

November 8, 2008

"Historic Past, Sustainable Future"  
2008 Comprehensive Plan Update  
James City County Planning Division  
P.O. Box 8784  
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8784

RE: Impact of child care on a sustainable future

To members of the Comprehensive Planning Committee:

In James City County and Williamsburg, 63% of children under the age of six are cared for outside their homes. The majority of those children are in unregulated care that receives payment for their services. Many of those lower cost alternatives may have a JCC business license, but have not had an inspection of their homes to see if they meet reasonable standards of safety. These homes have a JCC business license, but have not completed any training or minimum background checks. You may receive business tax payments from individuals who are operating these licensed businesses where the resident may be a convicted felon, have a history of drug use, violent behavior or, heaven forbid, an offense against children. You have, through your business and zoning ordinances, permitted families to be ill informed about the conditions in which their children may be placed. Parents often confuse your business license with a license to operate child care.

Since 1982, Child and Family Connection has assisted family providers in obtaining high quality training. However, the ability to move these homes to state licensing is inhibited by the cost of the Special Use Process (SUP). State licensing would provide a reasonable standard of protection for young children. Family childcare is more flexible and more reasonable priced than center-based care. Locating licensed and monitored child care for the retail, tourism, restaurant, and shift work employees is impossible. The inability of women to obtain shift work at the larger employers places them in the lower paying jobs of service and retail. When 43 % of children in a single head of household live in poverty in JCC, we maintain and continue, by policy, the poverty cycle.

For child care providers who live in residential neighborhoods, the initial application for the special use permit is \$1000. Family child care providers earn a gross salary between \$27,0440 and \$30,000 per year. When adjusted for business expenses including food, cleaning supplies, materials, training and safety equipment, the income is then between \$16,000 and \$22,000.

The cost of a special use permit to grow their business by becoming licensed is a significant one-time expense. In most cases, there is little change to the footprint of the home, but a design within existing space. Meeting minimum licensing standards requires out of pocket expenses for background checks, materials, equipment purchases, and training. The cost of the SUP application and the process are expenses these small business owners cannot manage.

As you move forward, we would like the Planning Committee to consider these suggestions:

1. Reduce the application fee
2. Consider the SUP to be only for the resident owner and expire at any transfer of title.
3. Explore prioritizing those applicants who are close to transportation routes and who serve non-traditional hours which are needed by service, tourism, and retail industries.
4. Consider developing these small businesses as part of the infrastructure to attract businesses that are part of economic development.

Thank you for any consideration you may give this request. There are family providers who would gladly meet with you to discuss the issue. You may contact us at the [REDACTED]

Best Regards,

[REDACTED]