



For Immediate Release

April 18, 2022

**MOUNT LAUREL TOWNSHIP AND VOLUNTEERS FOR PAWS FARM, INC.  
CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE RE-OPENING OF PAWS FARM**

***Mount Laurel, NJ*** --- On Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, the Mount Laurel Township Council will adopt a Resolution moving the re-opening of PAWS Farm from Phase 1 to Phase 2. This new Phase recognizes the amazing accomplishments of Volunteers for Paws Farm, Inc. to restore the property, including the historic Darnell Homestead, and making significant improvements performed during Phase 1.

“We are so indebted to the hard work of Volunteers for Paws Farm, Inc. Their enthusiasm to lease the property over the last year for the sole purpose maintaining, repairing and cleaning the mess left by the prior operator demonstrates their love for this site and the mission that Charles and Kate Tweedy first envisioned,” said Mayor Kareem Pritchett. “I couldn’t be happier with the results of these volunteer efforts,” he continued.

In January 2020, PAWS Farm abruptly closed its doors when the contract operator told the Township it could no longer operate the business. The closure caused the Township to re-house all the animals to safe homes at other zoos, farms and preserves. The Township searched for a new operator but the onset of Covid-19 and the uncertainty of the pandemic left little hope for the future of PAWS until Volunteers for PAWS Farm, Inc. was formed and stepped up to the task.

“As original founders, my wife Kate and I just could not accept that fate for Paws,” said Dr. Charles Tweedy. “We got some of the old band back together and now their grown children, to forge a new path for this treasure. Our first step was to convince

the Township to give us a lease on the property, so we could go in and clean up the property and make significant repairs and upgrades. With the Township's blessing we raised and spent about a \$250,000 bringing the Paws property back to life," Dr. Tweedy explained.

With Phase 1 complete, the Township now enters Phase 2 of the re-opening process. During this process, Volunteers for Paws Farm, Inc. will hire a caretaker for the property and hold special events on site for fundraising for animal care and operational support. Most importantly, Phase 2 will continue to have the Township and Volunteers working together to find a new partner to help operate PAWS.

Deputy Mayor Stephen Steglik spoke on this critical task: "Neither Volunteers for Paws Farm Inc., or the Township are in the position to run and operate Paws Farm without the assistance of a third partner. The Township will maintain the lands, the Volunteer's Board will oversee the mission but we need that third partner capable of handling employees, animal care and daily operations. We will continue to exhaust every opportunity to find the right fit to meet this challenge."

"While we all wish we could snap our fingers and swing open the barn doors to willing visitors, we also want to make sure that the history of January 2020 does not repeat itself, Steglik continued. "We have contacted many sources about this partnership and will continue to do so. If residents or business have additional ideas, please contact the Township at [comments@mountlaurel.com](mailto:comments@mountlaurel.com)."

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