

Willig, Robert A.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 5:36 PM
To: ACRE Shared Mailbox
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Local ordinances preventing farm based business
Attachments: SOM - Draft Zoning Ordinance - 1-26-2024.pdf

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To whom it may concern.

My township is making changes that will negatively impact my farms ability to operate. We are told that our 20+ acre farm is now zoned residential and governed by rules that will not allow our operations. We grow Hops, a specialty crop, and manufacture craft beer from it to sell to the public. We are fully license to produce but not permitted by township to allow people onsite to purchase goods. Please see attached draft regulations for Somerset Township, Pa. Please contact me for further information. We have been unable to sell our products for over a year now.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

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Willig, Robert A.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2024 10:45 AM
To: ACRE Shared Mailbox
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Local ordinances preventing farm based business

Robert,

In December of 2020, we discussed our intentions for revitalizing the farm as a hop producer and local brewery/eatery with the Somerset Zoning department and was advised that the zoning regulations were in review, but our operations should not be impacted. We began agricultural practices to establish hop plants, and invested ~\$300K into renovating the barn and old milkhouse to house the brewery operations. In 2023 we applied for occupancy and was advised that zoning no longer permitted a brewery/eatery on our property. There have been several meetings at the township, several attorneys involved, and I recently hired a private investigator to try and determine what has been happening. We also received a building violation from the township for the renovations we did and was advised to stop work immediately. We have been sitting idle now for some time and barely making ends meet.

The portion of the code not in our favor is that they deem us as residential, R1, which does not permit our operations. In our original conversation with the zoning board it was said that we would be changed to B1, for business operations. Even as B1 though, the new regulation is still in flux, so I am not sure how it will end up. At the county level we are still classed as agricultural, which we based everything on. I am not sure who/how the local zoning map was changed or why it was never submitted to the county.

I believe there is need for oversight of this township change. At a recent meeting, the people were very angry, standing room only, but the supervisors appeared to ignore most comments and simply continued to push the new regulations. We are a farming community, my neighbor has many head of cattle, so I'm not sure how we became residential.

[REDACTED]