Old Town Civility Forum Summary Report
Friday, May 24, 2013
Convened by Friends of Old Town
Hosted by Matchbox Realty

A public forum was designed and facilitated by 4C: The Campus Community Civic Collaborative, a partnership of the JMU Institute for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue and The Fairfield Center, at the request of Friends of Old Town (Roberta Fernandez) with the following purpose:

Our purpose is to identify methods of educating and integrating JMU students living in Old Town in order to create a safe, caring, peaceful and beautiful neighborhood for all.

Over 50 people attended representing residents, local businesses in old town, city officials, landlords, local law enforcements, students, and JMU faculty and administrative staff.

A survey was done in advance of the forum to gauge the types of issues influencing perception of the issues. The results of the survey follow:

**Promoting Old Town Civility: Our Starting Points**

24 people responded to the survey including people who represented the categories of: Permanent resident, Student resident (present or former), Landlord, Old Town Business, City Official, City Law Enforcement, JMU Official

**Perceptions of the efforts of those who play a role**

How effective are others' efforts in promoting civility and harmony between permanent residents and students residents in Old Town?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not effective (1)</th>
<th>Effective only in the face of immediate issues (2)</th>
<th>Attempting to be effective proactively (3)</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>JMU official</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>1.38</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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Specific comments offered characterizing the efforts being made:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Each party is limited in what they can and cannot do (sometimes legally and sometimes practically) to assure civility in Old Town.</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Permanent residents | I appreciate the efforts made by permanent residents. Residents are largely on their own when trying to tackle these problems.  
... either exercise their rights to complain (to the police, zoning), completely ignore the problems and hope someone else deals with it (fear of getting involved, or in fear of retribution), or move. |
| Harrisonburg Police Department | Police are involved to extent they feel they are able, but can more be done?  
City law enforcement does its best to serve the community, however could use a more consistent presence in the area.  
When the police are called for anti-social behavior or loud parties, rarely produces the desired outcome. Need to enforce penalties for anti-social behavior.  
HPD is currently working to build partnerships in the community to foster a more proactive approach to issues between permanent and student residents.  
HPD has been very proactive in their efforts to inform students and curtail behavior as it arises.  
Harrisonburg Police Department responds to quiet a party down when I call. |
| City Officials | Zoning needs to be enforced more rigorously in particular with regards to fraternities and sororities.  
Violations for zoning ordinances ought to be enforced more rigorously.  
City officials seem to care, but haven’t seen much progress in recent years. |
| Landlords | Don’t see evidence that the landlords or realtors on my block are doing anything.  
Issue centers around landlords violating zoning and renting properties to too many tenants.  
Historic homes have become run down by landlords and their occupants.  
Landlord required students to pay for replacing some fencing which they damaged.  
Nonresident landlords have little incentive to care about their homes and the behavior of their tenants |
| Realtors | Realtors or others involved with selling property in the neighborhood are not required to disclose the zoning of the property for sale. Uninformed buyers purchase a home with intent of renting it when doing so (to more than 2 unrelated people) is against our zoning laws. This ends in a lot of frustration by all parties. |
| JMU | Moving fraternities and sororities off campus has not helped.  
Over the years, I have not seen much attention from JMU; only when JMU employees that also happen to live in the neighborhood get involved. |
| Students | For most students, living civilly and in harmony with the neighborhood was an extremely low priority.  
Have communicated with us as neighbors only to inform us of parties as a way to gain permission for doing whatever they want without getting into trouble. Otherwise, live with an "island" mentality.  
One house of JMU students went to next door neighbors and said they wanted to be more considerate of the neighborhood and asked us to call them if they were too noisy. We had no reason to call them after that - they kept their gatherings relatively quiet and ended them earlier.  
Registering of parties is being misused by students; being treated as having a blank check until they get a phone call from the police. Concept should be discontinued. |
Perceptions of “us”

- I think many are unsympathetic of RESIDENTS because a) they don't know how bad the behavior is and b) they feel we made the choice to live near students and must suffer the consequences as much as someone who purchases a house in a flood zone has taken a calculated risk.
- I know some people think there is no point in trying to fix this, and I understand this frustration. But I think THIS EFFORT IS WORTH MAKING.
- Others must understand as well as we do that OUR EFFORTS ARE FUTILE in the face of student pressure.
- I imagine that people believe we do not do enough, even though we do all that we can.
- I believe that others think JMU has more influence in the area than they do. JMU struggles with locating, communicating and partnering with those students living in old town.
- I feel that people want more from HPD and that we are working to find a better mix of enforcement (after the fact) and education (prevention before the fact).

Ideas for educating and integrating JMU students living in Old Town

- Have families reach out to students at the beginning of the year (bring cookies, invite to dinner, etc.)
- Get students and residents together as soon as they move back in August, just to get to know one another.
- Programming welcoming them to the neighborhood, discuss their responsibilities with them
- Set out the rules clearly and concisely, repeat, repeat and repeat them (be visible and firm as residents) and then make sure there are effective enforcement methods in place.
- Students must feel they have a stake in Old Town, it has to be something that involves the students.
- Getting information to students through the landlords and rental companies. Working with neighborhood organizations to start a conversation about expected behaviors and courtesies.
- Police should assign beat cops before August 1; Keep records so landlords can fine students who are cited; get a nuisance ordinance in place
- Landlords: make students meet neighbor and provide a complete list of names and contact information.
- Residents: be the eyes and ears of your neighborhood; know who owns the houses near you. Meet the students and parents upon move in and be vocal about expectations. Call the police, landlords and the city about infractions.
- JMU: Create a mandatory course for all students moving off-campus. Potentially a selection process for who GETS to live in Old Town; a filter for selecting the most compatible students who do not make partying their top priority
- JMU Greek Life: encourage fraternities and sororities to get involved in Old Town. Enforce rules for Greeks that are on the books. Require Greek organizations to be located on campus.
- Include an online "Living Off Campus guide" or workshop administered by Student Affairs or Student Housing at the end of Freshmen year that covers etiquette of living in family neighborhoods as well as knowing the responsibilities.
• JMU must exert some manner of control over student houses that repeatedly violate noise and
nuisance ordinances.
• Judicial affairs: create restorative justice opportunities for students in Old Town.
• Fundamental for the university not to engage in ventures with landlords and developers who
have displayed a lack of business ethics and corporate responsibility.
• JMU Theatre Department: create a tragi-comedy about the JMU-Harrisonburg culture clash.

FORUM AGENDA

10-10:15 Introductions and Starting Points, brief review of survey data
10:15-10:45 – Brainstorming in small alliance groups
10:45-10:55 – Report Out (Summarize ideas of small groups)
10:55-11:10 – Large Group identification of Actionable Steps
11:10-11:15 – Ask for commitments from participants to choose areas they will engage in and work to
create positive action
11:15-11:30 – Meet briefly with identified action teams to determine next steps to keep the momentum
going

BRAINSTORMING IN ALLIANCE GROUPS

Participants self-selected into groups to discuss the overall goal and how the partners listed good begin
to collaboratively address the issue by focusing on the question: “What are your ideas of how we as an
alliance of residents and ______________ can educate and integrate JMU students living in Old Town.”

Here are the collected ideas generated by each group:

Residents and JMU Staff and Students

Problem of retaliation
How to address accountability of criminal things more
Rooming and boarding houses supposed to have a designee
Landlord 24-hr. on call
How do you identity who is house is responsible
Fines don’t seem to have effect
JMU-Reciprocal Agreement
  Implications for ordinance violations
  Withhold grades, etc.
  Suspension
Work with Honor Council/Judicial/Police/Law Enforcement
Show good examples of what is working in each office
Students are more afraid of JMU than city
Can City violations automatically be reported to parents
Landlords – need implications identified before they sign the lease
Include implications in the lease
Can bill for clean-up, etc.
   Back to residents not needing to know about it
How to deal with noise
What is pushback from students to bills?
Landlords – adding rooms without permits
Students do complain about bills/fines
Audit accounts – to make sure bill appropriately for services

Consistency
in Punishment/consequences (suspension $\Rightarrow$ change in behavior)
in Education
   Highlight success stories
in Expectations
   Noise
   Trash
   City Ordinances
   Neighborliness
Environmental changes will lead to Cultural changes
Activities that make people real (Block party, community service)
JMU Administration must have the Political will to do something
Realistic expectations
   Look at other University models (U of Delaware, Clemson, K State, Texas A&M, UC Boulder)

Revising Party Registration
   Office of Campus Life and HPD
Student-driven program for change
Get buy-in by involving students
Campus and Community showing up to events about environmental change

Residents and Law Enforcement
Talk to Parents
   Component of orientation
Talk to students
   Before it becomes a problem
Not relying on police (hassle to wake up and call)
Sharing personal stories with students
Education as priority, not just enforcement
- Noise ordinance is not sufficient

FOOT go door to door

Education from landlords
  - Easier online police reports for properties (new ordinance)
  - Landlords need to check

How to integrate it?
  - They need to want it

Include students in annual picnic

Social Media
  - Safety tops

Door hanger with key info

Know which houses are rentals

Have neighborhood children welcome students

“Block party” instead of separate from picnic

Encourage students to host community events
  - Count this as community service hours

Someone to hold responsible
  - Property manager?
  - Building owners?

Residents and City Officials

- Magnets and/or hang tags, creative ways to educate students on city ordinances

Facebook
  - Permanent placard on doors or in rental homes/apts.

About:
  - Civility
  - Noise
  - Trash
  - Couches on porches
  - Parking

Difficulty communicating with students
  - Need designee to communicate with

Landlords should have educational response

Students should have to qualify to live “here”
  - Want to be there for the right reasons, not to party

Noise violation
  - Noise meter constraint

Residents and Landlords

Selection process – Filter applicants for a good fit
  - Landlords should investigate references
  - Develop standard set of questions, need a consistent criteria
“Picking” applications has legal implications
Market forces also indicate there are more beds than students so owners/landlords are happy to have rental full
Find way to combat “group mentality” in houses
Residents and Property Owners/Landlords have some shared in quality of life but business reality also means there are some inherent differences.
Leasing process is done a year in advance, so behavior one year does not affect whether they get to resign, because it is usually a different group on the following year’s lease.
Promote that living in a house in a residential neighborhood has a different “feel”
  Qualitatively different than apartment living
Can build behavior expectations into lease agreements
  Look at what are currently being listed as lease violations in most leases.
Zoning violations
  What are steps in pointing out and addressing violations?
Landlords want documentation of violations
  Need objective proof to report to owners and prove lease violations
Currently website shows only dispatch log, not charges (if any) filed
  Dispatch log of a response is not “proof”
Differences in criminal and civil law violations need to be known/addressed

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION OF ACTION STEPS

After these small group discussions, the large group reconvened to consider “What are actionable steps we can take to integrate and educate students?”

Action Steps Identified
Documented of Violations
Technology for police to aid in Violations
Defining what we mean by “quality” collaboratively
Look at ordinances
Educate on Expectations
  Involve JMU Judicial Affairs
  Penalties
Look at other models
Changing Environment
  Show them what civility is (like having FROGS for off campus)
Presence Back Week – have a tent/info spot set up in the neighborhood
  HPD
  Community Members
  Campus offices

PERSONAL COMMITMENTS
Finally, participants were asked to make some personal commitments: “What are you willing and able to do, get involved with, support as an individual?” Participants selected areas they would be willing to work on.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAMPUS COMMUNITY COALITION</td>
<td>Kathy Whitten</td>
<td>476-4202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JMU INITIATIVE/CANNIE CAMPBELL</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hannah Facknitz</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ted Byrd</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lisa Mathews-Ailsworth</td>
<td>540-568-6259</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cannie Campbell</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jeremy Hawkins</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hawkinjl@jmu.edu">hawkinjl@jmu.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taylor Symons, Coordinator, Fraternity and Sorority Life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christopher Mueller</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Chris.mueller@harrisonburgva.gov">Chris.mueller@harrisonburgva.gov</a> 540-560-8505</td>
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<tr>
<td>STUDENT-DRIVEN PROGRAM FOR CHANGE &amp; REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS</td>
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<td>540-568-5903</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENFORCEMENT</td>
<td>Lisa Mathews-Ailsworth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brian Cowger</td>
<td>540-434-5150, ext. 119 <a href="mailto:brian@matchboxrealty.com">brian@matchboxrealty.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Beverly McGowan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mcgbev@gmail.com">mcgbev@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cpl. Horowitz (HPD)</td>
<td>437-2643</td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Cross training wth PD and City on what’s enforceable and How</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revising Party Registration</td>
<td>Jeremy Hawkins</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hawkinjl@jmu.edu">hawkinjl@jmu.edu</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scott Sellers (HPD)</td>
<td>540-578-3710</td>
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<td>Look at Ordinances</td>
<td>Cheyenne Bisbee</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Cheyenne@matchboxrealty.com">Cheyenne@matchboxrealty.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stacy Turner (City)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Stacy.turner@harrisonburgva.gov">Stacy.turner@harrisonburgva.gov</a> 432-7700</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Christina von Rotz</td>
<td>820-8419 <a href="mailto:vonrotzbrunk@gmail.com">vonrotzbrunk@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>John Hancock (HPD)</td>
<td>704-906-4911</td>
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<tr>
<td>JMU JUDICIAL AFFAIRS COORDINATION/STUDY OF OTHER MODELS</td>
<td>Joe Lynch</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lynchj@newmanavenue.com">lynchj@newmanavenue.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stacy Turner (City)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Stacy.turner@harrisonburgva.gov">Stacy.turner@harrisonburgva.gov</a> 432-7700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chris Ehrhart, JMU Judicial Affairs (focus on education, not just enforcement)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ehrharcl@jmu.edu">ehrharcl@jmu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTURE/EDUCATION</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Mike@matchboxrealty.com">Mike@matchboxrealty.com</a></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Quality</td>
<td>Paul Riner, Riner Rentals</td>
<td>438-8800</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jeremy Hawkins</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hawkinjl@jmu.edu">hawkinjl@jmu.edu</a></td>
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<td>Civilty is</td>
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| **Week Back**
Event/Presence/Preventative
Education/Orientation | Cannie Campbell | normaleavine@gmail.com |
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