

**ElephantVoices**

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Planning Board  
Hope Town Office  
441 Camden Rd.  
Hope, ME 04847

**To the chairman and members of the Planning Board:**

I am writing out of concern for the plan that has been proposed to you regarding keeping a single elephant, Rosie, in your town. While the sentiment behind the plan may be well intentioned, the details do not at all support the best interests of the elephant or ensure her a good life. I therefore must urge you to oppose the plan.

I am basing my opinion on 36 years of experience studying the behavior of wild elephants and working for their conservation and welfare. I am the Director of ElephantVoices, lead author of The Elephant Charter and a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Amboseli Elephant Research Project, the longest study of elephants in the world. In the early 1990s I headed Kenya's elephant program and was responsible for the conservation and management of the country's 25,000 elephants. I continue to study African elephants and run an elephant conservation project in the Maasai Mara, Kenya.

Scientific research over the last 40 years has greatly advanced our knowledge of elephants. With all due respect, we now understand far more about these complex animals than when the gentleman proposing this plan was working with elephants. This knowledge compels us to improve the care of elephants, rather than continue housing them in ways that does not suit their complex needs, including keeping an elephant alone.

Elephants are large, long-lived, intelligent and highly social animals with a complex system of communication. They are self-aware and capable of empathy, can remember other individuals after more than a decade of separation, and are capable of emotions such as joy, anger, grief, compassion and even humor. Similar to humans they have a large and complex social network, one that can include hundreds of elephants.

It is my considered opinion that captive female elephants should never be housed alone for any period of time, as maintaining social relationships is an essential aspect of an elephant's daily life. Captive female elephants should be housed in the company of other members of their own species and permitted the freedom to engage in normal social interactions and activities. Despite the best efforts of any well-meaning elephant keeper, human care just cannot replace social contact with other elephants.

I am also concerned with the facilities that will be provided for Rosie. Elephants

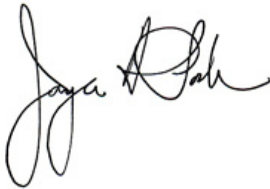
require ample, environmentally complex space; it is simply not possible to meet an elephant's physical, social and emotional needs on a few acres. In the wild elephants roam over hundreds of square kilometers and may travel considerable distances each day, as they explore, forage, care for young, and search for friends and mates.

It is not enough to simply provide elephants with food, water, and limited shelter, and expect that this would satisfy their needs. In fact, when confined in small spaces, without autonomy of movement and behavior, and kept in socially deprived conditions, elephants become dysfunctional, unhealthy, depressed, and aggressive. The fact that Rosie would be confined indoors for several months each winter would only exacerbate these grave problems.

The best placement for Rosie would be at an elephant sanctuary in a warmer climate where she could enjoy vastly improved space in a natural-habitat setting, a healthy social environment, and year-round access to the outdoors. Sanctuaries specialize in the rehabilitation of older, needy elephants, such as Rosie, offering high-quality daily and veterinary care, provided by a staff of experienced caretakers. There are many instances of elephants once deemed anti-social who have flourished in these refuges.

As a society, we have come a long way from seeing elephants as nothing more than a novelty attraction. And claims to be educating the public while keeping elephants in woefully inadequate physical and social environments are spurious at best. The greatly advanced scientific knowledge we have about elephants – and simple compassion – demand that we err on the side of caution when the health and well-being of elephants are under consideration. I urge you to do the same with the plan that is before you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joyce H. Poole". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joyce" being more prominent than the last name "Poole".

Joyce H. Poole, PhD  
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