

Minutes taken at the Sidney-Pacific HVAC Renovation Announcement

Date: Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 7pm

Scribe: Sam Elder

## Presentation

**Henry Humphreys of Student Life** introduced the other people in the room. There were ~10-12 people up front with him, and I didn't keep up with their names. Edit: Only about 4-5 of them talked.

**Humphreys:** Why are we here? The HVAC (heating and cooling) in SidPac has never worked as it should. Housing has come up with a proposal for how it could be upgraded.

**Mike Kearns (Facilities):** The building air system has some problems: Not enough air supply, too much exhaust. This causes negative pressure in the building, pulling in warm, moist air in the summer, causing condensation on metal piping. This water runs onto things and causes water damage. He showed pictures of the damage in the building: rust, damaged pipes. It's been a chronic problem, and they want to fix it now once and for all.

Solution? Create a positive pressure in the building to dry it out, and better control the temperature.

Process will take place over two ½ year phases, in all, August 2015 to August 2016, to reduce disruption. Phase One will affect the North, and Phase Two will affect the South. They'll "flip" the occupants in the middle. Everything should be done in time for the new leases in August 2016.

What will be done? They'll need to bring in three big air handlers and put them on the roof. They have to run a lot of duct work just below the roof, since there isn't a lot of ceiling space. Within the building, they'll have to add "vertical chase spaces" in a handful of spaces illustrated on a map, outside rooms. They'll need to cut holes in the floor. They'll then add duct work to connect to each room. The kitchen exhaust and room air piping will need to be replaced and reinsulated.

On the first floor, they'll generally divorce the two halves, but since so many common areas are on the north side, they'll provide access corridors to those rooms in the fall.

**Humphreys:** What does this mean? We'll need to shut down sections of the community, the small (north) in the fall and then the large (south) in the spring. They want to continue to accommodate 300 beds, so we'll have to decrease capacity by 370 people (accurate number?). Continuing status people will get to stay. Jen Hapgood-White (who wasn't able to make it tonight) will work with SPEC moving forward on this plan. Tonight they're announcing 75-80% of the decisions of this process so far. They want our community to stay together.

**Peter Cummings (Student Life):** What will this mean for students? Non-renewable licenses mean nothing changes, but SP will not be an option for you. If you get a space, it'll be renewable. For those with continuing status, you will maintain it for the whole time, and be able to stay. There will be an in-house lottery to determine which apartment you'll be in. There are discussions beginning with SPEC about what that will look like. While the large side is being renovated, some two-bedroom suites will become quads.

They will try to make the middle transition in January 2016 as easy as possible, and coordinate the moving, providing moving services for SP residents. They recognize that this is a disruption and want to make that as worry-free as possible.

**Humphreys:** People moving within the building will get packing materials, and they'll move the boxes from apartment to apartment. If you choose to move off during this time, they'll still provide packing materials. If you are on continuing status but don't want to live in SP ("a construction project") for this year, you will not lose your continuing status, as long as you return by August 2016.

They have developed an FAQ which will be e-mailed out to everyone. All of the information will be passed out to everyone, and they'll have e-mails where you can ask questions. Once a construction company is chosen (they're seeking bids), they'll also be open about all of this.

This is somewhat similar to what's going on in Random Hall. There's a building next door there that's being built, and it caused problems. There was contact between the Housemaster and the construction manager of that building. It didn't remove all of the problems, but there was open communication, informing residents ahead of time about disruptions most of the time. They seek to do the same in our situation.

If you are deciding to move off-campus for this year, Tasha Coppett in their office will be able to assist you and has been meeting with realtors to understand who can help.

## Q&A

One issue is that the insulation wasn't attached properly in the first place. What will we do to make sure it's properly installed this time? Second: Is there a website to let us know about issues in the building earlier? It would have been nice to know sooner.

- **Kearns:** We have a newer structure of project coordinators in Housing that make sure that these mistakes aren't made. Architects provide daily reports as well. The applications are signed off by the architect before the contractor is paid. They'll pay a lot of focus there. Facilities didn't build the building 14 years ago, but there was a shortage of bids and some things fell through the cracks.
- **Humphreys:** Quality assurance is much better now. This is a bit of a surprise. As an institute, buildings are being examined and studied constantly. This issue came up in a

study of all of the buildings. They're working on making an effective communication structure, including what new buildings might be built.

Technical questions: There's been problems with temperature control (e.g. with rooms with windows). Will this new system give independent temperature control? Second: The fume hoods have a problem of spreading fumes to other rooms above them. There was a rumor that they'd make that air recirculate, is that true?

- **Kearns:** This project will not give independent temperature control in doubles. It'll only heat or cool in each double, since there are only two pipes, one for heating and one for cooling. Kitchen hoods: Recirculation was an early design, but they're just going to improve the fans on the roof. This problem should be reduced. They'll look into ways to keep this from happening.

For continuing residents, when your part of the building is shut down, will you have to change room types? If you have a room now, can you return to the same room in August 2016?

- **Humphreys:** We don't know yet. All we know is that we've guaranteed your option to stay. Yes, we think so, that you can return.

When will the construction be during the day, and how disruptive will it be?

- **Humphreys:** We can adjust the time. Normal construction hours are 7 to 3, but that's pretty early for grad students. We might make it a 10-6 operation, but we'll work with the house leadership to determine the best time.

How noisy will it be? Will gym and laundry be available?

- **Kearns:** The noisiest part will be cutting the holes in concrete. They'll wall off the relevant portion, so hopefully the noise will be distant. They'll be monitoring dust and safety to keep the disruption to a minimum. They hope to leave that part of the first floor available. They're trying to determine if the courtyard or other things like that are available for e.g. orientation. They'll give at least a week notice in general if some common space will be closed. They'll also be monitoring the air quality to make it a reasonable place to live.

(1) What about the garage? Will there be danger to cars? (2) Will there be compensation or reduction in rent? (3) What about storage of items, if they can't fit where they get moved?

- **Humphreys:** (1) Garage will generally be open, though parts will be taken for materials. There will be construction in some parts, and they'll just block off the relevant parts so cars don't get close. There won't be a significant impact on parking. (2) Yes, though they don't have a dollar or percentage amount, but it'll be reduced. (3) This building does not have storage capabilities, so this is something they'll have to figure out over the next few months.

Why weren't people more informed of this earlier? And in particular, this meeting?

- **Humphreys:** This has been a problem for a while. Facilities came up with this solution, and knew that they needed to announce it as soon as possible, so that it didn't spread by

rumor. Not everyone will be able to make this meeting, but they'll disseminate the information and have many more meetings; this is just the first. They didn't want the news to get out in other ways. Now we have ten months to plan, but they didn't want that time to be any shorter.

Will there be disruption to heating/insulation/water supply in the part of the building that remains open? What about current officers who will be getting continuing status? What about those who have been officers only one year?

- **Humphreys:** We haven't figured out the rules for people on the way to continuing status. Obviously they'll still want people running the community next year. This is most of the plan that hasn't been worked out.
- **Kearns:** They do not intend to disrupt the operations, apart from a small (single-digit) number of planned shutdowns. They're working that to be as minimal as possible, and give people plenty of notice.

Will there be accommodation for those who are out of the country during August or January?

- **Humphreys:** This is a detail we still need to plan out.

Can SP seniority points be transferred to other buildings? Will the internet be cut down?

- **Humphreys:** No, points will not transfer. Internet will operate normally, and if there is a planned interruption, it will be announced. That's IT, so it's not 100% but that's his best knowledge.

What thought have you put into maintaining this community? If there are no new residents, who will run the community after that?

- **Humphreys:** We don't know. This is one of the strongest communities on campus, and they don't have an answer for how to keep the community moving forward.

The gym needs soundproofing for rooms above it. Can we install windows?

- **Humphreys:** That is a separate project we'd need to bring up with others about. Maybe it could be lumped in while the other work is being done, but it's not under this project. This would be a good time to make those kinds of renovations, though.

Two-bedroom suites becoming quads -- which rooms is this?

- **Humphreys:** All two-bedroom apartments. EDIT: Later clarified to just be a fraction of them, if 300 people want to stay.

Can you get a benefit for moving into another grad residence, if you have continuing status?

- **Humphreys:** No, once you move to another building you'll lose your continuing status.

Twice as many people here sounds really squished. If we're not sure about this, you mentioned having a trial period to see if we could stand it. How long is that? It'd be hard to get a lease if we leave in the middle. Could possibly people be financially incentivized to move out?

- **Humphreys:** The building was designed for that level of capacity in the first place. There is no rule about how long the trial period would be. We'll be looking for places with shorter-term leases to help. There will be no compensation for moving off.

Given the tendency of projects to run over time and over budget, what measures are they putting in to make sure it completes on time?

- **Kearns:** It is a fairly aggressive schedule, but they've been working on it for a long time with one of the best engineering/architectural firms in the area to assess it. The construction company thinks they can do it faster than planned. But they don't want to add more risk, since they'll be opening areas that they don't know about, and they could find further damage than expected. You don't have to worry about cost. Their department generally average 3-5% under budget as a whole.
- **Humphreys:** We're sure to be sensitive that this is a residence hall, not a classroom/lab.

When will people have to decide what to do next year?

- **Humphreys:** We're saving those sorts of questions for talks with the student leadership. They hadn't realized that people were building points towards continuing status that they needed to worry about. This will need to be answered by early in the spring semester, though, so people can make their plans. They're trying to reduce stress, not create more.

How many doubles will be converted to quads?

- **Humphreys:** Right now, all of them. We know some people will want off in that case. They want to offer a "worst-case scenario" first and then scale back. EDIT: Clarified later.

Will efficiencies remain efficiencies?

- **Humphreys:** Yes.

How many beds currently in the graduate system are not being used? What's the spare load?

- **Someone else:** Vacancy moves around constantly. The most vacancies are in Tang, a number that hovers around 20-24 beds. All other buildings, by and large, are 100% filled. Summer is a little different with people moving out and subleasing.

How will you arrange for mail forwarding? If we keep moving around, will we be able to arrange it appropriately? Will we need to change our address to banks and whatever else?

- **Humphreys:** Our goal is to minimize disruption to you, but we don't have a specific option. The desk will be operating throughout this time. The building will operate as it would, but will be cut in half.

Will we be allowed to terminate the lease early permanently?

- **Humphreys:** Yes, and we're trying to do this so there is no penalty to people. We haven't worked out specific date, but it's a good question.

This plan requires 300 people being okay with a roommate. When that turns out to not be the case, will you be okay with half the number of people filling those spaces? (EDIT: Clarified later.)

- **Humphreys:** You can move out if you don't feel comfortable.

For people moving back on the north side, if you don't want someone in your room, are you forced out?

- **Humphreys:** We haven't figured out how that'll work.

In the regular doubles, four people with that kitchen size?

- **Humphreys:** It's not ideal. Residents will need to evaluate if that's okay with them.

Can the Cambridge/Boston area accommodate the extra 370 people?

- **Humphreys:** People will not just move to Cambridge, but also the surrounding communities. There is some availability in the greater area, and we believe there is enough rental property there.

Will the bike rooms be open during the construction on the large side? People like to store their bikes there during the winter.

- **Humphreys:** We don't know.

While your side of the building is open, will you be able to stay in your room?

- **Humphreys:** We don't know.

When will you have these answers? In April?

- **Humphreys:** Much sooner than April. We intentionally waited to answer some of these questions because we wanted to communicate with the students before answering.

Will Housemasters stay?

- **Humphreys:** One couple wants to stay wherever, but otherwise, in the fall, the housemasters will move out. There has been a request to give them an office space, or house them close to the building.

Is there an e-mail address we can e-mail with more concerns and a Q&A website?

- **Humphreys:** [sidpachvac@mit.edu](mailto:sidpachvac@mit.edu). They have thought about the website, but don't have enough answers.

SPEC is pretty busy keeping the building running. Can we appoint more people?

- **Humphreys:** You're right, and we'll try to parse out the work more.

## CLARIFICATION

- **Cummings:** There might be a misconception that everyone might have to double up. We're looking at doubling up maybe just 70 people, if 300 people want to stay. There are 280 rooms on the small side, so we won't have to double up nearly most of the rooms.

**Jenny:** SPEC will be around for coffee hour tonight. We have plenty of time to plan, and we'll take full advantage of it. This plan is not completely fleshed out, and we'll be looking to you for feedback to flesh it out in the most appropriate way possible.

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