

September 20, 2010

Geneva City Council
c/o Matt Horn, City Manager
City Hall
47 Castle Street
Geneva, NY 14456

Mr. Horn and members of Geneva City Council,

As a representative of Hobart & William Smith Colleges and as citizens of the city of Geneva, we would like to request use (in the form of a 5-year lease or purchase option) of the land located along Exchange Street known as the "OEO site," to be developed into a community chicken co-op. The land is currently unused and to our knowledge has laid derelict for many years. This proposal will make creative and educational use of the grounds without extensive impact or jeopardizing its future use for other means.

As envisioned, the chicken co-op will consist of a henhouse and about 30 laying hens. Students from HWS, supervised and directed by us, will manage the small operation as a cooperative, soliciting volunteers from the community to feed and care for the hens. In exchange, members will receive a share of fresh, free-range, and organic eggs. Local schools will be invited to visit the co-op and learn about tending farm animals and the life of chickens, and the project will incorporate sustainable infrastructure like rain catchment systems and solar power.

Chickens are hardy, quiet, clean animals that require minimal care. They are personable, productive (one egg per hen per day for several years on average), and beneficial to the land they inhabit, keeping bugs down and fertilizing the soil. They are also a curiosity, and tourists will be drawn to Geneva to see the progressive chicken farm happening right in the middle of downtown. This model has been successful elsewhere (see the accompanying article about a co-op in Portland, Oregon) and is ideal for the tract of land in question.

The co-op will serve as a link between students at HWS and citizens of Geneva, and is consistent with the mission of the City Green Committee. The educational opportunities abound: running a small business, maintaining a budget, community engagement, setting shifts and timelines, optimizing production, promoting local, sustainable practices. Future enhancements could include beekeeping, composting, and research into alternative building methods.

Thank you for your consideration. We welcome any questions you might have and would be happy to discuss further. We look forward to hearing the Council's decision, and, hopefully, getting to work building a suitable coop.

Sincerely,

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