

AU Submission to the Zoning Commission re the Operation of the CLC

Linda Argo, Tom Smith, and Jeffrey Kraskin are to be congratulated for coming up with changes to the CLC that will improve its operations now and going into the next Campus Plan. Below are some suggested tweaks that can make the new CLC arrangement work even more effectively.

1. Chair of the CLC

Current Proposal: The requirement that the CLC be chaired by a person of Vice Presidential rank within the university was changed, perhaps inadvertently, to read “a representative of American University”.

Suggested Change: The agreement should be explicit in retaining the requirement for a Vice-President of AU to chair the CLC.

Reasoning: This maintains the importance of the CLC even in times between Campus Plans Development efforts.

2. Neighborhood Co-Chair of the CLC

Current Proposal: The neighborhood co-chair is to be selected from one of named community association organizations (a subset of CLC member organizations representing members adjacent to the main campus).

Suggested Change: ANC Commissioners from Single Member Districts (SMDs) adjacent to the main campus should also be eligible to co-lead the CLC.

Reasoning: Each of these ANC Commissioner represents ~2000 people who expect that Commissioner to represent them in establishing and maintaining an effective relationship between their neighborhood and AU. The AU/Neighborhood relationship works best when ANC Commissioners and Neighborhood Associations work hand in hand with AU. ANC Commissioners should not be excluded.

3. Choosing the Neighborhood Co-Chair of the CLC

Current Proposal: The proposal is silent about how the neighborhood Co-Chair is to be chosen.

Suggested Change: The proposal should be explicit in saying that the Neighborhood Co-Chair is to be elected by the neighborhood members (ANCs and Neighborhood organizations) of the CLC.

Reasoning: In order for the Co-chair to have credibility as representing the neighborhood representatives, he/she needs to be chosen by the neighborhood, and not by American University. This could be accomplished, for example, by inviting nominations (including self-nominations) from the CLC membership and then having a vote of the neighbor representatives at a regularly scheduled CLC meeting.

4. Equal Numbers from AU and the Neighborhood on the CLC?

Current Proposal: The supporting papers that were submitted to the Zoning Commission¹ recommend that the CLC be composed of an equal number of university and neighborhood representatives.

¹ Page 5 of November 16th letter from Paul Tummonds to Chairman Hood of the Zoning Commission: “It is recommended that the Community Liaison Committee be composed of an equal number of representatives of the University and the community...”

Suggested Change: The words “an equal number” should be deleted.

Reasoning: The willingness of the University to have a certain number of its representatives participate in the CLC should not be seen as limiting the number of neighborhood representatives. Such a limiting was probably not the intent of the language, but the current “equal number” language is unnecessary and could be a cause for future disagreement and therefore should be deleted.

5. Membership of the Neighborhood Collaborative

Current Proposal: Membership is limited to certain named neighborhood community organizations (as in #2 above). ANC Commissioners who represent neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the main campus “will also be invited to participate.”

Suggested Change: Make these ANC Commissioners equal members of the Collaborative.

Reasoning: These Commissioner represent as many or more neighbors than the named organizations and should not be disenfranchised. Some of their campaigns for office explicitly promised this representation.

6. Chair of the Neighborhood Collaborative

Current Proposal: The Neighborhood Collaborative would be chaired by the University.

Suggested Change: The Collaborative should be co-led by the neighborhood and that co-lead should be elected by the neighborhood members.

Reasoning: This change is appropriate here for the same reasons as it is for the CLC.

7. Neighborhood Membership of the CLC and the Collaborative

Current Proposal: The agreement could be read as limiting membership to organizations that exist at this time.

Suggested Change: The agreement should be explicit that membership of both the CLC and Collaborative is composed of those ANCs and those organizations created by neighbors, at least some of whom are directly affected by AU operations (or, as in the case of the Collaborative, who reside adjacent to the main campus), and that the list provided in the agreement simply reflects those organizations that exist at the time of the signing of the agreement (2016) and is not exclusive.

Reasoning: Citizens are free to create and disband their community organizations, and it is important that AU be able to deal whatever the organizations (current at that time) that neighbors have created and not be limited only to those that existed at a particular point in time. In addition, the University should not be seen as picking and choosing those neighborhood organizations with whom it chooses to deal. Neighbors should clearly be able to choose whom they wish to be represented by without implied endorsement or withholding of endorsement by the University. Excluding any future groups would undermine AU’s effort to fully engage its neighbors in the development and maintenance of its campus plans.