

SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS
MINUTES OF MEETING

November 28, 2011

Morrill Hall Room 238A

[In these minutes: supporting alcohol collaborative; update on SHAC tobacco free campus resolution; response to smart grid presentation]

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

PRESENT: Dave Golden (chair), Kim Robien, Amelious Whyte, Carol Foth, Dan Kelliher, Madisen Johnson, Teresa Schicker, Susan Cable Morrison, Shannon Evans, Sandra Krebsbach, Anthony Quill, David Fuhs, Carolyn Mayberry, Ahmed Heikal

REGRETS: Timothy Sheldon, Lizzy Shay, Stephen Gross, Michael Sommers, Michael O'Day, Rebecca von Dissen,

ABSENT: Maria Hanratty, Elizabeth Ault, John Broadhurst

GUESTS: Jan Morlock, director, University Relations; Kendre Turonie, coordinator, Student and Community Relations

OTHERS: Jon Steadland, president's office

Dave Golden called the meeting to order, and asked committee members to introduce themselves.

Committee Discussion on Methods to Support the Work of the National College Health Improvement Project (NCHIP) Learning Collaborative on High-Risk Drinking

Mr. Golden began the discussion noting that the Office for Student Affairs (OSA), the Minnesota Department of Health, and Boynton Health Services raised the issue of alcohol use on campus as a topic of concern. He also noted the University of Minnesota's participation in the NCHIP Learning Collaborative on High-Risk Drinking. Mr. Golden stated that 38% of students on campus report participating in high-risk drinking. This affects the campus and the surrounding community. Mr. Golden further noted that this is not just a campus problem; as a state Minnesota has one of the highest rates of alcohol consumption per capita.

Mr. Golden then invited Jan Morlock, director, University Relations and Kendre Turonie, coordinator, Student and Community Relations, to provide information on the impact of alcohol on the community surrounding the University. Ms. Turonie provided committee members with handouts regarding "noisy/ unruly assemblies violations" and Minneapolis

Police Department warning letters and calls for service in the neighborhoods surrounding the University including: Prospect Park, Como, and Marcy Holmes. She noted that noisy assemblies violations indicate problem “party houses” with multiple violations in addition to noise. She stated there has been a continual decrease in noisy/unruly assembly violations in all of the surrounding neighborhoods from 2009 to 2011. There has also been a decrease in warning letters and calls for service from 2010 to 2011. She cited several factors for the decrease in violations including:

- Increased communication between the University Police, Minneapolis Police and the OSA
- OSA’s Student Neighborhood Liaison Program (door knocking, outreach, and literature on responsibly hosting parties)
- Working with landlords to improve conditions of homes
- Outreach to homeowners encouraging them to call 911 when there are disturbances

Amelious Whyte noted that changes to the social host ordinance, extension of the Student Conduct Code to students living off-campus, and the availability of new apartment housing for students might also be contributing to the decrease in alcohol related violations in communities surrounding the University. Mr. Whyte further noted that the number of alcohol violations in the residence halls is decreasing and student detox calls are down.

Ms. Morlock agreed that OSA’s engagement on all fronts and the work of the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity to inform students that conduct off campus also falls under the Student Conduct Code is assisting in the decrease in community violations. Ms. Morlock went on to state there must be a balanced approach to alcohol and community relations. She noted the riots that occurred in 2002 and 2003 and the destructive effects alcohol can have on a community. She also cited Professor Tobin Nelson’s research showing that an increase in alcohol licenses correlates to an increase in high-risk behaviors. But citing the example of neighborhood restaurants, she stated alcohol sale and use could also help build community and make neighborhoods more inviting for all ages to live and work.

Teresa Schicker asked about the impact of the Aurora Center’s initiatives. Mr. Whyte responded that alcohol plays a role in the vast majority of sexual assault cases. There has been a decrease in large parties and possibly a decrease in assaults. Shannon Evans, an Aurora Center advocate, noted that many assaults are not reported.

Mr. Whyte commented on other negative impacts of drinking such as missing classes, injuries, being at greater risk for being a crime victim, and a decline in the quality of neighborhoods.

Ms. Turonie noted the focus of her work is on decreasing the negative impact of student drinking on neighbors, and Ms. Morlock discussed the importance of keeping a critical mass of stable neighbors in the communities surrounding the University

Anthony Quill commented that the most important factors for controlling alcohol use are financial such as penalties for violating the social host ordinance and high damage deposits for rental properties. He also commented that the high unemployment rate among students makes it more difficult for them to purchase alcohol.

Ms. Turonie emphasized the importance of informing students about the consequences of high risk drinking and Ms. Morlock noted some of the biggest challenges are the size of the student body and the metropolitan environment.

Professor Kelliher asked what percentage of high risk drinkers are male. Mr. Golden responded that 60% are male and 40% are female. High risk drinking is defined as five drinks for a male and four drinks for a female. At age 21 high-risk drinking peaks and by age 25 many high-risk activities drop off, Mr Golden stated. Mr. Kelliher asked if steps are being taken to target 21 year olds. Mr. Golden responded there are many programs targeted at first year students such as Health Advocates and the Gopher Chauffer. Ms. Turonie also noted the information and workshops provided in the spring to students moving off-campus from the residence halls. Ms. Evans pointed out that providing information in the spring might be too late as many students sign leases for apartments by December.

Mr. Golden stated although noisy assembly violations are down, the rate of reported sexual assaults remains flat. One-in-four college women report being victims of sexual assault, and less than 20% report assaults that occur. He suggested one way to address this and other community related problems caused by high-risk drinking might be strengthening regulations on the availability of liquor licenses and consequently decreasing bar density. He asked Ms. Morlock about whether the type of liquor license issued makes a difference in the impact on the surrounding community. Ms. Morlock responded that the type of license does not necessarily have an impact, but the actions of the liquor licensee make a difference. She also suggested the regulation of licensees should be strengthened.

Mr. Whyte responded that the University of Minnesota does not have the same bar density problems as other “college towns.” But he agreed that the actions of the liquor licensees make a difference in students’ ability to engage in high-risk drinking. He believes, however, that most underage students are not obtaining alcohol from bars and restaurants. He stated the bigger issue is keeping alcohol out of the hands of underage drinkers.

Ms. Morlock suggested if the Committee is considering taking a position on the issue of liquor licensing, they should gathering information from those who regulate and enforce these laws. She stated there are many good laws in place that should prevent over serving alcohol and serving those who are underage, but the problem is how effectively they are being enforced. She agreed with Mr. Whyte that the riskiest alcohol behaviors are occurring in private settings rather in licensed bars and restaurants.

Next, the committee turned to the topic of the increased number of permits available for bars and restaurants on Oak Street to serve alcohol outside of the restaurant space. Mr. Golden stated the number of permit requests had doubled. However, Mr. Whyte commented that although the number of licenses increased, the bars' use of these licenses seems to have decreased over the last three years. Ms. Morlock commented that not all alcohol licenses are the same and noted that many of the bars in the area around the University have licenses to serve only alcohol, and are not governed by the new requirement that a proportion of their sales be for food.

Professor Ahmed Heikal encouraged the University to be proactive in helping students avoid excessive drinking, and asked about the consequences for students who violate drinking laws. Mr. Whyte stated if a student is ticketed for underage drinking there is usually an educational component to the intervention consequences, and it does not usually result in suspension or expulsion.

Mr. Golden next asked the committee to consider the possibility of an increase in the state excise tax on alcohol in order to control high risk drinking. He noted the State Commissioner of Health is interested in this issue. Professor Maria Hanratty commented it would be important not to penalize alcohol use that is not harmful. David Fuhs stated the tax might function as a user tax and provide funding for enforcement. Mr. Whyte stated the cost of dealing with alcohol issues and the cost of obtaining alcohol in a college environment should be considered. Also, there should be disincentives for overconsumption, and it would be important not to drive bars out of business.

Mr. Quill stated the demand for alcohol is inelastic; therefore, the tax must be quite high to change behavior. This may impact establishments that create community like microbreweries. He suggested a better solution would be to eliminate liquor licenses that solely permit the sale of alcohol without a food sale requirement. Mr. Quill also commented that an excise tax was not likely to impact high-risk drinkers. Professor Robien opined that the excise tax should be on hard alcohol rather than beer and wine. Sandra Krebsbach stated she does not oppose an excise tax, but does not believe the Social Concerns Committee should take the lead on this issue.

Professor Hanratty suggested an open forum on alcohol use with students and neighborhood groups. Mr. Whyte stated he was not sure students would participate. He thought the issue might better be addressed through Ms. Turonie's community work and the restorative justice system.

Student Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) Tobacco Free Campus Resolution

Prior to the meeting committee members received the SHAC Tobacco Free Campus Resolution and letter to President Kaler and were asked to consider whether to support the resolution. Mr. Golden explained that since that time, President Kaler met with SHAC's leaders and on November 23 sent an official written response to their letter. In his response, President Kaler stated he did not support a tobacco free policy on the campus at this time because of concerns about implementing and enforcing the policy on a large urban campus and a lack of support among the campus community. He stated he

would reconsider the proposal in the future if strong support for a tobacco-free campus is demonstrated among students and staff. Mr. Golden stated there should be renewed discussion of the issue across campus, and SHAC would focus its efforts to garner support for a tobacco free campus. Mr. Golden asked the Committee to hold off on consideration of the resolution at this time, and stated that Dr. Anne Joseph who researches tobacco control would be speaking with the Committee at its next meeting in February.

Response to Smart Grid Presentation

Mr. Golden stated he would send a thank you to Professor Massoud Amin for his October presentation to the committee, and asked committee members to send him any comments they would like included. He then asked committee members for suggestions on next steps to take with regard to the information provided by Professor Amin. Ms. Krebsbach stated the Committee should encourage a model smart grid at the University. Ms. Schicker noted that the University of Minnesota Morris has a smart grid in place and a model is being built at UMore Park. Ms. Foth suggested it would be helpful to hear from representatives of Morris about how the smart grid is working on their campus.

Mr. Golden and several other committee members noted they would like to learn whether new buildings on the Twin Cities campus could be smart grid ready, and would like to speak with Facilities Management about this.

Professor Hanratty asked if there is a student or faculty group that focuses on environmental policy on the Twin Cities campus. Professor Robien stated there might be a group within the Environmental Sciences Policy Management major or the Institute on the Environment.

It was also suggested that Social Concerns could sponsor a forum on the smart grid including the governor's office, state legislators, and representatives from Excel Energy.

Hearing no further business, Mr. Golden adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate Office