

Sustainability Committee meeting minutes

14 April 2010, Sharples Room 4, 8:30 am

Attending: Debra Kardon-Brown, David Burgy, Linda MacDougall, Eric Chiang, Eric Wagner, Evelyn Strombom, Camille Robertson, Nicole Lewis, Amanda Bayer, Carr Everbach

As the group was obtaining breakfast, Carr asked Debra about the Trash-to-Treasure Sale, now in its fourth year, in which students moving out of the dorms at semester's end donate unwanted items. These items are transported by volunteers (mostly EVS staff and students) to the Field House, where they are sold to community members and the proceeds go to the local United Way charity. Though this initiative predates the Sustainability Committee, it clearly promotes the efficient use and reuse of resources. Debra reported that the end-of-year dorm cleanout used to fill twenty 20-cubic-yard dumpsters, and now fills less than one. Carr wondered if this solid waste reduction could count toward energy/waste reduction targets. Items are moved from the dorms using a panel truck, with Wolman being the longest trip, so transportation carbon is minimized (compared to the alternative). Items are sold over 2 days (Friday people are admitted free with College ID or pay a premium if no ID; Saturday's items are open to the public). Unsold items are donated to the CAADC, a Chester-based group that relocates homeless people in apartments. Eric Wagner asked if other schools do this. Debra noted that the University of Pennsylvania and other schools have Trash-to-Treasure sales but also have higher overhead; our donations to United Way of Southeastern Delco total about \$20,000, larger than Penn's contribution to the regional United Way from their Trash-to-Treasure sale. There was unanimous approval of the effort and a special complement to the EVS employees who volunteer with this effort.

Carr called for a vote regarding Swarthmore College's enrollment in the sustainability-tracking program AASHE STARS. This program, first discussed in the minutes of the January 22, 2010, SusCom meeting, costs \$900 each year but may be better suited to our carbon tracking needs than the rating systems of the Sustainable Endowments Institute, the Princeton Review, or the Sierra Club. These groups sponsor "green campus" ratings whose methodologies are opaque and whose forms take weeks to fill out. Carr has obtained Stu Hain's permission to pay a handful of student volunteers to help put data into the STARS spreadsheet. Amanda questioned whether these should be volunteer and not paid efforts, citing Barry Schwarz's study on blood donors that show a reduction in giving if donors are paid. There was a discussion about the difference between volunteer efforts during the school year and paid work over the summer. Debra offered that if students are paid, there is more likely to be deliverables due to a sense of obligation. She also suggested that one individual should be responsible for the data and for organizing and validating the work of the volunteers. This person could be a student, possibly compensated depending on the level of responsibility. Eric Wagner reminded the committee that we envisioned a staff Sustainability Director providing this kind of coordination of volunteer efforts. Linda noted that one can push students harder if they are receiving compensation for their time. Ralph observed that the College should not do sustainability on the cheap, but rather make a firm commitment to the values and policies it sees as important. David pointed out that NOT paying people can price the poor out of

environmental efforts because they must earn money some other way (thus allowing only the rich to serve as volunteers). Amanda reiterated that paying for something sometimes demeans the activity and can cast a different light on the task. Camille pointed out that students offered their services for the AASHE STARS effort on a volunteer basis, but compensation was offered to them as a gesture of respect. Amanda noted that experience with the STARS formalism would look good on a student resume, and that may be sufficient compensation. Camille had the last word on this point, noting a desire to avoid the mentality that service on the STARS project can be dropped lightly by holding the participants more accountable to Carr (who holds the purse strings). The vote in favor of joining the AASHE STARS program was passed by acclamation. [Ralph confirmed later that the membership was completed, and Carr met with two students to begin the process].

An additional vote as passed dropping involvement with the SEI green report card program, especially in light of their desire to charge for participation. We will tell them that we have adopted the STARS model instead.

Carr reported that a Mellon grant awarded to Pomona College to host a workshop among small liberal arts college sustainability leaders will pay his way there at the end of June. The irony of the many airplane flights this meeting will require was not lost on the committee, but there was general agreement that small liberal arts colleges should share resources, ideas, and experiences and that Carr should represent Swarthmore at the meeting.

A Swarthmore Gazette reporter told Camille that there would soon be an article about the New York Times grant as well as an update on the Renewing Fund to appear this week. This will be an opportunity to bring the College community up to date, just in time for Earth Day 2010. On Thursday, April 22, there will be guest speakers organized by Blaine O'Neill, a green pub night, and a 3-night sleep out campaign by Earthlust and other groups.

Carr gave a heads-up to the committee that Nadine's work in drafting a Sustainability Planning Document for the College may allow President Chopp to sign the Presidents' Climate Commitment on her Inauguration day. Carr will send a copy of the Commitment to each SusCom member prior to our next meeting.

Ralph announced that the College has agreed to reduce electrical use by 500 kW and be paid by PECO for the willingness to do so in brownout conditions. Ralph suggested that Earth Day, April 22, would be a good day to reduce campus electrical use for 1 hour, and watch the electric meter on Andrew Ruether's monitoring page (<http://www.swarthmore.edu/x29028.xml>) go down. There was general agreement that this would be a good test.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 am

Respectfully submitted,

Carr Everbach

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Upcoming meetings:

Tuesday, April 20, 2:30-3:30 pm (Everbach away; open meeting)- Kohlberg 226.
Agenda: update from Nadine on Sustainability Plan, update from Ralph on plans to curtail electrical use on Earth Day (Thursday).

Wednesday, April 28, 8:30-9:30 am, Sharples Rm 4 – discuss NYT proposals

Tuesday, May 4, 2:30-3:30 pm (last meeting before Finals and Inauguration; open meeting) – vote on NYT proposals
