

# Riverdale not ready for pedophilic priests at hospital

By Jim Keary  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Neighbors of a closed Riverdale hospital reacted coolly yesterday to a proposal to turn the facility into a treatment center for priests who have sexually abused children.

"I'm a mother of two daughters — aged 2 and 8 — and I am opposed to locating this particular facility in this location," said Judith Walters, who lives near the old Leland Memorial Hospital.

Mrs. Walters' comments came at a public hearing last night on the plan to move the St. Luke Institute Inc. into the closed hospital in the 4400 block of East-West Highway.

St. Luke's officials say they have

outgrown the facility in Suitland where they treat clergy, mainly Catholic priests, who have addictive behaviors, including substance abuse and sexual abuse.

The Rev. Canice Connors, president of the institute, said St. Luke's patients pose no threat to the community. But the facility needs to be located in a neighborhood as a part of their treatment, he said.

"We believe it is necessary for their treatment to be in the real world," Father Connors said.

Supporters note that St. Luke's has operated without incident in Suitland for 13 years.

But some people, including Prince George's County Executive Parris Glendening, have voiced con-

cerns about a facility for pedophiles in a community that was recently rocked by child molestation charges.

County police have charged James Kowalski and Stephen Bruce Leak with molesting an 11-year-old boy in a home in the 4800 block of Queensbury Road, just four blocks from the hospital. Police were led to the two men during their investigation into the May 22 disappearance of George Stanley Burdyski Jr., 10. The Brentwood youth has not been found.

St. Luke's is one of five organizations that might buy Leland from Adventist Healthcare Mid-Atlantic Corp.

The other four prospective buyers

want to use Leland for facilities to serve the elderly, which was recommended by a county task force studying possible uses for the hospital. Mr. Glendening noted that St. Luke's proposal is the only one of the five that is not compatible with the task force suggestions.

The state's Health Resources Planning Commission will have to sign off on any new use for the hospital, and staff member Richard Coughlan said yesterday that St. Luke's proposal has as good a shot as any at this point.

"We haven't ruled it out. There are ... concerns whether they will feel welcomed in the community," Mr. Coughlan said. "They currently operate and maintain their program in

the county, and they have not presented any difficulties at their current site."

But he said St. Luke's might not press the move if neighbors strongly object.

"Our understanding is the people from St. Luke's aren't interested if they are not going to be welcomed," he said. "We believe they will not make an offer if, in their judgment, they can't operate a quality health care program."

He said the commission will also consider the types of services that were lost to the community when Leland closed and whether they would be restored by the new owner. But any proposal must first go through the hospital owner.

"We've had some informal contact with companies and potential bidders and until such time as Adventist asks us, we won't be looking at any of them," said Mr. Coughlan.

About 50 people attended last night's hearing at St. Bernard's Catholic Church in Riverdale. Other meetings are scheduled tonight at 6:30 at the Hyattsville Public Library and tomorrow at 7 p.m. at the Riverdale Town Hall.

One man at last night's hearing said he did not fear the type of patients St. Luke's would bring to the neighborhood. The man, who asked not to be identified, said he had researched pedophilia and was satisfied that molesters do not usually target strangers.