about the appeal process to find out that I would have to complete a formal site plan review in order to operate at full capacity. This process is extremely extensive, expensive and the same process that other major businesses in town have to go through in order to expand.

I don't feel it is appropriate or fair for a home daycare/preschool to be held to the same rules and regulations as other businesses in our town. The site plan review has nothing to do with quality of care. If it did I would completely understand the need for such a process. With a background in medicine I am someone who believes in policies and procedures when there is a sound rationale. I don't feel there is one in this case. There was a child care crisis prior to Corona Virus but now it is worse than ever. We are at a tipping point in the child care industry. If

profound changes aren't made more child care facilities will be forced to permanently close.

Parents are struggling to find child care especially now with the Cape Elizabeth School system adapting a hybrid model. That is why I decided to restructure my business to meet this need. Starting the week of September 21, 2020 I will be open part time for my preschool students and part time for remote learners. With my two sons included in my child to staff ratio I am left with four potential child care spots. This is nowhere near enough to meet the needs of working parents. That is why I contacted Benjamin McDougal to see if the town is granting even temporary leniency to the child to staff ratios as the state is. He told me that the town council would need to adopt additional verbiage in order to grant this permission.

my email serves two purposes. One, I think it is time to revisit the restrictions placed on child care facilities in our town. The way it stands the town is discouraging child care facilities to operate in this town. It would be easier and more cost effective for me to move my business to another town. We have a wonderful town and it is our duty to help nurture its citizens. My program is focused on exposing children to farming and nature while helping to create a positive impact in our community. It is a service to our community to adopt proper regulations for child care facilities to ensure our town has the highest quality child care facilities while making sure the children in our town have access to child care.

The other reason for my email is to see if the town council will consider following Maine DHS lead and grant even temporary leniency to child to staff ratios.

We are a progressive town lets continue moving forward to assist this crisis while making sure the children in Cape Elizabeth aren't left behind and grow up to be the best assists to our community. I know Cape Elizabeth would benefit from my proposals. There would be countless thankful citizens. I would be more than happy to discuss this issue further

at your convenience. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

best,

Lisa Burleson

stringbeanfarmschool.com