

Coffee

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the main reason is that Cleveland Clinic does not want food in the emergency department.

"With heightened sensitivity towards individuals not feeling well in the Emergency Department waiting area, the decision has been made to remove preparation and serving of food and beverages from that location," Ms. Dickens told Hometown News. "Having a food service vendor in the ED does not follow the 'patients first' model of care that Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital wants to provide."

"They say the new administration complained about the smells from our food in the E.R., but these are the smells of home," Ms. Kohlhepp replied. "People come by and ask if we're baking cookies. People love the smells."

Regarding the decision to make the move now, instead of at the end of Central Perk's contract, Ms. Dickens cited the 30-day clause in the contract.

"The agreement with Central Perk Enterprise, Inc., allows either party to terminate for any reason at any time with a 30-day written notice. Alternative refreshment options, including vending machines and coffee kiosks, have been added to other areas of the facility."

While acknowledging that the hospital has the right to act on 30 days notice, Ms. Kohlhepp urged the hospital to realize that Central Perk is a small, family business that provides a service the hospital community appreciates.

"With the acquisition of Indian River Medical Center, Cleveland Clinic has decided to terminate our contract early," Ms. Kohlhepp said. "While we understand that they would like to take over our area, we're only asking that they let us stay until the end of our contractually negotiated date of July 1st. We will close up shop happily and move on with our lives, but a 30-day notice for no wrongdoing seems unjust."

"We've been there 12 years and eight months. We know the nurses and their families. We know the names of their kids. They come here every day, and they have long, grueling days. We're open 7 a.m.-midnight, Monday through Sunday, and we're always ready for them."

"There are people who cannot leave their posts. They're in surgery for hour after hour. We know when they're coming, and we're ready with a fresh pot of coffee. They've got literally five minutes to walk down the hall, grab something to eat, and then go back for another surgery."

"This is our livelihood. You're giving us 30 days, in the middle of the holidays?" So, with the help of friends and co-workers, they started a petition on the website Change.org. As of Dec. 1, the petition has been signed by 1,358 people.

"They say they don't like an E.R. that has food. We should have been having that discussion months ago. Two months ago they mentioned the possibility of moving us to the Health and Wellness Center and doing something on a smaller scale. We were open to that, but we never heard back from them. When we talked last week, I said we were still open to



The Kohlhepps

that."

While the Kohlhepps now say they simply want to remain until July, they say they are open to a long term agreement to stay at the hospital in some form.

"I want to stay there until July, and we will go, happily," Ms. Kohlhepp said. "But we do hope they see the value of the coffee bar. They can move us to the patient pavilion, they can move us down the hall, because our main draw is the employees."

"We have been a part of this hospital for nearly 13 years," the couple say in their petition. "We've survived numerous

regime changes, multiple administrative replacements, and many contract negotiations. We've served hundreds of thousands of cups of coffee and become family with hundreds of employees and patients of this wonderful facility. Throughout all the changes at this hospital, there has been one mainstay - Central Perk.

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/CentralPerkirmc/ or www.change.org/p/hospital-staff-and-patrons-keep-central-perk-in-the-hospital.

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