

Therapy center granted approvals

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The Amity Township zoning board and supervisors have given approvals for two women from Spring City, Chester County, to operate a counseling and horseback riding therapy center as a home occupation on a historic farm at 405 Pleasant View Road.

The applicants are Maria L. Campo, a licensed clinical social worker, and Lauren E. Baxter, a professional trained in horseback-riding therapy and reiki.

The applicants also applied to have a private art gallery in one of the farm's buildings to showcase Baxter's work a few times a year.

The 20-acre farm is bordered by Farmingdale Drive, Farm View Court, Pleasant View Lane and Timberline Drive.

Township officials granted the approval following a hearing Monday night that lasted more than four hours. It was packed with residents who had questions about the women's plans but were largely supportive by the end of the meeting.

Campo said the therapy center will only treat clients who do not have criminal or sexual abuse backgrounds or severe psychiatric disorders.

According to the testimony, Campo and Baxter will have only a handful of clients a week and a volunteer will help with the riding treatments.

The businesses won't have signs. Campo said clients appreciate having a discreet place for counseling.

Some residents were concerned about odors. There will be three horses and two ponies and plans call for using their waste as manure at the farm.

Campo, Baxter and residents said odor is not a problem for a nearby property where more horses are kept on fewer acres. And if odor does get to be a problem, they could have waste hauled away.

Other residents expressed concern about additional animals.

Campo and Baxter said the only other animals they would have would be two small sheep, two dogs and cats to deal with mice.

After the zoning hearing board approve a variance for the plan, the supervisors voted 4-0 to grant the applicants a conditional-use permit.

Supervisor Scott W. Stepp was absent.

- By Jennifer Hetrick