

## Delaware Coast Press

County Council predicts Jimtown won't be adversely affected by the presence of a therapy program in which horses play a vital role.

By Bruce Pringle  
Staff Writer

A therapy center whose treatment consists of horseback riding got the go-ahead Tuesday to move to a rural area where some residents say it would be a nuisance. Sussex County Council voted 5-0 on each of two measures to enable Southern Delaware Therapeutic & Recreational Horseback Riding Inc. to relocate near the village of Jimtown, southwest of Lewes. Earlier this month, Jimtown residents told the council of fears they will be inundated by traffic and the odor of horse manure. But council members said the center is likely to have little effect on neighbors.

"It's a low-impact activity," Councilman George Cole said of the riding lessons offered by Southern Delaware Therapeutic. The organization would move from leased ground on a farm on nearby Beaver Dam Road.

Southern Delaware Therapeutic serves both children and adults. Some patients are mentally handicapped or have serious emotional problems; others have physical conditions such as multiple sclerosis and cerebral palsy. Riding is credited with building physical strength and self-confidence.

Council limited the potential scope of the center's operations by ordering that no more than 15 horses be stabled and that special events - such as riding exhibitions and cookouts - be limited to three per year, none lasting more than two days.

In addition, a 50-foot-wide buffer of trees must line Jimtown Road; the complaining residents live on the opposite side of that road. And outdoor lighting must be screened to avoid shining on neighbors' homes.

"The (residents' concerns) have been taken seriously," said Council President Lynn Rogers, who predicted the center "will be a good neighbor to them."

Southern Delaware Therapeutic, founded in 1988, will have land of its own for the first time. Its 20-acre site will be donated by Marine Farm L.L.C., a firm that plans to build 630 homes on adjacent property, farther from Jimtown.

Marine Farm, part of the Caldera Properties development company, denies ever promising Jimtown residents that it would leave vacant the 20 acres set for donation. Residents say they got the impression from Marine Farm that the land was to remain an undeveloped portion of the 630-home community. Construction of the community has yet to begin.

A number of Jimtown residents opposed plans to develop the community when council considered that project in 2004 and 2005. But Marine Farm won approval of its plans after promising not to build housing on the 20 acres now set to be donated.