

Community Liaison Committee Meeting
Monday, December 3, 2012
American University – Katzen Arts Center – Room 154
6:00 p.m.

Introduction

The meeting of the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) was opened by AU Vice President of Campus Life Gail Hanson, who convenes and leads the meetings for American University. She opened the meeting at 6:06 p.m. by welcoming representatives of neighborhood organizations and local Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs). She stated that in March, the CLC will revert to the 7 p.m. meeting time, preceded by a “meet and greet” at 6:30 p.m.

New Director of Community Relations

Linda Argo, AU Assistant Vice President for External Relations and Strategic Initiatives, introduced Andrew Huff as the university’s new Director of Community Relations. Huff comes to AU from the Government of District of Columbia where he worked most recently as Director of Communications for Ward 2 Councilmember Jack Evans. He also worked for Mayor Adrian Fenty, as well as at the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). He is a 2007 graduate of AU’s Master in Public Administration program. Huff gave out his contact information to attendees (ahuff@american.edu; 202-885-2167 [desk]; 202-440-2221 [cell]) and encouraged residents to contact him at anytime with questions or concerns.

Fall 2012 Student Enrollment Report

Jorge Abud, AU Assistant Vice President for Facilities Development and Real Estate, reviewed enrollment data with CLC participants. This information also was included in the CLC meeting packet provided to all attendees. Issues reviewed included student enrollment from 2005-2020 and an up-to-date headcount of AU faculty and staff. Abud stated that by 2016, two-thirds of AU students will be housed on campus. There were no questions from CLC participants on the enrollment data.

Introductions

At this point in the meeting, attendees were asked to introduce themselves, as well as state their affiliation.

Construction Update

Jorge Abud, AU Assistant Vice President for Facilities Development and Real Estate, provided an update on construction projects under way currently, as well as those in the planning phase.

North Hall: This building will “top out,” meaning the roof will be installed, by the end of this week. North Hall is on schedule to be open for use in August 2013.

Nebraska Hall addition: Work is under way on this building, although it is currently behind schedule due to permit delays and site conditions. To help get the project back on schedule, an agreement was reached between AU and the Fort Gaines Citizens Association allowing exterior work to take place on Saturdays. The building still is expected to open in August 2013.

McKinley Hall: Demolition is now complete and the foundation for the building's new section is being installed. The building is on schedule for a January 2014 completion.

4401 Connecticut Avenue, NW: This building will house WAMU, as well as other AU functions. The building should be complete and occupied in May 2013.

At this point, Beverly Sklover, representing ANC 3E01, asked Jorge Abud about the Babe's development in Tenleytown and if AU was committed to undergrounding utilities in front of its Wisconsin Avenue property when other undergrounding takes place as part of the project.

Jorge Abud reiterated the university's commitment to undergrounding utilities in front of its property when the time arrives.

Jorge Abud then announced an upcoming meeting with neighbors related to landscaping at North Hall. The meeting will take place on December 17 at 6:30 p.m. in Room 203 of the Mary Graydon Center.

AU Law School at Tenley: Design is under way with construction scheduled to begin in July 2013, with Whiting-Turner acting as construction manager.

Jorge Abud then announced a yet-to-be-scheduled community meeting with residents and DDOT to discuss options for traffic calming measures on 42nd Street, NW. An initial meeting has taken place with AU and DDOT to review the process and permitting requirements.

4801 Massachusetts Avenue, NW: AU currently is in the planning process to determine the use of this building when the law school vacates, with a goal of using it in its current configuration as much as possible.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, asked if AU plans on engaging the neighborhood when determining future use, or if the university will make a decision and then inform the community.

Jorge Abud replied that there will be discussion with the community, but that first the university needs to narrow down its choices and alternatives.

Gail Hanson stated that the building's use would be consistent with its current operation (offices and classrooms) and would not be modified beyond this use.

Nan Wells, representing ANC 3D03, replied that the use is not the concern for the community, but rather the population using the building. She also asked if the building will be used exclusively for AU purposes.

Jorge Abud replied that the building would be used solely for AU purposes and that the university is not considering any other uses or non-AU affiliated tenants.

Tom Hier, representing Ward 3 Vision, then asked Abud about the front lawn of the Tenley Campus and if there were any updates on the design of the lawn and stairs.

Jorge Abud replied that AU has had discussions with the District's Historic Preservation Office (HPO) and interested community members, and that a meeting with interested parties will likely be scheduled for January 2013.

A question was then asked about the East Campus construction and what is AU's timeline. The East Campus will be built on what is now a parking lot at Massachusetts and Nebraska Avenues, NW.

Jorge Abud advised the group that construction of the new East Campus will begin in the summer of 2014 with an estimated completion date of August 2016.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, asked Abud to please remind construction vehicles to adhere to agreed upon routes. Abud advised that he would speak to the construction crews and instruct them to do so.

CLC Operating Document and Mediation Program Guidelines

Gail Hanson referred to a few comments posted on the CLC listserv expressing concern that the Operating Document and Mediation Guidelines may be discussed and approved at the December meeting. She reminded the CLC that the original documents were introduced in May, discussed in depth at previous CLC meetings, and revised three times based on CLC member feedback. She advised that at the March meeting, she'd like to achieve a sense of the committee that both of these documents can be lived with and used to guide the group moving forward.

Operating Document

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, expressed concern over who the contact person at AU should be between CLC meetings. Currently, the Operating Document states that this person is the Director of Community Relations. Commissioner Smith's opinion is that the Zoning Commission intended this person to be someone in the President's cabinet.

Gail Hanson advised that the CLC Chair does not supplant the university's community relations operation and that the Director of Community Relations is often easier to reach and can address issues more quickly. Gail then advised CLC participants to decide for themselves the nature of any issue they may have and determine who to contact accordingly. She also reminded attendees that she is always available via email with any concerns or questions.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, then asked Gail who her back up was in the President's cabinet should she not be available to which she responded David Taylor, the President's Chief of Staff.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, then requested that the words "and concerns" be removed from the sentence that read, "Between meetings, the Director of Community Relations will serve as the primary contact for CLC members' inquiries and concerns. It was agreed that these words would be removed from the Operating Document.

Gail Hanson reminded CLC members that these two documents are interlocking and meant to complement each other. She stated that the Operating Document is straight forward and sets expectations for the group. She then asked that all final comments or suggestions be emailed directly to her or to the CLC listserv. She once again stated that these documents will be finalized at the group's March meeting.

Mediation Guidelines

Gail Hanson, in comparing the Mediation Guidelines to their previous iteration, described the document as simpler and with fewer steps.

Beth Marcus, representing Sutton Place condominiums, asked about the term "neighborhood groups" and stated that it reads like it means specifically ANCs and civic associations and not condo boards or organizations. She believes the term should be replaced with "community groups."

Gail Hanson replied that "neighborhood groups" means those groups that are parties to the CLC.

Jorge Abud then pointed out the list of individuals and organizations included in the Operating Document.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, then asked for the meaning of "relevant neighborhood group representatives" and if this meant a single group or more than one group.

Gail Hanson replied that the CLC is an informal group with the possibility of different representatives from different groups attending each meeting. Because of this, she stated that specific representatives were not identified. She clarified that during mediation, relevant groups could determine at that time who would represent them and that you do not need more than one group.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, asked that the word "relevant" be removed from the phrase "relevant neighborhood group representatives." With no disagreement from the group, Gail Hanson accepted the request.

The conversation then shifted back to the Operating Document. Jess Gersky, an AU neighbor, asked if the CLC was only limited to the groups specifically listed in the document. Gail Hanson replied that the CLC is inclusive and any new group would be welcome to join.

Jeffrey Kraskin, representing the Spring Valley/Wesley Heights Citizens Association, pointed out that the AU Park Association was missing from the list, perhaps because they have been relatively inactive as of late.

Gail Hanson agreed to add language to the Operating Document regarding group expansion. She also stated that the document is intended to serve simply as an "operating" document and not a "governing" document.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, stated that the Zoning Commission would not see this distinction and that it could negatively affect the evaluation of the CLC process ten years down the road.

Gail Hanson replied that the Operating Document was not a requirement of the Zoning Commission or the Zoning Order which governs the Campus Plan, but rather something AU created on its own in an effort to establish clear expectations between the university and community in the management of the CLC.

Gail Hanson once again reminded the CLC that the group must move forward with these two documents and that in March it is the intent to have them accepted in order to guide future activity.

Designation of Working Group to Develop Pool of Mediators

Gail Hanson deferred the process of asking for volunteers to work with AU's General Counsel to select individuals to be a part of the pool of mediators until the March meeting. She went on to remind attendees that as part of the mediation process, there will be a pool of qualified mediators established so that they are available on short notice if ever needed.

Nan Wells, representing ANC 3D03, asked if the mediators must be certified or simply qualified for the job.

Gail Hanson said that they must be certified and asked Hisham Khalid from AU's General Counsel's office for clarification.

Hisham Khalid replied that there is some flexibility in the selection of individuals for the pool of mediators, as long as the group can reach consensus on the individuals chosen.

Summary of Incident Reports and Resolutions since September Meeting

Michelle Espinosa, Associate Dean of Students, provided a report on incidents involving AU students and student groups since September.

Since September 18, four properties housing student groups or organizations have been reported for disturbances. Five additional locations were reported as well, but all were in public spaces and individuals were unable to be identified as the scene was clear when AU Public Safety arrived.

Michelle Espinosa met with the students from the four locations referenced above, joined in the case of one fraternity, by national advisors and representatives. She offered one example of a property on W Street, NW where she worked with the landlord and property manager to ensure that the property was free of trash and debris, as well as properly landscaped. She also advised that in all of the cases she has followed up with the reporting parties to ensure that the problems do not continue.

Stephanie Partridge, representing Embassy Park condominiums, stated that they continue to experience a problem with noise from students who walk on the thru-sidewalk in the

condominium. She went on to explain that students are welcome to walk on the concrete portion of the sidewalks, but are not permitted on the brick portion due to the close proximity to the windows and doors of the residents. She then relayed to the group that there have been verbal confrontations with students who do not believe that the condominium and thru-street are private property.

Gail Hanson stated that students have been mailed letters reminding them of this issue and what is permitted and that the next reminder will be sent out in January.

Nan Wells, representing ANC 3D03, advised the group that any serious incident should first be reported to MPD to make the record public and ensure follow through from the city.

Michelle Espinosa replied that she always tells residents to call MPD first, but also to report any incident both to AU Public Safety and her directly to ensure that the university also has an opportunity to use the tools available to address issues of student behavior.

Gail Hanson informed the group that AU has a strong working relationship with MPD's 2nd District.

Phil Morse, AU's Senior Director of Public Safety and Emergency Management, reiterated that it is important to contact MPD for the quickest response and that AU Public Safety and Michelle Espinosa want to know about incidents as well. He advised that MPD will contact AU Public Safety if they are on the scene of an incident involving AU students, allowing AU officers to get there as well.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, asked about the recent rash of assaults on women near campus and if AU had increased off-campus patrols in response to these incidents.

Phil Morse responded that patrols were increased around the locations that the incidents took place (Massachusetts Avenue, NW between campus and the Berkshire apartment building) and that these levels will be sustained.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, asked by what means these patrols were taking place.

Phil Morse stated that most patrols take place by vehicle in order to cover the most ground, but that foot beat and bicycle officers also are in place, although they are mostly utilized on campus.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, asked if there had been any feedback or input from students on the current situation.

Emily Yu, President of the AU Student Government, advised that she has not heard anything about the issue from students since the original incidents occurred.

AU's Pedestrian Safety Campaign

Phil Morse, AU's Senior Director of Public Safety and Emergency Management, presented a pedestrian safety plan that soon will be implemented on and around the AU campus and focus largely on Ward Circle.

Phil Morse explained that AU has adopted the Be Street Smart campaign developed by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (www.bestreetsmart.net).

Phil Morse explained the three phases of the campaign that will be implemented at AU:

- 1) Passive education: beginning in January (and continuing through May), information will be posted on billboards, shuttle buses, websites, and other locations educating students on how to be a safe and responsible pedestrian.
- 2) Active education: beginning in February, pedestrians will be targeted on Massachusetts and Nebraska Avenues, NW and Ward Circle. Those who cross illegally or display dangerous behavior will be approached by an AU student, public safety officer, or staff person and presented with information on the safe and proper way to cross. A media release also will accompany this portion of the campaign to generate awareness on and around campus.
- 3) Long-term approach: pedestrian safety will be incorporated into student orientation and throughout the year in various AU sponsored crime prevention events and activities.

Phil Morse stated that the program will be evaluated in April for its effectiveness.

Status of Parking and Transportation Review

It was requested and agreed upon that this item be deferred to the March CLC meeting due to the fact that Judy Chesser was unable to attend this meeting.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, asked if there was traffic data available related to the turn at the School of International Service (SIS) parking garage entrance.

Jorge Abud, AU Assistant Vice President for Facilities Development and Real Estate, replied that this information is available from last spring and DDOT will respond with recommendations based on this data.

Tom Smith, representing ANC 3D02, asked if this information can be shared with the CLC.

Jorge Abud responded that this information will be shared at the March CLC meeting.

Community Emergency Response Training (CERT)

Dan Nichols, AU Executive Director of University Safety Programs, announced that the university will be working in collaboration with Serve DC (the District government) to offer CERT training to interested community members. The training prepares participants to come together in the event of an emergency when MPD and the Fire Department may be strained and unable to provide a quick response. The training is 15 hours total and can be done in a weekend or during the course of several days.

Kent Slowinski, representing ANC 3D01, agreed to work with Dan Nichols and Serve DC on organizing the training.

Good of the Order

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m. and was followed by a Town Hall meeting with AU President Neil Kerwin and a neighborhood holiday reception.

Attendees

Community:

Mike Bilecky, Ft. Gaines Citizens Association
David Fehrmann, Westover Place Homeowners Association
Gregory Ferenbach, 4300 42nd Street, NW
Lucy Fraser, Sutton Place Condominiums
Jess Gersky, Neighbor
Elizabeth Haile, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E (incoming)
Tom Hier, Ward 3 Vision
Jeffrey Kraskin, Spring Valley/Wesley Heights Citizens Association
William Krebs, Spring Valley/Wesley Heights Citizens Association
Beth Marcus, Sutton Place Condominium Association
Penny Pagano, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D
Stephanie Partridge, Embassy Park Neighbors Association
Dennis Paul, Neighbors for a Livable Community; Spring Valley/Wesley Heights Citizens Association
Beverly Sklover, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E
Kent Slowinski, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D
Tom Smith, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D; Spring Valley/Wesley Heights Citizens Association
Jane Waldmann, Tenleytown Historical Society
Nan Wells, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D
Beverly Zweiben, Sutton Towers Condominium Board President

American University Staff:

Jorge Abud, Assistant Vice President for Facilities Development & Real Estate
Linda Argo, Assistant Vice President for External Relations & Strategic Initiatives
Michelle Espinosa, Associate Dean of Students
Jerry Gager, University Architect
Gail Hanson, Vice President of Campus Life
Andrew Huff, Director of Community Relations
Hisham Khalid, Office of the General Counsel
Walter Labitzky, Director of Facilities – Washington College of Law
Phil Morse, Senior Director of Public Safety and Emergency Management
Dan Nichols, Executive Director of University Safety Programs
David Taylor, Chief of Staff to the President

American University Students:

Joshua Mattess, AU Student Government

Rory Slatko, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D

Joe Wisniewski, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D

Emily Yu, AU Student Government President