

Community Liaison Committee Meeting
Tuesday, June 5, 2012
American University - Mary Graydon Center – Rooms 4 & 5
7:00 p.m.

Introduction

The first meeting of the newly constituted Community Liaison Committee (CLC) was opened by AU Vice President of Campus Life Gail Hanson who will convene and lead CLC meetings for the university. Refreshments and a “meet and greet” preceded the meeting at 6:30 p.m. She welcomed representatives of neighborhood organizations and area ANCs and stated that tonight’s session would be an organizing meeting. Individual introductions were made by those attending the meeting.

Briefing on Recent Development

Jorge Abud, AU Assistant Vice President for Facilities Development and Real Estate, reported that neighbors had filed a complaint that trees had been removed improperly at the site for the new North Hall residence facility, behind the President’s Office Building. He announced that the Zoning Administrator ruled that some trees were not specified to be removed in the Campus Plan zoning order and that the university is reviewing and responding to the ruling. Asked why the trees were removed, Abud said it was determined that they would not survive because of their proximity to the excavation for the new building and the path of utilities.

CLC Membership

Gail Hanson talked about the composition of the CLC and the importance of having designated representatives from all of the neighborhood organizations so that there is continuity in attendance and a way for CLC information and actions to be shared with members of all of the participating groups.

Judy Chesser, representing Tenleytown Neighbors Association, requested that the Tenleytown Historical Society be included and have a representative to the CLC. Gail Hanson noted that some concern had been expressed about whether advocacy groups should have the same standing as neighborhood groups.

Robert Herzstein, representing Neighbors for a Livable Community, asked what matters before the CLC would require votes.

Gail Hanson gave two situations when CLC votes would be required: a vote would be taken on whether to hold a special meeting; and a vote would be proposed to declare a disputed matter “intractable” and refer it to mediation.

Robert Herzstein noted that while he had cited the need for dispute resolution, he never proposed that there be a vote. Gail Hanson suggested that the group holds that thought until we get to the agenda item on the proposed CLC Mediation Program Guidelines.

Alan Pollock, representing Ft. Gaines Citizens Association, said that groups with a vote should represent organized groups of neighbors. He suggested that groups like a historical society might have a different point of view and that if the CLC were to call for a vote, “we’d have to think whether their votes would make a difference.”

David Fehrmann, representing Westover Place Homeowners Association, expressed similar concerns and noted that his Board has not met yet to discuss the CLC and its composition. He said that “borders are important” and some neighbors may be more affected by disruptive conditions than others. This needs to be considered when there is a vote. He added that he would be willing for the meeting to proceed and to learn more about the other participants before deciding the voting matter.

Gail Hanson noted that ANC3D, ANC3E, and ANC3F are included in the CLC, and that a group email list for the CLC will be created, along with a CLC website where meeting materials and other information will be posted. The CLC replaces AU’s less formal Neighborhood Liaison Commission (NLC) as part of the new Zoning Commission order for AU to create a consultative group with more structure. She urged all of the groups represented to be sure their organizations have a designated representative. She also suggested that for the time being, it is probably desirable to err on the side of inclusion. There were no objections to adding Ward 3 Vision and the Tenleytown Historical Society to the CLC roster. It was agreed that the matter of voting privileges merits further discussion.

David Fehrmann also suggested that some neighborhood “zones” be accorded greater weight. “I’d hate to see the neighborhood most affected have a vote that was watered down,” he said.

Alan Pollock added that, based on the history of past quarterly meetings, those problems were worked out pretty easily between the university and affected areas.

David Taylor, Chief of Staff to AU President Neil Kerwin, added that there was no reason that there couldn’t be area-specific sessions of the CLC, if they were needed.

Gail Hanson asked attendees to take the documents that were circulated by e-mail and distributed at the meeting back to their groups to get their input. She also described the draft mediation guidelines for the groups to review and invited recommendations for mediators.

Robert Herzstein suggested that the group not formalize the proposed mediation guidelines now, but to do so as needed, and also revisit the vote issue.

Gail Hanson asked the group to look at the suggested civility pledge. She noted that the tone of the meetings is important, particularly when groups may anticipate some difficult conversations. In light of this, she suggested that it is productive to agree on ground rules in advance. She asked if the representatives were comfortable accepting the civility

pledge as a general understanding among us about how CLC meetings will be conducted. There were no objections.

Scheduled Reports:

Linda Argo, AU Assistant Vice President for External Relations and Strategic Initiatives, said that there had been a lot of discussion at the Zoning Commission about how the university would consult consistently with neighbors and resolve disputes, and that the creation of the CLC grew out of encouragement by the Zoning Commission to find a better way to do this.

Gail Hanson added that an important role for the CLC is to ensure that the university is meeting the reporting requirements mandated by the zoning order. The CLC may expect that a construction update will be a consistent agenda item. She noted that there is some progress on sound management on Jacobs Field to be reported tonight, as well as a report on student conduct off campus.

Construction Management Update

Jorge Abud provided the construction update:

- Nebraska Hall addition: AU is awaiting final permits. A construction trailer is on site, and work is expected to start in a week or so.
- North Hall: AU has the initial permits for excavation and work has started.
- McKinley: Work will start in about two week to renovate the existing building for the new home of the School of Communication.

Project information sheets were distributed at the meeting with general information about these three projects and contact information for AU and contractor staff. A new website <http://www.american.edu/buildingAU/> has been created to keep the public informed about construction work, and contact information is listed on a separate page for each construction project.

Jorge Abud also noted that a variety of small renovations are under way, including a modification to the chilled water pipes that requires excavation down the main road of campus, along the area by Hughes Hall.

He reported that the university recently purchased a commercial office building at 4401 Connecticut Avenue to provide a new home for WAMU 88.5 and other AU administrative offices. The two street-level retail stores, Subway and UPS, will remain as tenants. Renovation work to adapt the building for AU's use is scheduled to start in August.

Off Campus Student Conduct: 2011-2012

Michelle Espinosa, Associate Dean of Students, presented a PowerPoint on off campus student conduct which included information about outreach initiatives in the community, the complaint management process, and how students are dealt with by the university.

Alan Pollock said that the management process is a failure because action comes “after the fact.” He said there needs to be more preemptive work by AU at houses that have a history of issues, and that AU needs to visit these houses before parties happen and problems develop.

The presentation showed complaints by types, reported locations, and disciplinary actions that have included warnings, censures, and disciplinary probation. Disciplinary actions create a student conduct record that can affect graduate school admission, internships, and employment.

John Wheeler, representing Ward 3 Vision, said that the city has a responsibility to make sure that landlords take more responsibility for maintaining their rental properties.

Progress on Athletic Field Sound Management

David Taylor is working with Robert Herzstein to set up a meeting to discuss engineering design for a new sound system for Jacobs Field.

Good of the Order and Summer Events

David Fehrmann asked about construction hours and deliveries to construction sites. Jorge Abud noted that construction hours are limited and posted on the website for each project. Deliveries are supposed to take place during the posted hours. Neighbors are asked to report any activity outside those hours to the contact for the particular project or AU Public Safety.

Linda Argo showed the group the new “Building AU” website and its features for individual construction projects.

Gail Hanson said the next CLC meeting will be September 18, 2012. The agenda will include revising the documents that the group has received already. A list of all CLC participants with their email addresses will be made available with the summary of this meeting.

CLC meetings are open to any interested member of the public.

Tom Hier, representing Ward 3 Vision, noted that interest continues for a charrette for the new Law School in Tenleytown.

Penny Pagano, Director of Community and Local Government Relations, gave an update on campus events and activities open to neighbors.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Attendees

Community:

Mike Bilecky, Ft. Gaines Citizens Association

Judy Chesser, Tenleytown Neighbors Association
David Fehrmann, Westover Place Homeowners Association
Deon Jones, ANC3D
Jay Ghoush, Greenbrair
Bob Herzstein, Neighbors for a Livable Community
Tom Hier, Ward 3 Vision
Beth Marcus, Sutton Place Condominium Association
Ellen Meyer, Tenleytown Campus Neighbors Association
Dennis Paul, Neighbors for a Livable Community and Spring Valley/Wesley Heights
Citizens Association
Kyle Pitsor, Westover Place Homeowners Association
Alan Pollock, Ft. Gaines Citizens Association
Peter Rient, McLean Gardens
Jane Waldmann, Tenleytown Historical Society
John Wheeler, Ward 3 Vision, Tenleytown
Joe Wisniewski, AU Student Government, The Berkshire
Emily Yu, AU Student Government President, The Towers

AU:

Gail Hanson, Vice President of Campus Life
Jorge Abud, Assistant Vice President, Facilities Development and Real Estate
Linda Argo, Assistant Vice President, External Relations and Strategic Initiatives
Michelle Espinosa, Associate Dean of Students
Hisham Khalid, Associate General Counsel
Walter Labitsky, Director, Facilities, Washington College of Law
Dan Nichols, Executive Director, University Safety Programs
Penny Pagano, Director, Community and Local Government Relations
Michael Purcell, Assistant University Architect
David Taylor, Chief of Staff to AU President Neil Kerwin