

**John and Josie Taylor
2814 Cola Woods Lane
Charlottesville, VA 22901**

July 8, 2020

Board of Supervisors
County of Albemarle
4001 McIntire Road
Charlottesville, VA 22901

**RE: Opposition to Request for Approval of an Exception to Allow for a Homestay Permit
at 888 Woodlands Road, Charlottesville, VA 22901**

Dear Supervisors:

We are writing to you to express our extreme opposition to approving an exception to allow for a Homestay at the property located at 888 Woodlands Road.

We purchased our home at 2814 Cola Woods Lane in July 2017 and have lived in it since then. Our home is located adjacent to the subject property and is on a private road that includes two other properties. It is a quiet and private area. We are both retired and spend a great deal of our time in our yard.

When we moved here there were two long-term rentals at 888 Woodlands Road. A lovely couple with a baby upstairs and a gentleman downstairs. Both rentals became vacant shortly after we moved in. Several longer-term rentals followed. In each case there were no issues with the tenants. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case.

In the fall of 2019, we, as well as our neighbors David and Judy Lane, began having problems with people staying at the 888 Woodlands Road property. Renters would arrive, stay for 1, 2 or 3 days, leave and a new set of people would arrive. The cycle never ended. On January 2, 2020, I (John) spoke with Keith Bradshaw, Compliance Officer, Albemarle County Office of Community Development, regarding the situation. By this time, we had found an Airbnb listing for nightly rental of one, two or both units at the property. Mr. Bradshaw advised that this was an unlicensed Homestay and was operating without the knowledge of the County.

On January 8, 2020 we, along with the Lanes, met with Mr. Bradshaw at his office. He explained the process the County follows regarding Homestays. On February 28, 2020, Mr. Bradshaw advised us that Mr. Crane had been sent a Notice of Violation with an expiration of March 16, 2020. He further informed us that Crane's tenant's lease with Mr. Bobbs would expire in April 2020. For six weeks after the lease expired the house was rented continually for 2-4 weeks at a time. Then in June, the nightly rentals began again.

On June 30, we, along with Judy Lane, had a telephone call with Mr. Bradshaw and Rebecca Ragsdalee, Principal Planner, Community Development, County of Albemarle. We were told on

that call that Mr. Crane had filed a petition for a special exception to the Homestay requirement of a 125 feet setback from adjacent properties and the Homestay requirements that the dwelling be owner occupied. We were told in that phone call that Mr. Crane was to stop all rentals on the property as of June 30, 2020 through the date of the hearing on August 5. This did not happen. In fact, there was a couple renting the property for two days June 29-July 1. When they left, a group arrived and stayed from July 2-July 5. There were five cars associated with that rental. When they left, a new group arrived and stayed until July 7. There were three cars associated with that group or groups.

In his petition, Mr. Crane stated that Mr. Bobbs and his girlfriend currently reside at 888 Woodlands Road. This is not true. Mr. Bobbs and his girlfriend have not lived there since we moved here in 2017. Nor has Mr. Crane.

The actual 15' setback (not the required 125') and the trees between our properties are not an ample buffer for the sound generated by his renters and do not prevent their dogs from roaming our property or the issues with cars coming and going and trash spilling over cans. His property is too close to ours for us to be unaffected by his operating an Airbnb. We strongly request that you deny his petition and allow our neighborhood to regain the peace and civility that is a large part of its attraction.

Mr. Crane's turning his property into an Airbnb has had an extremely negative impact on our quality of life. A sample of some of the issues we have had are as follow:

- **Noise.** Renters are there on vacation. They are in party mode and we have constant sounds of music playing, people shouting to each other and people singing into the early hours of the morning loud enough to wake us up.
- **Weapons.** One afternoon I (Josie) heard gunshots and saw several men shooting from the back deck of 888 Woodlands into the woods behind our properties.
- **Dogs.** We have frequent incidents of dogs roaming around our property. Several weeks ago, three dogs that were part of the rental group charged at me, coming through the trees that border our property. I happened to be holding a running hose and was able to hold them off until their owner came over to get them. In addition, we have had frequent issues with renters walking their dogs on our property and on our private road, allowing them to relieve themselves. We had one dog come barking onto our porch while we were out there having dinner and one dog who came into our garage and had to be removed.
- **Cars and Traffic.** We have had cars park on our grass near the entrance to our property and often have people drive up to our front door looking for the Airbnb. There are often six+ vehicles parked at the property (once there were 15) and there was an occasion where we had a tour bus drive up to pick up partiers for a wine tour. Also, we have had several deliveries of food meant for 888 Woodlands but delivered in error to our house. This has happened several times late at night. One time an Uber driver arrived on our property late at night and when he turned, he became high centered on the edge of the driveway. He needed assistance to get out and had been looking for 888 Woodlands.

- **Trash.** The renters do not understand the trash pickup schedule. There are many occasions where the trash cans have been left overflowing in front of the property for a week. Occasionally, this trash has blown onto our property. This is an eyesore as well as attractive to bears.

This list is just a sample of what we have experienced since Mr. Crane began running his property at 888 Woodlands Road as an Airbnb. He has proven himself unreliable in terms of commitments he has made – i.e. there is no resident manager, he did not stop renting the units during the time he was told to do so, etc. We have tried to speak to Mr. Crane directly on two occasions. He was unwilling to talk to us.

For nearly a year, Mr. Crane and Mr. Bobbs have operated an unlicensed and unapproved Airbnb at 888 Woodlands Road. They have refused to comply with the conditions established by Albemarle County for the establishment of a Homestay. We, and the Lanes, have had to constantly deal with a series of problems created by their greed and their disregard of the Homestay regulations and rules the rest of the citizens of Albemarle County adhere to. They have made inaccurate statements in their application. Their request for an exception to the Homestay requirements should be denied.

Sincerely,
John and Josie Taylor

P.S. We have contacted a number of people in the county in an effort to determine if Mr. Crane or Mr. Bobbs obtained a business license to operate 888 Woodlands as a Homestay for the last year but no one would tell us. The county has lost considerable revenue in the past year if neither Mr. Crane nor Mr. Bobbs have paid taxes on the rentals.

July 6, 2020

Board of Supervisors:

I am providing you with information to support my strong opposition to the Special Exception request being made by Philip Dobbs and Matthew Crane.

To specifically address two aspects of their request:

First- I am extremely offended by the blatant lie presented by these two individuals. Philip Dobbs **DOES NOT** reside at 888 Woodlands Road and **NEVER** has. (Mr. Crane has not resided at this address at any time since my husband and I moved to our home in 2016.)

Second- the request for a waiver to the 125' setback requirement. This setback isn't the issue here. The real issue is the nature of the renters who stay at this house. The renters are coming to this house on "holiday" and they are basically in party mode the entire time they are here. The gatherings out on the back deck / backyard are rarely conducted with "indoor voices" nor do they end at a reasonable time in the evening. No amount of tree screening is going to prevent this noise from reaching the neighbors, particularly the Taylors. Property owners in this neighborhood have backyard BBQ's like anyone else, but they are very once-in-awhile events. Since this property started being rented as a short-term rental, most weeks have seen full time occupancy. Each new group brings on the "party"...so all week, every week. This is a quiet residential area and is **NOT A TRANSIENT NEIGHBORHOOD**.

Some points to consider:

- Mr. Dobbs' Airbnb profile indicates he lives in Washington, DC. So does his Facebook profile.
- Mr. Dobbs is a "host" for two other properties in Charlottesville (that I can see) and for two properties in Raleigh, NC.
- Reviews posted for 888 Woodlands Road indicate that it has indeed has been rented all during 2020 to date. A February review said "there were ample towels for all 12 guests we had with us". Another, posted May 15, 2020, said "we had 10 guests and the entire house". His other properties indicate recent/current renters, also.
- Mr. Dobbs has stated specifically in his Airbnb "house description" that "I will not be there during your stay, so you have the whole place to yourself".
- There have been many times of 6+ cars parked there; one time there were 12+ cars. Four+ cars is pretty typical, at the upper house. "Two bedrooms to be offered"- does not speak to the number of guests.

- This is obviously a cash cow for Mr. Crane. He has not been able to sell the house, though it has been on the market several times since 2016. A strange remodel was done in 2014-2015 (?), turning it into a house with a basement apartment, an arrangement that I assume made it very difficult to sell.

This property has been an Airbnb rental continuously since late summer/early fall 2019. It's time for it to stop. 888 Woodlands Road being used as an Airbnb / VRBO is over the top inappropriate for this neighborhood. The request for a Special Exception to the requirements of Homestay should be denied.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Lane
David Lane

2815 Cola Woods Lane
Charlottesville, VA 22901

916-425-7745

July 13, 2020

Board of Supervisors:

This is an update to comments we sent you last week. We won't reiterate details you already know.

Since speaking with Keith and Rebecca on June 30- the "line in the sand" / no more renters date - the property has been continuously rented, generally with 4-5 cars per group. (The lower apartment has been rented a few days; single car.)



This photo speaks to a complete lack of honesty, integrity and cooperation on the part of Mr. Dobbs. He stated in his Airbnb listing for this property that (among other "new rules", which were direct responses to neighbors' complaints) tour buses were not to pick up / drop off guests at the property. Guests were to be picked up / dropped off at the Methodist Church down the road. I (Judy) was working in the yard on Saturday, July 11, when this bus arrived, dropping off 5+ (couldn't see them all) guests returning to the upper house. So much for enforcing the rules **you** wrote, Mr. Dobbs. How can anyone believe anything you say? Based on his actions and behavior, I have no doubt that Mr. Dobbs would offer any assurances he thinks you would want to hear and would go right back to his standard operating procedures.

While we can appreciate there may be a need to consider home stay cases individually, this is not a resort neighborhood, nor a hotel district and is not an homestay property.

Let's not commercialize / suburbanize our rural neighborhood by allowing an individual, whose SOLE INTEREST IS FINANCIAL GAIN, to run such a business. He is **not a homeowner** and has **nothing invested** in being a good neighbor. A "property manager" would have no investment, either. (Remember, he has five -that I can see- Airbnb listings that he "manages"; two are in North Carolina....hard to be "on site" in all of these places at once.)

This situation definitely has a negative effect on many neighbors. No one signed on for this commercial intrusion into our rural neighborhood. Please do not approve the request of Mr. Dobbs.

Yours,
Judy Lane
David Lane

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Charlottesville, 22901

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