

## **Sustainability Committee Minutes 23 February 2009**

Attending: Art McGarity, Maurice Eldridge, Carr Everbach (chair, agenda), Mike Roswell, H.G. Chissell, Rebecca Ringle, Kelsey Hatzel, Nicholas Buttino (Notes), Nadine Kolowrat

National Geographic published energy issue: images of waste heat from cars, homes, plugs show that much progress can be made by conservation and related technologies.

Rebecca S. Chopp is new president-designate; SusCom discussed her contributions to environmental sustainability at Colgate, hiring Sustainability Director there, openness to dialog, understanding values of College community. SusCom should have some response to new president: Carr will draft welcome letter and circulate it among committee members via email. Unclear how much the Dr. Chopp will be available on campus until July; however, there is a good chance that she will come at least once to speak to community. Maurice noted that Dr. Chopp is happy to hear from people.

In previous minutes, a welcome letter to Dr. Chopp from Earthlust was discussed and, partly based on SusCom feedback, was modified and sent to her. Mike will obtain final version of letter and will enter it into the minutes for Friday's meeting.

Discussion of Earthlust's "GreenMarch" idea:

Intent of Green Advisors (GA) was to focus on one thing that people could change each day during March, 2009. However, comments from our committee, circulated via email, addressed whether austerity produces an actual savings worth the cost. SusCom's feedback on the "GreenMarch" has been useful in semi-real time in that it allowed GA/Earthlust to consider other options. It is in SusCom's purview to provide such feedback, encourage dialog with student groups, since we may have different roles and may even disagree on strategy but share the same goals.

- Invite faculty to turn off lights/projectors during class
- Air dry your clothes
- Vampire Energy
- Encourage energy efficient transportation of Spring Break
- local food day
- vegetarian day (this will not be forced upon students, but will be presented as an invitation to eat vegetarian for one day)
- Sharples Compost Day
- Do readings online
- Encourage bringing water bottles for bag lunches
- Recycling Day
- Email Day (encourage emails rather than campus mail)

A more trimmed-down list from GA coordinator was circulated for comment (above). The new approach is to focus on weekly themes instead of individual ideas for days, and allow individual students to focus on what actions they may take consistent with the weekly theme. Important vision of austerity is not really energy/resource savings, but on how people may want to make lifestyle choices.

In original list of items, however, many things required institutional action, not just student choices, and this is where Ralph and Linda had issues. The role of SusCom was discussed as separate from advocacy: our job is to provide information and recommendations for institutional policies, but not emphasize “should” in the personal decisions of community members. Earthlust, Good Food, Green Advisors, and other groups are appropriate to emphasize the “should” since they are advocacy groups.

A lengthy discussion ensued of this boundary between rational facts, studies to determine best practices regarding resource use, and education of the College community, and recommendations for institutional policy, especially in light of SusCom’s proposed recommendations (on our website). Consensus (but not unanimity) was reached that “tragedy of the commons” unfair use of resources should be an institutional issue, but that judgments that force certain values on students/faculty/staff should only be made after solid data show such actions as necessary. Some members pointed out that pro-sustainability lifestyle changes often are not perceived as austerity (negative) but simply different and possibly better (e.g. fresher, better-tasting food).

SusCom returned to the example of air-drying clothes and monitoring dryer use. It was pointed out that the use of drying racks by students in the dorms still costs energy because the heating/air conditioning system will have to remove the moisture/latent heat anyway. However, as an example of engendering discussion, raising awareness of issues, and providing experimental data for the best way forward, it is probably worthwhile to undertake. Electric dryer use can be estimated by counting coins in the coinbox of the dryers; students can be urged to provide SusCom feedback on the pros/cons of drying racks rather than coin-op dryers during March.

A suggestion was made that committee members themselves commit to adopting the GreenMarch suggestions (bulleted list, above) and a discussion of how some of these items would translate to life off-campus ensued. Members agreed to join the GreenMarch effort in whatever ways made sense for them and their families. Should SusCom formally recommend that faculty/staff/students join this effort? Some disagreement about the role of the committee versus an advocacy group like Earthlust. Rather than endorsement, best to applaud the efforts of Earthlust and ask that feedback from the GreenMarch lifestyle experiments be sent to SusCom for possible future policy consideration (best practices).

SusCom would like feedback from student body about how well GreenMarch worked for individuals, using GreenBox as feedback mechanism (these comments

will be grouped and summarized on SusCom website). SusCom members expressed appreciation that a student group (Earthlust) came to us early for suggestions and feedback; this show of good faith should be rewarded with support for their efforts, in line with SusCom's responsibility to provide information/education about best practices. SusCom can help publicize Earthlust's effort, and report to the faculty on what we learned from the GreenMarch process. Rather than just passively obtaining feedback, we can actively seek it, such as initiating a survey of GreenMarch adopters and what they learned (e.g., clipboard on dryers: "why not use drying rack?").

Invitation for Jeff Jabco to appoint a replacement since Liz Haegele left the committee. Likewise, ask Dining Services to send a representative to SusCom meetings since Linda McDougal often unable to attend.

Consider opening up our meetings to the public. Tradeoff between transparency (minutes are posted on website – ECE) and efficiency if visitors have a lot to say or even hijack meetings.

After meeting: request by SusCom member to consider "hands-up" voting rather than consensus model of committee decision-making.

**Next meeting: Friday, February 27, 2009, Lang Center Keith Room, 11:30-12:30 pm** (just prior to Faculty Meeting). Hannah Jones, Green Advisor, will answer committee questions about final GreenMarch plans. Other agenda items: discuss two issues immediately above (open meetings, decision-making), review and discuss recent GreenBox suggestions (on website).