

## CLV Graduate Housing Consultative Council Meeting Protocols<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction to Town Halls

The CLV Graduate Housing Consultative Council (GHCC) meetings are very similar to a meeting format known as a “town hall”. Holding a town hall meeting is an effective consultation tool. They act as an efficient way to gather feedback through focused group discussion. It can be between 45 and 90 minutes in length.

Town halls can provide dynamic information not only about what people feel, but why people feel the way they do about a particular subject or idea. Group discussions have the potential to provide both accurate and in-depth data.

The townhall meeting is intended as a complement to the rest of an area’s assessment and consultation activities.

### The Moderator

Fundamental to the town hall meeting is a moderator who facilitates the discussion. This person should feel comfortable in a public speaking role and have effective listening skills. The moderator’s goal is to create an environment that allows participants to express themselves openly, while keeping the discussion on track.

For those uncomfortable in speaking roles, the best strategy to use as a speaker is to take the position of a seeker of wisdom. The focus in all communications can come from this position. It inherently assumes that the participants have the wisdom needed to inform and guide practice.

Most importantly, moderators must competently listen and avoid taking over the discussion with their own opinions or plans.

### Participants

All residents should be invited via email. It is important for there to be multiple staff present at town halls in order to provide information or answer questions when necessary. In addition to relevant staff, it is important to assign the following roles:

- Someone responsible for advertising and co-ordinating the logistics of the event.
- Someone responsible to take accurate summary notes during the Town Hall meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> This protocol document was adapted from  
[http://www.ncspfsig.org/Project\\_Docs/Town%20Hall%20Meeting%20Protocol.pdf](http://www.ncspfsig.org/Project_Docs/Town%20Hall%20Meeting%20Protocol.pdf)  
(accessed last April 7, 2014)



## **Pre-event**

It is important to explain the topics that will be discussed at the town hall. Any topic can be discussed at a town hall meeting, but having a list of topics will give attendees an idea of what will be discussed.

Further, the topics will act as an overarching agenda for the meeting.

## **Setting the Rules**

Before beginning the discussion, the moderator should begin explaining the purpose of the event and establish a few ground rules. The rules should include the following:

- Only one person talking at a time;
- No side discussions among participants; and
- Focus on the situation or issues, not the person; no members should be put down because of their opinions.

An important principle to convey is that every question in the time allocated will be answered, but not every request will necessarily be acted on

## **Opening Question and General Structure**

It is important to ask a general question at the beginning to allow for any burning questions or comments to be given adequate time. Some residents may have attended for a certain topic or issue and giving opportunity for them to be heard is important. The moderator should ask if anyone has any concerns or issues that they'd like addressed and then either 1) immediately respond to the comment, or b) add it alongside another topic in the agenda to be discussed.

After the initial question, the moderator should go through each topic one at a time and encourage discussion to stay within that topic. The moderator should be patient for participants to respond after asking for participants' views/comments/questions on a certain topic category. Positive and negative comments should be welcomed, encouraged, and reinforced by positive feedback from the moderator.

In addition to preparing for the opening question, the moderator should prepare concluding remarks.

## **Responding to questions/comments**

The goal is to receive feedback from residents. Appropriate responses should be provided to students when possible. There are a variety of responses that could be given to a particular question or concern. In response to a comment, the moderator or staff member may respond:

1. In agreement and suggest that they will intend on implementing the suggestion made.



2. With another question, to better understand the comment being made.
3. By politely disagreeing, with an explanation as to why a certain suggestion is not possible (for example, budgetary concerns).
4. By withholding judgment, and suggest that they will look into the comment further. Many comments may be responded to best with this answer, “Good suggestion. We’ll need to bring this back to the team and look at this further. We can update you at the next meeting about progress made and post information about progress on this topic online.”

#### **Follow up**

After the town hall, the recorded comments should be summarized and placed on the Graduate Housing Consultative Council website. On this website not only will the comments be listed, but Campus Housing’s responses will also be listed next to relevant topics/comments. However, meeting minutes should only include what was discussed in the meeting and not what Campus Housing staff have added after the meeting.

