

**FOCUS GROUP ON RENTAL PROPERTIES NEAR THE COLLEGE
MINUTES
Thursday, March 5, 2009**

The Focus Group on Rental Properties Near the College held a meeting on Thursday, March 5, 2009 at 7:30 pm in the third floor conference room of the Municipal Building, 401 Lafayette Street.

ATTENDANCE

Present were Messrs. Dell, Fitzgerald, Fox, Granger, and Witkowsky, and Meses. Murphy, and Shackelford. Also present were Facilitator Bill Porter, and Recorder Kaitlin Keller. Present college representatives included Ginger Ambler, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, and Don Challis, Campus Chief of Police. Absent were Messrs. Pons and Talley, and Ms. McCord.

AGENDA

Approval of Minutes for February 26th, 2009 Meeting

Mr. Porter requested that the February 26, 2009 meeting minutes be approved as submitted. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Discussions, The College of William & Mary

Mr. Fox introduced Ms. Ginger Ambler, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, and Chief Don Challis, Campus Chief of Police, stating that both college representatives are considered to be leaders from the College with significant experience in their respective areas. Student Affairs oversees the several departments of campus and student life, including but not limited to: housing, counseling, health needs, activities, conduct, multicultural events, recreational sports, and academic support services. Chief Challis stressed that while campus police primarily work on campus, the police department has an excellent relationship with the City of Williamsburg police department and frequently assists them in off-campus matters. After these initial introductions, an informal question and answer session began.

Ms. Ambler informed the Focus Group that the College has recently conducted a feasibility study for the inclusion of new dormitories in the next six year plan to ensure that students who want to live on campus can do so. She explained that the College of William & Mary is marketed as a residential university, students therefore typically want to live on campus and take part in campus activities, and that campus housing is required to house 75 percent of undergraduate students.

Chief Challis explained that the campus is not necessarily the physical boundary of campus police jurisdiction. Campus police are the primary back up for the city's police force and as such, are in constant contact with city police. They also routinely drive around and through off-campus neighborhoods, while the city police frequently drive through campus.

Ms. Ambler answered several questions regarding the campus Alcohol Policy, Student Code of Conduct, and Honor Code. She informed the group that the Alcohol Policy is a campus-wide policy; as such it includes all parties and receptions in any campus building or dormitory. Several of the requirements are: enforcement of all state and local laws, party registration, alcohol service only for of age guests, availability of appropriate alternative beverages and food, and a ban on kegs on campus. Because this is a campus policy, student parties off-campus are not required to abide by these rules, but are expected to abide by all laws. Ms. Ambler also explained that the College has a creative and multifaceted approach in terms of curbing alcohol use that consists of a focus on prevention, education, and strict enforcement.

Ms. Ambler stated that there is a distinction between alcohol policy event regulations, the Code of Conduct, and the Honor Code. She stated that if a student breaks a law the College can become involved as a result of the Code of Conduct, but there are several limitations to the College's involvement, including jurisdictional limitations. In addition, the Honor Code has specific definitions of lying, cheating, and stealing, that can be applied regardless of location in some circumstance, and can only be enforced if charges are brought before the Honor Council. Any changes to the Honor Code must be approved via student referendum. Ms. Ambler also stated that she would be happy to discuss the Code of Conduct and Honor Code with the Focus Group at greater length at another meeting.

Several questions arose and were discussed in terms of feasibility and appropriateness amongst the Focus Group and college representatives. First, whether or not breaking the "three person rule" warrants college involvement via the Code of Conduct was discussed. Additionally, the question of whether or not the College should have a stronger role in enforcing student adherence to local ordinances was considered. Ms. Ambler stated that the College will be a partner in any collaborative agreements, but that the level of college involvement in enforcement cannot be determined until after the Focus Group discovers which options are to be considered. Ms. Ambler also stated that the College would seriously consider increased good behavior education, such as a multifaceted approach of e-mails, mailings, and workshops, in addition to the current Residence Life seminars for off-campus living. She explained that requiring this education would be a challenge, but not impossible. Additional conversations with students who are troublesome off-campus were also mentioned as a possibility. Chief Challis informed the group that there are numerous times each week when campus police are involved in off-campus disturbances, but this enforcement process is not the same process as an Honor Code or Code of Conduct violation.

The idea of enforcing campus housing safety regulations off-campus was also discussed at length. Currently, many regulations, including safety regulations, are associated with the use of campus facilities and housing contracts and may need to be changed to allow for increased jurisdiction. The feasibility and legality of this possible jurisdiction expansion was questioned and discussed as well.

Student parking both on and off-campus was also discussed in depth. The Focus Group questioned whether or not the restrictions on freshman and sophomore parking can be adapted to include the City of Williamsburg, not just the campus, in the limitations. City visitor parking tags were also addressed in terms of the feasibility of a time stamp adjustment and better

enforceability of current visitor tags, as it is difficult for city police to identify how long a vehicle uses a visitor tag.

The role of landlords and the significance of the immediate contract relationship between tenant and renter were then discussed by the Focus Group. Though all leases are not the same, leases can include information about local ordinances, including the “three person rule” and parking restrictions, as well as information on respectful neighborly behavior. Violations of these rules can jeopardize a lease which includes them. The group suggested that landlords need to help occupants to better understand ordinances by putting relevant information in all leases and stressed the importance of considering property size in addition to occupancy limits. A question was asked as to whether or not the Zoning Ordinance can require a lease template or addendum to specifically include information on relevant ordinances. The feasibility of homeowners associations was also briefly discussed as a way to hold all residents accountable to the standards of the community.

Agenda Topics for March 12th Meetings

Mr. Porter stated that the next meeting time will be utilized for smaller group discussions. Mr. Fox suggested an upcoming meeting include time for additional discussions with Ms. Ambler on the Honor Code and Anna Martin, Vice President for Administration. The Focus Group members agreed that this would be beneficial.

Public Comment

Sharon Baker of Skipwith Farms suggested that liability issues also be addressed when discussing safety regulations. She asked for copies of the Code of Conduct and Honor Code and was informed that they are available through the College of William & Mary website. Ms. Baker also noted that there was no discussion regarding the proposed four person rule, and suggested including the Code of Conduct in tenant lease agreements.

Debbie Keane of Jamestown Road stated that she did not hear the group discuss common courtesy and common respect for neighbors. She informed the Focus Group that residents attempt to create a community, and that they welcome students into this community. When students fail to follow the rules, the process of creating a community breaks down.

Kathy Allport of Matoaka Court asked whether or not athletic conference rules that restrict special housing for athletes can apply off-campus as well as on campus. She asked that this be addressed and considered if possible.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm.