

May 10, 2013

Dear Chancellor Grimson and Dean Colombo:

We, the residents of Bexley, would like to start by extending thanks from the Bexley community. We know that the news was not easy for anyone to hear, and we appreciate that we were informed directly and together. Thank you for the time and energy that you have spent responding to the situation; we understand that this is difficult for everyone involved.

We want to stress the importance of keeping the Bexley community alive. We care deeply about our community, not only because it is a close-knit group of people who have enjoyed living together, but also because we are grateful to have found this community at MIT. We hope we can continue to offer its unique culture to future students. Many of us cannot imagine MIT without Bexley; the friendship, support, and acceptance we have found here has been integral to our MIT experience and we would be devastated to see this community torn apart.

We were shaken to receive the news of Bexley's closure Tuesday evening, but have now had the time to collect ourselves and feel prepared to voice the opinions of our community. As such, we will outline below some of our concerns and desires, and the methods in which we reached our conclusions. We will also be addressing what we would like our housing solution to look like, some other requests we would like the administration to keep in mind, and some options that we believe are viable and acceptable.

Our Goals

The goal of many residents in Bexley is to ensure that they have similar housing situations in the Fall to that of Bexley. A large part of this is financially comparable dorms; the Bexley community has expressed concerns regarding the financial burden of other dorms' pricing. These residents are also interested in choosing their future residencies and staying with small groups of other residents. The cost of living in Bexley is much less than many of the other options on campus, and having to pay the higher cost of other dorms would be a financial burden on these residents.

The priority of many of the other students is to remain together as one residential community during this reconstruction period. These students are willing to make sacrifices on aspects of the housing to stay together as a group. The Bexley community, specifically this subset of students, is a very closely tied one. In-house anonymous electronic polling has been used this week to determine both who would like to live in a large Bexley community and which current residents and GRTs would like to live together. The first poll has resulted in 47 dedicated students and the latter poll has demonstrated that these students are greatly interconnected; they expressed desires to live with the other 40 people not knowing each other's preferences. This group carries the culture of Bexley and it is important that they stay a residential group.

We would also like to point out that MIT is not foreign to the idea of keeping communities together in situations similar to ours. In the 1970s, about 100 displaced residents from Burton House were temporarily housed in the Hamilton House, a motel in Boston, while the construction of MacGregor was completed. More recently, Maseeh

was reborn with the help of the Phoenix group. This group contained past residents of Ashdown and they were housed in a graduate dorm for an extended period of time in order to keep the community together. This allowed them to foster a culture and continue to receive new freshmen to keep their community alive. We bring these cases up to provide a backdrop for our current plans, not necessarily to suggest these specific solutions.

Maintaining the culture of Bexley is at the heart of many of the community's desires, including that to live together. The culture is one that many at MIT, beyond just the Bexley community, consider unique and valuable. MIT prides itself on providing a residential education, and the cultures of the dorms is integral to that education. Bexley specifically has a long and colorful history, and as devastated as the current residents would be to see it go, those who have known Bexley in the past are similarly affected.

Another hope of the community is that we will have access to the relevant information throughout this process. It will be beneficial for the students to understand new information as it is presented so we can form individual and group responses. This will facilitate communication with the administration and will be beneficial for them.

We also believe that having new members who are integrated into our community is important to the vitality and continuance of the community. The community benefits from meeting and including new members who bring unique qualities to the community, and these members will help to keep the Bexley community and culture alive and thriving.

Housing Options

The desire to find housing similar to Bexley for residents who don't wish to live together in a large community has been met by the administration. The preference of Bexley students in the housing lottery, the attention to placing students in non-dining dorms, and the consideration of financial aid to cover the difference between dorm rents has all be discussed. The proposed blocking system also allows students to stay with some of their friends, again emulating their current situation in Bexley. We feel that the administration is dedicated to these ideas and that residents desiring this type of housing have been accommodated.

The option of a large, again, around 40 to 60 students, Bexley contingency living together in a community has not been explored. In the best case scenario, this location would be close to or even on the MIT campus. The block system, as presented, is not a solution that meets our needs. Solutions that have been proposed to us or that we have constructed include, in order of our preference, on-campus temporary housing, off-campus ILG-like housing, and on-campus dorm housing.

On MIT's campus, there are several locations that could possibly be repurposed to create temporary on-campus housing. First, for example, a portion of 100 Memorial Drive could be rented as it is already residential. Another option is the tennis courts at Ames and Amherst, which could serve as a location for temporary housing. The Westgate Parking Lot at the west end of Briggs Field could also be a feasible temporary housing location. The N10 Annex lot along Albany street might also be a feasible location for temporary housing. If an official MIT parking lot is out of the question, the empty lot across from Ashdown house along West Albany street could also be used.

The amount of funding required for this plan of a temporary structure is largely dependent on the quality of the structure. The Bexley group desiring to live together are willing to be flexible about the amenities of this structure, as our main concern is continuing to live together. It is also within our desires in this plan to maintain dorm status so that freshman will be brought into the community regularly. As an estimate of costs and source of precedence, the provided research shows how other institutions handled similar situations:

- At Amherst College, two temporary housing structures were built in 2002 to house approximately 100 students. They are still in use. Cost: ~\$1.7 million
- At the University of Missouri, converted offices and study rooms were used to house approximately 40 students. Cost: unknown, but housing was considered extremely temporary.
- At Alaska Tech, 100 students were housed in nearby hotels at a cost of approximately \$50/night for two semesters. Cost: \$1.2 million

The second option, an off-campus house large enough to support the 40 to 60 person community, is desirable, but there are concerns about the associated timespan of this plan. If a building becomes available for which MIT already has a dormitory license, and this building is willing to house the Bexley community for the construction duration, this plan is feasible and desirable. However, if it will be necessary to acquire a new dormitory license, and the time expectation of move-in exceeds a year, more immediate plans should be considered. This plan also requires greater attention to freshmen interest, as they will not be able to live with the community.

The third option, finding a large block space inside another dorm, is the least popular with the community by a wide margin. While there have been recent movements to allocate large block space for the residents, we do not expect other dorms to accommodate the Bexley group. Trying to do so would be highly detrimental to both cultures, rooming arrangements, and freshman interest. We not only believe that Bexley's culture should be prized and saved, but similarly, that all the dorms have a unique personality, without which MIT would be a different place. We do not feel that MIT should have to lose or displace any other communities.

Additional requests

Staying together is by far our highest priority, but we also have other concerns and requests to address. First, with regards to our concern regarding access to information, we believe that the formation of a reconstruction group is essential to the Bexley community. A council comprised of faculty, administrators, students and engineers would be optimal. This council would make decisions regarding dormitory design, building access, group spaces, room layout, and building policies. This would allow students to have direct access to information, and would enable us to voice our opinions, not just to the relevant administrators, but also to the engineers and interested faculty.

It is also important to us that the Bexley community be given access to the engineering reports. Immediate knowledge of the damage to the building is important to our safety now, and will be necessary during the reconstruction process. If future reports and investigations are made, we request that students be included in the divulgence of this information.

MIT has a precedent of including students on the councils that will be making decisions about the dorm. In 1996 when Senior House was remodeled, students took part in

deciding what the building's layout would look like, and were actively part of the planning construction process. Their council of engineers, students and administrators working together exemplifies the power of working together, and is what we would like to do as well.

We would also like to ensure that Bexley remains a visible presence on campus, which would speak to our concern about keeping the culture alive and healthy. The best-case scenario would include a space similar to a department or student group lounge, which would be available for resident use. This would allow student interest in Bexley to continue, independently of the proposed community living space. Ideally, we could use a space like the Compton Room (26-110) or Pritchett Dining as our lounge area. This space would also help increase freshman interest in the community, which is vital to the dorm's future and sustainability.

To that same end, the continued visibility of Bexley in the i3 media, first-year summer mailing materials, and REX is necessary for the sustained growth and continuity of the Bexley community. If Bexley residents were to be temporarily relocated to an off-campus arrangement, we would like freshmen to be able to move into this residence in their first year, although we understand if this is not a possibility. We will be focusing our attention on generating and sustaining freshmen interest in any circumstance.

For the future of the dorm culture, we would like to express our strong preference to keep our current and continuing GRTs-- Micah Eckhardt, Elliott Hedman, and Matthew Getz -- in the case that we are allowed to or required to have GRTs. They have become a part of our family and have expressed their desires to continue to live with us. We also request that they continue to receive funds for community activities equal to the funds currently being allocated.

When Bexley is ready to be used once more, we would like a guarantee that the building will not be repurposed, as is the fear of many in the community. Although Bexley is defined first and foremost by its residents, this building is and always will be our home. We would be devastated by its loss.

Once more, we thank you for the time and effort that you are putting into this issue. Thank you for listening to our voiced concerns and suggestions. We hope that our input will be taken into strong consideration when deciding what will be done over the next coming months. We would love nothing more than to stay involved and keep voicing our opinions and helping the administration during this time.

Sincerely,

The Bexley community

cc: President Reif and Executive Vice President Ruiz

Signed,

Soraya Shehata

Tony DiBlasi

Sophie Diehl

Ethan Sherbondy

Nicolas Brown

Nicole Power

Alvoro Morales

Sam Whittemore

Emma Gargus

Chris Sarabalis

Emily Zhang

Francesca Perone

Ilana Habib

Matthew Getz

Azra Horowitz

Brandon Le

Natthida Wiwatwicha

Jesse Sharps

Owen Rees

Sara Brockmueller

Ariana Eisenstein

Varun Ramaswamy

Edgar Gridello

Julia Ellermeier

Otto Briner

Aaron Thomas

Eduardo Maristany

Nikita Khlystov

Christiana Rosales

Valkyrie Felso

Vanessa Trevino

Kristjan Eerik Kaseniit

Laila Shehata

Mavis Brefo

Olga Vasileva

Daniel Lizardo

Ory Tasman

Mathiele Taylor

Ronald Heisser

Kathleen Laverty

Viveka Mishra

Veronica Newlin

Chris Davlantes

Kale Rogers

Alexander Klein

Andrea Nickerson

Olivia Papa

Leslie Meyer

Ilica Mahajan

Joseph Church

Noga Feinberg

Dennis Wilson

Marco Farrugia

Zac Nelson

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