

**FOCUS GROUP ON RENTAL PROPERTIES NEAR THE COLLEGE
MINUTES
Monday, February 16, 2009**

The organizational meeting of the Focus Group on Rental Properties Near the College was held on Monday, February 16, 2009 at 7:00 pm in the third floor conference room of the Municipal Building, 401 Lafayette Street.

ATTENDANCE

Present were Messrs. Dell, Fitzgerald, Fox, Granger, Pons, Talley, and Witkowsky, and Mes. McCord, Murphy, and Shackelford. Also present were Facilitator Bill Porter, and Recorder Kaitlin Keller, as well as Mayor Zeidler and City Manager Tuttle.

AGENDA

Welcome

A welcome was given by Mayor Jeanne Zeidler, who noted her hopes for a strong and complete discussion of the issue, a willingness to listen to all opinions represented by the group members to work toward suggestions for city council, and the invitation of public input and interaction. City Manager Jack Tuttle introduced the facilitator, Bill Porter and the recorder, Kaitlin Keller.

Purpose

Mr. Porter stated the purpose of the Focus Group.

PURPOSE

“To conduct fact finding and discussion with the goal of making consensus recommendations for actions to serve the interests of each party and to improve the Williamsburg community as a whole.”

Introductions

Mr. Porter had the group members introduce themselves, state what role in the community they represent, why they believe the focus group is important, and what attributes they bring to the group. Member responses emphasized the importance of an open and public dialogue between stakeholders to ensure viability and future success for the Williamsburg community.

Ground Rules and Procedure

Mr. Porter then stated seven components needed to achieve good outcomes as listed below:

- 1.) Focus on interests and not positions.
- 2.) Be open to all options.
- 3.) Consider all alternatives to ensure the best conclusion possible.
- 4.) Give fair treatment to all members to maintain legitimacy.
- 5.) Communicate openly, honestly, and respectfully.
- 6.) Build Relationships with others.
- 7.) Stay committed to the goal of the Focus Group.

Ground rules to encourage positive, honest, and respectful discussions were then discussed and decided upon.

GROUND RULES

- 1.) No idea is a bad idea.
- 2.) Take turns speaking and do not interrupt others
- 3.) Listen to understand
- 4.) Don't blame, attack, or engage in putdowns
- 5.) Ask questions for the purpose of understanding and clarity
- 6.) Speak from interests, not positions
- 7.) Focus on the goal of the focus group
- 8.) The "three knock rule" whereby the facilitator has the ability to interrupt discussions by knocking on the table three times
- 9.) Maintain meeting timeliness

Meeting Schedule

The meeting day, time, length, and frequency were set. The focus group will meet weekly from 7:30-9:00 pm Thursday evenings, with the option of moving to bi-weekly meetings, until the end of April.

February 19th Meeting Agenda

Mr. Porter then distributed the February 19, 2009 meeting agenda which consists of several background presentations on the issue of student housing. A brief discussion followed regarding other possible presentations for future meetings and the opportunities for public comment. A consensus was reached on public comment procedure. Future meetings will consist of 15 minutes of public comment at the end of each meeting. Those who wish to comment will use speaker cards and be limited to approximately two minutes. Additional meeting time for public comment is possible if deemed necessary by the facilitator at the beginning of the meeting, and several meetings will be designed specifically as public hearings when alternatives are being considered. In addition, an e-mail address will be set up for public comment on a webpage that will also include the Focus Group's agendas, minutes, and presentations to the group.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.