

TOWN/UNIVERSITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, December 11, 2007
Audrey Beck Municipal Building
Council Chambers
4:00 pm**

Minutes

Present: P. Barry, J. Bell-Elkins, T. Callahan, B. Clouette, B. Feldman, M. Hart, A.J. Pappanikou, E. Paterson, R. Miller

Staff: M. Capriola, G. Padick, C. van Zelm

1. Opportunity for Public to Address the Committee

None.

2. November 13, 2007 Meeting Minutes

The minutes of November 13, 2007 were passed unanimously.

3. Community-Campus Relations

Mr. Clouette provided an update on the Town's strategic planning efforts. Notably, he provided an overview of the strategic planning search conference that occurred December 8th and 9th. He noted that there were a number of participants that wanted to see the "us versus them" (Town versus University) sentiments dropped from the community. Strong support of the Downtown project was evident. Overall the search conference was very positive. Mayor Paterson echoed Mr. Clouette's remarks regarding strategic planning. She stated that many participants emphasized that we (Town and University) are one community and that they noted a number of positive Town/University partnerships. Mayor Paterson said that concerns were related to water and off-campus partying issues. Mr. Hart stated that open houses would be occurring in January, as well as another search conference weekend, and an opportunity for the public to comment on the strategic planning process electronically. Mayor Paterson said that Carla Fox and Steve Rhodes from the University participated in the search conference weekend. She also stated that there was great consensus amongst the group, as well as great support of the Mansfield Community Center.

Mayor Paterson stated that some search conference participants were interested in having one Mansfield resident on the University Board of Trustees. Mr. Pappanikou stated that you need to petition the legislature for a seat on the Board. Mr. Barry said that Mansfield could have a representative sit in on the Board meetings and that in fact, this was the case many years ago.

Mayor Paterson and Ms. Bell-Elkins provided an update on the Mansfield Community Campus Partnership. MCCP will be conducting a presentation to the student affairs team next week. Ms. Bell-Elkins and Ruth Freeman (underage drinking prevention grant) met with liquor outlets and learned about scanning mechanisms. Ms. Bell-Elkins provided a Guard Dogs update; the group has contracted with Enterprise for two cars for the Spring. Our Guard Dogs program is modeled after the Texas A & M program. The program provides a safe ride home for students that used alcohol or drugs that evening.

Mr. Clouette noted that transportation emerged as a priority during the strategic planning search conference. However, he stated that ridership appears to be low. If Mansfield were to invest in transportation, utilization would need to increase so the subsidy won't need to be high. Mr. Callahan stated that it would be interesting to know how the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia became responsible for operating Virginia Tech's bus system; Blacksburg is similar to Mansfield. Mr. Pappanikou said that more students ride the bus to Big Y and to the mall than residents. Mr. Miller discussed the zip car program at UNC Chapel Hill. Mr. Hart stated that ridership is up from 30,000/year to 50-55,000/year.

4. Community Water and Wastewater Issues

Mr. Pappanikou inquired as to why his water rates were increasing. Mr. Callahan stated that CT Water Company has recently acquired the water utility formerly owned by Birmingham Utility.

Mr. Callahan informed the group that the next water/wastewater advisory meeting is scheduled for December 13th at 5:30pm at the Bishop Center. An update will be provided on how the University managed the dry conditions in 2007. The University stopped pumping from the Fenton on July 26th or 27th. The University may begin pumping limited amounts from the Fenton again beginning this week. The University has been using the Willimantic well field since July 26th or 27th.

Mr. Callahan stated that 2 projects will be submitted/forthcoming to the Committee for review; the projects are Ponde Place and Knollwood Apartments (sewer connection).

Mr. Clouette asked if any customer is entitled to the University providing water. Mr. Callahan stated that the University does not have an exclusive connection area. The Chief Operating Officer/Vice President makes decisions regarding water/wastewater, with the Committee serving in an advisory capacity. The Trustees are informed of water/wastewater decisions. The University and Trustees are not endorsing any project when they grant water/wastewater. It is the responsibility/authority of the Town's landuse authority to approve or deny a project.

Mayor Paterson inquired and Mr. Callahan stated that the study on the Willimantic River will happen and is anticipated to take 18 months to complete.

Mr. Padick stated that he, Mr. Miller and Pat Bresnahan have been invited to participate in the League of Women Voters forum on water topics.

5. UCONN Compost Facility

Mr. Miller provided an update on the proposed compost facility. He stated that his office had listened to neighbor concerns and is taking a step back to evaluate alternative sites. Mr. Padick will be included in the site selection process. Old Colony Road was the most remote site, with only 4 properties within 500 feet. The Old Colony Road site is not suitable for crops because there is a large amount of bedrock in the soil. Mr. Miller stated that the University is reviewing 7 possible sites for the proposed compost facility. Mayor Paterson inquired as to whether a regional site for the Town, University and Coventry was possible.

6. Mansfield Downtown Partnership

Ms. van Zelm stated that Leyland has submitted its application to the CT DEP regarding stormwater as well as its applications to the State Traffic Commission and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Currently, they are working on financing for the Dog Lane Building. Construction on the Dog Lane Building is expected to begin in the spring, with the building be completed by next year. MDP is working on ways to publicize its progress and encourage attendance at their open houses. MDP open houses are held on the last Thursday of every month.

7. Town/University Conference on Climate Change

Mr. Hart stated that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Environment and Mr. Miller's office held a town/university conference on climate change on November 1st. The conference was well attended. The Town, University, and State presented on their sustainability efforts. Mayor Paterson said that the conference was a successful partnership between the Town and the University on an area of mutual interest. Mr. Miller stated that over 100 people attended. Mr. Miller stated that it is exciting to be part of a community that cares so much about the environment. Ms. Bell-Elkins said it was the most well organized conference she's ever attended and it was an amazing event.

8. 2008 Meeting Schedule

The Committee discussed its 2008 meeting schedule. Any corrections to the schedule should be submitted to Ms. Capriola. Ms. Capriola will submit the Committee's 2008 meeting schedule to the Town Clerk.

9. Other Business

Mr. Pappanikou complimented the efforts for President Hogan's reception. He also asked if it would be possible for the traffic lights on Route 195 to blink yellow when the students are on breaks. It was suggested that this issue would be a DOT issue.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria E. Capriola
Assistant to Town Manager