

Focus Group on Housing
April 22, 2009

College positions:

- Much more engaged in last 14 months. President Reveley is closely involved and wants to improve the neighborhood concern
- Process not about 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10...persons living in a home – it is about new behaviors, greater College, student, landlord, City and resident involvement
- Numbers living in a house is not the main issue but it is an issue - along with parking, safety, neighborhood tranquility
- Landlords are a crucial partner

Recommendations by WM:

- WM must remain at the table; cannot be absent in discussions important and specific to the local community as in years past
- President will continue meeting with mayor and city manager on a monthly basis
- Senior administrators will continue meeting on a regular basis with the Morton Hall Group - citizens representing the Neighborhood Council of Williamsburg
- Long term housing solutions will be addressed. WM Undergraduate students want to live on a residential campus – unique to other VA colleges. WM will begin planning for a new dorm on campus – later this year – that will include 200 beds. WM will also continue planning for a mixed use retail/residential building near the WaWa on Richmond Road. Presently WM houses 75% of undergraduate students on campus – second highest in the state. These additional beds will raise that percentage to 80%! Cost of these two projects will total more than \$40m - a huge investment
- Continue working with City and County on more student retail and entertainment options – New Town, High Street
- Behavior. Office of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Office will become more engaged with off campus behavior issues
 - Create and offer “good neighbor” training sessions; use local citizens to assist with sessions; encourage student attendance with better publicity
 - Develop an off campus “How to be a Good Neighbor” publication
 - Should there be questions about off campus issues in general, a number will be set up to call. Website will be established to provide additional information
 - Complaint process must involve neighbors, landlords and City Police. If – after - second attempt to remedy issue fails, the Office of Student Affairs should be contacted
 - President’s office will ask Athletic Department to work with coaches who have players possibly creating problems off campus.
 - Office of Student Affairs will handle intransigent students
- College will review current alcohol policy on campus and its impact off campus

What WM will not support:

- Creation of a new office and new position within Student Affairs responsible for off campus housing/housing placement/enforcement – whatever the responsibility. Privacy is an important issue. Most cases - students simply want to live off campus to be left alone. Experts who understand the issue argue such an office would contribute little. Cost is an issue.
- Compilation of off campus addresses. Again, privacy issues. Not appropriate. If WM becomes an arm of City Police or City attorney’s office, students will quickly figure way around the process (PO Boxes, etc.). Currently students can opt out of the Directory – there will be hundreds more with this plan.
- Important issue of trust between College and students
- Expansion of the honor code – already addressed by chair of the honor council weeks ago. Academic integrity is first and foremost what the honor code must always be.

Neighbors:

- When students move in, welcome and introduce yourself, discuss neighborhood needs – and issues with noise, trash, etc.
- If problems begin, return and talk to students
- If issue persists, call the Dean of Students Office and explain situation. These actions are imperative before College role
- Call City if noise, trash persists for ordinance enforcement
- If possible work with neighbors to encourage absentee landlords to sell to owner occupied
- Work with City to aggressively contact absentee landlords about condition of rental properties

Students:

- If living off campus, attend “good neighbor” sessions and learn responsibilities
- Respond to neighbors welcome and reasonable requests
- Understand the College will now be more engaged and aggressive and seek remedies towards off campus behavior; more accountability
- Support Student Assembly’s plan to create an “Off Campus Housing Association” to further provide off campus responsibilities (student to student) – and work cooperatively with the College, city, citizens and landlords to promote understanding

City:

- Lean on absentee landlords to the maximum extent of the law
- Respond aggressively to noise, trash and parking complaints in neighborhoods
- Consider size of house, parking and character of neighborhood when reviewing number of unrelated persons in a rental home

- College supports recommendation to permit a four person household – administratively - should guidelines be met -- and for five or more through the Special Use Permit process
- Market student friendly housing off campus
- Continue working closely with Campus Police

Landlords:

- Direct benefit from renting to students
- Many violations are lease violations too – take actions accordingly
- Perhaps most important to help solve problems. If behavior or property issues continue at rental property, begin to assess fines on the landlord – if legal