

URBAN COUNTY COUNCIL
PLANNING COMMITTEE SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 20, 2007

Ms. Gorton chaired the meeting, calling it to order at 1:00 pm. All committee members were present except CM Crosbie.

I. Student Housing

Dr. Stevens stated he has been involved with student housing around UK since 1999 when the Mayor at that time appointed a task force of neighborhoods that surround the university to review this problem and come with some thoughts on how it could be approached. One of the ideas that came out of this was the creation of the Town and Gown Commission with representatives from LFUCG, UK, landlords, neighborhood presidents and students. He stated the Town and Gown Commission started in 2000 and has been meeting regularly since then. He stated despite all the effort they have not been able to resolve the problem of dense student housing in some neighborhoods. Dr. Stevens gave an overview of the information in the packet. He also stated that State College and Morgantown WV has started a home buy back program. He stated they have a plan that when a student home becomes available on the market the city buys it. They retain ownership of the land in a land trust and sales the building. He stated in the 3 or 4 years they have been doing this they have converted approximately 45 houses back into owner occupied houses. Dr. Stevens stated LFUCG is now looking into a buy back program and what we can do about it.

Charlie Boland, Mayor's Office, stated they have had a sub committee of the Town and Gown Commission that has met to begin discussion particularly the buy back program and use of a landbank. He stated a landbank has to be set up legally structured and must have a goal. He stated State College uses predominantly home money and CDBG money to do this program. He stated their observation is that it is geared mainly towards preservation and rehabilitation of the housing stock and then used as a first time home buyer approach. He stated that is how the federal funds are made eligible for use by the program. He stated it appears that most of the homes purchased have been jointly by the parents and students. He stated they are exempt from the student home rule which is a spacing requirement. He stated that a 150K home could be sold for 100K by taking the land cost out. He stated they have discussed how this program may be tailored to fit the situation in our community. Mr. Boland stated it is an approach that is being used in the Newtown Pike project.

CM Blues stated we have certain issues caused by the concentration of a population that is essentially transient not as fully invested in the community and its

particular future as permanent residents are. He stated the problem has been caused significantly by the university itself. He stated we have a university that wants to grow but has no serious plans to increase its student housing, has alcohol policy that basically says go drink elsewhere and hypes its sports programs. He asked where the university stands with the issues that the city is dealing with.

Lisa Higgins Hord, UK VP Assistant/Community Engagement, stated this is part of the university issue and LFUCG shouldn't deal with it alone. She stated the majority of the students are good students. She stated they have not taking a formal position on this yet. She stated it is important for the university to look at what other universities are doing. She stated they will not take an immediate stand on one issue they are just beginning to look at. Ms. Higgins Hord stated they know it is something they need to be a part of. She stated she would like to see a balance approach.

CM McChord stated the university is a major economic driver in this state that has been mandated by the legislature to be a top 20 research institution. He stated we have a tough time now finding where to put people and now we are going to grow this by 7000 to 8000 students. He stated we have to figure out what is our role in this and what we can do. CM McChord asked what the purpose of today's meeting is.

Dr. Stevens stated he looks at it as a public meeting for input.

CM Gorton stated she is expecting to hear ideas from citizens that are going to speak.

CM McChord stated we need to talk about short term solutions and what are some of the long terms solutions. He stated UK has been putting before the legislature their desire to have their own bonding capacity. He stated they need to devise a resolution to send to General Assembly supporting their initiative to do that.

CM Beard stated all student housing and problems are not located off Elizabeth St. He stated it is not all located near the university.

CM James asked who is meeting discussing this issue and is everybody represented. She stated they need to be in contact with those meeting and see what each group sees the issue being. She asked Mr. Boland what is defined as affordable.

Mr. Boland stated that is part of the preliminary discussion they have had about this. He stated there is no proposal even being considered. He informed the committee the Town & Gown Commission is set up of LFUCG, UK, Transylvania, neighborhoods, landlords and student representatives.

CM James stated there is nothing in the packet showing the negative impact of a student zone.

CM Beard asked how would financing take place on the buy back program.

Mr. Boland stated he can't answer that question specifically.

CM Beard stated this problem is more global than the defined area of the Town and Gown group. He stated they should consider asking the Mayor to form a task force to look into this instead of handing it back to Town and Gown.

Vice Mayor stated they are looking at evaluating where Town & Gown is now. He stated Town & Gown is focused on long term. He stated there is not an overnight fix. Vice Mayor stated we need to see all points of view.

CM James stated what are the particular aspects they are looking to diminish with lower intensity student housing.

Dr. Stevens stated the problems that are present relates to too many cars, noise, trash, and alcohol.

CM James stated we have current ordinances that deal with all these issues.

Dr. Stevens stated enforcement is the issue.

CM DeCamp stated we know that we are a college town and all college towns have these issues with student housing. He stated there are good students out there but then you also have the bad apples.

CM Myers stated we have plenty of laws on the books that deal with these issues. He stated we need to look at enforcing current laws instead of writing new laws. He stated a task force is a good idea.

The committee heard from many neighborhood association representatives, university area housing association, landlords, and students.

A motion by CM Beard for the Vice Mayor to form a task force to study this issue, seconded by Dr. Stevens, passed unanimously.

Vice Mayor stated they will have conversation about the proper structure of it.

Planning Committee meeting adjourned at 3:05 pm.