

May 14, 2021

Dear Neighbor:

We write this letter as we are deeply concerned and saddened by the deceptive information that continues to be spread throughout the neighborhood, in an effort to shut down services provided by Whispering Meadows Ranch and thereby deny Flagler County's children with special needs and disabled veterans the life-improving services they receive there. It has come to our attention that someone anonymously placed an inflammatory "Notice" on mailboxes throughout our neighborhood yesterday, in an attempt to turn neighbor against neighbor.

Our purpose in writing this letter is to correct misinformation, dispel rumors and ensure you are aware of the facts. The truths that we point out in this letter are all independently verifiable by checking the documents section of the Flagler County Planning and Development Board and watching the recorded record of the April 13, 2021, Board meeting at Flagler County's YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69_FolkGrZI

First and foremost, we will NEVER do anything that jeopardizes the harmony, quietude or safety of our beloved neighborhood. In fact, Flagler County Development Director Adam Mengel can tell you that that was one of the very first things we said when we met regarding the "semi-public use" application process.

We have lived in our home at 5011 John Anderson Highway for 22 years. Thirteen years ago, we recognized that we were being called to offer the special needs community in our area a new service: equine-assisted activities, and we founded Whispering Meadows Ranch as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization. In the 13 years since, we have provided equine-assisted programs to children and adults with special needs and disabled veterans at this location. We are not profiting from this provided service. We have no employees. The Ranch is 100% run and operated by volunteers. Because of the nature of the service we provide – therapeutic riding for children and veterans with special needs and disabilities, ranging from autism to Cerebral Palsy to Downs Syndrome to traumatic brain injuries – this must be conducted quietly and calmly. For this reason, many of you may not have known we existed before the recent effort to pit neighbor against neighbor.

FALSEHOODS: You might have heard the Ranch is planning to expand at this property, or that we seek a permit from the county to create a new business.

TRUTH: THE PROGRAM HAS NO INTENTION OF EXPANDING OR CREATING A BUSINESS OR, IN FACT, CHANGING THE PROGRAM, SERVICE OR PRESENCE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD IN ANY WAY. This fact was put into the public record with the Flagler County Planning and Development Board. The reason the Ranch is now seeking a "semi-public use" application of our property is because in January 2021, Flagler County informed us we would need this application to continue our service. As soon as we were informed, we began working closely with the County government to ensure we met all requirements for approval.

FALSEHOOD: The anonymous "Notice" affixed to mailboxes throughout the neighborhood yesterday falsely claims that the Ranch "has negatively impacted your neighborhood with a loss of 10-20% property values."

TRUTH: Property values are climbing in the neighborhood – In fact, according to the Flagler County Property Appraiser's Certified Just (Market) Valuations, most property in the neighborhood has increased in value by at least 20-40% in the last two years alone! (You can check for yourself here: <https://qpublic.schneidercorp.com/Application.aspx?App=FlaglerCountyFL&Layer=Parcels&PageType=Search>)

Further, the listing real estate company for property adjacent to the Ranch, Coldwell Banker Realty, and its Broker David Franklin withdrew his Real Estate Opinion letter submitted to the County officials. This week we received a letter and a donation commitment from the Coldwell Banker Florida Corporate Office supporting Whispering Meadows Ranch, its programs and future in Flagler County.

FALSEHOOD: The anonymous "Notice" distributed in the neighborhood misleadingly asserts: "One couple recently lost a contract for the sale of their property when the purchasers learned that the commercial WMR, Inc., was adjacent to the land."

TRUTH: The prospective buyers of the vacant property exchanged phone numbers with us and mentioned if they purchased the property they would be interested in volunteering with our program, as it was consistent with their past involvement with the Special Olympics. Furthermore, as another adjoining property owner noted, the potential buyers expressed concerns to her about recent flooding of the property and about The Gardens, the large development to be built down John Anderson Highway.

FALSEHOOD: If the County grants Whispering Meadows Ranch the permit it needs to continue operating as it has for 13 years, this will “set a bad precedent” and “open the door” to other businesses in the neighborhood. The anonymous “Notice” stuck on mailboxes in our neighborhood falsely states that it would open the door for businesses such as: “Group Homes, Domestic Violence Centers, Houses of Worship (any religion), Religious Sponsored Halfway Houses, Religious Sponsored Drug/Alcohol Rehab Houses”.

TRUTH: Assistant County Attorney Sean Moyland, said, point-blank, this is untrue. Furthermore, as stated by Mr. Moyland on-the-record during the April 13, 2021, Meeting, for the County to approve semi-public use of property in the neighborhood, the purpose must be found: 1) to meet a current or future need in the community and, 2) to NOT impose any substantial detrimental effects on the neighborhood.

FAILURE TO DISCLOSE/DECEPTIVE PRACTICE: Some neighbors have reported being approached to sign a petition stating they are opposed to allowing businesses to operate in the neighborhood. On its face, this would seem harmless enough. However, those circulating the petition did NOT disclose that they plan to exploit those signatures to try to shut down Whispering Meadows Ranch.

TRUTH: If you have been asked to sign a petition stating you are opposed to businesses operating in the neighborhood, you were, in fact, being asked to sign a petition that is specifically intended as a tool to shut down Whispering Meadows Ranch.

FALSEHOOD: You may have heard that the Ranch has loud bands and caused major traffic problems.

TRUTH: The Ranch has never had a band playing on the property and has parking for its visitors within its property. The Ranch has agreed to NOT ALLOW parking on John Anderson Highway.

If you haven’t had the opportunity to visit the Ranch, it might be helpful to have a glimpse of what happens here. We have enclosed a few photos. Typically, each equine session involves from 1 to 3 persons with disabilities.

Depending upon their special needs, each client might require extra assistance from trained volunteers to ensure their safety. The sessions are organized and quiet and led by a certified equine-assisted instructor. These sessions help those served in a wide range of ways, including but not limited to improved coordination, improved balance, strength-building, improved focus and concentration, better ability to follow directions, and greater confidence. Caregivers report that, for many of those served, their time at the Ranch is the highlight of their week. They find a sense of peace and calm and joy that they are unable to get elsewhere.

We appreciate this opportunity to lay out important facts that impact your neighborhood. Please know we have had and are continuing conversations with many landowners, equine facilities and developers and businesses in our County to assist us with future plans for Whispering Meadows Ranch. The universal feedback is “this will take time.” We ask for your patience and understanding as we navigate this process. We are available to answer any concerns or questions you may have. 386-439-3195

Respectfully,

Richard and Helene Davis

