

BELLINGHAM- WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY CAMPUS COMMUNITY COALITION

May 19, 2006

St Luke's Community Health Education Center
3333 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

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| Alanna Ahern, WWU Associated Students | Kunle Ojikutu, WWU Office of Student Affairs |
| Anna-Marie Neff, WWU Student | Lara Welker, Campus Community Coalition |
| April Markiewicz, Samish Neighborhood Assn | Leah Koehn, WWU Associated Students Legal Information Center |
| Barbara Hudson, NW Rental Owners Assn | Lidia Tillman-McAdoo, Rental Property Owner |
| Barney Goltz, Cornwall Neighborhood Assn | Lyndsey DeLuca, WWU Student |
| Bill Ouwenee, South Hill Neighborhood Assn | Malcolm Oliver, Whatcom Comm. Coll, Bellingham Tech Coll. |
| Brian Tines, The Royal / Fairhaven Pub & Martini Bar | Margaret Vlahos, Whatcom Community College |
| Buff Schoenfeld, WWU President's Office | Marie Eschenfelder, WWU Center for Service Learning |
| Chris Neumann, Community member | Matt Vogt, WWU Student |
| Christine Burkhart, Bellingham Police Department | Michael Flippo, WA State Liquor Control Board – Wenatchee/Ellensburg |
| Dale Monroe, Puget Neighborhood Assn | Michael Schardein, WWU Office of Student Life |
| Dick Conoboy, Samish Neighborhood | Michael Sledge, WWU Residence Life |
| Elizabeth Allen, Happy Valley Neighborhood Assn | Moshe Quinn, COB Planning Division |
| Erin King-Luce, WWU Students in Service | Naomi Jones, St. Joseph Hospital |
| Erwin Lloyd, Puget Neighborhood Assn | Renee Collins, WWU Office of Student Affairs |
| Francesca Raffini, WWU Student | Richard Maneval, Alabama Hill Neighborhood Assn |
| Gayle Shipley, WWU Environmental Health & Safety | Steve Felmley, Bellingham Police Dept |
| Gene Knutson, Bellingham City Council | Steve Kirkelie, City of Bellingham Attorney's Office |
| Iain Davidson, Association of Bellingham Neighborhoods | Sue Anderson, Whatcom Coalition for Healthy Communities |
| Jim Schuster, WWU VU Facilities, Student Activities | Susan Adams, Campus Community Coalition |
| Jim Shaw, WWU Police | Ted Pratt, WWU Student Affairs |
| Kathryn Hanowell, City of Bellingham Mayor's Office | Tom Dixon, WA State Liquor Control Board |
| Kevin Majkut, WWU Viking Union Student Activities | Tony Masias, WA State Liquor Control Board |
| Kevin McClain, WWU Student | Van Hudson, NW Rental Owners Assn |
| Kristen Beck, WWU Prevention and Wellness Services | |
| Kristi Coy, CLX Rentals | |

Lara Welker welcomed the group and members introduced themselves. Lara extended a special welcome to people attending a Coalition meeting for the first time. She presented a certificate of appreciation to Alanna Ahern, WWU student and Associated Students Vice President for Campus and Community Affairs. Alanna is graduating this spring and has been actively involved with the Coalition for two years, bringing much energy and enthusiasm to several work groups and projects.

CCC project updates

Lara gave a brief overview of plans for enforcement and LateNight@WWU activities for the fall.

For enforcement, more emphasis will be placed on enforcement education at the start of fall quarter, including neighborhood “Think Locally – Act Neighborly” doorknockers, ads in the Western Front, promoting the Off-Campus WWU website which includes tips for safe and legal parties and information on party-related citations, and a “Let’s Talk” forum with a focus on dialog between students and law enforcement personnel.

The LateNight@WWU work group met last week and is planning another “line up” of late night events at the beginning of fall quarter. The Coalition has also been working with WWU’s Dining Services and Associated Students to extend the hours of the Underground Coffeehouse and offer late night films on an ongoing basis.

Anna-Marie Neff asked whether the “party bus” would continue to operate. Lt. Steve Felmley stated that the Bellingham Police Department no longer has the big bus used in the past, but a smaller bus will be used and Party Patrol will operate the same way it has in previous years.

Steve Kirkelie of the Bellingham City Attorney’s Office reported on the Neighborhood Service Alternative pilot project recently completed with the Happy Valley and York neighborhood associations. People who received a minor in possession of alcohol (MIP) citation and lived in those neighborhoods were required to do two hours of community service with the neighborhood association. The goal was to connect them back to the neighborhood where they live and where the offense occurred. He stated that on average the participants each completed 10 hours of service with the neighborhood association, even though they were only required to do two. Based on the success of the pilot, the program will continue in Happy Valley and York and may be expanded to other neighborhoods.

It was asked whether only WWU students were referred for neighborhood service. Steve clarified that people were referred for service without regard to student status, but that most of the people referred were college students.

Elizabeth Allen commented that about ten students attended a Happy Valley Neighborhood Association meeting, and then worked on neighborhood trails. She felt the work they did and the interactions between them and long-term neighbors were very positive.

Susan Adams reported on the new Off-Campus WWU website. The purpose of the site is to educate students about living off campus, and developing it has been a collaborative effort involving the Coalition’s work group, WWU students and staff. She showed the live site, navigating the four main sections: “Moving into Your New Place,” “Be the Neighbor Everyone Loves,” “Partying in Bellingham,” and “Get Involved in Your Neighborhood.” She also showed two of the short videos.

Bill Owneneel said the site seemed to strike a good balance between taking the issues seriously and still having some humor and levity to it.

Anna-Marie Neff suggested creating a blog where students could discuss what they think of the site and the information; Susan stated that the site does include a feedback form, but a blog could also be explored.

Barbara Hudson asked how the site would be promoted to students. Susan described some of the promotional strategies, such as posters, public service announcements on KUGS, announcements in new student publications, ads in the Western Front, sending an email with the link to students who indicate they are moving out of the residence halls, and showing it at the upcoming landlord-tenant workshop sponsored by the Legal Information Center on campus.

Susan also mentioned plans to promote the site with rental property owners, and Van Hudson stated he would share the information at the next meeting of the Northwest Rental Owners Association.

Coalition members are encouraged to contact Susan Adams with any additional ideas for promoting the website.

Visit Off-Campus WWU at www.offcampuswwu.com.

Lara gave an overview of some of the fall plans for the Neighborhoods Engaging with Students (NEST) projects, including promotion of the Off-Campus WWU website and the Neighborhood Mediation Program, continuing the Neighborhood Service program, distributing “Think Locally – Act Neighborly” doorknockers, and having the Neighborhoods table at the Associated Students information fair at the start of fall quarter.

The Neighborhood Service work group met in April and discussed additional ways to increase student integration into neighborhoods. Based on this discussion, several new NEST activities are being explored for the fall: block parties or other informal social events that focus on connecting students and neighbors, enhancing the role of student representatives on neighborhood association boards, a neighborhood-based Let’s Talk forum, and space in the Western Front dedicated to neighborhood issues and events.

What are you hearing?

Lara noted that it is the end of the academic year, the end of the Coalition’s grant from the Washington Department of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, and there is a little over one year remaining of the National Institutes of Health funding. It therefore seems like an appropriate time to reflect on student drinking -- the issue Coalition members are working together to address.

Lara asked members to consider the question, “What are you hearing about student drinking at WWU and in Bellingham?” write down their thoughts, and discuss them with others at their table.

One person from each table then reported out highlights from the groups’ discussion.

Reoccurring themes were:

- There seem to be fewer off-campus parties this year, especially big parties.
- Student alcohol use may be down, but there are indications that illicit use of medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, is increasing.
- Drinking and driving is a concern.

Ian Davidson asked about free taxi rides for intoxicated students, and Brian Tines noted that there are not enough taxis in Bellingham to meet the demand when the bars close; sometimes people wait over an hour for a ride. Alanna Ahern commented that she and other students have been working to get late night bus service established to meet the late night transportation need.

Please see pages 4-5 for the list of all the comments from attendees’ cards.

Lara closed the meeting and thanked members for coming. She stated that there would be no Coalition meeting during the summer. However the work groups and projects will be active and she invited members to contact her or Susan with any questions or suggestions.

What are you hearing about student drinking at WWU and in Bellingham?

Complete comments from cards:

Less drinking/fewer loud parties

- I am hearing that late night programming has been very instrumental in reducing drinking on campuses.
- (1) Lower numbers than last year. (2) CCC approach, education is better than punitive measures of pass to all involved. Late night programs; other drugs—close to campus problems.
- No complaints in neighborhood, compared to previous years.
- Impressed less noise, litter, traffic, parties.
- From the University Police perspective: there continues to be some drinking by the underage groups. However the frequency and size of parties has gone down significantly. Off campus parties/calls have also become less frequent.
- Fewer comments about large parties. More complaints about MIP/Party bus in fall busting up parties.
- Less than previous years. Awareness of party patrol.
- There are less disruptive parties in the Happy Valley neighborhood. Focus on DUI instead of underage.
- From administration (WWU) point of view there has been less complaint from the neighborhoods.
- What the [City] council is not hearing. The emails and phone calls about drinking parties have dropped off about 99% since the coalition and renters association have stepped up to the plate and done a wonderful job on this problem.
- Alcohol abuse seems to be lower, or less frequently noticed this year. At the end or beginning of quarters more partying seems to occur. Nice weather incites more parties outdoors. Visible from sidewalks.
- I have not heard of a party in my part of my neighborhood (South Hill).
- Slowed down a lot in my neighborhood—especially after citation issued.
- The noise is decreasing in the neighborhoods.
- Have not heard as much as the past. Appears to be down due to more education, patrols, and information available.
- Not much, thanks.
- End of the year party/celebrations? Not that much, really. Seems to be on the down-low. Not flaunted openly? I live in the Birchwood neighborhood and drug issues in my neighborhood, but not really related to students, more related to poverty issues.

Parties and alcohol-related problems continue

- Indian Street – students from residence halls coming off campus who are drunk disrespecting property.
- Student drinking on Indian, about a block from campus is pretty crazy R, F, S, days. Houses are having parties and people are overflowing onto lawns and into the streets. Another problem is large groups of underage drinkers coming down from the dorms already drunk and not respecting people's property and adding a large number of underage drinkers to parties which lead them to getting broken up. I receive calls from neighbors complaining about students next door or down the street. Parking issues. Trash in front yard. Traditionally, the number of these calls goes up with warmer weather.
- That students are still partying! I am not aware of what the students are doing. My friends/coworkers are saying that they have a partying house in their neighborhood. It's hard to find a party or activity where they (students) aren't drinking.
- Respect issues between neighbors: students underage drinking/parties are a growing problem.
- Not much, but there is one house in the York neighborhood where there is obvious drinking/drug use on an on-going basis. No one is reacting to it except to complain to each other. The landlord is not doing anything although it's an ongoing problem even though the tenants have changed several times over the years.
- Observed students at Martini Pub at Lakeway Inn. Students there drink excessively.
- There are several weekend parties which are hosting teenagers from high schools.
- Increased concern/complaint about noise disorderly conduct in central business district (downtown). This increase of complaints is in direct proportion to downtown housing increase.
- The City is just trying to make money on students by enforcing the liquor laws.
- Need more policing by WWU – more accountability. It's a Western issue—"that's what we are paying for" (parents).

Drinking patterns

- Thursday nights are still a tradition for cruising the bars—it's almost a ritual!
- Early week drinking at bars and night clubs has gone away! Sun, Mon, Tues, Wed—do not exist downtown.
- Students aren't drinking at licensed premises in the early week.
- Expensive to drink—preload at home prior to bar hopping.
- The first two years of off-campus living is when the most partying occurs.

- Amount of underage drinking somewhat different depending on location: on-campus, off-campus parties, bars, and Canada.
- Seems more of a problem at the beginning of year. Younger, inexperienced drinker usually not able to determine their limits. Isolated incidents around holidays when other kids may go home those left behind may become depressed and drink more.

Expectations/social norms

- Party culture—a form of coping—a social thing. Control issue, human nature, not necessarily a student thing. A need for love, community, connectedness and self acceptance.
- “What’s the big deal—we all drank as Western students. Its part going to college. In fact, the cops were pretty nice about not busting our parties and we appreciated that.” (What we hear from peers who went to Western years ago.)
- Overall drug use. Not restricted to alcohol. It’s an epidemic. Lots of pressure.
- Misperception that everyone drinks.
- It is a cultural part of many students’ life styles.
- Students are often disrespecting the neighborhood, sometimes stemming from not knowing neighbors. Students think they are in college and just wanna have fun.
- More than college culture, part of greater Bellingham culture, issues are bigger than drinking and WWU—WWU is key—incoming people to build social structures, fill the vacuum for leaders, draw people into the spot light to become community leaders.

Enforcement

- Out of 1,000 ID checks at the Royal, how many underage people present their actual ID showing them to be underage?
- Students need to know police perspective.
- The bulk of the penalty is on the students—none on the landlord.
- What is the party patrol? Why is there a party patrol?
- Students think police sometimes are unfair, but sometimes are fair. The problem is we never know what is going to happen.

Drunk driving/safety

- There needs to be some system for making the trip from the bars to home safer: more lights in alleys, whistle.
- There needs to be more emphasis on drunk driving rather than underage drinking.
- Drunk drivers.
- Drunk driving is also a problem.
- Drinking and driving patrols; advertise cab companies and safe drivers. Walking home from bars – more street lights.

Other drug use

- It’s not the drinking I’m hearing about...there is concern about growing use of other drugs...prescription and non-prescription.
- Move towards harder drug issues.

Need for education/resources

- There is a need for communication about consequences of MIP, DUI...drinking underage, being loud, etc.
- There is a lack of understanding of the difference between “normal” partying/drinking and problem drinking and alcoholism. There needs to be a person/several people easily accessible to students to provide this information, someone “between” Resident Advisors and Lifestyle Advisors.
- More awareness of what constitutes an alcohol problem. Resident Advisors are seen as police of the residence halls (babysitters), so they cannot be effective to provide information and confidential space to disclose information that could involve drinking.

Other comments

- Awareness, but of what? Enforcement dominates treatment and true healing. Why drink? Party culture, coping. Lose control from fear of not having control. Need for community and connectedness (versus separate), need to let go, need for love.
- CWU rural area drinking is “the” activity of choice. Spring time, early fall party/party/party. Getty’s Cove, Yakima River, Cle Elem Hills.
- Advertise Off-Campus WWU website on WTA buses and free shuttles.
- The return of the sun has probably increased the visibility/noise of student drinking, but not necessarily drinking itself. Bellingham students are reflecting Healthy Youth Survey [results] of binge drinking and easy access from peers, adults and parents.