

Community Liaison Committee Meeting
Tuesday, Sept 15, 2020
Meeting was Held Virtually On Ringcentral
6:30 – 8 p.m.

Introductions & Opening Remarks

The meeting of the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) was opened by Don Edwards, from Justice and Sustainability Associates, at 6:30 p.m. Chief of Staff and Counselor to the President, Seth Grossman, who convenes and leads the meetings for American University, welcomed representatives of neighborhood organizations and local Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs).

Standing Reports

Student Conduct Off Campus since June 2020; Office Campus Conduct Presentation

Michelle Espinosa, AU Dean of Students, provided information on the Student Code of Conduct as relevant to off-campus student conduct from June 8 to Sept 10, 2020, The university received a total of three (3) complaints: Three (3) from single-family homes in Tenleytown, Palisades, and Foxhall. Two (2) reports were unactionable, one (1) report was resolved through a meeting with the Office of the DOS. One (1) report was resolved by athletics. Additionally, there were eight (8) reports of non-compliance surrounding COVID-19 requirements. Reports came from Alban Towers, the Archer, and 4200 Cathedral. The presentation can be found at <https://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/clc-presentation-9-15-2020-2.pdf>

Construction Projects Update

David Dower, AU Assistant Vice President for Planning and Project Management, updated the CLC on progress at the Hall of Science, which now has occupants working partially within it. The presentation can be found at <https://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/clc-presentation-9-15-2020-2.pdf>

Community Relations Update

Maria Barry, Director of Community Relations, shared information about recent outreach and community work by American University, including information related to the impact of COVID-19. This presentation can be found at <https://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/clc-presentation-9-15-2020-2.pdf>

Chuck Elkins, of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D, stated there is some confusion about the opening of AU's campus and suggested AU clarify their language on how people can safely visit the Main Campus.

William Clarkson, of the Spring Valley Neighborhood Association, agreed with Chuck on clearing the language up around visiting the campus. He also stated neighbors should not assume those unmasked on campus are AU students.

Maria replied that she was aware of the instance being described on NextDoor and had reached out to the source of the original complaint.

Jeremy Del Moral, of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D, stated that mask compliance on campus seemed okay, but that he had seen some families not wearing masks.

Shelly Repp, of Neighbors for Responsible Development, questioned if AU Police are asking those not wearing masks to comply. He also asked about data for students who live on-campus or off-campus who tested COVID-19 positive.

Maria replied that AU Police are looking out to remind people to wear masks, although there are no fines levied. She followed up by stating the current number of COVID-19 cases at AU is four (4), with information being tracked on AU's website.

New Business and Neighborhood Issues

Ed Fisher, Assistant Vice President of Community and Government Relations, gave an update on the effects of COVID-19 on American University and the 2021 Campus Plan, including a framework related to enrollment and potential development sites. This presentation can be found at <https://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/clc-presentation-9-15-2020-2.pdf>

Dennis Williams, of the Tenleytown Neighborhood Association, stated that he was confused by the adjustment of the 6.61% increase to the student enrollment cap and asked what the total enrollment cap will be.

Ed replied that the enrollment cap is 14,380.

Dennis followed up by asking about the 2,700 students who live in the 20008 and 20016 Zip Codes and how AU is enforcing their COVID-19 guidelines for them.

Ed stated that all students, faculty, and staff have to take a COVID-19 health and safety training that covers what is expected both on and off campus. He added that students can be tested at AU's health center. The off-campus training program also has a COVID-19-focused component.

Dennis asked for details on the training guidelines.

Ed stated that the training impresses upon students to self-isolate if they are showing COVID symptoms.

Dennis asked if those outside of the 20008 and 20016 Zip Codes get the same training.

Ed stated they do get the same COVID-19 training.

Dennis asked for more information on the types of students living outside those Zip Codes and if they count towards the 67% cap requirement.

Ed replied that the students are factored into the mandate that AU be able to house 67% of undergraduates on campus.

Jessica Herzstein stated she shares the longest border with AU as a residential neighbor, elaborating there has been a large increase in activity at Jacobs Field in the last 15 years. She explained during the last 2011 Campus Plan there were specific conditions set for Jacobs Field including time slots for use and placement of speakers. She further explained that a few years ago, she began to meet with AU to discuss a sound wall to help with the exceedances of noise. She stated that AU now proposes to build a wall, but also wants to change the conditions. She expressed concern that any changed conditions are contingent on the engineering of the new sound wall and should not be modified until its completion.

Tom Smith, of the Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association, thanked AU for sending a hard copy of the 2021 Campus Plan, but stated that it is unreasonable to expect people to read through the campus plan in a week's time. He requested another CLC meeting to discuss the 2021 Campus Plan and further stated that this version of the Campus Plan is not as detailed as past campus plans, including the purposes of the new buildings. He asked how AU got the 500 additional bed numbers using Sites 2 and 4.

Ed stated that between Sites 2 and 4 they would house an additional 500 beds combined.

Tom replied that bed-count information should be in the 2021 Campus Plan draft. He asked for info on Site 5.

Ed replied that Site 5 is now the existing sports annex building, but it could also be a residential site in the 2021 Campus Plan.

Tom asked how many beds AU could build if they built out all their residential options.

Ed replied AU is planning to build 500 beds, with Sites 2 and 4 being their priority for building.

Tom asked for the total bed count if AU built out all residential sites.

Ed stated that AU wants to build 500 beds, elaborating that the other sites have been identified as a contingency. He explained that there would be 180 to 200 beds at Site 2, and 280 to 350 beds at Site 4. He confirmed that all other residential options are potential sites if needed.

Tom asked if the maximum number of additional beds beyond the additional 500 would be 200 more if the Frequency lease expired.

Ed replied AU is proposing to build 500 beds.

Troy Kravitz, of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E, stated that Site 12 could be built if the Frequency lease fell through and Site 11 was built. He added that Site 11 now houses approximately 120 beds.

Tom stated he was troubled that the plan had so many additional housing units.

Troy replied that the campus planning process does not mean all buildings proposed will be built.

Ed again stated that AU is planning to build 500 beds.

Tom expressed the need for straight answers to the questions and noted that there are no numbers for bed units reflected in the Campus Plan document. He accused AU of not wanting to have a dialogue.

Don stated that his questions have been recorded.

William spoke to the issue of the Jacobs Field sound wall, saying there had been significant discussion on the issue in Zoning Order 11-07-G.

Troy stated that bed count numbers related to the 2021 Campus Plan have been given extensively throughout the process. He added that CLC participants were invited into the AU Neighborhood Partnership and working groups, and they chose not to participate.

Jessica replied to William's point, stating that there had been extensive work done on the possibilities of the wall and different options on where to put speakers and other noise issues. She elaborated that this needs to be done before the conditions are modified.

Dennis wanted to understand why the Frequency lease could fall through.

Ed stated AU has a lease with the Frequency through next year but explained that anything could happen during contract negotiations.

Dennis suggested using language that might make that clearer when it comes to conditions in the 2021 Campus Plan, using condition #2 for an example.

Ed noted his point.

Dennis also asked for clarification on condition #5.

Ed replied that AU is proposing allowing students to take classes at the Washington College of Law campus while not being in the Washington College of Law. He explained that AU would only go ahead with the plan if the total student population there was under the 2,000 cap already set.

Dennis asked if there was any precedent for such a condition and asked about condition #11 when discussing AU residence hall regulations.

Ed stated that off-campus master leases are treated just like a campus dorm, and that the Frequency Building is 98% occupied by AU students.

Tim Talley, Wesley Heights resident, asked Ed to repeat what the Fall 2021 enrollment number is for AU.

Ed replied AU reports their enrollment number in the December CLC meeting, and that currently AU has internal protocols to work through.

Tim asked if AU would have those enrollment numbers when they go before the Zoning Commission. He also noticed some work being done at the remediation site of the Public Safety building and asked for an update on the status of that process. He mentioned the site numbers in the 2021 Campus Plan document were altered from the 2021 Campus Plan Framework.

Ed replied that Exhibit L lays out some information on changed building site numbers.

Dan Nichols, Associate Vice President of Risk, Safety and Transportation, replied that the Army Corps of Engineers had updates on the remediation site on their website.

Tim asked AU if there are further Working Group meetings scheduled for the fall. He also wanted to know when construction would begin at the earliest and if there were any sites slated for first build.

Ed replied, after the 2021 Campus Plan is approved, there needs to be further processing done. He noted that the Center for Athletic Performance might be the most reasonable to start, but it is still very early in the process.

Shelly spoke to the Jacobs Field issue, asking if AU would agree to respect the current commitments until the new Campus Plan is approved, additionally he wanted information about the draft traffic study for AU.

Ed replied the CTR was filed with the DC Department of Transportation today.

Good of the Order

The next CLC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 1st from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Don Edwards thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

Attendees

Community:

Natalie Ambrose, Wesley Heights resident
Myra Barron, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
Anthony Ciccone, Fort Gaines Citizens Association
William Clarkson, Spring Valley Neighborhood Association
Jeremy Del Moral, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D
Diane Dragaud, Neighbor
Chuck Elkins, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D
Aaron Epstein, Neighbor
Jacqueline Epstein, Neighbor
Esther Garcia, Neighbor
Teresa Guzman, Westover Place Resident
Jessica Hertzstein, Neighbor

Jeffery Kraskin, Spring Valley Wesley Heights Citizens Association
Denise Liebowitz, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
Tony Long, Executive Director of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
Wendy Martino, Alban Towers resident
Jonathan McHugh, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E
Troy Kravitz, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D
Gretchen Randolph, Spring Valley Neighborhood Association
Shelly Repp, Tenleytown Neighbors Association
Douglas Saunders, Westover Place Homeowners Association
Tom Smith, Neighbors for a Liveable Community
Timothy Talley, Wesley Heights resident
Jane Waldmann, Tenleytown Historical Society
John Wheeler, Ward 3 Vision
Betsy White, Wesley Heights resident
Dennis Williams, Tenleytown Neighbors Association

American University Staff:

Maria Barry, Director of Community Relations
David Dower, Assistant Vice President for Planning and Project Management
Michelle Espinosa, Associate Dean of Students
Ed Fisher, Assistant Vice President of Community and Government Relations
Seth Grossman, Chief of Staff to the President
Daniel Nichols, Assistant Vice President of Risk, Safety & Transportation Programs
Sherry Rutherford, AU Campus Plan Consultant, Requity Real Estate
Peter Starr, Provost

Other:

Iain Banks, Nelson/Nygaard
Matt Bell, Perkins Eastman
Chris Forinash, Nelson/Nygaard

Joshua Babb, Justice and Sustainability Associates, LLC
Don Edwards, Justice and Sustainability Associates, LLC
Kayla Elson, Justice and Sustainability Associates, LLC
Laura Gramling, Justice and Sustainability Associates, LLC