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Dept. of Community Planning, Housing, and Development
Arlington County Government
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Ste. 700
Arlington, Virginia 22201

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

Nov. 16, 2011

Dear Ms. Fisher,

Thank you for allowing the Alcova Heights Citizens Association the opportunity to weigh in on the request for El Rancho Migueleno's request for a permit to perform karaoke. As a neighborhood association, we welcome the chance to express our thoughts on any County measures that may have an impact on our neighborhood.

The association surveyed residents and while the number of responses was relatively low (n=54), many respondents expressed concern that approving the permit for El Migueleno may cause additional problems, and a majority (63%) requested that the county deny the permit based on the amount of police activity at the restaurant.

Significantly, only a few residents reported hearing loud noises or music from El Ranch Migueleno – even those within a block or two of the restaurant, a good indication that the establishment is not typically a noise nuisance to the neighborhood. In fact, a majority of survey respondents initially supported the proposed karaoke permit, based on the fact that the County reported no recent problems with County ordinances or regulations. It was only after respondents learned that Arlington police had responded at least seven times in the past two years – including assault, destruction of property and drunk and disorderly – that a majority of respondents opposed the permit. And as District Police Commander Capt. Brett Butler has pointed out, it isn't the number of reported crimes at El Rancho Migueleno, but the severity of those incidents that raises police – and neighbors' - concerns.

There may be an avenue of compromise, however. Many respondents left comments supporting efforts to work out problems with El Rancho Migueleno. Several suggested a temporary permit that could be revoked if noise or an increase in crime became a problem. Said one resident: "Problems may be worked out. I would rather see a business succeed and grow rather than more vacant space like a blighted corridor."

As residents of a neighborhood adjacent to some of the County's most rapid development, we want to encourage business investment that will help our community thrive. At the same time, our residents want to avoid problems that could erode the quality of life in Alcova Heights.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Regards,

Marie Van Ness, President, Alcova Heights Citizens Association

Cc: Peter Katz, Planning Director, Arlington County
Thomas Miller, Supervisor, Current Planning, Arlington County