Community & College Commission
Miller Administration Building, Room 405
Meeting Minutes: January 6, 2014
6:30 p.m.

Attendees
John Bennett
Carolyn Bershad
Michael Catalano
Scott Conroe
Carl Gambitta
Kimberly McRae Friedman
Adam Megivern
Tom Michales
Fred Pierce
Kim Pietro
Mark Prus
Greg Sharer
Bruce Tytler
Melony Warwick (support)
LeighMarie Weber (via phone)
Susan Wilson

Absent
Ken Dye
Steve Dangler
Tom Gallagher
Lee Price
Katie Silliman

Opening and Welcome
Commission Co-Chair Bruce Tytler welcomed everyone and reported that Kim Pietro sent out the agenda earlier today.

Web page and Email Update
Commission Co-Chair Kim Pietro reported that the commission web address has received three emails that were distributed electronically to all committee members. Messages will continue to be shared with the full committee. The Web page link still needs to be set up on the city Web page and it was suggested that the mayor’s office be contacted. Fred Pierce commented that everyone should have received the link and asked everyone to let him know if anything needs to be changed.

Timeline of Events of November 16
Police Chief Mike Catalano distributed the timeline of events of Nov. 15–16, 2013 as reconstructed by the police department. Chief Catalano reviewed the timeline and commented that unruly crowds started to gather on Friday evening, November 15. Between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. they responded to 51 calls, which is about twice the
amount they normally handle on a busy night. On Saturday, all the downtown bars were full by 11 a.m. and drunken people were wandering about. Overall, the meat of the problem Saturday occurred on Clayton Avenue, where crowds began congregating around 2 p.m. By 2:40 the crowd had swelled to 4,000 to 5,000 people. Around 3:15 city police requested any backup assistance available to help control the huge, unruly crowd. Mike C. commented that social media kicked up interest in what was happening on Clayton Avenue, and that is when everything started happening.

Kim Pietro asked what the fine is for a nuisance violation. Mike C. responded the minimum fine is $100 and the maximum fine is $500 and it is up to the judge if the resident and/or the landlord gets fined. Carl Gambitta asked what the landlords’ obligation was. Mike C. reported that his office contacts the landlord and expects that they will talk to residents. He said they usually get good cooperation from landlords.

Mike C. said that there was property damage reported during Cortaca weekend, such as broken fences, windows and a windshield. Eighty arrests were made and there were 30 additional summonses as a result of the weekend. A question and answer period ensued. Mike C. commented that on Cortaca weekend every officer works at least a 12–hour shift. All but one of his officers was working that weekend and rumors that they were short staffed due to the opening of deer hunting season are completely untrue. No officers were hurt but a couple of patrol cars were damaged.

Small Business Meeting Update

Fred Pierce reported that commission members invited representatives from local businesses to a meeting on December 12. A good mix of business owners attended such as George Siebel (Dark Horse), Teresa Wilson (Hotel and Innkeepers Association), Tammy Timmerman (Restaurant and Tavern Owners Association), Tom Terwilliger (Red Jug Pub), Jodi Wainwright (The Bling Store) and Chris and Amy Spadolini. (The Daily Grind) Bob Haight (Chamber of Commerce) and Jim Dempsey (Convention and Tourism Bureau) attended as well.

Fred P. reported that initially there was some hostility as tavern owners felt left out and were not being represented on the commission. But they also made it clear that they stand ready to work with us to help prevent destructive behavior during Cortaca weekend. During Cortaca weekend, taverns do well, but other businesses do not, and some chose to close. Adam Megivern, who represents all downtown businesses as executive director of the Downtown Partnership, commented that he can’t necessarily represent all of those groups.

Fred P. reported that a lot of surprising things came out at the meeting. At the meeting, Jim Dempsey reported that Cortaca has a $1.6 million economic impact on the community Hotels like Cortaca weekend not only because they are packed, but
because the demand allows them to raise their prices. Bars raise their drink prices as well. Bar owners were very resistant to the idea of a law directly at them. They did understand that the kind of activity that went on that weekend is not good and have a willingness to help us in this effort. Also at the meeting, Cortaca t-shirts that are sold by local businesses were discussed briefly. Susan Wilson commented that only 34 percent of the Anheuser Busch products that are sold in Cortland during Cortaca weekend is sold in bars on Cortaca. Susan also reported that the Innkeepers Association talked about the lack of available transportation to get people from downtown back to hotels. Kimberly McRae Friedman asked if we could look at coordinating the date with other events happenings in town.

Both Fred P. and Adam M. asked if there should be a representative on the Commission from the tavern and restaurant association. After a very brief discussion, it was decided the since commission members were appointed by Mayor Tobin and President Bitterbaum, the commission doesn’t have the power to appoint new commission members.

**NYS Liquor Authority**

Kimberly McRae Friedman reported she attended a statewide meeting with colleagues and the commissioner of the NYS Liquor Authority. The meeting was scheduled prior to Cortaca weekend. Kimberly F. reported that it was a good meeting and the general purpose was to see how referrals were made. The NYSLA offered to come to Syracuse for a local law enforcement and informational session on policies. She reported that bar hours of operation and last call are controlled at the county level. The State Liquor Authority dictates the window of time that bars have to be closed.

**Other Case Studies**

Scott Conroe reported that he looked at college student riots or gatherings similar to the Cortaca situation which occurred recently at James Madison University, University of Northern Colorado, Kent State University, Penn State University, Western Washington University, Michigan State, University of Delaware and four universities in New England. He reached out to some campuses to see if we could pick their brains and only James Madison got back to him. Rioting activities included crowds swelling, destroying street signs, setting fires, throwing objects at police, and cars being turned on their sides.

**Open Meetings**

Kim Pietro reported there will be an open meeting for the community on Wednesday, January 8 and one for businesses on Thursday, January 9. Both meetings will be in the
County Office Building Auditorium at 7 p.m. Kim P. and Bruce T. will put together some talking points that will serve as a guide in addressing the public should there be inquiries about the work of the committee to date.

**Once Around**

- **Carl Gambitta:** Has had a few people talk to him about the process and one individual feels that whatever rules we establish should be enforced starting in September, at the beginning of the school year should be enforced in November.

- **Mark Prus:** Looking through the case studies, what jumped out were not the large crowds and alcohol abuse but the defiance toward police.

- **Mike Catalano:** There already is outreach activity going on. The police department works with students all year. They visit them and give out pamphlets to set the tone.

- **John Bennett:** He is realizing that he is such a dinosaur when it comes to social media We need to find a way to have students help us in some way with social media.

- **Carolyn Bershad:** She takes some comfort in knowing that there are other schools struggling with the same issues, but finds it disheartening.

- **Greg Sharer:** Enforcement starts in September and continues through May. The question is how we change the culture/message.

- **Scott Conroe:** He would like to understand where this all comes from, and is very optimistic.

- **Adam Megivern:** The business group is very interested in possible solutions and looking forward to the open meetings.

**Next Commission Meeting**

Kim Pietro announced the next meeting will be on January 27 in the Park Center Hall of Fame Room at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melony A. Warwick