

LEGISLATIVE #

110640C

Letters to the Planning Department & Commissioners in Support of Bruce Baber & Home-Based Pet  
Sitting in

Gainesville

From: [dcreaven@hotmail.com](mailto:dcreaven@hotmail.com)

Subject: Concerning Bruce Baber and his dogsitting service

Date: December 1, 2011 10:15:21 PM EST

To: [COGPlanning@gru.com](mailto:COGPlanning@gru.com)

My three dogs had two short stays with Bruce, and during those stays I watched my dogs on his doggie camera online while I was out of town. It was a great socialization event for my dogs, and I'm sure you know our community wants well socialized dogs. When I drove up to Bruce's house I heard no dogs barking outside, it was very quiet, although when I approached the door I did hear some barking. Bruce prefers to meet clients with their dogs outside to avoid triggering indoor barking. I spent time in his backyard with dogs mingling and it was quiet and the yard was neat and clean because he polices it regularly. He also behavior tested my dogs with the dogs who were already there to make sure that my dogs would be appropriate with the group. I was impressed with his dog behavior expertise because all the dogs in his care seemed relaxed and content.

Almost everyone has to work, and many people want companion animals even though they have to work, and they can't always afford to spend a lot of money for dog sitting. So many dogs are left home alone and some of them bark out of boredom or develop behavioral issues from stress and boredom. I think a dog sitting arrangement like Bruce has with his clients is an excellent solution for a working individual with a companion dog; the animal is less stressed, the owners are less stressed and Bruce loves the work. A secure and relaxed dog is much easier to train and more enjoyable to be with. Since having companion animals has become even more popular today than in the past, flexible options should be developed to promote successful dog-human relationships. A well cared for and trained dog is no more of a nuisance in a neighborhood than a well cared for and well behaved child, in my opinion, for those who are worried about the nuisance factors. On a more personal note, for eight years I fostered dogs one or two at a time, almost 70 total, working with abandoned animals who were going to be placed for adoption with a new person. I do think that

some of those dogs might not have been relinquished if the owner had a reliable, convenient, affordable dog sitter. I support Bruce's home business, and I think there should be more responsible dog sitting allowed in home settings because it is less stressful than a kennel or leaving the dog home alone.

Diana Creaven

5221 NW 62nd Ct

Gainesville, FL 32653

352-514-5360

From: [holmesmc@yahoo.com](mailto:holmesmc@yahoo.com)

Subject: Bruce Baber

Date: December 2, 2011 2:11:03 PM EST

To: [COGPlanning@gru.com](mailto:COGPlanning@gru.com)

Cc: [brucebaber@gmail.com](mailto:brucebaber@gmail.com)

Reply-To: [holmesmc@yahoo.com](mailto:holmesmc@yahoo.com)

I am writing in support of Bruce Baber. He provides a much needed service for the people of N.W. Gainesville that have canine family members. Mr. Baber provides such affordable care and I don't need to worry about my dogs when they are in his care.

Sincerely,

Margaret C. Holmes

From: [davis\\_jeanne@hotmail.com](mailto:davis_jeanne@hotmail.com)

110640C

Subject: Support of Bruce Baber

Date: December 1, 2011 9:05:58 PM EST

To: [COGPlanning@gru.com](mailto:COGPlanning@gru.com)

Cc: [brucebaber@mac.com](mailto:brucebaber@mac.com)

To: COG Plan Board Members

We are writing in support of Bruce Baber and his pet sitting business.

We have lived at the address below since 1967, so have a long history in this neighborhood. While there are many things that impact this neighborhood negatively, Mr. Baber's dog sitting service definitely IS NOT one of them! We have watched him with the dogs for many years and he is always in control of them, and they bother no one. There is no barking, using neighbors' yards as "doggy toilets", or otherwise being a disruption in any way. Anyone who has walked the streets of our neighborhood area can easily see all of the 'Save Bruce' signs posted in many yards, indicating that the neighborhood fully supports Mr. Baber's efforts. He provides a convenient, affordable, quality dog care service . . . which should be continued.

We hope that you will support Mr. Baber's efforts so that he can continue his dog care service uninterrupted. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Hunt & Jeanne Davis

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*'The most wasted of all days is that  
during which we have not laughed.'*

Nicolas de Chamfort, 1741-1794

From: Maximes et Pensees

Hunt & Jeanne Davis

1812 N.W. 6th Avenue

Gainesville, FL 32603-1215

From: [alisson\\_clark@yahoo.com](mailto:alisson_clark@yahoo.com)

Subject: Bruce Baber's dog-sitting business

Date: December 1, 2011 3:56:27 PM EST

To: [COGPlanning@gru.com](mailto:COGPlanning@gru.com)

Cc: [brucebaber@mac.com](mailto:brucebaber@mac.com)

Reply-To: [alisson\\_clark@yahoo.com](mailto:alisson_clark@yahoo.com)

I'm writing to offer a testimonial to the responsible and conscientious manner in which Bruce Baber has run his in-home dog-sitting business, which is on the agenda for the Plan board meeting on Dec. 5. I was his client for more than a year and was very impressed at how thoroughly and frequently he cleaned the back yard where the dogs used to play. You would never know that there were dogs there.

His system of ingress and egress of the dogs is designed to minimize impact on the neighborhood and creates minimal disturbance. If it is possible for him to be considered for a variance to continue his business, I believe he deserves that chance. Please feel free to contact me if I can offer further information.

Many thanks,

Alisson Clark

[alisson\\_clark@yahoo.com](mailto:alisson_clark@yahoo.com)

From: [genie@peds.ufl.edu](mailto:genie@peds.ufl.edu)  
Subject: Bruce Baber & Gainesville Pet Sitting  
Date: December 1, 2011 1:30:05 PM EST  
To: [COGPlanning@gru.com](mailto:COGPlanning@gru.com)  
Cc: [brucebaber@mac.com](mailto:brucebaber@mac.com)

My husband and I, as residents of Gainesville for the last 11 years, are very much in favor of neighborhood dog-sitting services, and would like to see this become part of our community. I am a physician, and my husband is a mental health counselor in town, and we often have out of town seminars and other work related obligations. We are a couple without children, and treat our dog as our "only child". As an animal that spends much of his time walking and playing outside, we could never have him locked in a crate at our vet's office for several day in a row while we are away. We were lucky to have found Bruce Baber, who lives around the corner from our home. We have used his services in the past for overnights and even for afternoons when we know we will both work late and our pet would otherwise be home alone for over 10 hours! It has been a wonderful experience!

I'm sure there are many other citizens of Gainesville, who would like to have pet-sitting available, in their neighborhoods. In talking with other dog owners at Gainesville dog parks, I have heard over and over again that there is a great need and desire for home-based pet-sitting in our community. My husband and I chose to live in Gainesville because it is such a progressive community. Allowing for in-home animal care would be another modern convenience in our town. What a great small local business that would be.

If Bruce Baber has been able to run such a business with no negative impact on the neighborhood (as seen by the countless support Bruce signs all over town and dozens of highly satisfied former clients of Bruce Baber), I am confident our city could broaden this to include other responsible pet sitters in other areas of town.

Genie Kahn Beasley, MD  
Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition  
Shands Children's Hospital at University of Florida  
[genie@peds.ufl.edu](mailto:genie@peds.ufl.edu)

From: [cjburkle@yahoo.com](mailto:cjburkle@yahoo.com)

110640C

Subject: Concerning Bruce Baber

Date: October 15, 2011 3:53:54 PM EDT

To: [www.COGPlanning@gru.com](mailto:www.COGPlanning@gru.com)

Cc: [brucebaber@gmail.com](mailto:brucebaber@gmail.com)

Reply-To: [cjburkle@yahoo.com](mailto:cjburkle@yahoo.com)

Dear Mr. Hilliard,

I am Bruce Baber's next-door-neighbor and was incredibly dismayed to hear that again his right to legally care for dogs in his home is under attack. I have had signs in my yard, had bumper sticker on my car, sent countless emails to city officials, and attended city meetings to speak on his behalf for over a year now. I am far from the only neighbor who has done this. We have worked with the city tirelessly, to say nothing of Bruce's own efforts, to find a solution that will allow him to care for dogs in his home legally as he'd done before and am heartsick to hear that after coming so far he may not be able to. Of all the people who have made claims about the impact of his dogsitting business, I feel I am the most qualified to give a factual account of the impact his business has on this neighborhood. I live directly next to him and have for five and half years. Not one time did I find his business in any way obtrusive. Not once have I been awoken by the sound of barking dogs or offended by the smell of dog waste. Not once have I had my ability to drive in my neighborhood impeded by the traffic of clients dropping off their dogs. Bruce always took considerable pains to limit any inconvenience to his neighbors and has always been approachable and willing to ameliorate any problems immediately. Because of his proximity, he is able to provide this service at an affordable rate. Clients don't have to drive very far, limiting the environmental impact of car travel. I'm a graduate student at UF and also work; I simply do not have the time to drive my dog across town to a brick-and-mortar dogsitting service. The few times I have tried the financial strain made it impossible to continue taking my dog there, and since my dog is a rescue from UF's animal research program, she has emotional scars from her past that make that environment very stressful for her. When I was able to take her to Bruce I felt comforted knowing she 1) wasn't going to damage my property due to boredom or separation anxiety; 2) was enriched physically and mentally by the home environment Bruce provides; and 3) loved dearly by a sweet, sensitive spirit who cares for and understands dogs (Bruce). Seeing the city's treatment of Bruce and the way they have reversed prior decisions in his favor makes me very disappointed in my local government. I understand that city officials need to take into

account the desires and needs of all Gainesville's citizens, but knowing how overwhelming the support for Bruce is in our neighborhood, the city is blatantly turning its back on the stated desires of our neighborhood if they refuse to find a way to allow Bruce's in-home dogsitting business.

Sincerely,  
Carla Burkle  
(352) 283-3909

From: [doldervj@bellsouth.net](mailto:doldervj@bellsouth.net)  
Subject: Bruce Baber  
Date: October 12, 2011 2:39:28 PM EDT  
To: [www.COGPlanning@gru.com](http://www.COGPlanning@gru.com)  
Cc: [brucebaber@mac.com](mailto:brucebaber@mac.com)

Dear Committee,  
Thank you for planning so carefully for our wonderful city!

I live in the same neighborhood where Bruce Baber lives and find a great joy in watching him walk multiple, well behaved, and happy dogs. They get along and, when approached, they greet you by wagging their tails! Bruce is always careful to pick up after the dogs!

It appears that a great percentage of our neighbors wish to continue to see Bruce nurture these dogs for their caring pet owners... Please rule with the majority and allow Bruce to continue.

Again, many thanks for your efforts,  
Virginia and Richard Dolder

MIZPAH  
May the Lord watch between  
me and thee  
when we are absent  
one from the other...

Virginia James Dolder  
731 NW 15th Street  
Gainesville, Florida  
32603



From: [aleciaskipper@hotmail.com](mailto:aleciaskipper@hotmail.com)

Subject: Baber

Date: October 10, 2011 12:01:54 PM EDT

To: [hilliardrw@cityofgainesville.org](mailto:hilliardrw@cityofgainesville.org)

Cc: [brucebaber@mac.com](mailto:brucebaber@mac.com)

Mr. Hillard,

I am writing in support of Bruce. I am a neighbor on 7 th place. Bruce has been a life saver for myself and my great Danes. My husband and work in health Care so we have a few long shifts, any of the doggie daycares that I looked into required me to pick them up by 6 at the latest, were way out of the way (imagine loading up two great Danes an infant and a toddler in the morning), and a lot weren't open on Sundays (so if I have an overnight on Saturday I would have to board them until Monday). Bruce is well liked by all neighbors, students and professionals alike. Our whole neighborhood is canvased in save Bruce signs to show our support of not only a good man, but also a provider of a valuable service in our neighborhood. Thank you for your time.

Alecia McDonald

From: [matheny@ufl.edu](mailto:matheny@ufl.edu)

Subject: Support for Dog-Sitting exception to residential zoning

Date: October 9, 2011 2:24:32 PM EDT

To: [hilliardrw@cityofgainesville.org](mailto:hilliardrw@cityofgainesville.org)

I support Bruce Baber's dog-sitting and -walking service in its current location because the service could not otherwise exist economically or "locationally," if he were to have to move to a commercial location. It's not safe to walk a large number of dogs in the high-traffic areas associated with commercial enterprise. Nor could Bruce keep the costs of services low enough to benefit most of his clients, if he were to have to rent space in a commercial building. His location just north of the county's largest employer (UF) makes his operation convenient and efficient for the clients who can drop their dogs off and pick them up on the way to and from work, respectively.

The College Park neighborhood overwhelmingly supports Bruce's service, and his service operates much more quietly and with much less impact than the dominant residential rental activity which characterizes his surrounding neighbors. The rental properties in the neighborhood have more cars and more noise than Bruce's service generates. Further, Bruce keeps his property in better shape than most of the rental properties in the neighborhood. It's unfair to let landlords get away with running down the neighborhood, while focusing unnecessarily on a service that actually benefits the neighborhood in many ways.

Just think about that for a moment, and ask yourself what's actually fair in all this.

Thanks, Albert

m: [adairj52@gmail.com](mailto:adairj52@gmail.com)

Subject: Overwhelming Neighborhood Support to Keep Bruce Baber Services of Dog Walking

Date: November 20, 2011 3:05:50 PM EST

To: [COGPlanning@gru.com](mailto:COGPlanning@gru.com)

Bcc: [brucebaber@mac.com](mailto:brucebaber@mac.com)

I forward this note which I sent to Bruce Baber "the dog walker" as a show of support. Having lived next door to Bruce from the time he started the business nearly twenty years ago until very recently, I cannot see how his home based business provides anything other than a very well respected and depended upon service. Mr. Baber was born and raised in this home ever since his parents built it in at the conclusion of WWII. In an off campus single family neighborhood full of students and rentals with many absentee landlords, and somewhat of a historic crime problem, Bruce provides a sense of continuity, security and community with his dog walking business. I think in today's America with everyone away from their homes for extended periods of time, convenient neighborhood locations providing child and pet care are an real and much appreciated assets.

Please do not miss the point. This service needs to stay in its current location and enable this small self-employed citizen to do a job that he has done for many years. Stating the obvious... A family bought our previous residence and then quickly sold it to an investor who put his college age daughter and her room-mates in the home. I cannot speak to their agenda, and why they have found above all the difficulties of living in that neighborhood location, that they would choose to assault Bruce with a barrage of troublesome communications. I do think that if you examine the massive support that has come from nearly all of his surrounding neighbors it does provide reason to question their motivation. Personally, because my family lived next door to Bruce and his aging parents before their deaths, and had very close relationships and interdependent lives, my husband Dr. Albert R. Matheny and I have spent long hours along with numerous neighbors speaking at board and commission meetings. One student investor family has created a hardship for many neighbors, customers, and friends who will be there long after that family has sold and moved on. A great disservice has been done.

Jane Adair  
2613 NW 24th Terr.  
32605-2820

To whom it may concern:

Please accept this letter as my support for Bruce Baber and his in-home dog sitting business. As a home-owning neighbor of Bruce's, I can attest to the cleanliness, lack of noise and overall perfection of the business he runs. Additionally, Bruce's business is of zero negative impact to our neighborhood. As a matter of fact, his biggest impact to our neighborhood is the overall betterment of our College Park Community. He provides a service that many of us could not access or afford if forced to use traditional means, i.e., veterinarian or boarding services. It is also comforting to know that he is walking the neighborhood several times a day keeping an eye on things.

Opposition to our neighborhood wish to allow Bruce to continue his business is largely based on a misunderstanding of the circumstances and what provisions would be allowed. Opposition to Bruce is misinformed of the issues.

Please drive to our neighborhood. Please recognize the overwhelming support of Bruce. Please allow him to continue his in-home dog sitting business.

Bruce is what makes our College Park Neighborhood special, unique and one-of-a kind.

Sincerely,  
Terra Moore  
1815 NW 7th Ave.

From: [ekomahoney@gmail.com](mailto:ekomahoney@gmail.com)

Subject: Re: Revised Instructions

Date: November 17, 2011 6:24:14 AM EST

To: [hilliardrw@cityofgainesville.org](mailto:hilliardrw@cityofgainesville.org)

Bcc: [brucebaber@gmail.com](mailto:brucebaber@gmail.com)

Dear Ralph Hilliard,

I support Bruce Baber in his efforts to be allowed to sit dogs from his home.

I live 3 houses down from Bruce and have lived here since July 2010. Bruce is a good and responsible neighbor. I have never once heard dogs barking from his house, and I walk, run, bike, and drive by his house frequently. He walks up to 9 dogs at a time, and I swear to you he is a "dog whisperer". Every one of those dogs is well behaved and walks calmly next to him. I am absolutely amazed, and this is coming from not only a dog owner for the previous 20 years, but also a veterinary student. Bruce makes his living walking and caring for dogs, and by repealing his license to petsit from his home, you are destroying his livelihood.

I really appreciate that when Bruce is allowed to run his business from his home, he is constantly walking in the neighborhood. He keeps an eye on things. He knows where everyone lives and who should be around houses in the neighborhood. I feel much safer just knowing that Bruce is out and about running his business. I can also assure you that Bruce is very responsible about the dog walking and always picks up after the dogs. Please do not prevent Bruce from running his business.

Thanks for taking the time to read this e-mail, it means a lot to me and it also means a lot to Bruce. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Katie O'Mahoney  
1803 NW 7th Ave  
Gainesville, FL 3603  
[ekomahoney@gmail.com](mailto:ekomahoney@gmail.com)

I am writing to urge you to enable Mr. Bruce Baber to resume his valuable service to the community via his dog-sitting service. Until City Commissioners made Mr. Baber close down his wonderful service, my husband and I had our dog stay with him every week while we were at work, as well as when we were out of town for business travel. This was a huge help for us. Our dog loved going to Bruce's home, and we were so glad that he could go to stay with Mr. Baber and play with his doggy buddies, rather than be kenneled when we were out of town. As President of the American Academy of Audiology, I am constantly on the road, sometimes even two trips in one week. It was such a relief to be able to drop Gordy off at Mr. Baber's house with not a single worry about his care. Additionally, Mr. Baber had several mini-cams so that patrons could check in on their dogs throughout the day, regardless if they were at work, at home, or traveling. I never sensed that Mr. Baber's neighbors were concerned about the dogs in any way. If Mr. Baber's neighbors felt that the dogs were a nuisance (e.g., running wild in the neighborhood, barking loudly outside, etc.), then that could be reported as a noise ordinance violation or it could be reported to the animal control department. However, to my knowledge, there have been no legitimate complaints from neighbors. One of my coworkers lives across the street from Mr. Baber and she is so sad that the dogs are no longer able to stay with Mr. Baber due to the decision of the City governance. I don't know if you have ever had the opportunity to observe a dog who is kenneled. I have never seen a kenneled dog who looked calm and happy to be sitting all day in a kennel cage. In contrast, when I would take a peek on the Mydogspace website minicams, I would see happy dogs playing with each other, or following Mr. Baber around the backyard as he did his chores, or sleeping blissfully on one of the sofas or chairs available for them. Since Gainesville is clearly a dog-lover's town, and Mr. Baber is appreciated so greatly by those of us who cannot always be available to walk our dogs during the day, and because the dogs are so happy to stay with Mr. Baber, I hope you will advise the City governance to let Mr. Baber continue his dog-sitting service in his home."

Patricia Kricos

"Last week I received an unexpected and grievous email from Bruce Baber that the City of Gainesville will no longer allow him to continue dog sitting. Bruce has provided a loving and caring environment for my Weimaraner Griffin for well over a year, which has allowed me to keep regular work hours in addition to starting a second business. Because of Bruce and Mydogspace, I was able to do this without having to worry about the health and happiness of my beloved family pet, Griffin, who requires special attention. Griffin suffers from severe separation anxiety and cannot be left alone for long periods of time. Through Bruce's love and care (and an exercise and medication regimen that Bruce also helps to supervise), Griffin has improved immensely and has finally begun to adapt to his environment. Taking him away from Bruce would undoubtedly disrupt this progress. Bruce's home is a safe shelter for many other dogs in addition to Griffin. He provides a wonderful and invaluable service to the pet owners. Many of his clients have expressed great concern for both Bruce and their pets should he be unable to continue his work. There is simply no one else in town that is able to do better what Bruce does. To deny him the ability to continue Mydogspace is a loss to all of us and it deprives Bruce of his employment and his livelihood."

Brittany Lee

"We've recently learned that our neighbor and dog sitter, Bruce Baber, will no longer be allowed to take care of our or anyone else's dogs at his home due to a codes violation. We are writing to urge you to work toward finding a way to allow Mr. Baber to continue providing dog sitting services out of his home. We adopted our puppy, Pooka, from the Humane Society in January of this year. Because she is too young to stay home alone for long, we have to find someone to watch her when we are gone from the house for more than a few hours. Mr. Baber offers not only a warm, friendly, healthy, and safe environment for our dog, but also a very affordable one. In most kennels, dogs are kept in crates or very small containment areas, and while able to see or hear each other, are kept separated; they are anxious, restless, and noisy. On the other hand, Bruce's dogs are not crated and have free access to part of his home, his yard, and the other dogs; for the most part, they're quiet and content. Have a look at the four webcam screens (now six) on Mr. Baber's website ([www.brucebaber.com](http://www.brucebaber.com)), and you'll see what we mean. Our dog loves going to Bruce's house for the day: when we bring her there, she can't get to the front door soon enough and runs inside without a backward glance at us. We are writing to support Mr. Baber not only as dog owners, but also as neighbors. Raising our three daughters in a neighborhood so close to the university, we've always been very supportive of any regulations that keep the neighborhood as "family friendly" as possible – from limits on the number of unrelated persons allowed to live in a home to limits on noise, business hours, etc. But neighborhoods need more businesses like Bruce's, not fewer. His services allow our family to enjoy the companionship of a dog while still dealing with the inevitable demands of work and school. And again, his services are affordable: he charges less than any other dog care facility we know of in Gainesville."

Gustav Paulay and Bernadette Holthuis

"I am writing to you regarding Mr. Bruce Baber and the discontinuance of his in-home dog sitting service. Mr. Baber has been caring for my family's two Labrador retrievers over the past year during our out-of-town travels. The service that he provides is the best that you will find, and it is not about the money (and he is a bargain at \$10/day and \$12/for overnight). My two Labradors are part of my family and their well-being is of great concern to me and my children, as I am sure is the same with most pet owners. Under Bruce's care, we can be certain that our rambunctious labs have had 2-3 walks per day, have remained uncrated and had plenty of human contact, and have had the opportunity to run and play with various safe breeds of dogs all day. Mr. Baber also maintains a website that enables us to view our dogs on four web-cams to check-in throughout the day. How much better could the service be? One week ago, Mr. Baber was notified that he was in violation of Gainesville City Code regarding animals in residential areas. The code states that animals may not be kept in a home for purposes other than as a pet, unless allowed under a special use permit. Upon applying for the special use permit for operating a business in one's home, Mr. Baber was promptly notified that it was denied. Bruce maintains a controlled environment at his home, and he has developed a system to keep barking at a minimum. Bruce walks the dogs, several at a time, with bags in hand. My daughter's school bus passed Bruce on one of his walks recently and the children were thrilled. How could anyone not be? I urge the City Code Enforcement and the City Commissioners to please reconsider and issue Mr. Baber a special use permit to operate this business in his home. With its multiple dog parks, walking trails, specialized pet stores, and pet-accommodating hotels and restaurants, the City of Gainesville is a pet-friendly locale. Bruce Baber provides a much-needed, quality and affordable service to Gainesville's pet owners. He has dedicated his life now to caring for our pets, and this in-home pet service has become his only means of support. By not issuing him a special use permit to operate this business, the City of Gainesville is destroying Mr. Baber's livelihood and disappointing many of Gainesville's dog owners."

Angela Hausman

"Please do not make a hasty decision following the directives of a system that might not serve the citizen, Bruce Baber, or his clients (your constituents). The circumstances of his situation are rare and exceptional and deserve some concern and sensitivity. If you will take the time to review his web site, and meet him, you may get some sense of this truth. I understand the neighborhood guidelines and rules put in place to preserve a quality environment in a location of small lots in the UF and business area of College Park. My husband and I were next door neighbors to Bruce the Dog Walker as our home of twenty some years, and we shared our lives and pets with Bruce and his parents while they were still alive. Bruce is rare in that he is maintaining his childhood home, and trying to do his part to assist people in the neighborhood and campus community by providing a much needed, convenient and appreciated service to their pets. Bruce has been providing the care services for over twenty years. During the years while we were his neighbor, he mowed our lawn and cared for our home while we were away. He looked after our toddler throughout his childhood, while in addition he provided dog and cat sitting services. Our lives were made flexible and secure by making use of his services. I have found relatives and friends in need of assistance, and they have become loyal clients. Having the affordable, convenient, reliable, and uniquely loving services provided by Bruce is a blessing many have become dependent upon. As an independent business person, he has carved out a niche for himself which cannot easily be duplicated or replaced in any way. Bruce Baber, a veteran of Viet Nam, living in his childhood home is providing a very modest income for himself in his pet sitting business. His services are affordable, while providing an indispensable service to the community. He lives a simple and quiet life, while being a good citizen, and responsible member of our College Park neighborhood. Please. Bruce does not deserve the trouble and attention that this whole business has brought into his life. I feel especially stirred to advocate in his interest, as my husband, Dr. Albert R. Matheny (Dean CLASS Academic Advising Center for UF) and I considered his parents Bill and Dorothy (Dot) Baber as members of our family along with Bruce. We were there to see both pass away, and I personally put his mother's mind to rest at the end of her life when I assured her that his brother was planning to help Bruce to purchase an Apple computer that he could learn on, and that I would help him realize his dream of becoming a pet-sitter. He was a rare nurturer, I assured her. He had chosen of his own accord to make her comfortable and secure in her old age, and now he would again draw on that special gift to care for animals which he so loves. Thank you for your attention. There are not two Bruces in the world. He is precious and unique, and he deserves that understanding and sensitive outcome as you help resolve his plight. We all love Bruce very much and want the best for him more than anything. You probably have sensed that."

Jane Elizabeth Adair

"As a Gainesville resident, I would like to ask each of you to consider letting Bruce Baber reopen his dog-sitting business, mydogspace, on NW 7th Ave (University Park neighborhood).

I used to take my two puppies twice a week for daycare to Bruce Baber's doggie daycare business. Bruce is a wonderful dog sitter; he is very caring and loving of the dogs and extremely responsible to his neighbors; he keeps the dogs quiet and the environment clean by always picking up after them when he walks them. My two dogs are a year old littermates that I had since they were 10 weeks old. I work long hours at the University of Florida and my partner works two days a week in Ocala, at the Marion county school system. On the days that she works, we used to take our dogs to Bruce. Bruce's business is a very convenient location for us, right on the way to work for both of us. The dogs loved going to Bruce's, they always ran to greet him with their tails wagging and then ran to the door to enter the house and see their doggie friends. Our dogs received good socialization at Bruce's and we loved knowing that they are safe. We were able to be worry-free during our workday, knowing that our girls

were safe, happy, and out of trouble. Then about 4 months ago, this ideal arrangement was disturbed. Bruce was informed that he would be unable to continue sitting dogs at his house due to an ordinance prohibiting keeping animals other than personal pets in his neighborhood. We were devastated to hear that the wonderful arrangement for our dogs was slipping away and to know that our lives were about to change for the worse. And even worse than that, that Bruce's source of livelihood was disappearing together with the superb service he provided to his dog-owning neighbors. Now I take the dogs twice a week to Dogwood Park. It has negatively affected the quality of my life, as I'm driving to and from work an hour and a half longer on those days. Due to the morning and afternoon rush-hour, it takes me almost two hours, one hour each way, to get to this doggie daycare establishment on West Archer Road, instead of it being on my way to work and taking me 10-15 minutes each way. Please find a way to let Bruce continue to provide his dog sitting service at his home; it would help increase the quality of life for me, my partner, and many of his past customers."

Orit Schectman

"Mr. Baber provides a valuable service for dog owners and our family has benefited from it. Our dog Churro was an abandoned dog that does not do well in just any environment. When our son got married, we were facing a big dilemma, that was to find the proper place to leave Churro. After endless prayers, God answered through Mr. Baber's dog sitting service. His service was exactly what we needed. A big burden was lifted from us. Mr. Baber's providing a home environment and personal interaction, made it less traumatic and easier for Churro to adjust to the new experience of being away from us. It will certainly give us peace of mind to know, that in the future, we can depend on Mr. Baber's services the same way that we have done in the past, on different occasions."

Barry and Anna Bovitch

"We are writing as homeowners who have lived in this neighborhood, not far from Bruce's house, for over forty years. We have seen Bruce on his rounds, in rain, hot sun, and cold days. Sometimes he may have had as many as four or five dogs, but ALWAYS they were under control, walking along, no barking or yipping, and causing no disturbance. Also, the dogs do not use yards as their "toilet." Since the owners of the dogs are pleased with the arrangement they have with Bruce, Bruce seems competent to care for the dogs, and the dogs are causing no disturbance to neighbors, please vote to let Bruce continue with his dog business. It seems the RIGHT thing to do!"

Jeanne and Hunt Davis

"I'm writing to offer a testimonial to the responsible and conscientious manner in which Bruce Baber has run his in-home dog-sitting business. I have been his client for a year and have been very impressed at how thoroughly and rigorously he cleans the back yard where the dogs used to play. You would never know that there were dogs there. His system of ingress and egress of the dogs is designed to minimize impact on the neighborhood and creates minimal disturbance. If it is possible for him to be considered for a variance to continue his business, I believe he deserves that chance."

Alisson Clark



"I know how busy you are, so I will try to make this brief. Our friend and former neighbor, Bruce Baber, who lives at 1713 NW 7th Avenue in Gainesville, has a dog-walking service that he operates out of his home. He's been walking neighborhood dogs for well over 20 years, and, after his mother died (he returned home after retiring from military employment to take care of her in her later years--she died at 94 in 2006), he started walking the dogs of people who worked at UF and who dropped their dogs off during the day on their way to work. He has taken every conceivable measure to buffer his yard from his neighbors, and only one has complained (the people who live in our old house at 1723 NW 7th Avenue). That neighbor complains that the dogs Bruce walks have caused flea infestations in their yard or house; but Bruce's house and yard are flea-free, so this contention simply doesn't hold water. Noise is not an issue either (or the other neighbors would have complained). Bruce always picks up after his dogs when he walks them, too (we know because we supply him with our used plastic bags, and he goes through them quickly!). Bruce's entire operation has been vetted through the Gainesville City Board of Adjustment just a month or so ago, and it was approved. No one objected to anything like what the 1723 NW 7th Avenue residents have submitted (the issue at the time was whether he was conducting an illegal business from his home). Since then, Bruce has continued to work on being a good neighbor by adding additional visual buffers, etc., to his property. Bruce is simply trying to provide a much-needed service doing the things he loves very much, dogs and exercise. He makes a little money on this service, just enough to enable him to continue living in the home he was born in. His parents built that house in 1940, and his family has continuously occupied that home since then (70 years!), while nearly everyone else has abandoned the neighborhood to absentee landlords who tend to trash their properties with no consideration for their neighbors. If you get a chance, drive by 1713 and 1723 NW 7th Avenue, and see which one keeps his or her house in a more "neighborly" condition! Then I think you will be able to judge that Bruce really is a good neighbor and deserves to keep providing his dog-walking service to his many happy customers, some of whom will surely be in attendance on February 3rd. We'll be there even though we no longer own a dog, because we know Bruce is doing the right thing and deserves our support. Yes, he's our friend, and there's a reason for that!"

Albert Matheny, III

"Bruce Baber walks and watches our family dog on days when my husband and I have to spend long hours at work away from home. The service that Bruce provides is extremely valuable to us, as it is to others who depend on him to provide much needed exercise, responsible care, and a safe environment for their pets during times when they are unable to do so. My husband and I live just north of the University Park neighborhood where Bruce Baber lives. We have lived in this quiet Gainesville neighborhood near campus for more than 20 years, and we are very aware of the importance of city codes designed to preserve residents' quality of life. However, we have seen no evidence that Bruce's activities are disruptive. In fact, on walks past his house and from his driveway while picking up and dropping off our dog, we have never heard dogs barking or seen any sign of the other dogs in his care. Others who are longtime residents and homeowners in Bruce's neighborhood have also written and testified on his behalf. We appreciate the time and careful consideration that the commissioners have already given to this case, and we support the decision allowing Bruce to continue offering his services under the specified conditions. To our knowledge, Bruce has been very careful to respect the terms of that arrangement. He is a kind and courteous person and we hope that he will be allowed to continue providing this very valuable service to the community.

Candace Harper and Brett Presnell

"I am writing to urge you to support Bruce Baber's dog sitting service, Mydogspace. He has taken care of my dog, Sadie for almost a year now. The service that he provides is a unique and valuable asset to our community. His service is unique because of the location and quality of care he provides. As a UF employee, I work long hours and often erratic hours. Bruce's specific location, his flexibility, and his superior dog care allows me to perform my job knowing that my beloved pet is happy and well cared for. I am not alone in relying on Bruce to take care of "gator" dogs as several of his clients work at UF. His location near campus is a very valuable asset for the UF and Gainesville community. Dog care is a need akin to childcare for many of us- we rely on it and also demand high quality care. Bruce is absolutely unique in his combination of high quality, professional care, near campus. Before I found Bruce, I struggled to find a place where I felt comfortable leaving my dog. Bruce cares for my dog as I do and does not treat her like a paycheck, unlike several places in town. He thinks about her comfort and does an amazing job socializing the animals- there are several places in town where dogs go back and forth between crates and concrete- this is not a good setting for a family pet. Bruce evaluates the dogs and selects a well balanced group. You can literally see that the dogs get along well via his web cameras. The fact that Bruce puts cameras up for us to view our dogs shows that he is confident about the quality of care he provides and that he knows how important it is for us pet lovers to have peace of mind regarding our pet's care. All of this could be the reason why there is so much peace and quiet at Bruce's compared to other sitters in town- I don't think I have ever approached his house and heard a bunch of dogs barking- a common occurrence at other places. I urge you to support Mydogspace as it is a much needed and valuable resource in the Gainesville community." Jennifer Seavey

"I'm writing to ask you to please support the continuation of Bruce Baber's small business, Mydogspace. Bruce has provided a unique and hugely valuable service to many of us in Gainesville, by taking care of our beloved canine companions while we're on the road, on vacation, or otherwise unable to be there. Bruce is truly an expert at his job, and performs his work with grace, enthusiasm and great professionalism. Moreover, the service Bruce provides is a true mutualism: we dog owners benefit from his unique and irreplaceable service, and Bruce benefits from the modest income he makes which enables him to get by. Bruce is fair in his dealings, professional in carrying out his work, and respectful in his interactions with all others—in short, the type of businessman that I hope Gainesville would want to promote." Todd Palmer

"I am writing, as I'm sure many others have recently, to express my frustration at what I just learned is happening with Bruce Baber. I can certainly understand the concerns that might come up with his type of business, but I can honestly tell you that if anyone deserves to be running this business, it is Bruce. I recently moved to Arizona, and boy do I wish there was a Bruce nearby! Before moving here, I worked for a year at TV20 after graduating UF with my degree in Telecommunication. I rescued my hound-mix, Kathy, in August of 2008. She is the most loving member of my family; however she sometimes needed a place to stay. I wouldn't dare board her or leave her with a kennel, and Bruce was a God-send for this reason. He is a loving, caring man with the perfect service. His house was always clean, as was his spacious, dog-friendly back yard. Although I didn't live right around the corner, I would sometimes come by to drop off Kathy while he was walking through his neighborhood. You could tell his neighbors loved him, and he was definitely a happy sight in the area! I hope there might be something you can do to allow Bruce to continue his work. He provides a much-needed service, at a price that you and I could actually afford. In a community that has so many other

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issues to deal with, it would be such a shame to see an honest, hard-working person shut out of a decent living."

Andrew Vogeney

"I am very saddened and distressed that Bruce has been ordered to close his dog sitting service in his home on 7th Avenue. Bruce has cared for my dog, Levi, for some time now and has performed this service with kindness, integrity, reliability and accommodation. Furthermore, his service is convenient and affordable so that I am able to take Levi there daily. I live near downtown on NE 1st and am able to drop Levi off on my way to work at my office on SW 13th Street then pick him up on my way home. Levi is able to exercise and play with other dogs in a safe environment and I am free from worry that he would be getting into trouble if left alone at home. Finally, this service is Bruce's only source of livelihood and I believe it would be grossly unfair to deprive him of this. No doubt your department is correct in the enforcement of city ordinances but what we are dealing with here are human lives and the lives of their canine companions, many of which, like Levi, were rescued from shelters."

Ron Joos

"As the backdoor neighbors of Mr. Baber we feel that we are best suited to state our experiences with him and the dogs in his care. We are not bothered at all by his dogs. Hardly ever does one of his dogs utter a short bark, which is totally acceptable. We are, however, bothered by other neighbors' own dogs who start barking ferociously whenever we enter our backyard. But because these are their own dogs, they are apparently allowed to bark their little hearts out without restraint. Mr. Baber has always been very cooperative. We like having him as a neighbor. We even feel that his walking the dogs around our neighborhood plays a large role in crime prevention. One could argue that other people also walk their dogs along our street but we do not know them and they do not know us. Mr. Baber knows this neighborhood and the people who live in it. He will notice if there should be any changes that might point to some criminal activity and would then notify the owner and/or the police. We need Mr. Baber and his dogs in our neighborhood. We cannot comment on the issues of city ordinances, but we trust that these can be adapted to Mr. Baber's specific situation. We urge the Gainesville City Commission to find a way to keep Mr. Baber's dog sitting business in our immediate neighborhood and let him continue with his important and worthwhile endeavor."

Rolf and Valerie Hummel

"I am a resident of Gainesville, and a friend and client of Bruce Baber. I just wanted to contact you as a show of my support, in hopes of him being allowed to continue his services. My wife and I are small business owners here in town, and his services are crucial to our business. Not only that, but, Bruce is a hard-working, respectful, and terrific citizen of the City of Gainesville. It would be a real shame if someone of his character and loyalty to the City not be taken into account."

Todd and Christy Morgan

"I understand that there has been another appeal of the Board's decision to continue Bruce Baber's Mydogspace. Bruce has always been very professional and courteous. I trust our dog Murphy to be in excellent hands with Bruce. My dog absolutely loves being with Bruce and playing with the other dogs there. Bruce gives us the freedom to be able to go out of town or have him take care of him when we can't get out of work and gives us the security that our dog is enjoying his time with Bruce. My out of town dog friends are jealous that such a place like Mydogspace exists for Murphy in Gainesville. Sometimes we wonder if Murphy has more fun at Bruce's than being at our house. I don't think that I would be able to say this with another dog daycare place. During the time when Mydogspace had to be temporarily closed, we had to find a new dog sitting service for Murphy and after trying two other places I was very weary about how my dog had been taken care of at each of those places. At one place, we were very disappointed that our dog came back with tons of ticks. Once we found out that Mydogspace reopened, I immediately cancelled the other dog service so that our dog could be taken care of by Bruce. It is so important for us that Bruce's Mydogspace continue for our dog and for many other dogs and their owners. He has been so wonderful to work with. Please seriously consider to continue Bruce's dog walking service for our family and for many Gainesville families."

Tamayo and Rath Chau

"I am writing in support of Bruce Baber. For many years, he has been a welcome presence to nearly everyone who lives near him on NW 7th Avenue near 17th Street NW. He provided a very useful service in taking care during the day of dogs belonging to many people who must spend their days at work. His daily walks around the neighborhood have been beneficial to residents of the neighborhood, as nearly everyone in the neighborhood knows him and realizes that he helps to keep an eye on the neighborhood while most residents are at work. For many years my wife and I lived on NW 7th Lane, and we were aware of Bruce and his value to the neighborhood, even though we did not use him ourselves as a dog-sitter. We now live about a mile away, and we have over the past couple of years been very lucky to have Bruce either dog-sit for us (when it was legal) or (under current regulations) give our dog a walk several times a week, while we are at work. This is the absolute highlight of our dog's life, as he gets incredibly excited whenever he sees Bruce. I do realize this is a difficult issue for the City Commission, to have an ordinance that does not cause potential problems in residential neighborhoods. However, if there is some legal way to allow Bruce to do some dog-sitting at his home, there are many people in the community who would welcome it. In addition, those who know Bruce will be very grateful to the commission for doing something that is helpful to a kind person so many people in the neighborhood care about very much."

Alan Agresti

From: [davidbeasley17@gmail.com](mailto:davidbeasley17@gmail.com)  
Subject: For the Dog Sitting business  
Date: December 5, 2011 8:26:36 AM EST  
To: [COGPlanning@gru.com](mailto:COGPlanning@gru.com)  
Bcc: [brucebabber@mac.com](mailto:brucebabber@mac.com)

To Whom It May Concern:

This email is requesting that you allow dog sitting/walking services to be allowed in our neighborhoods in Gainesville. I think of Gainesville as a progressive community that is able to grow and adapt to the times while maintaining a family friendly environment. Allowing services such as what Bruce Baber offers is an example of such a service. The convenience and affordability of how his business is structured is what makes this necessary. The days of driving to a vet's office to board our pets just to have them neglected while paying high fees should be over with. I am asking that you pass what's needed to make that happen.

Sincerely,

David Beasley  
Resident of the Duckpond neighborhood

From: [rjoos@cox.net](mailto:rjoos@cox.net)

Subject: Bruce Baber Petition

Date: December 5, 2011 10:17:23 AM EST

To: [COGPlanning@gru.com](mailto:COGPlanning@gru.com)

Cc: [brucebaber@mac.com](mailto:brucebaber@mac.com)

I support Bruce Baber's petition for the appropriate zoning change to allow dog sitting services in residential zoned areas. This type of neighborhood based service, when operated responsibly as Mr. Baber has done in the past, provides a valuable, convenient, caring, and low cost alternative to all residents with no negative impact on the surrounding area.

Your approval of this petition will be greatly appreciated.

--

-Ron Joos  
706 NE 1st Street  
Gainesville, FL