

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF MEETING
OCTOBER 1, 2003

[In these minutes: Student Services Fee Subcommittee, Off-Campus Housing Issues and Discussion, Review Committee Charge]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the view of, nor are they binding on the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Adam VanWagner, chair, David Lenander, Gerald Rinehart, Jean-Marie Del-Santo, Yasemin Kaygisiz, Cheryl Meyers, Janet Schottel, Shawn Lavelle, Ryan Osero

OTHERS: Gabriele Schmiegel, Tina Falkner, Dr. Ehlinger, Tom Zearley, Jeff Nath

GUESTS: June Nobbe, Director of Student Development and Leadership Programs; Laurie McLaughlin, Director of Housing and Residential Life; Laurie Scheich, Associate Vice President for Auxiliary Services; Mark Karon, Director, University Student Legal Services; Bill Dane, Staff Attorney, University Student Legal Services; Paul Zerby, Minneapolis City Council Member, Ward 2

I). Adam VanWagner called the meeting to order and welcomed all those present.

II). Director of Student Development and Leadership Programs June Nobbe began by providing members with historical information concerning the formation of the Student Services Fee Subcommittee. To begin, Ms. Nobbe explained that student services fees are mandatory assessments on students carrying 6 credits or more and these fees are mandated by Regents' policy. The Regents' Student Services Fee Policy can be found at the following URL:

<http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/StudentFees.html>.

In the summer of 2001, the Student Services Fees Task Force conducted the last major system-wide review of the fees process. An issue that stemmed from this review was the fact that the Student Services Fees

Committees on each campus operated very autonomously and were only accountable ultimately to the Board of Regents.

Student Services Fees Committees are appointed and/or elected by the respective student associations on each of the campuses. For example, on the Twin Cities campus, the undergraduate student government, MSA and GAPSA jointly appoint the Fees Committee. The issue the Task Force grappled with was what would happen if a Fees Committee, in any given year, failed to follow procedures, or violated policy. As a result, the Student Services Fee Subcommittee was established as a place to go when:

- There are substantial alleged violations against procedures by the Fees Committees on any of the campuses.
- There are proposed substantive changes to the fees process that may impact the Regents' Student Services Fee Policy.

Because the Senate Committee on Student Affairs (SCSA) is a system-wide Committee with representation from each of the campuses it was chosen to be the parent Committee to the Student Services Fee Subcommittee. Ms. Nobbe added that the Student Services Fee Subcommittee is not an on-going committee but only needs to be convened on an as-needed basis.

In reviewing the charge, Ms. Nobbe noted that while it stipulates the Student Services Fee Subcommittee should receive and review an annual report from the Chair of the Student Services Fee Committee operating on each campus, this may be something SCSA revisits in order to decide if it is truly necessary. Ms. Nobbe recommended SCSA put this on their agenda for further discussion.

Finally, Ms. Nobbe highlighted one the duties and responsibilities of the Subcommittee: "To recommend to the Vice Chancellor or the Office of Student Development (as appropriate), in consultation with the senior administrator of the Student Services Fee process on each campus, any changes in the individual campus policies and/or procedures for the allocation of the Student Services Fee on that campus, as well as to address issues noted in resolutions submitted annually by fees committees on that campus". The Task Force, according to Ms. Nobbe, was very deliberate in having the Student Services Fee Subcommittee be a consultative body and that all recommendations and ultimate decisions on any rulings would be in

conjunction with the Vice Chancellors on the coordinate campuses or the Vice President for Student Affairs on the Twin Cities campus.

Ms. Nobbe provide Adam VanWagner with the report issued by the Student Services Fees Task Force on its final recommendations.

In response to a question, Ms. Nobbe stated that no violations or substantive changes have occurred since the Subcommittee was formed.

What happens if a group requesting fees is dissatisfied with the Fees Committee's decision? Ms. Nobbe emphasized that it is NOT the role of the Student Services Fee Subcommittee to handle these types of complaints. Rather, public hearings are held for groups to express their dissatisfaction in front of both the Fees Committee as well as administrators that receive the Fees Committee recommendations. Ms. Nobbe told Adam VanWagner if he is contacted directly concerning a complaint involving the fees process to contact the Office for Student Affairs or the appropriate fee advisor on the coordinate campus.

III). *Off-Campus Housing Issues and Discussion:* Adam VanWagner welcomed Laurie McLaughlin, Director of Housing and Residential Life. To begin, Ms. McLaughlin noted that Housing and Residential Life lists housing rentals near the campus and in the greater Twin Cities area. This year the University has approximately 3,200 accounts set up with landlords and 2,300 of these accounts are landlords that are only listing one unit. Housing and Residential Life (HRL) charges landlords to list their properties based on a sliding scale fee. Ms. McLaughlin emphasized that the University makes it very clear, on its website as well as in its publications, that HRL does NOT inspect any of the properties it lists.

Starting in June 2003, there have been discussions between the Office of the General Council (OGC), University Student Legal Services (USLS) and Housing and Residential Life (HRL) concerning how the University can legally discriminate against problem landlords that wish to list properties with HRL.

Next, Ms. McLaughlin distributed the following information to members:

- Housing and Residential Life's Off Campus Housing Guide

- A Place of Your Own - A Guide For Off-Campus Living sponsored by Boynton Health Service and Hennepin County Community Health Department
- A copy of draft policy language proposed by HRL concerning which landlords it will and will not list based on the following criteria:
 - Require properties to be licensed. A provisional license will not be acceptable because it signifies (in Minneapolis and St. Paul) the property has not yet been inspected. Ms. McLaughlin noted, however, that unfortunately not all cities have the same requirements relative to inspections, licensing, etc.
 - Refuse to list or de-list properties when a landlord has 3 or more unresolved tenant complaints filed with the University Student Legal Services (USLS).
 - Refuse to list or de-list properties when the University becomes aware that the landlord has been subject to 3 or more inspection orders finding municipal code violations within the previous 12 month period.

If the University adopts the proposed criteria noted above, it will undoubtedly significantly diminish the number of off-campus housing listings with HRL. Not only will property listings be reduced, these requirements will also impact HRL's New Roommate Matching Service. It is likely students looking for roommates will be required to prove that they are living in a property that meets the above criteria in order to register for this service.

Next, Mark Karon and Bill Dane of University Student Legal Services (USLS) introduced themselves to the Committee. Mr. Karon noted that USLS is in the process of creating a database that would identify a property, the respective landlord and whether the property is licensed as well as if there are outstanding complaints with USLS and/or municipal code violations. In addition, USLS in collaboration with HRL is working to expand their educational efforts to enlighten students about living off-campus. MSA has also become very involved in these initiatives.

In addition, a survey that would allow students to share their off-campus housing experiences with respect to various properties is being contemplated. Results of such a survey would allow students to better understand the particular property they are considering renting before they

actually do so. Students are a targeted population by prospective landlords and the more information the University can provide them with to make an informed decision the better off they will be. The University hopes that this initiative will be operational in the very near future.

According to Bill Dane, USLS staff attorney, USLS accepts responsibility for working to identify problematic landlords e.g. never return security deposits, over-occupancy cases, substandard properties, etc. He added that USLS is very excited about the HRL listing criteria that will soon be used to control questionable landlord activity. Mr. Dane is hopeful that there will be immediate attempts by even the worst landlords to clean up their act so that they will be allowed to list with HRL.

In response to a question, Mr. Dane noted that the vast majority of landlords respond to inquiries from USLS, however, there are some that have a reputation for not responding. As the new criteria for listing with HRL is put in place and enforced, Mr. Dane is optimistic that this will give landlords a greater incentive to respond to USLS inquiries.

A member asked how many complaints USLS receives per month. Mr. Dane stated that USLS opens and closes on average 30 cases per month, although it receives more complaints than that per month. He noted that months with a large amount of turnover in the student population are busier than others. By in large, cases that occur during the school year involve living condition concerns. In addition, Mr. Dane stated that occasionally USLS handles situations where students used poor judgment and did something they should not have done.

If a student calls and asks about a particular landlord/property will USLS provide them with any information? While USLS is answerable to not only the University of Minnesota, it is constrained by the ethical rules of the legal profession; therefore, they do provide some information but the amount of information they share is limited by these constraints.

Will the new criteria imposed by HRL for landlords to list their property make a difference if the number of listings is reduced significantly and students are forced to find affordable housing via other means? Mr. Dane agreed that this is a very good point. USLS is confident that the survey

process will help to educate students and allow them to make better housing decisions.

Can the University put pressure on the city inspection process? Much of the press following the recent tragedy where 3 students died in an off-campus house fire, cited John Bergquist, Assistant City Coordinator, Operations and Regulatory Services with the City of Minneapolis, attributing student behavior as being the root cause behind the tragedy. Mr. Dane questioned how it is possible to get decent, quality service from the City when its employees take this type of attitude. Towards that end, there is a meeting scheduled for next week with the University and the Minneapolis Inspections Division to clear the air and set the record straight. Mr. Dane added that this is a critical issue and a matter of resources.

Associate Vice Provost for Student Affairs Jerry Rinehart noted that the University has a responsibility to make sure its students are acting responsibly. He announced that the University hired Kendre Turonie as its Coordinator of Student and Community Relations. It will be Ms. Turonie's role to get a sense of what is happening in the community by working with the neighborhood associations, students living in off-campus housing, etc. This new position is part of the University's investment in improving its relationships with the neighborhoods. According to Vice Provost Rinehart the more the University develops its relationships with the neighborhoods, the increased likelihood that students will better understand their role in these neighborhoods and open up opportunities to participate in positive ways.

Would it be possible to have Ms. Turonie sit *ex-officio* on SCSA as a way for that position to stay connected with student affairs issues? Members thought this sounded like a good idea.

A member suggested finding out the Minnesota Daily's current policy regarding whether they will run ads for landlords that HRL will not list. If SCSA is not satisfied with their position on this issue, the Committee entertained the idea of passing a resolution encouraging the Minnesota Daily to consider taking this position. MSA Vice President Jeff Nath asked that MSA be allowed to draft this resolution because he believes the resolution

would be better received by the Minnesota Daily coming from MSA versus a Senate committee.

In light of limited resources, SCSA Chair Adam VanWager suggested having students educate students on off-campus housing issues. Mr. Dane suggested that USLS might be able to recruit some of their student clients to talk about their experiences at the off-campus housing educational sessions. By having students share their experiences with other students could offer more meaning and peer recognition for students.

USLS developed a Tenant Resource Packet, which it distributes to approximately 2,000 students each year. These packets include sample letters, leases, forms, checklists, etc. Mr. Dane volunteered to provide the Committee with these packets.

In addition to programming efforts, the University plans to intentionally, on an on-going basis, put educational information in front of students regarding off-campus housing issues. It is better to give students too much information than to have students say they did not know where to get the information.

Why do so many students leave residence halls after their first year? Ms. McLaughlin believes it is a combination of factors. Does the University conduct exit surveys on its departing residents? No, but the University does administer satisfaction surveys to its residents. Ms. McLaughlin noted that there is an extremely high demand for student housing from the first-year student class. Because the University guarantees housing for first-year students, it would be in a very precarious position if several thousand students suddenly wanted to stay in the residence halls beyond their first year or two.

A member asked if there is a demand by upper classmen/women for University sponsored housing that would have different rules and regulations than the typical residence halls. Based on conversations with other students, this member believes that many students leave the residence halls because of the required meal plan. Ms. McLaughlin noted that the University has apartment style housing and this year, as an example, Stadium Village opened with approximately 50 vacancies for returning students. Stadium

Village is apartment style housing managed by University Housing, however, there are still rules e.g. underage students are prohibited from consuming alcohol, etc. A majority of University apartment style housing units in Stadium Village are 4 person/4 bedroom. There may be a correlation between the high vacancy rate at Stadium Village and the fact that students that want apartment style living do not want that many roommates and/or more privacy. The University leases the housing it has in Stadium Village and does not own this property. The University will continue to evaluate whether or not this facility is a good option for students. It was also suggested that maybe the privatized housing developments on campus could possibly have affected the vacancy rate at Stadium Village. Ms. McLaughlin agreed this could have been a factor especially considering the deep discounts they were offering.

A member asked City of Minneapolis Ward 2 Council Member Paul Zerby whether the City is considering making any ordinance or other changes in light of the recent tragedy where 3 U of M students died in an off-campus house fire. Similar to a recommendation put forth by St. Paul City Council Member Jay Benanav, Mr. Zerby is also considering requiring rental properties to have a certificate of occupancy before a property can be occupied/rented. The City of Minneapolis is faced with a situation, however, of limited resources. Mr. Zerby further noted that the City Council in 1990 adopted a policy stating that there would be a 10-year inspection cycle. Currently, the City is substantially behind that cycle. Mr. Zerby likes the HRL criteria and thinks that the City should consider something similar in terms of an ordinance that would allow the City to revoke certificates of occupancy. Ultimately, any and all initiatives will depend on getting sustained resources.

According to Mr. Zerby the properties with less than 4 units absorb a tremendous amount of the inspection division's time and energy. In order to generate a revenue stream to garner the resources to inspect properties in a timely manner, Mr. Zerby believes that it may be necessary to raise the licensing fees for properties with less than 4 units. There will naturally be terrific political push-back on this idea. In addition, Mr. Zerby noted that whatever costs are put on the landlords there is a fair chance these costs will get funneled back to the tenants.

Mr. Zerby also would like to see the University and the City cooperate more closely in addressing off-campus housing issues with the neighborhoods. Situations that are not safe and not tenable should not be allowed to continue e.g. over-occupancy. An idea raised at a recent City Council Meeting suggested that the City look into getting NRP (Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program) money and to use it for cooperative housing initiatives. While this is a good idea, Mr. Zerby believes this money needs to be targeted based on need.

In his role as City Council Member, Mr. Zerby needs to think about the people that live in these neighborhoods permanently too. Mr. Zerby continues to push the University to apply its Student Code of Conduct off-campus. If there is egregious behavior on the part of students, the University needs to take responsibility.

As a way to stay connected to the Committee, Mr. Zerby may have his assistant, Allan Bernard, attend future meetings.

A member asked Mr. Zerby what kind of safeguards are in place to protect students from predatory behaviors of landlords. Mr. Zerby stated that to get rid of landlords with a history of code violations, etc. it would be necessary to have inspections conducted. Mr. Zerby will look into beefing up the ordinances to make this happen.

A guest at today's meeting sees the root of the problem as lack of affordable on or off campus housing for a majority of students. Until the University, the City and/or the State takes some action to fix this problem, bad situations will continue to occur. When students are forced to live in substandard housing, students tend not to treat the property or the neighborhood respectfully. As long as there are landlords with properties to rent, whether HRL lists them or not, there will be a demand for those properties. Therefore, inspections need to occur and licenses need to be pulled when properties are not up to code so that landlords can no longer rent their properties. Mr. Zerby agreed but said it is a matter of getting the resources to take this kind of action.

A member asked the status of the University's housing survey. Contact has been made with Ohio State University and UC Santa Barbara to learn about

their successes and failures with similar initiatives in an attempt to avoid as many problems as possible. The questions are currently being drafted and then they will need to go to USLS for approval. It is anticipated the survey should be on-line and operational in approximately 2.5 weeks if everything goes as planned.

Mr. Zerby liked the idea raised earlier of looking into what can be done to make University housing more attractive to those beyond their freshman year. In addition, Mr. Zerby raised the point that the University just wrapped up a very successful fund-raising campaign, and stated an argument can be made that it is the University's responsibility to fund off-campus housing initiatives and resolve its housing issues. Mr. Zerby also noted that in a typical year the City of Minneapolis spends \$500,000 to provide fire protection to the University of Minnesota and the City does not get reimbursed for any of its costs. In addition, when riots occur at the University, the City provides police protection as well as clean-up services for the aftermath. In response a member questioned what are the University's boundaries. He indicated he is not mentioning this to be adversarial but truly believes the University and the City have a community of interest they both need to take responsibility for. Mr. Zerby, in closing, noted again it all comes down to a matter of resources.

IV). Review of Committee Charge: Adam VanWagner asked members for their input regarding any changes they would like to have made to the charge. Comments included:

- Because the Committee deals with all aspects of student life, by highlighting certain pieces e.g. student/staff health service facilities and international students, seems to make the charge somewhat exclusionary.
- Consider having the SCSA charge be similar to SCFA's charge - simple, straight-forward and all encompassing.
- A suggestion was made to change the charge accordingly: "The Student Affairs Committee is concerned with all issues dealing with the ~~social~~ welfare of students at the University of Minnesota; ~~including services such as the operation of student/staff health service facilities, and special needs pertaining to international students.~~" Members debated retaining or eliminating the word 'social'

and the implications this may have on the charge. Additional verbiage was also discussed and debated e.g. "...physical, social and academic welfare..."; "...welfare of all students...".

- The Committee passed a motion to change the wording of the charge to: "The Student Affairs Committee is concerned with all issues dealing with the welfare of students at the University of Minnesota".
- Next, under Duties and Responsibilities, e.1. suggestions were made to modify the verbiage, to omit this duty and responsibility entirely, etc.

In light of the time, it was asked whether the Committee could leave the charge as is for the time being and come back and review it throughout the year. It was noted that SCC Chair Judith Martin requested all proposed changes to committee charges be completed by October 31st. Renee Dempsey was charged with checking to see if there is any flexibility with this deadline. It was also suggested that maybe the wordsmithing of the charge could be conducted over email.

V). Hearing no further business, Adam Van Wagner adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate