

February 4, 2010

Letter to Committee for Community Quality of Life

My name is Jake Friedman, of Northwood Road, and I've been a homeowner and resident of Mansfield for ~10 years. As an undergraduate at the University, I purchased my house and began renting my extra space to fellow students. My quality of life was enhanced when I was able to enjoy my own home, away from the parties and nuisance of apartments or dorms. Since then, I have enjoyed sharing my house with various interesting folks, such as visiting faculty, international students and yes, even the dreaded undergrads. So, I suppose I'm one of those town residents against whom you intend to discriminate. The measures that you are intending to enact will limit or eliminate my ability to use my private property as I wish and will reduce my quality of life.

I have taken the time to review the various minutes from Quality of Life Committee meetings as well as the Town Council meetings, I found no mention of specific disturbance or nuisance issues, but rather vague concerns about "student rental housing." Without specific nuisance complaints, I had to question the extent of the proposed problem of student rental housing, as the vague references sound more like a Witch Hunt. So I did some research. A few calls to various administrators at UConn Division of Student Affairs revealed the following: Off-campus student tenants are beholden to the Student Code, which covers disruptive, endangering or destructive behavior (part 3B, The Student Code). According to the Office of Community Standards, there were 10 instances of conduct violation out of 1200 rental units in town (statistics sheet attached)! It turns out that if a nuisance or behavioral complaint against students is filed with the Division of Student Affairs, a representative will actually visit that house to address the issue on a town resident's behalf. There is a protocol for town residents to use in making a complaint against student renters (also attached). According to the Director of Community Standards, there were 3 complaints from Mansfield residents regarding rental houses in the 2008-2009 academic year. Three out of 1200 rental units in town! In addition to the ordinances that we

already have in place and Police citations, the Division of Student Affairs has tools that we as residents have available to address behavior/nuisance/blight issues coming from houses rented to students. I submit that either: 1. these tools are almost completely unused or 2. The vague complaints that are on record do not represent reality.

I don't believe that the folks on this Committee have ill intent. However, it is not your intent that matters, but the course of your actions and their unintended consequences that we will all have to live with. The course of your actions is arrogant, discriminatory, intrusive, elitist, abhorrent and worst of all, un-neighborly. A quick peruse through the landlord registry would tell you that most of the landlords that would be affected by your planned restrictions are Mansfield residents. These are not carpet-baggers. These are our neighbors. For at least some, rent is retirement income. These restrictions would reduce property values for them, as well as non-landlords in town, at a time when the economy is the worst it's been in decades. Reduced numbers of rental homes will be used to justify building more high density student apartments, such as the Ponde Place development that is planned on Hunting Lodge Road. And for student apartments, there is tremendous precedent for actual blight, unsafe and nuisance conditions.

I urge the members of this committee to change your course of action. First, stop requesting the valuable time of our town staff to research and draft restrictive ordinances that are far removed from the issues of blight, nuisance and behavior that are isolated to so very few houses in town. Second, focus on the actual issues- specific properties where there may be blight- the numerous abandoned commercial buildings at Four Corners, for example, as well as rental homes. Third, use the tools that are available but have been almost completely unused to address specific neighborhood issues.

Thank you.

Zone Summary: University (Non-residential)

Zone	Spring 2008	Spring 2009	Change from Spring 2008 to Spring 2009
University Building (non-residential)	57	113	+56
Athletics Facility	23	9	-14
Campus Road	45	28	-17
Depot Campus	0	0	0
Other University Property	13	16	+3
Parking Lot/Garage	24	6	-18
Regional Campus	3	13	+10
Study Abroad Program	4	2	-2
University Misc.	0	7	+7
Total	169	194	+25

Zone Summary: Off-Campus

Zone	Spring 2008	Spring 2009	Change from Spring 2008 to Spring 2009
Off Campus: Apts.	21	15	-6
Off Campus: Business Establishment	32	10	-22
Off Campus: Local Road	9	18	+9
Off-Campus Misc.	5	10	+5
Total	67	53	-14

Location Summary: Residential Halls

Location	Spring 2008	Spring 2009	Change from Spring 2008 to Spring 2009	% of all Spring 2009 RH cases
Alumni Quad	31	15	-16	2%
Buckley Hall	54	28	-26	3%
Busby Suites	62	48	-14	5%
Charter Oak Apts.	57	28	-29	3%
East Campus	12	27	+15	3%
Garrigus Suites	33	26	-7	3%
Graduate Residences	5	6	+1	Less than 1%
Hilltop Apts.	52	65	+13	7%
Hilltop: Hale/Ellsworth	31	37	+6	4%
Husky Village	14	3	-11	Less than 1%
Mansfield Apts.	23	24	+1	3%
McMahon Hall	37	44	+7	5%
North Campus	156	172	+16	20%
Northwest	194	195	+1	22%

Protocol to Address Off-Campus Behavioral Concerns

Step 1

Complaints needing immediate attention should be directed to the police. For other issues that need addressed, the proper town authority should be contacted (i.e. Town Manager, Department of Building and Housing Inspection, etc). If you have a concern about a student rental, please contact the appropriate authority in a timely manner. For example, if you are concerned about noise from a party at Midnight, do not wait until the next day to call the police or Town. In order to address the issue, the authorities need to know when the behavior is occurring.

Step 2

Police and/or another town authority will respond to the complaint. Police and/or another town authority will provide information to the Director of Off-Campus Student Services regarding the complaint and response to the complaint. If a complaint is brought to the attention of the Off-Campus Student Services directly, information will be collected. The concerned resident will be told to first contact police and/or another town authority if they are concerned in the future. The protocol will also be explained, so the resident understands the steps taken by the University. Off-Campus Student Services will verify if any action was taken by the police and/or another town authority.

Step 3

Off-Campus Student Services will share the information with UConn Community Standards Office. **The Director of Community Standards will determine if action should be taken formally based on the following:** 1) The complaint alleges or addresses a potential violation of *The Student Code*; 2) The alleged violation "has a direct and distinct adverse impact on the University community, its members, and/or the pursuit of its objectives" as outlined in *The Student Code*; and 3) The amount of evidence available about the alleged violation.

Step 4

If the complaint does not meet the threshold for formal action by the Director of Community Standards, the Director of Off-Campus Student Services will visit the rental to speak with student residents regarding the following:

1. Explain complaint to student residents;
2. Hear student resident perspective;
3. Describe consequences of continued behavior; and
4. Suggest strategies to avoid future complaints.

Step 5

Off-Campus Student Services will send a letter to the landlord of the property to make him or her aware of the complaint. Copies of the letter will be sent to the Town Manager and Director of Community Standards.

Step 6

The Director of Off-Campus Student Services will maintain the documentation in the Judicial Action database.

Step 7

If repeat complaints occur and there is sufficient evidence (including student resident names) to support a violation of *The Student Code*, provided by a complainant, police officer and/or another town authority, the Director of Off-Campus Student Services will file a formal report stating the alleged violation of *The Student Code* against the student residents with the Office of Community Standards and will serve as the complainant in the case.

***The University Community Standards system should not be the only avenue for addressing student tenant behavior off-campus. Since students are citizens of the town, laws and town ordinances should also be enforced by police and town authorities.**

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Off-Campus Student Services
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