

Notes from GSG/Administration meeting on Lawrence Apartments Construction

April 5, 2002, 2:00pm, 306 Nassau Hall

Present were:

Eric Adelizzi, GSG Corresponding Secretary
Anita Adhitya, GSG Recording Secretary
Bill Bausmith, Construction Manager
Dawn Brooks, graduate student
Amy Gutmann, Provost
Pamela Hersh, Director of Community Affairs
Jon Hlafter, Director of Physical Planning
Mark Kirby, Architect/Planner
Tom Miller, Director of Housing
Joann Mitchell, Vice Provost for Administration
F. Joy Montero, Associate Dean of the Graduate School
Meredith Safran, GSG Press Secretary
Radhika Wijetunge, Lawrence Committee Secretary

INTRODUCTION TO THE CURRENT STATE OF THE PLANNING

Mr. Hlafter started the meeting by discussing the current status of the Lawrence Construction project. The project will be presented to the Princeton Planning Board soon, and it is hoped that they will hear the plan this summer. Based on this schedule, the first buildings (two of them) should be open by fall 2003. The hope is to break ground this coming fall.

Mr. Hlafter delineated the reasons behind the construction. In the fall of 2000, there was a "sharp and unexpected" increase in the graduate student population, leading to the concern that insufficient housing was available. The consultants Brailsford and Dunlavey were called in and they have issued a report. Princeton currently houses 75% of its enrolled graduate students. This is a significantly higher proportion than comparable research institutions. Stanford and Columbia house about 50% and others less. Thus, Princeton is ahead of its peers, but its community is different. It was decided that the University should do more and house a higher percentage. This goal could not be achieved by fall 2002 without resorting to "developer housing" of poor quality, the condition of which would deteriorate at an unacceptably rapid rate and require major

renovations in 30 years or so. A decision was made to build for the long-term.

Mr. Hlafter said that a number of sites around campus were considered for the construction. First was the Butler Tract, where housing is currently "not the best", but construction at Butler would require the demolition of units in the short term, sharpening the housing crisis. Second, an area on Broadmead Street is owned by the University and zoned residential, but the density of housing permitted is too low; some construction is still planned for this area. Third, plans were put forward for housing south of Lake Carnegie, but transportation would be an issue and the addition of a Dinky stop would be too difficult in the short-term. All eyes therefore focused on Lawrence.

Mr. Hlafter stated that the project as he would describe it was really two projects coming together. The other project involves the relocation of the Springdale Golf Clubhouse to the Lawrence site, making room at the corner of College and Alexander for an undergraduate residential college. This site was considered for the sixth undergraduate college, but problems of land ownership led to the selection of the tennis courts south of Dillon Gymnasium instead. "One can fully expect, twenty to thirty years from now, that there will be another increase in the undergraduate enrollment." This increase will be reflected in construction toward the Graduate College to "begin to undo the problem created" when the Graduate College was located on the perimeter of campus against University President Woodrow Wilson's wishes. Therefore, the University is working with Springdale golf Club to relocate the Clubhouse to the southern end of the links. The new driving range will extend into a presently treed area near the clubhouse.

Mr. Hlafter moved to a map and described the "small housing village" that it is hoped will be created. There are currently 150 units in Lawrence and another 200 will be added. There will be seven new buildings: four 3-storey, two 5-storey, and one 6-storey. There will be roads on both sides. The lower level of the building closest to the existing Lawrence Apartments will include a "community center", a meeting room, a kitchen for catering use, laundry facilities, and an apartment for the superintendent. The current superintendent apartment will be converted to other uses.

THE BUILDINGS

Mr. Hlafter said that not all residents would be graduate students. Postdocs and visiting scholars will have access to housing there. There will be 136 two-bedroom apartments, 34 one-bedroom apartments, and 32 efficiencies.

Mr. Hlafter showed diagrams of the planned apartments. The two-bedroom apartments featured a door with a kitchen on one side, a living room straight ahead, and a corridor on the other side leading to two equally-sized bedrooms with closets, two additional closets, and a bathroom. The external hallways also featured one hallway closet per two-bedroom apartment, presumably for public or janitorial use. A pair of one-bedroom and efficiency apartments fits into the footprint of a two-bedroom apartment. Efficiency units have become popular at MIT, Mr. Hlafter added, so Princeton has decided to try them out.

There will be 346 beds in total. Because of the housing of spouses and partners, it is anticipated that somewhere between 200 and 250 graduate students will be accommodated. The Physical Planning Department hopes for and expects breathing room in the short term, i.e. a temporary excess of housing, so that the Butler Tract can be emptied in five one-year stages allowing for the replacement of 20% of units at a time. Work also needs to be done elsewhere -- the existing Lawrence Apartments are more than 35 years old and are in need of "renewal". Brailsford and Dunlavey found that much graduate student housing was in "poor condition".

PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

Mr. Hlafter stated that there were several problems that have to be solved:

1. Traffic and Circulation. Even the current situation, in which traffic exits West Drive onto Alexander is bad because of heavy traffic and the curve in Alexander. Therefore, an outlet will be made north of the Alexander Curve and a traffic light will be installed. A traffic report will be filed with the planning application and this report will also be used in connection with the Golf Clubhouse relocation. The authority that administers Karin Court will not allow golf club traffic to go through their complex or by their parking lot, so another connection will be

made,
north of the new apartments. Currently, there are 150 units in Lawrence and parking spaces exist in a 1.1:1 ratio with units. Public Safety conducted a survey showing that about 20 spaces or more are empty overnight, so new spaces will be added at this ratio. Mr. Hlafter stated that with only 150 current residents, a shuttle service would not be efficient. Nevertheless, the University will "continue to investigate" shuttle service as the population increases. While this stops short of an complete solution, it is an "honest commitment".

2. Loss of trees. Eight-hundred trees will be removed during the Lawrence construction, and a similar amount will be lost during the golf course work. The University plans to plant 400 trees as part of the landscaping of the new apartments, and one of the two new courtyards will be forested. Mr. Hlafter showed a flyover picture taken in 1940, demonstrating the the land in question was previously cleared farmland. The University planted trees when the Lawrence Apartments were built.

3. Wildlife habitat. The construction will result in the reduction of size of a wildlife habitat. There is an official wildlife preserve across West Drive that will not be affected in any way, but some wildlife cross into the woods in question. Mr. Hlafter summarized: "Wildlife tend to adopt places that are unofficial." Professor David S. Wilcove, a member of the Princeton faculty with joint appointments in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology and the Woodrow Wilson School, a former Princeton graduate student who lived in the Lawrence Apartments, will, with an EEB graduate student, conduct an assessment of ecological impact over the next two months. If remediation is needed, there are opportunities in the Lake Carnegie/Stony Brook vicinity. Mr. Hlafter pointed to a location south of the Delaware and Raritan Canal and east of Washington Road. Mr. Kirby pointed out that, for the first time at Princeton, a geothermal climate control system will be used. Mr. Hlafter said that the University has been advised that the area under the proposed driving range, just north of the proposed apartments, is very suitable to geothermal wells. If it works out, such wells may be used elsewhere on campus. The basic idea of geothermal climate control is that the ground, if you dig sufficiently deep, tends to remain at a nearly constant temperature year-round; thus, it is cooler than the surface temperature in the summer and warmer in the winter. A heat exchange system can take advantage of this to draw heat

from the ground in the winter months and aid in heat dissipation in the summer months.

Mr. Hlafter welcomed comments and questions.

TRAFFIC FLOW

Ms. Safran introduced herself, Ms. Adhitya, Mr. Adelizzi, and Ms. Wijetunge. Mr. Adelizzi raised the question of traffic flow through the parking lot. Mr. Hlafter stated that there will be no circle per se, as exists in the current parking lot, but there will be "drop-off" areas at the far end of both the old and new construction, and also right in the middle.

Mr. Adelizzi raised the issue of the roadway to the golf course running north of the proposed construction and associated issues of safety, traffic, and noise, and noting that Karin Court had been alarmed enough to forbid the placement of this road by their complex. Mr. Hlafter stated that a gravel road would be required anyway, since the municipal Fire Marshal requires emergency lanes near all buildings. Mr. Hlafter expected the traffic to be small, with perhaps 50 golfers on the fairways at any given time, and these staying 4-5 hours. Most community events would be held in the courtyards and would therefore not be disturbed. Mr. Hlafter considered the safety issue "modest".

Mr. Adelizzi brought up Mr. Hlafter's earlier comment regarding the placement of the Graduate College. Mr. Adelizzi stated that many Graduate College residents did not look favorably on the idea of an undergraduate college so close to the Graduate College. Further, the construction of one would not solve any "problem" since the Graduate College would still be inconveniently far from campus and lose the only redeeming characteristic of this distance, namely the isolation. Mr. Hlafter stated that he had not meant to characterize this as a "problem". Nevertheless, he noted, the University will continue to grow and growth will occur in the direction of the Graduate College. Mr. Adelizzi considered this needlessly fatalistic. Provost Gutmann stated that none of the current graduate students at the Graduate College would see any change. She added that part of the student and alumni bodies will oppose any new thing. She stressed that no decision had been made in regard to the location of a

seventh residential college. She denounced a "NIMBY" (Not In My BackYard) attitude that foreclosed on future possibilities. Mr. Hlafter stated that an intermediate place between such a college and the Graduate College might be seen as an ideal place for graduate/undergraduate interaction, or even shared housing. One should view the movement of the Clubhouse as opening up opportunities for the future, since it is prudent to think ahead. Provost Gutmann suggested that the current discussion focus on the Lawrence construction and what we really need to get the Planning Board to approve the plan. Mr. Adelizzi stated that he had not wished to change the subject but that he was afraid that the Physical Planning Department saw the isolation of the Graduate College as a "problem to be corrected." Mr. Hlafter assured him that this was not the case.

SHUTTLE SERVICE

Ms. Safran raised the issue of a shuttle service. Clearly, the Facilities Department was not responsible for a shuttle service, but would one be incorporated into the proposal presented to the Planning Board? Mr. Hlafter stated that Planning would prefer to reduce the need for automobiles and was attempting to design with this goal in mind. For instance, a location across the canal in West Windsor was considered for graduate housing, but it was determined that no housing would be constructed across the canal unless a second Dinky stop could be arranged.

Mr. Hlafter added that the Lawrence Apartments were "on the edge", i.e. a little too far to walk but at an acceptable biking distance. Biking raised a safety issue, though.

Mr. Hlafter said that Ms. Hersh was working with the Township and Borough of Princeton and various University departments, including the GSG, on a shuttle system. Nevertheless, the shuttle would not be included in the planning proposal. Ms. Hersh suggested that if the shuttle were a failure, its placement in the planning proposal might require the University to run an empty shuttle, serving no one and wasting money. She stressed that a shuttle system is fraught with difficulties, including cost and liability issues. Nevertheless, she added that graduate students must simply know that the administration is really concerned. Mr.

Hlafter

suggested that there is low-income housing nearby in Karin Court and that the planning board might require the University to serve Karin Court with shuttle service if the issue is broached.

Provost Gutmann stated that there were two issues on the table: (1) what is committed to in a public way, and (2) what the University commits itself to doing internally. She suggested that it would be irresponsible to make a public commitment to the Planning Board, adding that the University has made a commitment internally to get a sort of shuttle service that "really works". She stressed the fear that the town could "piggyback" and make things more complicated.

Ms. Safran suggested that, in an earlier incarnation, the plans had called for a shuttle system as part of the proposal. Provost Gutmann stated that this had never been the case, but that the Planning Board might mandate a study of shuttle service.

Mr. Hlafter said that the University had had a shuttle service "for years" but that it had not been a great success. The University currently runs a shuttle from the new parking garage, and that has proven to be successful.

Ms. Safran commented that the GSG has been collecting data and supporting statistics for a shuttle service.

Ms. Hersh commented on the density issue, stating that the Planning Board can't deny the proposed density, but it can deny the requested variance for a smaller parking lot than the state guidelines suggest for the given number of residents.

Provost Gutmann stressed the imperative nature of the schedule, stating that if the plans were not approved soon, the opening date of Fall 2003 could be missed.

PRICING OF UNITS

Ms. Safran turned the discussion to pricing of units. She described the financial realities faced by graduate students and distributed a sample budget for a graduate student:

Pricing of Units, projections based on current Lawrence rate
(Based on single graduate student entering 2001-02)

Gross income from stipend, calendar year (academic year + summer funding):	\$17,000
Federal tax on \$17,000 after standard deduction and single exemption:	- \$1,500
Net income from stipend, calendar year:	\$15,500
Lawrence Apartment high-rise one-bedroom, 12-month rent (2002-03 rate, \$713/mo):	- \$8,560
Balance:	\$6,940
Utilities, PSE&G (monthly \$25, based on 2001 rates, not scaled for summer a/c usage):	- \$300
Balance:	\$6,640
Telephone, Verizon local and long-distance (monthly \$45, basic services at 2001 rates):	- \$540
Balance:	\$6,100
Groceries (monthly \$200, based on local rates at Wegman's, Pathmark, and Wild Oats):	- \$2,400
Balance:	\$3,700
Car maintenance and insurance (basic; one year)	- \$2,500
Balance:	\$1,200

Clothing, books, supplies, emergencies, supplementary
insurance fees, family/holiday and work-related travel and
out-of-pocket expenses [not included]

Mr. Adelizzi stated that Mr. Miller had said at the February 5, 2002,
Open
Forum on Housing and Health Care, organized by Vice President and
Secretary Thomas Wright, that the rates for the new Lawrence Apartments
would be higher than those of the existing units, since they would be
more
desirable. Mr. Miller confirmed this statement, adding that the precise
rates had not yet been determined.

Provost Gutmann stated that it would be foolish to make the new housing
unaffordable to graduate students. She added that the units might be
"slightly" more expensive than less desirable units. Mr. Hlafter stated
that the least expensive University housing for graduate students was
when
two graduate students shared a two-bedroom apartment. The low rent is a

trade-off for some loss of privacy.

Ms. Safran commented that many international graduate students arrive in Princeton with a spouse and possibly a family and have to live on one income due to visa regulations. Provost Gutmann suggested that one must look at the whole stock of graduate student housing and that much of it is quite affordable. Dean Montero said that international students are required to document that they have sufficient income to support themselves (and, by extension, their families) before coming to Princeton.

Provost Gutmann stated that the administration will remain cognizant of the financial situation of graduate students but must also consider that the new apartments will be more highly sought after. Mr. Miller affirmed that there will be a distinction in the pricing, but that the pricing would be set at a "comfortable" level.

Ms. Safran raised the issue of the cost of living. Provost Gutmann stated that teaching stipends go up each year, at a higher rate than inflation. Mr. Miller stated that the costs charged in rent reflected the decisions of the Priorities Committee. Ms. Wijetunge added that AR stipends are not as high as AI stipends. Provost Gutmann asserted that housing costs don't increase much and that Princeton, while remaining competitive with the market, tends to lag behind it.

Ms. Wijetunge mentioned the plight of foreign students with families who apply for a two-bedroom apartment. Vice Provost Mitchell suggested that the new Lawrence construction should be viewed within the larger picture of the entirety of the University housing stock. Not all goals, she said, could be accomplished at Lawrence. Provost Gutmann stated that the Lawrence construction would be an important addition to the graduate student housing stock, but that it would not be the last one. Although it will not be perfect for everyone, it will make things "so much better." Provost Gutmann requested that the GSG work with Ms. Hersh to help in getting through the planning process.

As the meeting was running late, the Provost excused herself and departed.

STORAGE AND COMMON FACILITIES

Ms. Safran raised the issue of storage. Mr. Hlafter stated that the basement of the six-storey unit would be "mainly mechanical" but may have storage spaces.

Ms. Safran asked whether there would be bicycle shelters. Mr. Hlafter stated that there would not, but that bicycle lockup posts would be placed near each entrance. He added that there currently exists a large shelter next to the high-rise building at Lawrence but that it was more difficult to provide shelters with lower density housing. It might nevertheless be possible to add one or more bicycle shelters later, but not as part of the plan.

Mr. Hlafter said that there were no bicycle shelters in other housing units, such as the Graduate College. Mr. Adelizzi stated that the Graduate College House Committee had been asking for shelters for some time. Mr. Hlafter stated that additional lockup posts had recently been added between the Old and New GCs.

Mr. Adelizzi asked whether the smaller buildings would have basements. Mr. Hlafter said that they would not. The laundry facilities would be on the first floor. Mr. Adelizzi asked for a description of the common facilities. Mr. Hlafter stated that there would be an office for the Lawrence Committee and several small study/meeting rooms. There will be a service kitchen for use in catering events.

Ms. Wijetunge asked whether there would be a computer cluster. Mr. Hlafter stated that there was no room identified as a computer cluster, but all apartments would be connected by ethernet to the campus network. Ms. Wijetunge suggested one of the first-floor rooms could be converted. Mr. Hlafter was noncommittal.

Mr. Adelizzi stated that basements were useful for future needs. As an example, he stated that the builders of the Graduate College had not anticipated in 1913 the advent of television or computer rooms, but they had built a full basement where these facilities could be added. He suggested that the University could not know what would be needed in 50-100 years and should plan ahead by building basements and modular spaces. Mr. Hlafter stated that basements, while cheap compared with other construction, were still expensive and could not be encompassed in the current construction budget.

CONSTRUCTION AND ASSOCIATED ANNOYANCES

Ms. Safran raised two points in conjunction with the construction process itself. First, there were concerns about the safety of residents during the construction. Second, there was the inconvenience to Lawrence residents, including, especially, the start time for the construction.

Mr. Hlafter stated that noise would be inevitable. Nothing he could offer would sound effective, he stated. Nevertheless, he stated that the administration and contractors would try to be sensitive.

There will be weekly meetings with the contractors and the architect, Mr. Kirby. Mr. Hlafter added that the GSG would get input into the process during those meetings. Mr. Miller said that he will set up a "communications process" so that the administration will know in advance how to handle complaints.

Mr. Hlafter stated that the loudest construction would be on the two buildings farthest away from the existing apartments.

Mr. Adelizzi suggested that some universities arrange a late start time for construction around student residences. He also added that during the previous summer, residents of the New GC had complained that renovation work had proceeded at early hours of the morning and that the contractor had apparently been unaware that the people were living in the buildings around the site. Mr. Hlafter stated that this had been due to a problem in communication between people who had not worked together before.

The meeting adjourned at 3:21pm.

EPILOGUE

After the meeting, Mr. Adelizzi wrote to Mr. Hlafter to enquire whether the forest remediation site he had mentioned would be in the path of the Millstone Bypass. Mr. Hlafter sent the following response: "The exact route of the Bypass has never been agreed upon. My recommendation would be to construct a berm to separate the road from the an expanded buffer and to fill that buffer between the road and the D&R Canal with trees."

Respectfully submitted,
Eric Adelizzi
GSG Corresponding Secretary