



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 22, 2011

Minn. Landowners Battle County Commission for Their Property Rights

The rights granted to the American people by their Creator, and secured by the U.S. Constitution, are slowly being taken under siege by their government, both federal and local. U.S. citizens are being told that they can no longer carry raw milk over state lines, post crosses in their front yards, or purchase Happy Meals with toys for their children. And landowners in Houston County, Minnesota, have been fighting for five years to reclaim their property rights against a county commissioner who has called the Constitution an “old document.”



The struggle is over updates to the Land Use Plan brought on by the United Nations' [Agenda 21](#). *The Blaze* explains, “On the surface, the issue lies with an ‘updated Land Use Plan.’ With additional amendments being proposed for adoption, many of the affected landowners started getting involved in their local government.”

In 2007, for example, a newlywed couple was sued by Houston County over the new land use plan after they legally purchased a home. They were given just four options to “settle the situation.” They could either move their house 50 feet, purchase another 32 acres of land, sell their property to a neighbor, or simply tear the whole house down. Instead, the couple opted to appeal the ruling in the Minnesota Supreme Court, which refused to even hear their case, ultimately forcing them to sell their property.

Apparently there are over 50 similar situations in the area, according to Houston County records, wherein landowners feel they are being “denied rights guaranteed by the Constitution.”

Recognizing an erosion of their rights, residents of Houston County organized the Landowners Concerned about Property Rights group, and drafted a resolution that reads, “We the Landowners Concerned About Property Rights in Houston County do hereby call for the resignation of all the members of the Planning Board and Commissioners who do not agree with the will of ‘We the People...’”

The landowners say they felt compelled to organize because a number of people had allowed themselves to become intimidated and ultimately compliant. “It has made the county afraid, causing some to just go along with the system,” said a member of the Concerned Landowner group.

In its entirety, the resolution reads:

“We the people, property owners of Houston County, desiring to reclaim our liberties and property rights as guaranteed and specified in the Constitution of the United States and the State of Minnesota, do hereby determine that the Houston County Board of Commissioners pass this resolution stating all interpretations and applications of the zoning ordinances shall acknowledge and promote the supremacy of private property. We the People retain the right to own, maintain and develop property as we see fit, free of restrictive zoning regulations. This right being



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guaranteed to all in their “pursuit of happiness.” These liberties extend until it can be proven that their execution brings harm to or infringes upon the rights of others. Let justice be served.

Seeking liberty and justice for all, let all zoning regulations be examined to see if they accomplish this intent. This document to be affirmed and recorded in full.”

That resolution has already been signed by 700 of the county’s landowners, but when it was presented to the Commissioners in 2007, it received no response.

The people of Houston County are still trying to work within the system to accomplish their goals. They’ve been attending public hearings and county commission meetings since 2006, but to no avail.

“From the beginning, we experienced being ignored and belittled,” related one landowner. “We were told to sit down, to be quiet, and not to speak about our Constitution.”

At a 2008 planning board meeting, the disgruntled landowners questioned the board on the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. One landowner, Conrad Curren, directly asked the board if they “knew what they swore to uphold when they took their oath of office.” No one answered, even after the question was repeated several times, until commissioner Tom Bierke finally responded, “I know we’ve sworn to uphold the Constitution but it is an old document; times have changed.” He went on to tell the concerned citizens, “Quit bringing up the Constitution.”

Meanwhile, landowners were also forced to contend with local newspapers which they alleged were “taking sides” and printing “false claims.”

People were sending letters to the editor “in droves” to bemoan the land use policy.

One newspaper decided, after having been flooded with letters regarding the land rights issues posed by Agenda 21, that it would pull the plug on the letters. The *Spring Grove Herald* announced “New Policies for our Opinion Page,” one policy of which was that it would “stop publishing letters to the editor on the land rights issue.” The editor, Heather M. Gray, determined that the letters were simply redundant, but said that she “will accept a limited amount of letters from any individuals who support the county’s current zoning ordinances.”

In other words, anyone opposed to the ordinances could no longer express themselves — only those who favored them.

In a phone interview, Gray stated that she “did not feel that she was taking away the residents’ right to freedom of speech because they had said everything they needed to say. They were just trying to sway people to think like them, but were saying the same things over and over again.” Gray asserted that it was in fact appropriate to remove a venue for the residents to have their voices heard.

After some fierce opposition to the new policy, the “freeze” on those letters was finally removed, but residents are now held to a 500-word limit, and the editorial policy permits the editor to change the letters “as she feels fit.”

Frustrated with the lack of progress, landowners took matters into their own hands. *The Blaze* reports:

A small group of landowners decided that it was time to educate others, and themselves. With easy-to-read handouts of the Declaration of independence, quotes of the Founding Fathers, and parts of the Constitution, the group spent their evenings going from door to door, talking to their fellow citizens and asking for support.

The landowners have also brought their case to the Minnesota Federal Court.



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“We are not a litigious group,” said Robert Ideker, a Houston County landowner. “We have tried to work with the county, we have attended dozens of meetings and hearings, we have written dozens of letters, but no one will listen.”

County landowner Tom Groeschner said, “It is disappointing that it has come to federal court litigation, but there is nowhere else to turn. It seems impossible, but we must get the government back into the hands of ‘We the People.’”

The Landowners Concerned About Property Rights group commented:

We are doing this because of our faith. We believe that the earth is the Lord’s and that men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. We all need to care for our families, run our farms and businesses, and better our lives as we so desire, being stewards of what God has given us.

Photo: Houston County courthouse.



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