

**FOCUS GROUP ON RENTAL PROPERTIES NEAR THE COLLEGE
MINUTES
Thursday, February 26, 2009**

The Focus Group on Rental Properties Near the College held a meeting on Thursday, February 26, 2009 at 7:30 pm in the third floor conference room of the Municipal Building, 401 Lafayette Street.

ATTENDANCE

Present were Messrs. Dell, Fitzgerald, Granger, Pons, Talley, and Witkowsky, and Meses. McCord, Murphy, and Shackelford. Also present were Facilitator Bill Porter, and Recorder Kaitlin Keller. Absent was Mr. Fox.

AGENDA

Approval of Minutes for February 19th, 2009 Meeting

Mr. Pons moved that the February 19, 2009 meeting minutes be approved as submitted. Ms. Shackelford seconds this motion and the minutes were unanimously approved. Public comments received from the focusgroup@williamsburgva.gov e-mail address were distributed.

Identification of Initial Interests of All Parties

Mr. Porter asked that the Focus Group Members identify their interests, as opposed to positions, in regard to rental housing near the campus, and the Williamsburg community as a whole. The definition of consensus was also discussed and defined. The Focus Group Members decided that a consensus consists of a majority of the Focus Group agreeing upon recommendations, but that all members must agree that the outcome is the best possible. Mr. Porter stated that while not everyone will agree, everyone does have to live with the recommendations and so compromise must be achieved when possible. The interests discussed are listed below in no particular order.

INTERESTS

- See the situation and look for the best outcomes for the city collectively
- Achieve positive change
- Achieve elasticity and flexibility for future generations
- Accommodate the diversity of homes and neighborhoods
- Maintain the viability and value of neighborhoods
- Recommend enforceable policies
- Achieve accountability and fairness
- Be forward thinking
- Consider the availability of student housing near the campus
- Strive for respectable, responsible, and safe neighborhoods
- Consider the city government to be an ally, not an enemy
- Achieve community confidence and trust in Focus Group recommendations
- Address current neighborhood issues before considering changes in occupancy limits
- Explore the role of the College in discussion and improve relations

Discussion of Attributes of Recommendations Needed to Build Consensus

Mr. Porter led the discussion regarding what components the Focus Group recommendations must consist of in order to build a consensus and satisfy the interest of community stakeholders. The components are listed below in no particular order.

COMPONENTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS MUST ADDRESS:

- Availability of adequate, existing on-site parking
- College involvement, particularly relating to the current campus alcohol policies
- Evaluation of the number of off-campus undergraduate and graduate students living within the City of Williamsburg
- Enforceability mechanisms
- Noise control and property maintenance, including trash
- Identification of eligibility for any proposed ordinance changes
- Identification of risks, knowns, and unknowns
- Balance between single family homes and rental/off-campus student housing
- “Good Neighbor” education

Agenda Topics for March 5th meeting

Additional discussion on recommendation components will continue at the March 5th Focus Group Meeting. College of William & Mary employees will also present information to the group on several relevant issues, namely, but not limited to student housing and campus police enforcement. Mr. Porter stated that Focus Group Members will be divided into smaller groups to research student housing solutions in other cities.

Public Comment

Sharon Baker of Skipwith Farms stressed the importance of college participation in discussion and recommendations. Ms. Baker also asked the Focus Group to evaluate the definition of “near the college” and consider the secondary impacts recommendations may have on the city. She stated that the group should consider a “one-stop shop” for residents to call regarding property maintenance, parking, and other complaints. Ms. Baker also stated that any deviations from the current ordinances will create difficulties for residents in knowing whether or not a violation is occurring in their neighborhood.

Jackie Morrell of Skipwith Farms concurred with Ms. Baker that residents have concerns about granting exceptions to the current “three person rule”. Ms. Morrell stated that it will be difficult for residents to identify if tenants of a rental dwelling are in violation of zoning ordinances. She stressed the role of landlords in Focus Group discussion and final recommendations and the need for tenants to be respectful of the current “three person rule”.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:07 pm.