

Narragansett - URI Coalition
Steering Committee Minutes

May 6, 2008 Meeting

Coalition Attendees

Town Gov.: Jeff Ceasrine; Robert Briar
NPD: Joseph Little; Robert Storme; Desiree Dugan
URI Admin.: Leslie Williams; Katrina Dorsey; Dan Graney
URI students: Jaclyn Pascocello, Josh Feinberg
Neighborhoods: Gerry McCarthy; Bob Shields; Carol Stuart; Eileen Desforges
Real Estate:
Businesses/Liquor Vendors:

Meeting called to order by Gerry McCarthy, Co-Chair at 4 pm.

Storme moved to accept Steering Committee's Minutes of March & April meetings. Both minutes accepted unanimously as submitted.

1 - Election of Officers

Shields volunteered to continue as Secretary.
McCarthy volunteered to serve as Co-Chair.
Williams & Graney urged a student serve as the other Co-Chair.
After discussion, Pascocello agreed to be the student Co-Chair.
This slate was nominated & voted into office unanimously.

2 - Suggested Topics for 2008-2009 Steering Committee Meetings

Included in the discussion were last year's accomplishments (& failures) and what the Coalition should concentrate upon during the next academic year. It was generally agreed by all that we need to abandon our tendency to rehash issues & instead develop new approaches to our issues.

Ceasrine reiterated several of the points he made in a memo he had previously e-mailed to all members. He emphasized the town's views that: 1) private property rights in RI are defined by the State & implemented locally through ordinances & zoning regulations, 2) rooming houses are defined as dwellings where persons rent individual rooms, not having a lease, 3) "mega-house" is a term lacking a specific, legal meaning.

Stuart objected that this narrow interpretation of the town's responsibility to its permanent residents ignores those concerns relating to the quality of life issues of vital importance to the general welfare & happiness of its residents.

McCarthy mentioned we need to have representation from the Realtors, business & liquor retailers on the Coalition. Shields stated that he had always sent minutes to & personally invited two liquor store owners & The C. of C. Director to serve; they all declined. Briar said he will do what he can to enlist reps from the business community. Stuart said we might get help from the Washington County Board of Realtors in finding a rep. Erin Rooney was mentioned as a new neighborhood rep from Bonnet Shores.

Briar stated he issued 290 written trash warnings & 206 verbal orders to pick up trash on private property during the last 9 months. After the third warning, he informs town authorities, who can cite the owner for an health violation. Neighborhood reps agreed that several properties which had historically been trashy, have been cleaner this year. He suggested we should promote the use animal proof cages/corals to contain garbage cans at rental properties.

Desforges said we should work to stiffen the student code of conduct. We should lobby the RI Board of Higher Ed. She mentioned that Burlington, VT & Boston have implemented student codes of behavior & work proactively with the Universities in their cities to implement zero tolerance enforcement procedures.

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Cearrine suggested we write our state elected officials alerting them to our concerns & needs. We might for example ask to raise the current \$500 limit for misdemeanors, which is the top fine the town can impose on violations of noise ordinances.

Stuart suggested we urge URI to mandate a course on the social obligations of community life & potential penalties for violating the laws, specifically as a prerequisite for all students, offered at the time they move off campus. She strongly recommended these sessions should include neighborhood representatives, town officials & police.

Williams mentioned it might be possible to issue a certificate for such a course. Neighborhood reps warned that mandatory attendance requirements and the content of course 101 have heretofore been widely forgotten or ignored by the time a student actually moves off campus. A more pertinent, focussed & timely course needs to be devised by URI.

3 - Open forum

Russ Matuszek urged the Coalition to become more involved in the oversight of the liquor vendors and the town's effort to prevent illegal purchase of alcohol. He suggested we might benefit by teaming with the RI PTA organizations to develop a joint program to combat alcohol abuse. Little responded that the training offered by the NPD of personnel at all the town's liquor providers in the proper procedures checking IDs and reporting violations is ongoing. The next police meeting with liquor vendors will be held soon.

4 - Announcements

Williams said that an end of year food pickup has been arranged with Narragansett's rubbish removal businesses. It is intended to provide off campus students a way to donate unused nonperishable food to a food bank at the time they depart.

McCarthy offered to meet the students attending today's meeting again before they leave town for the summer to explain the Coalition's purposes & outline the responsibilities of the Co-Chair; Pascoello & Feingerg agreed and he will arrange that via e-mail.

5 - Meetings Next Year

Regarding next year's meetings, it was agreed we should have 6 meetings during the 2008-09 year. They will be scheduled, when the URI calendar allows, on the 3rd Tuesday of September, October, November, and in 2009, in February, March & April.

Shields requested that when statistics are announced at future meetings by town & URI officials, the secretary be given a hard copy of them to avoid possible errors when recording them in the minutes.

Next meeting:

September 16, 2008 at 4 pm, Narragansett Town Hall.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.

For the record, no motions were formally proposed at this meeting.

As requested by McCarthy during this meeting, an informal meeting was held on May 15th, with McCarthy, Pascoello, Feinberg & Shields attending, to resolve matters left hanging at the end of this May meeting. It was resolved for several reasons that Feinberg & Pascoello would jointly serve as the URI Co-Chair & that they would work together sharing the responsibilities.

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Respectfully submitted,
Bob Shields, Secretary