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MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

Housing and Community Affairs (HCA) Committee
June 10th, 2009
Meeting Minutes

Present: Wendy Lam (HCA), Julia Nickel (HCA), Julie Valastyan (Eastgate), Jason McKnight (ResLife), Amanda Zangari (Ashdown), Sidney Tsai (GSC EECS rep), Zenzile Brooks (SP), Raj Ghosh (Tang), Michelle Sander (SP), Nan Gu (GSC), Alex Chan (GSC)

Start time: 6:10 pm

1) Stop sign at Albany St./Pacific St. intersection

Complaint about lack of stop sign at Albany/Pacific intersection was raised at April's HCA meeting. Met with Vice Mayor Sam Seidel (Cambridge) last month, and the city responded last week. Their response- putting a stop sign on Albany St. would create a "less safe intersection." The Albany/Pacific intersection does not meet the engineering criteria for a safe all-way stop intersection. As a T-intersection with low volumes on Pacific Street, cars on Albany Street would not be expecting a stop sign at this location.

Currently a raised pedestrian crossing exists. City reinstalled missing pedestrian crossing warning signs last month, and planned to collect data on driver compliance, but so far no traffic counts have been made. Drivers still do not stop/slow down. Over 1000 students living in the NW corridor walk through that intersection everyday, and their safety should be a priority. HCA plans to meet with Sarah Gallop (Office of the President, Director of City Relations) and Sue Clippinger (Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Director, Cambridge) this summer to continue talks on stop sign.

Will inform dorm governments (Ashdown, Warehouse, SP) once the meeting is set up. Would be helpful to collect feedback from residents (possibly a petition).

Julia- could put up chicanes like speed bumps, flower pots to force people to slow down.

Kevin - Similar issue occurred at Simmons. Raised crosswalk (yellow-painted speed bump) was built. Response has been positive.

2) Community Outreach Subcommittee

Introduction of Michelle Sander, the new chair of this subcommittee. Initial focus on 1) educational outreach, and 2) Cambridge. Idea is to collaborate with existing outreach group (such as Science Club for Girls., Tutoring Plus, etc.) Plan to create teams of people to work together. Monthly or bimonthly lunches to build community and share their experiences. General timeline: talk to different groups over the summer,

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and pick one, set up program. Launch program in fall, advertise heavily during orientation. Sally Susnowitz suggested applying for a student life grant for extra funding. You will hear from Michelle very soon about search for volunteers. Contact Michelle or the HCA chairs for questions.

3) MIT Housing Website

Housing hired external company (Nimble Partners) to revamp website entirely. Proposed launch date is in mid-October (beta version). Main point is to streamline content and cut irrelevant information. On-campus content probably going to remain very similar. Wendy shares more details about improvements. Need to fill one slot (preferably an on-campus student) for testing on Friday at 10:30am. RentMonkey will be transferred over officially to MIT Housing.

4) Graduate Student Dental Plan – Survey draft

Distribution of copies of draft survey. Wendy recaps the most important points of the current dental plan. Plan to run survey in August, run focus group late summer/ early fall, and collect data from MIT Dental and Delta Dental to back up our hunch that graduate students are not a higher risk group than other students and that it would be financially feasible for MIT to self-insure (rather than offering Delta Dental's basic plan). Please get back to Wendy with comments. Will run draft of survey by Steve Lerman this Friday.

5) Campus Safety Initiative

In response to incidents on campus recently attempt to increase vigilance. Want to recruit subcommittee chair who would be in charge of ensuring that people get crime alert bulletins. Current way of distribution not reliable, some people receive redundant emails and some are not informed at all.

6) Transportation

Julia met with Larry Brutti (MIT Transportation). Updates on two issues:

- 1) Boston Saferide shuttle: rerouted for the summer because of construction on Bay State Road. Summer route runs along Commonwealth (similar to Green Line route).
- 2) EZride – negotiations with EZride will take place over the summer. Larry would like to change EZride route so that it's more similar to the Northwest daytime shuttle's route. There is a possibility that Northwest shuttle service will be cut if this happens.
 - Sidney – is the NW shuttle very packed?
 - Wendy – depends on time of day and year. Winter, yes (during morning rush hour) but not so much in the summer.

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Julia would like to bring up alternative suggestions for rerouting EZride. Could reroute it so that it serves areas that current MIT shuttles do not serve (such as Inman). Kevin explains history of rerouting of EZRide 2 years ago. In order to change the EZride route, need to convince EZride that it will be beneficial and profitable to their company. Despite what happens to EZride's route, it's still important to make sure that NW shuttle service remains.

Alex – important for us to communicate that NW student is the biggest group of beneficiaries for NW shuttle. Need to have ridership data for rerouting EZ Ride to go to Inman Sq, and to show that it benefits employees. EZride is now run by a different company (Paul Revere) so perhaps negotiations will be different and more fruitful this time.

7) Open Floor

Sidney – Comments on Ashdown Dining closing?

Amanda explains the situation from AHEC's point of view. Not enough people came each night to make dining profitable. Hundreds of dollars were lost each night. As an alternative, AHEC suggested reducing number of nights. Another problem is that they don't know how to feed the Phoenix group now that the dining service is gone. Amanda mentions that grad students can buy into meal plans, so even with Ashdown dining gone, they can go elsewhere (Next House, etc.) Alex suggests promoting on-campus dining in general more to grad students.

Nan- mentions closing of nighttime service at MIT Medical due to budget cuts. Potentially a problem for students who work in lab late at night.

Kevin – MIT has a partnership with Mt. Auburn Hospital. Patients needing immediate attention will be transported to Mt. Auburn during the summer. There will also be a taxi service for transport (in non-emergency situations) to Mt. Auburn. Other than that, the emergency response team should be the same.

Meeting adjourned: 7:15 pm