

American University
Community Liaison Committee Meeting Notes
Tuesday, December 10, 2024
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Mary Graydon Center, Room 307

Introductions & Opening Remarks

The quarterly meeting of the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) was opened by Donzell Robinson from Justice and Sustainability Associates at 6:00 PM. Matt Bennett, Vice President and Chief Communications Officer, welcomed attendees. Donzell Robinson reviewed the ground rules. Matt Bennett reviewed the agenda.

Standing Reports

Campus Safety Conversation with Phillip Morse

Phillip Morse introduced the Safety and Security Working Group (SSWG) and explained that the security working group was established in response to gun violence incidents at other universities like UVA and Michigan State. The group was tasked with reviewing the university's overall safety and security, as well as its response and mitigation plans for potential gun violence.

The working group is made up of students, faculty, and staff to ensure an inclusive process. Educational sessions were offered to inform the community about the university's current safety measures, threat management, and partnerships with law enforcement. Community forums were held to provide a safe space for people to give feedback and ask questions about the potential options being considered. A survey was also conducted to gather sentiment from the broader community, including neighbors, parents, and alumni.

The next step is a feasibility study to determine the sustainability and budget impacts of any proposed changes, such as arming campus police. A report will be drafted for university leadership to review, and a final decision is expected to be communicated by the Board and campus community in February.

Phillip emphasized the importance of being transparent and inclusive throughout this comprehensive review process on campus safety and security.

Questions:

How does the university look at the risk in the case of a campus incident?

- The university looks at the overall risk, including the environment and location, crime data both on campus and in the surrounding neighborhoods, and an analysis of whether the physical security and programs in place are effective deterrents.

Have there been any specific incidents on campus that prompted this safety review?

- The initial prompt for the safety review was the gun violence incidents that occurred at the University of Virginia and Michigan State University.

How would the university reach out to the surrounding neighborhoods in the event of an incident on campus, especially considering there is an elementary school nearby? Would you use social media like Nextdoor to communicate with the neighborhood?

- The university communicates through alerts with DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMA). The university reports incidents and they determine which communities are notified. There are Guest Alerts, which community members can sign up to receive. And Geo-fencing that HSEMA uses to send alerts directly to peoples' phones who are in a specific area.

Can the university track students living off-campus and their parking habits?

- The university does have the ability to track students living off-campus and monitor their parking.

Enrollment and Housing Update

Matthew Bennett reported that American University is currently in full compliance with the Campus Plan's housing requirements. The university has 6,606 full-time undergraduate students this year, which translates to providing housing capacity for 70.87% of the undergraduate population. The Campus Plan requires the university to provide housing for at least 67% of the undergraduate population, so AU is comfortably meeting this requirement. The incoming class this year was smaller than originally projected, which can be attributed to the difficult enrollment environment facing higher education in general. The university continues to strive to maximize both undergraduate and graduate enrollments while staying in compliance with the Campus Plan.

Questions:

Is the university's plans for housing and enrollment aligned to satisfy the two-year residency requirement for first- and second-year students?

- This is part of the modeling and planning. The university ensures that housing capacity matches the enrollment projections to meet the residency requirement.

Will there be any impact on the community from this two-year residency requirement?

- There should be no impact, as the university always plans to have sufficient housing to meet the requirements outlined in the Campus Plan. AU will monitor it and make any necessary adjustments.

Off Campus Student Conduct

Justin Bernstine presented the Off Campus Student Conduct Report, reporting that for the period of September 11 through November 21, there were a total of 10 reports related to off-campus student conduct. 5 of the reports were for single-family homes in the surrounding neighborhoods. 2 reports were for apartment or condo buildings. 3 reports were for incidents on public property. Most of the reports (8 out of 10) involved noise, parties, or gatherings. 1 report involved smoking or vaping, and 1 report involved the use of athletic equipment. One report was resolved through meetings with Bernstine's office.

Nine of the reports involved non-AU persons. Bernstine noted that for the public property incidents, they were unable to identify any AU students involved.

Questions/ Comments:

I recently had students come to my house, inform me they were having a party, and provide a phone number in case it was disruptive.

- This was likely AU students and said he would let them know their efforts were appreciated.

The low number of reports involving AU students may indicate that the university's efforts to orient off-campus students are effective. The fact that neighbors are calling to report issues is a positive sign, as it's better than having neighbors upset but not reporting anything.

(About a specific property that seemed to have multiple reports) Was the university able to identify any AU students associated with that property?

- AU was unable to identify any AU students for a couple of the public property incidents, but said they are working with the landlord to try to get more information.

Construction Update

Jonathan provided an update on Meltzer Construction, explaining that the major site utility infrastructure, including the geothermal system, is now in place. The structural steel work has been completed for both the Meltzer Center itself and the Sports Center Annex. The project is currently about 50% complete and is still on track to be substantially finished by the end of 2025. The roof deck is expected to be completed by the end of this month. The QR code provided allows access to live construction camera footage to view the progress. The exterior materials will be a mix of elements, including some similar to the existing "Bender brick" as well as new panel systems.

Questions:

What is the timeline for the exterior masonry and other outer materials?

- The weather barrier wrapping is already mostly done, and they are now starting the exterior brick work. AU does not have the exact timeline for the full exterior completion yet.

Will the exterior materials for Meltzer be different from the current Athletic Center building?

- There will be a mix, with some elements similar to the existing Bender nb brick, but also new panel systems, both steel/aluminum and concrete, to create a new look.

Community Relations Update

Jason Millison provided a Community Relations Update. Jason explained the overarching strategy to strengthen the bond between AU and the surrounding community.

- AU hosted and co-sponsored various community events this fall like a movie night, arboretum tour, the Janney 5K, Mann Elementary Turkey Trot, and the Airlie 5K and Fall Festival. These

events were aimed at bringing the best of AU out into the community and interweaving the university with the neighborhood.

- The community newsletter subscription has grown from 850 to over 1,300 people, indicating increased engagement.

Jason gave an overview of upcoming winter events.

- Men's and women's basketball games with special events like Scout Day and Elementary School Night
- A DC Central Kitchen Day of Service around Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- A post-game youth sports clinic for Girls and Women in Sports Day

The university is committed to creating more events and content to strengthen ties with the local community and provide opportunities for collaboration and participation.

Questions:

In addition to the athletic events, can the university engage with local elementary and high schools through its performing arts groups and academic clubs, like the singing groups and theater program?

- There is potential to collaborate with local high schools, such as through the university's Model UN program or other academic-focused clubs.

Tenleytown Main Street design committee's has interest in public art projects. Are there opportunities for AU student involvement?

- Interest in exploring these types of collaborative community projects.

Good of the Order

Donzell Robinson provided the dates for the 2025 Quarterly CLC Meetings: March 12th, June 10th, September 17th, and December 9th. He then opened the meeting to any questions and reminded participants that there is an opportunity to ask questions during the reception following the meeting.

Closing Questions and Comments

What are Wesley's plans to build a residence hall for AU students?

- There are ongoing discussions with Wesley. The university is focused on its own Campus Plan and housing strategy and will engage with Wesley and the Zoning Commission as needed.

What is the status of potentially moving the School of Education from the Spring Valley building?

- There are no plans to physically move the School of Education, and the discussions are focused on the school's administrative structure and operations within the university.

Is the university planning to sell the old law school building?

- No plans to sell that facility.

Will the new President be meeting with neighbors, similar to previous presidents?

- President Alger will continue the tradition of holding an annual town hall or presidential gathering to engage with the community.

Donzell Robinson thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Attendees

Community:

Mary Buckles, Neighbor
 Chuck Elkins, ANC 3D Representative
 Olaoluwadeji Jones
 Judith Kopperud, Student Life and Safety Working Group member
 Tony Long, OLLI
 Dennis Paul, Neighbors for a Livable Community
 Georgianna Paul, Spring Valley resident
 Doug Saunders
 Larry Seftor, Neighbor
 Marilyn Slatnick
 Suzanne Smoilk
 Timothy Talley
 Betsy White, Wesley Heights Neighbor

American University Staff:

Matt Bennett, Vice President and Chief Communications Officer
 Justin Berstine, Deputy Dean of Students
 Ash Boltrushek
 Elizabeth Deal, AVP for Community and Internal Communications
 Josh Finver, Assistant Director for Transportation Demand Management
 Laura Marks, AVP of Community and Government Relations
 Jonathan McCann, AVP of Planning and Project Management
 Jason Millison, Director of Community Relations
 Phil Morse, AVP University Police Services and Emergency Management
 Sherry Rutherford

Justice and Sustainability Associates Staff:

Donzell Robinson
 Katherine Smith