

Community Liaison Committee Meeting
Thursday, December 1, 2016
American University – School of International Service – Abramson Family Founders Room
7 p.m.

Introductions & Opening Remarks

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 7:04 p.m. by welcoming neighbors, representatives of neighborhood organizations, and local Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs).

Attendees introduced themselves and stated their affiliations.

New Business & Neighborhood Issues

Gail Hanson invited attendees to raise any issues not on the meeting's agenda for discussion.

Ben Tessler, of Westover Place Homeowners Association, asked about the East Campus landscaping and stated that it did not look complete, despite claims that it was.

David Dower, AU's Assistant Vice President for Planning and Project Management, stated that the buffer was planted according to plans approved by the District government and shared with residents of Westover Place on several occasions. He added that some species did not survive planting and that these items would be replaced as soon as possible.

Linda Argo, AU's Assistant Vice President for External Relations & Auxiliary Services, said that she had received an email from Ben Tessler on this matter and had responded with similar information. She added that the plant material in the buffer will need time to grow and that the plans show what it will look like when the plants and trees are mature and filled out.

Alan Pollock, of the Fort Gaines Citizens Association, said that it took some time for the trees and plants to grow behind the Katzen Arts Center and that where there were gaps, AU filled them in.

Duffy Miller, of Westover Place Homeowners Association, expressed concern that the berm was not constructed to be as high as it should be.

David Dower replied that like the landscaping in the buffer, the berm was also constructed according to plan.

Chuck Elkins, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner-Elect, raised the issue of Uber vehicles dropping off passengers in the travel lane in front of the Katzen Arts Center, causing traffic disruptions.

Dan Nichols, AU's Executive Director of Risk, Safety, and Transportation Programs, replied that the issue also exists on Nebraska Avenue and that the university has had preliminary discussions with Uber regarding designated pick-up and drop-off locations within the main campus.

Scheduled Reports

Fall 2016 Enrollment & Housing Report

Linda Argo presented the annual enrollment and housing report, which can be viewed at <http://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/Fall-2016-Enrollment-and-Housing-Report-12-02-16.pdf>.

She added that the enrollment numbers are slightly below what the university anticipated and that once East Campus opens, the university will meet the requirement that it have the capacity to house 67percent of full-time, undergraduate students on campus.

Construction Update

David Dower updated attendees on progress at AU's East Campus. His presentation can be viewed at <http://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/Capital-Projects-Update-12-02-16.pdf>.

He stated that exterior hardscape and landscaping has been completed, as have the interiors in the garage and Buildings 2 and 3, now named Congressional and Federal Hall, respectively. All exterior work also has been completed. Students' belongings will be moved by professional movers the week of December 19.

Duffy Miller advised that lights in the Don Myers Technology and Innovation building (TIB) are left on all of the time and asked if this would be the case when the building opens.

David Dower responded that when the buildings open, all lights will be motion sensor activated and only will be on when a room is occupied. He added that all windows also will have shades.

Jeffery Keller of Westover Place Homeowners Association asked if there is something that could be done in the meantime to block the light.

David Dower responded that he would speak with Skanska about this to see if paper could be placed over the windows for the balance of the construction period.

Jeffery Keller asked if some parking has been removed from the site's surface parking lot.

David Dower replied that per the request of the Westover Place board, the spaces adjacent to the buffer zone were relocated, but the same number of spaces exist as this is a Zoning Order requirement.

Andreas Hake of Westover Place Homeowners Association stated that the buffer area seems lightly planted and not according to plan.

David Dower reiterated that the buffer was planted according to plan with respect to both quantity and species. He added that the trees planted are very tall and large in diameter and that anything that does not survive will be replaced at the first opportunity.

Jeffery Keller asked if there could be a buffer walk-through in the spring to look more closely at how plants and trees are growing, to which David Dower responded yes.

Linda Argo added that AU would coordinate such a visit with the landscape architect and the arborist for the project, Bill Eck, to ensure there is a professional present as well.

Chuck Elkins asked if information about this could be shared with all CLC members, to which Linda Argo replied yes.

Dennis Paul of Neighbors for a Livable Community stated that the black metal fence around the campus is “tacky-looking” and that a redesign should be considered in the future.

Andrew Huff, AU’s Director of Community Relations, reminded attendees about the community tours of East Campus taking place on December 14 at 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. and invited all those interested to attend.

Chris Moody, AU’s Assistant Vice President of Housing and Dining Programs, presented information regarding the occupancy plan for East Campus. His presentation can be viewed at <http://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/East-Campus-Occupancy-Plan-12-02-16.pdf>.

David Dower stated that the new mid-block pedestrian signal (also known as a HAWK) has been installed and will be activated soon. When the signal becomes active, the perimeter fence around the site also will come down.

Alan Pollock asked if, when the road striping for the new crosswalk is complete but the HAWK signal has yet to be activated, the crosswalk would be considered legal.

David Dower responded that AU would follow up with DDOT on this concern.

AU Presidential Search

David Taylor, Chief of Staff to the AU President, updated the CLC on search for a new university President. He stated that Dr. Neil Kerwin will retire in May 2017, and that the search committee has been meeting for the last several months, led by Board of Trustees Chairman Jeff Sine. He referred attendees to the Presidential search website for additional information. (<http://www.american.edu/trustees/presidentialsearch/>).

Dennis Paul asked how many people applied for the position.

David Taylor responded that 60 candidates were identified initially out of a pool of approximately 150 applicants. Twelve were invited to come in for a first look and six for a second look. The process now is in the final stages with a potential announcement in the next 30-60 days.

Student Conduct Off-Campus

Michelle Espinosa, AU's Associate Dean of Students, reported that since the last CLC meeting in September, there have been 10 off-campus student conduct reports stemming from eight addresses. Three calls were regarding single-family homes (two addresses had two calls each about the same incident), four calls were from the Avalon Apartments, and one was from a public roadway.

She added that all of the complaints involved noise and that the students in each incident have been identified and met with, save for those involved in the public roadway disturbance whose identities are not known. The four calls regarding the Avalon were responded to by both the Metropolitan Police Department and AU Public Safety.

She also reported that per the last CLC meeting, AU Housing and Dining Programs sent a letter to students regarding the issue of using the Embassy Park walkway as a cut-through between Massachusetts and New Mexico Avenues. Students were advised to use the roadway or sidewalks if they choose to use this route. This was sent as an annual reminder.

AU Updates

AU Post-Submission Matter Before the Zoning Commission

Linda Argo updated the CLC on the university's Zoning Commission hearing on July 14 and the Commission's instructions to work with Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D and the Spring Valley/Wesley Heights Citizens Association on issues related to undergraduate enrollment and the effectiveness of the Community Liaison Committee. She stated that AU and these two parties met a number of times since then and that a post-hearing submission was filed with the Zoning Commission on November 16, addressing these concerns. She added that this agreement will go before Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D on December 7 and will be considered at the Zoning Commission's public meeting on December 12. AU's filing can be found at <http://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/ZC-Case-No-11-07F-Post-Hearing-Submission-12-02-16.pdf>.

Jonathan McHugh, of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E, asked for the details of the agreement.

Linda Argo responded that the agreement includes changes to the CLC as well as the creation of a new Neighborhood Collaborative to work with neighbors who reside adjacent to the university's borders.

Chuck Elkins stated that the agreement changes the operation of the CLC and that much of it was positive and would improve the CLC. He added that it calls for a neighborhood co-chair of the CLC, creates a new Neighborhood Collaborative, which would consist of groups adjacent to AU's main and Tenley campuses. He then circulated a document with his seven recommendations to improve the agreement, which can be found at <http://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/Proposed-Changes-to-Zoning-Commission-Agreement.pdf>.

Linda Argo stated that this agreement will be considered at the next ANC 3D meeting, but that the CLC should also have a voice, which is why it is being brought up now.

Claire Craik of Westover Place Homeowners Association stated that she supports Chuck Elkins' recommended changes to the agreement.

John Wheeler, of Ward 3 Vision, raised concerns about the process considering the July Zoning Commission hearing was intended to be about East Campus, but had morphed into additional changes without notice to all of the parties of the original zoning order. He added that he is also concerned about ANC Commissioners being unable to co-chair the CLC and the fact that this would diminish the role of elected ANC Commissioners. He continued that the viability of several neighborhood civic associations is unclear for various reasons. He concluded that the District government and Zoning Commission need to address this issue moving forward.

Chuck Elkins stated that he watched the hearing online as well as read the transcript and that the issues discussed were primarily about enrollment, but that issues with the CLC also came up. Zoning Commission Chair Anthony Hood took this up as a major issue and told AU to go back and work with the parties that were present – Tom Smith and Jeffrey Kraskin – to improve the CLC. He added that one approach would be to ask the Zoning Commission to postpone the public meeting on this matter.

Jonathan McHugh asked what the intent of the July Zoning Commission hearing was and what problem AU was there to resolve.

Paul Tummonds, Goulston & Stoors and AU's zoning counsel, stated that the original application was submitted because East Campus would not open in time to satisfy the requirement that AU have the capacity to house 67 percent of full-time undergraduate students on campus by the start of the fall 2016 semester. Once AU realized this was the case, the Zoning Commission had to be notified so as not to violate the zoning order. He continued that at the July 14 hearing, other issues were raised, including enrollment and the effectiveness of the CLC, and that the Zoning Commission instructed AU to go back and work on the issues that had been brought to their attention.

Jonathan McHugh said that ANC 3E was frustrated because they did not have party status in the matter and had no idea that the CLC would change permanently as a result of this process.

Claire Craik asked what a CLC neighborhood co-chair would do and what value would be added by having one.

Chuck Elkins replied that it is a model that works at Georgetown University and that it would help facilitate discussion about neighborhood issues and options for solving them.

Claire Craik asked what would happen if the co-chairs were in disagreement on an issue.

Chuck Elkins replied that the CLC would then need to work through that.

Gail Hanson pointed out that when the CLC was first constituted, members concluded that it would not be a voting body, but rather a discussion group to get a sense of the neighborhood and direct AU in addressing neighborhood issues. She asked if, with a neighborhood co-chair, the vision would be to start voting on matters?

Chuck Elkins replied no, but that the neighborhood co-chair could help to prevent issues from potentially festering. He added that he does not believe that the CLC is broken, but is thinking now about the next campus planning process.

Bill Krebs of the Spring Valley/Wesley Heights Citizens Association advised that the Army Corps of Engineers Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board also has a community co-chair and that it has added a lot to the group.

Gail Hanson asked Chuck Elkins what he sees as next steps.

Chuck Elkins responded that he has been unable to connect with Tom Smith or Jeffrey Kraskin to talk about his proposed changes to the agreement. He continued that the parties did a good job, but there was still work to be done. He asked if the Zoning Commission could delay their decision while the agreement continues to be discussed. He asked if a potential delay would harm AU in any way.

Paul Tummonds replied that the record remains open with the Zoning Commission until December 8, and that this could be an opportunity for parties to submit something to the Commission.

Jonathan McHugh stated that ANC 3E will consider a resolution asking the Zoning Commission to rescind the agreement. He continued that he supports Chuck Elkins' idea to delay the matter while the agreement is sorted out further.

Paul Tummonds said that the Zoning Commission wants to see AU and the parties work this out. He added that he would talk to AU representatives and that the recommended changes do not seem significant enough that something could not be worked out.

John Wheeler stated that Chuck Elkins' proposal is a good one and that he likes the idea of a neighborhood co-chair for the CLC. He added that the CLC is the best venue to discuss these changes as some of the groups who claim to represent the neighborhood do not even exist. He also said that he would like the co-chair to be a member of either ANC 3D or ANC 3E, as these are elected individuals who often have more experience working with neighbors.

Gail Hanson said that considering the CLC spent so much time achieving consensus on an operating document, she recommends modifying it in accordance with the changes suggested in order to sustain AU commitments and Zoning Commission requirements for quarterly reports and maintaining a public record. She added that she would forward this document to the CLC listserv as a refresher. The document includes the provision that it can be amended at any time.

John Wheeler replied that he thought this was a good suggestion.

Attention to Deteriorating Sidewalks

Andrew Huff advised that he has been in touch with both the Mayor's office and DDOT regarding the condition of sidewalks around Ward Circle and adjacent to the AU campus per a request from Dennis Paul.

Dennis Paul replied that several sections of sidewalk up and down Massachusetts Avenue are in need of repair.

Gail Hanson stated that this issue would be appropriate for the applicable ANC Commissioner to address as well, in partnership with AU.

Good of the Order

Chuck Elkins updated the CLC on a recent meeting convened by DDOT to discuss with neighbors the conditions at Ward Circle and potential improvements. He stated that DDOT proposed four alternatives for the circle and that attendees thought other options also should be considered. He advised that he plans to organize a community meeting with ANC 3E and others to take a closer look at the DDOT proposals.

Andrew Huff announced several upcoming campus events open to the community and referred attendees to their meeting packets for additional information. He mentioned specifically the January 5 town hall with AU President Neil Kerwin and New Year's reception. The event will take place at 7 p.m. in Room 201 of the Katzen Arts Center, and all are welcome to attend.

Attendees

Community:

Stacie Lee Banks, Fort Gaines Citizens Association
Claire Craik, Westover Place Homeowners Association

Chuck Elkins, Neighbor & Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner-Elect
Andreas Hake, Westover Place Homeowners Association
Jessica Herzstein, Neighbor
Jeffrey Keller, Westover Place Homeowners Association
Bill Krebs, Spring Valley/Wesley Heights Citizens Association
Jonathan McHugh, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E
Duffy Miller, Westover Place Homeowners Association
Dennis Paul, Neighbors for a Livable Community
Alan Pollock, Fort Gaines Citizens Association
Tom Quinn, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E
Nicholas Kram Mendelsohn, Student & Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner-Elect
Ben Tessler, Westover Place Homeowners Association
Jane Waldman, Tenleytown Historical Society
John Wheeler, Ward 3 Vision

American University Staff:

Linda Argo, Assistant Vice President for External Relations & Auxiliary Services
David Dower, Assistant Vice President for Planning and Project Management
Michelle Espinosa, Associate Dean of Students
Gail Hanson, Vice President of Campus Life
Hisham Khalid, General Counsel
Chris Moody, Assistant Vice President of Housing and Dining Programs
Dan Nichols, Executive Director of Risk, Safety, and Transportation Programs
David Taylor, Chief of Staff to the President
Paul Tummonds, Goulston & Storrs, AU zoning counsel