

Minutes of Sustainability Committee meeting October 6, 2008

Attending:

Joy Charlton (now an official member of our committee!)

Ralph Thayer

Art McGarity

Nadine Kolowrat

Carr Everbach, recorder

5 students invited to speak about their organizations' work

Carr opened the meeting by reporting on his Faculty Lunch Lecture on October 1, 2008, which went very well. Several faculty members either came up afterwards or sent email to say that they have been closet environmentalists but now feel motivated to come forward and help the College improve sustainability. Other comments were that our Committee should invite the Arboretum Director, College Librarian, ITS folks, Environmental Services and others to meet with us and tell us what they are doing to promote sustainability, and what are their challenges. Carr also circulated (by email) a list of suggestions from the "greenbox" suggestion box located across from the Post Office window in Parrish and on-line for faculty and students via the web dashboards (<http://www.swarthmore.edu/dash/students/> and <http://www.swarthmore.edu/dash/faculty/>).

Four student groups had been invited to the meeting. The first was the **Environmental Justice Group**, represented by Kavita Hardy, which was an offshoot of Earthlust but is now independent. They focus mostly on Chester and how it manages its waste; it sponsors a Community Garden in Chester and monitors its political and resource priorities. Efforts to reduce solid waste on Swarthmore's campus affect Chester because our trash is incinerated in the trash-to-steam plant there. Kavita made two concrete suggestions:

1. give points toward snack bars to students in reward for exchanging incandescent bulbs for compact florescents (after the case of them is found that was supposed to be given to RAs for distribution to frosh).
2. Provide 15-cent discount on coffee bar coffee if customer provides his/her own mug. This point was expanded to creating a composting operation and coffee-cup collection system for the expensive compostable paper cups (they have cornstarch in them) supplied for 2 years at the coffee bars on campus.

Jim Marsloff, co-manager of the Good Food Club, said that their golf cart is broken and so they are using a push-cart. They collect pre-consumer food waste from Sharples and compost it behind the grandstands, but they are receiving complaints from sports teams about the smell. The location is not ideal for a composting operation because there is no drainage. Carr suggested moving the compost pile to the grassy strip to the right of the roadway on the "back" way out to Harvard Avenue. Jim also noted that the paid "local food coordinator" position at Sharples was discontinued due to lack of funds, since students are paid to do the composting.

He said this was a bad trade, since the cost of 15-20 hours each week of student time at the top rate (\$8.10/hr) amounts to far less than the cost of a part-time professional engaged in increasing local produce purchases. Jim suggested that Sharples adopt a solid percentage goal for locally-grown produce, and make the "local food coordinator" position permanent. He would also like to expand the size of the composting operation near the corner of Cedar and Elm streets, and would like the Sustainability Committee to coordinate the effort with Grounds and the Arboretum staff.

Blaine O'Neil, from Earthlust, told us that this organization has been focusing on getting the College to buy 100% wind power, as a way of increasing dialog regarding sustainability on campus and of increasing student involvement. He discussed the rift between activism and pragmatic, clear goals in Earthlust. The 100% wind campaign satisfies both subgroups. Blaine emphasized that the purpose of Earthlust is to make sustainability interesting to the student body. He would like to increase alumni outreach and bring key speakers to campus. Finally, a specific suggestion is to remove the Styrofoam bowls that sit next to the ice cream in Sharples, encouraging students to adopt a "throw-away" attitude toward resources.

Lauren Richie and Elizabeth Crampton spoke on behalf of the Green Advisors, another Earthlust spinoff that stands now as separate. The focus of the Green Advisors is the personal actions students can take, and for the GAs to act as a resource for students and to promote environmentally-friendly lifestyles. They obtained a Swarthmore Foundation grant to purchase 300 reusable mugs to be used in the coffee bars for a discount. They would like to expand this program to flood the campus with thermoses that could be taken by students out of Sharples and returned later at any of many collection points on campus. The same idea already exists for cups, bowls, plates, and metal silverware. The goal is to make the use of disposable items less convenient, and to promote a mindset that favors reuse of disposability.

Art McGarity commented that there is a tradeoff between energy/carbon and water pollution in the choice between disposable tableware and washing, with hot water, reusable plates, bowls, and cutlery. The group agreed that it would be a good project (for the Lang Intern assigned to this committee?) to perform such an analysis and to publish it on our website. Prof. McGarity said that he would be glad to help with such an analysis.

Other sustainability-related student groups on campus from which we have not heard include the Animal Rights Coalition and the Crum Woods Stewardship committee, among others. The Green Advisors wish to make their positions permanent, and on the same footing as the sexual health counselors, the SAMS (which are paid positions) and to have a role in the same diversity workshop during frosh orientation that these other groups have. Joy Charlton quizzed Lauren and Elizabeth about the GA connection with the Dean's Office, and made structural suggestions about how they might proceed to solidify this program.

Concrete suggestions:

1. Make copies of Green Advisor summary sheet and provide in Bookstore to all students.
2. Increase the number of drying racks available for student check-out through the Green Advisors from the current 17 to some larger number. Provide more eco-friendly laundry detergent at subsidized cost to students.
3. Provide an indication, on each students MySwarthmore page, of the total number of pages printed each semester (or do top 100 lowest-page-count lists).
4. Monitor each dorm hall for electricity use, and have competitions for reduction.

The next meeting of the Sustainability Committee has not yet been scheduled, but perhaps the Monday after break (Monday, October 20, 2008) from 4-5 would be a possibility. Please email Carr if you can't make it. At this meeting, we would hear from the Arboretum, ITS, and the Library about each's Sustainability initiatives and what limitations exist.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Carr Everbach