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ODU Fraternity Draws Complaints

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NORFOLK—A Norfolk lawyer complained to City Council Tuesday that an Old Dominion University fraternity house in his neighborhood "makes X-rated movies look tame."

Charles Cloud presented a petition signed by about 65 citizens from the Ghent area, including some residents of Knox Towers for the elderly. The residents want the city's help in quieting down the Kappa Alpha fraternity House at Princess Anne Road and Colonial Avenue, directly across the street from the Knox Towers.

Cloud complained of loud noise, fights, screams, "girls yelling," and blood on the sidewalk. He said the fraternity house has parties several nights a week that continue until 2 or 3 a.m.

"It's worse than Main Street (Norfolk's pre-redevelopment "sin strip") ever was," he said.

"There must be some way to put out of business something that disturbs the peace and tranquility of a neighborhood," said Vice-mayor C. Mason Andrews, who presided Tuesday.

City Manager Julian Hirst asked the council to let him look into the matter, noting that the city had received similar complaints in the past.

An Old Dominion University spokesperson said the fraternity owns the house, and that technically it is private property over which the university has no control.

The fraternity also is part of the Interfraternity Council, a recognized student group, however, and

university representatives discuss any citizen complaints with the students to see if something can be done. In extreme cases, complaints can be made to the fraternity's national group, which can take actions such as restricting the number of the group's parties and visitors.

Although no officers were present Tuesday night, several fraternity members, who asked that their names not be used, said this was the first they'd heard of the complaint against the fraternity.

"We usually have parties on weekends," said one member, who added, however: "I can't remember the last one we had during the week." The members said the music may get loud on occasion. "But we've never had the police here," said another member.

"Maybe the complaints are about people after they leave the property," said a member, "and then, they're out of our control."

The fraternity, which houses 10 live-in members and has a total of 56 members, looks much like any other house on the street. The interior Tuesday night was neat and clean, though sparsely furnished.

Every fall, the members said, the fraternity sponsors a crab feast "and we invite professors from the college, even the mayor."

"We tried to reach out (to the elderly at Knox) and have them as our guests, but they shunned us," said another.

The fraternity has been at the same location for seven years, since before the apartment tower was built. "So it's not like we moved in and play loud music to shake them up. We were already here," another member said.