

Richmond Times-Dispatch

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Thursday, September 24, 2009 |

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Community meeting tonight on youth home in Craney Island Farms

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By [HOLLY PRESTIDGE](#)

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Residents in a Hanover County neighborhood are concerned about a home for troubled teens in their subdivision.

A community meeting is scheduled for tonight to address issues raised by those who live near Healthy Solutions, a foster home for four at-risk males ages 12 to 17 that opened this summer on Cudlipp Avenue in the Craney Island Farms community off U.S. 301. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. at Cool Spring Baptist Church.

Craney Island Farms resident David Liggan, who lives off Cudlipp Avenue, said he's concerned about a business operating in a residential area.

"We were never notified . . . or asked our opinion about the facility going into our area," Liggan said, referring to the home that provides 24-hour adult supervision and counseling services to teens who have behavioral issues.

Peggy Nicholls, who lives on Cudlipp Avenue, said the county should have alerted homeowners if a business was going in on their street. "I feel like the wool was pulled over our eyes," she said.

Hanover Planning Director Michael Crescenzo said Healthy Solutions didn't have to go through a permit-approval process because it meets the county's definition of foster care or family environment and therefore, by right, can exist in an agricultural district. It's also regulated by the Virginia Department of Social Services. The community surrounding the home is zoned as a single-family residential area.

Healthy Solutions Director Rahsaan Mitchell did not return two voice mails left for him.

According to the facility's Web site, the teens living in the home participate in individual and group counseling, mentorships and community-service programs, and they receive help with life skills.

The Hanover Board of Supervisors recently expanded its ordinance on foster-care facilities to include another permitted use, a residential children's facility. That means if a place such as Healthy Solutions

wants to house more than four teens, which is the limit now under the ordinance, it must get a special-exception permit.

John H. Hodges, deputy county administrator, said Healthy Solutions' introduction to the community "hasn't started out in the best way."

Because it was an accepted use within the community, "residents of the home didn't have to knock on doors and say, 'We're moving in,'" he said, and Craney Island residents "felt like there should have been some notice."

Hodges also pointed out that the county doesn't require adults who become foster parents to make their neighbors aware of what they're doing.

"We don't want to necessarily stigmatize them," he said. But in this case, "there are people who think [Healthy Solutions] is more of a business, not a foster family."

Contact Holly Prestidge at (804) 649-6945 or hprestidge@timesdispatch.com.

Reader Reactions

Posted by (David) on September 24, 2009 at 6:24 am

I can save everyone the time of going to the meeting.

1. The neighbors don't like it.
2. There's nothing they can do about it.

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