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Amherst bylaw looks to quiet off-campus partiers

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The town of Hadley recently adopted its own version of the law.
Underage drinking costs the nation at least $53 billion a year, mostly because of traffic deaths and violent crime, according to a 2003 report by the National Research Council's Institute of Medicine. Patrick and Linowski estimate overtime pay for officers during a springtime weekend were around $15,000. The new bylaw will not only allow for the fine, but also for the offender to pay expensive, police response costs.
Left to police discretion, enforcement would be a civil infraction "99 percent of the time," said Kent, meaning violators would not be arrested nor have the offense put on criminal record. Property owners would be notified after each of the first two complaints, as was done in the past, he said.
However, if the landlord has not started an eviction process after a third violation within one year, he too could be penalized $300 and the town may require the landlord to cover the expense of responding officials, said Kent.
"It's kind of a tricky issue because the landlord does not live with the tenant," said Gokhan Altinay, a graduate student living in Lincoln Apartments, who was previously unaware of the law.
This is only the case if the property owners are not actively trying to evict their boisterous tenant.
The bylaw makes residents and property owners responsible for noise complaints as well as other nuisances such as littering, obstruction of public access and underage drinking, added Kent.
Stephen Walczak, president of the Pioneer Valley Housing Association and property manager of Puffton Village Apartments described the law as, "a happy medium that allows students to socialize and blow off steam, but not to destroy a whole neighborhood."
"This will hopefully make a few more people aware of their responsibility," said Walczak, who does not plan to change any policies at Puffton Village.
He feels the apartment complex has adequate security and said eviction matters can vary, depending on the circumstances.

Continued...

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