

Community Liaison Committee Meeting
Thursday, April 30, 2020
Virtual Meeting on RingCentral
6:30pm-8:30pm

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). He noted and thanked participants for their willingness to innovate digitally.

Don reviewed the ground rules for the meeting. Then Kayla Elson, of Justice & Sustainability Associates, provided a review of the features of the virtual platform.

Preliminary Framework Overview

Ed Fisher, American University AVP, presented an overview of the 2021 Campus Plan Preliminary Framework, the presentation can be found at <https://www.american.edu/communityrelations/campus-plan/2021-campus-plan-framework-drafts.cfm>.

Student Life and Safety

Ed Fisher presented information about Student Life and Safety for AU's 2021 Campus Plan, the presentation can be found at <https://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/clc-april-2020-campus-plan-sessions.pdf>.

Transportation and Parking

Sherry Rutherford, presented an overview of AU's Transportation and Parking section of the Preliminary Campus Plan Framework numbers, the presentation can be found at <https://www.american.edu/communityrelations/clc/upload/clc-april-2020-campus-plan-sessions.pdf>.

Virtual Breakout Room 1

Facilitated by Laura Gramling, Justice & Sustainability Associates

Session on Student Life & Safety

Participants: Natalie Ambrose, Jeff Brown, Stacie Burgess, David Dower, Ed Fisher, Troy Kravitz, Denise Liebowitz, Wendy Martino, Jonathan McHugh, Dan Nichols, Shelly Repp, Chris Silva, Tom Smith, John Wheeler, Betsy White

Denise Liebowitz, of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), stated that, while there are no students in her building at 4200 Massachusetts Ave, many students live in adjacent buildings. She praised the lively presence that student residents bring.

Betsy White, a Wesley Heights resident, stated concerns from the past related to a house two doors away from her home that hosted many “wild parties.” She added that the low-rises (i.e. new developments) do experience late parties, which is a different emphasis in this year’s concerns versus previous years.

Shelly Repp, of Neighbors for Responsible Development, stated that AU should maximize the number of students living on campus. He continued this may mitigate annoyances for full-time residents, who are concerned about smoking near the Spring Valley building from AU students.

Natalie Ambrose, a Wesley Heights resident, stated that her neighborhood gets a lot of spillover of students. She noted a noticeable change with COVID-19 with frequent Uber/Lyft drop-offs and students using the retaining wall at Nebraska Ave to congregate, litter, and smoke marijuana. She asked how much AU charges for parking.

Tom Smith, of the Spring Valley Wesley Heights Citizens Association, expressed agreement with Natalie’s statements. He asked AU to remember, for planned improvements in the back of the campus, that these are the fronts of our homes. He stated that years ago AU proposed 800 new beds to bring more people from off-campus back onto campus. He asked if AU could provide these types of numbers now, to help neighbors better understand the issue.

Ed stated he can follow up with that request.

Tom Smith stated he was pleased to see Mary Graydon Center renovations in the mix again and suggested it needs improvement to be an effective student union.

Ed stated AU is serious about the renovations. He added that AU does not have a schedule or order of the development of buildings.

Jonathan McHugh, of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E, stated he was writing down comments for reference.

Wendy Martino, an Alban Towers resident, noted that her building houses a lot of AU students. She added that, although building management has not been very helpful; her participation in the Student Life Working Group has demonstrated AU’s improvements on being responsive.

Troy Kravtiz, of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D, said the focus seems to be on the big buildings. He suggested that about 50 percent of the time complaints that are reported to be AU students are not students in the case of apartment and condo buildings. He commended residents who are most affected by the student conduct for taking the lead in addressing issues and praised the work the AU Neighborhood Partnership in being proactive and responding to problems.

John Wheeler, of Ward 3 Vision, expressed a fear with the AU law school that AU students would occupy parking spaces, pointing to a notable presence in Car2Go car-sharing vehicles. He also highlighted his experience that group houses across the street have never been a problem. He approved AU plans to put more students on campus, especially with the plan to redevelop the Mary Graydon Center.

Breakout Room 1 Session on Transportation & Parking:

Participants: Natalie Ambrose, Jeff Brown, Stacie Burgess, David Dower, Ed Fisher, Troy Kravitz, Denise Liebowitz, Wendy Martino, Jonathan McHugh, Dan Nichols, Shelly Repp, Chris Silva, Tom Smith, John Wheeler, Betsy White

Denise stated with regard to OLLI parking, that parking is getting crowded and many more senior members have limited alternative options (e.g. no option to take the subway or walk). She continued that, during peak hours, the parking is getting very close to capacity.

Betsy stated she shared Denise's concerns about the parking garage at 4801 Wisconsin Ave, adding that parking enforcement was done well in the past. She stated AU has enforced it well but should make sure there is enough space for everybody. She noted difficulties from Lyft and Uber cars stopping on Nebraska Ave, backing up traffic, and causing dangerous darting in and out by other drivers.

Shelly stated that, when neighboring schools and OLLI are in session, parking on Warren Rd, Windom Rd, and Yuma Rd can be very difficult. He expressed concern for buses that park along the side of the Spring Valley building, then idle for 5-10 minutes and partially obstruct traffic.

Natalie urged AU to think of protocol for when students and faculty/staff come back to campus. She stated that her section of Wesley Heights experiences problems with AU students parking on their streets. She highlighted statistics about citations that she received from AU, which indicated an increase in parking by 60 percent. She stated concern with the development proposal for underground parking lots too. She expressed frustration with bicycles being parked in front of her house.

Tom Smith agreed with Natalie's points. He asked how many students will be taking classes in the Spring Valley building, commenting that the whole Campus Plan Framework is short on student numbers across the board. He asked if there was a plan for reducing the number of buses at Spring Valley, especially now that Tenleytown will be used for things other than the law school.

Jonathan stated that he has been pressing AU to move this shuttle stop. He asked those interested to come to the working groups in the AU Neighborhood Partnership to get more insight.

Shelly responded that he appreciated Jonathan's comments and hopes AU will follow up.

Wendy stated she had no comments regarding parking.

Troy agreed that there is a desire to do more than move that shuttle stop. He stated that the relevant AU Neighborhood Partnership working group is aware of the issue. He agreed with the need to address ride-share drop offs.

John Wheeler said he worked on both student life and transportation when he first joined the AU Neighborhood Partnership. He added that he rides the AU shuttle bus and loves the service.

Shelly asked to get the data on the number of parking fines paid by AU visitors.

Troy stated, in the case of Wesley Seminary, that delays are not by choice but by necessity. He disagreed that AU is full speed ahead.

Tom Smith stated that, given the circumstances of COVID-19, there is reason to delay the campus plan. He stated he received a note from Wesley Seminar one day prior because the Zoning Commission was going to extend any existing order by another 6 months – as a way to ensure that the community engagement process was more effective.

Jonathan stated he did not understand the process being described by Tom.

Tom responded that this campus plan was less complex than the campus plan 10 years ago.

Jonathan stated the AU Neighborhood Partnership has spent years working on this campus plan. He added that, despite the unfortunate arrival of COVID-19, much of the work is already done.

Tom Smith responded that, if there is so much data, then AU should share it. He highlighted that he has been asking for enrollment data for the last 4 months.

Laura Gramling, of Justice and Sustainability Associates, redirected unproductive conversation and stated that anyone can participate in the campus plan process if they have a phone, and can view documents available online.

Tom Smith stated he cannot address the campus plan without knowing the impact.

Public Chat Comments (in Breakout Room 1):

From Thomas Smith: 07:51 PM: The data should not be limited only to people in a working group. It must be available for anybody to see, especially during the campus plan community input process. Does AU still operate its employee carpooling program? I want a cap on undergraduate enrollment.

From Troy Kravitz: 07:56 PM: I am aware of that position. I would ask, what are you trying to achieve with a cap on undergraduate enrollment? What is the concern? Is it student impact (via the absolute number of students) on the community that concerns you? What aspect of it? If student behavior, let's address those impacts directly, instead of through some inadequate, round-about method. Is it traffic? If so, let's address those impacts directly, instead of through some inadequate, round-about method.

The undergraduate student body number is not the problem. The impact of those students is the problem, so let's address those impacts. That is precisely what the Neighborhood Partnership has been doing, fulsomely, actively, holistically, and for the last two years.

From Thomas Smith: 7:58 PM: There is no reason for anybody to be defensive about the Partnership or the work of the Partnership. The issue is numbers. We need numbers to have these discussions. You can't address impacts without numbers. The zoning regulations indicate that numbers alone is a factor in evaluating the campus plan.

Virtual Breakout Room 2

Facilitated by Don Edwards, Justice and Sustainability Associates

Session on Student Life and Safety:

Participants: Fanta Aw, Myra Barron, Maria Barry, Matt Bennett, William Clarkson, Jeremy Del Moral, Diane Dragaud, Chuck Elkins, Seth Grossman, Hunt LaCascia, Dr. Jeffrey Kraskin, Phil Morse, Dennis Paul, Tom Quinn, Sherry Rutherford, Doug Sanders, Tim Talley

Don Edwards welcomed participants to the breakout room session and opened the floor to questions and comments on the student life and safety.

Doug Sanders, of Westover Place Homeowner's Association, asked if the Mary Graydon Center will be fully renovated.

Don replied that the question will be answered in post-meeting documentation on AU's website.

Doug followed up by asking how the student union building will be replaced for a year.

Don noted that the question is captured.

Jeremy Del Moral, of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D, introduced himself to participants and stated he is attending to hear the concerns of the community.

Don thanked Jeremy for his comment.

Dr. Jeffrey Kraskin, of Spring Valley Wesley Heights Citizens Association, asked why the AU online training is limited to two zip codes (2016 and 2008). He inquired about the height of the field's film towers and asked if the tower had speakers. He also asked how many students currently live off campus. He further commented that renovations for the Mary Graydon Center were also in the last campus plan.

Don thanked Dr. Kraskin for his questions and comments.

Tim Talley, of Wesley Heights, asked which outside areas are being designated as green spaces for public gathering.

Don thanked Tim for his question and notes that it is recorded.

Myra Barron, of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), commented that the institute hopes their program could be incorporated into the long-term AU curriculum. She also noted that parking at OLLI (i.e. 4801 Wisconsin Ave building) is at capacity and that the institute is seeking accommodation for staff and students.

Don thanked Myra for her comments.

Diane Dragaud, of the Fort Gaines Citizens Association, introduced herself and noted that she has no questions at this time.

Don thanked her.

Chuck Elkins, of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D, highlighted that there is an unrealized issue of disruptive student behavior in high rise buildings. He commended AU for its emphasis on preventing disruptive student conduct in the current campus plan.

Don thanked Chuck for his comments.

Hunt LaCascia, of the Fort Gaines Citizens Association, asked if AU plans to bring students back in Fall 2020 and if practicing social distancing on campus (i.e. a former two person dorm only holds one student) will cause an overflow of students in the neighborhood. He also expressed concern for students smoking tobacco and marijuana in the neighborhood.

Don thanked Hunt for his comments.

William Clarkson, of the Spring Valley Neighborhood Association, requested additional information on how AU will further engage and collaborate with local schools, students, and parent-teacher associations concerning development (i.e. Mary Graydon Center).

Tim asked when the master lease of The Frequency building expires and is up for renewal.

Don thanked him for his question.

Tom Quinn, of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E, expressed frustration that AU's Transportation Demand Management program has not addressed or embraced biking for students.

Don thanked Tom and opened the floor for further questions.

Chuck suggested that the Mary Graydon Center or another building on campus may include a pub. He asked if 67% is still the appropriate number for the new campus plan in regard to beds. He also asked how many undergraduate students actually live on campus.

Dr. Kraskin followed up by asking if there is a report on legal alcohol consumption in the AU dormitories.

Don thanked Dr. Kraskin for his question and called for last comments before transitioning to the second session.

Breakout Room 2 Session on Transportation and Parking:

Participants: Fanta Aw, Myra Barron, Maria Barry, Matt Bennett, William Clarkson, Jeremy Del Moral, Diane Dragaud, Chuck Elkins, Seth Grossman, Hunt LaCascia, Dr. Jeffrey Kraskin, Phil Morse, Dennis Paul, Tom Quinn, Sherry Rutherford, Doug Sanders, Tim Talley

Don Edwards called on Tom Quinn to elaborate on his previous transportation and parking comments

Tom Quinn commented that AU has not fully engaged or encouraged students and faculty to bike around campus despite being asked during the last campus plan. He also thanked AU for not increasing the number of parking spaces.

Don thanked Tom for his comments.

Dr. Kraskin asked if the 275 spaces mentioned in the presentation belong to the Spring Valley building.

Don thanked Dr. Kraskin for his comments.

Jeremy suggested that more bikes should be added as well as bicycle use encouraged on campus.

Tim stated that AU should address the issue of increased parking and/or citations near potential development sites 6 and 7, at the corner of Nebraska Ave and Rockwood Parkway. He suggested that AU consider issuing warning citations for vehicles.

Chuck urged that AU should address the issue of neighbors receiving parking tickets while parked outside of their homes. He asked about the location of the entrance to parking next to potential development sites 6 and 7. He commented that neighbors do not want more traffic on Rockwood Parkway and are requesting traffic be brought to New Mexico Ave through the School of International Service (SIS) building.

William commented that warning citations will not likely be well-received among Spring Valley residents. He asked if AU could provide numbers on how these citations are resolved.

Doug commented that the Massachusetts Avenue Garage's current capacity is 275 spaces, but once the Ladybird project is complete, there will be 58 more spaces available.

Hunt suggested that the campus plan should address bike-ability and identify locations to place Capital Bikeshares.

Tim commented that the Horace Mann School's expansion has increased the number of parents dropping off and picking up students, further limiting parking for neighbors on 45th and Macomb St. as well as 44th and Lowell St.

Diane suggested that the campus plan should address the lack of drop-off and pick-up zones around the perimeter of the campus in order to accommodate ride-sharing services.

Myra commented that OLLI students do not have access to parking in the Superfresh lot. She asked AU to further consider allowing permanent parking that OLLI students can purchase.

Chuck stated that there is no single solution for the warning citation issue among neighbors. He noted that ANC 3D has started a transportation working group that can also address this issue.

Don asked for final comments.

Hunt reaffirmed Diane's comment and echoed the need for pick-up and drop-off locations that do not disrupt traffic on Nebraska Ave. and Massachusetts Ave.

William asked to what extent is AU working with scooter companies.

Public Chat Comments (in Breakout Room 2):

To note: There were no public chat comments in Room 2.

Public Chat Comments:

To note: There were no public comments during the general meeting summary.

Good of the Order

Don thanked the group for following the meeting design and welcomed feedback on the process and called the group attention to next meetings and the Campus Plan Website. He adjourned the meeting at 8:04pm.

School year events/calendar updates:

Planning 101 Session: May 19th

Proposed 2020 CLC Meeting Dates: June 9, 2020; September 15, 2020; December 1, 2020

Community Participants:

Natalie Ambrose, Wesley Heights Resident
Myra Barron, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
Tony Ciccione, Fort Gaines Citizens Association
William Clarkson, Spring Valley Neighborhood Association
Jeremy Del Moral, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D
Diane Dragaud, Fort Gaines Citizens Association
Chuck Elkins, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D
Hunt La Cascia, Fort Gaines Citizens Association
Denise Liebowitz, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
Dr. Jeffery Kraskin, Spring Valley Wesley Heights Citizens Association
Troy Kravitz, Advisory Neighborhood Commission
Dennis Paul, Neighbors for a Livable Community
Wendy Martino, Alban Towers Resident
Jonathan McHugh, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E
Tom Quinn, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E
Shelly Repp, Neighbors for Responsible Development
Doug Saunders, Westover Place Homeowners Association
Tom Smith, Spring Valley Wesley Heights Citizens Association
Tim Talley, Wesley Heights Resident

John Wheeler, Ward 3 Vision
Betsy White, Wesley Heights Resident

AU Participants:

Fanta Aw, Vice President of Campus Life and Inclusive Excellence
Maria Barry, Director of Community Relations
Matt Bennett, Vice President and Chief Communication Officer
Stacie Burgess, Director of Public Affairs
Jeff Brown, Dean of Students
David Dower, AVP Planning and Project Management
Ed Fisher, AVP of Community and Government Relations
Seth Grossman, Chief of Staff
Phil Morse, AVP University Police Services
Dan Nichols, AVP Risk, Safety and Transportation Programs
Chris Silva, Director of Housing

Other Participants:

Brenden Anodoseh, Justice and Sustainability Associates
Josh Babb, Justice and Sustainability Associates
Malene Bell, Justice and Sustainability Associates
Ingrid Eck, Justice and Sustainability Associates
Don Edwards, Justice and Sustainability Associates
Kayla Elson, Justice and Sustainability Associates
Laura Gramling, Justice and Sustainability Associates
Ann Harrell, Justice and Sustainability Associates
Sherry Rutherford, Requity Real Estate