

Sustainability Committee Minutes

27 April 2009

Attending: Eric Wagner, Stu Hain (invited guest), Maurice Eldridge, Joy Charlton, Rebecca Ringle, Nick Buttino (notes), Kelsey Hatzel, Ralph Thayer, Carr Everbach (agenda), Mike Roswell, H.G. Chissell, Nadine Kolowrat

Carr and Nadine attended a conference at Villanova on sustainable campuses on April 24, 2009, and learned about grant sources (local, state and federal) for which the College could apply for sustainability funding. Grant writing may be a major focus of activity for next year's Sustainability Committee (and any Sustainability Director).

3 new student members have been appointed to SusCom by Student Council: David Burgy (dburgy1), Eric Chiang (echiang1), and Evelyn Strombom (estrom1). All were welcomed by Carr in an email and asked to attend remaining SusCom meetings this year. A question was raised if any were Earthlust members, and whether Earthlust should have the right to appoint SusCom student members. Student Council makes those appointments, and so Earthlust may take that matter up with them.

The formal request for SusCom to be a standing committee has been submitted to COFP. COFP meets several times in May and it is likely that we will hear from them by graduation. Certainly we expect at a minimum that SusCom will continue (since we now have student members!).

Stu Hain, Vice President for Facilities and Services, spoke about how funds are allocated between capital budget and maintenance, both historically and in the current economic climate. Mr. Hain explained that the capital budget is the largest source of funds for large projects. Historically, the Board of Managers had allocated about \$2.5 million annually from the College operating budget for capital funds. In addition to this, there was also about \$5M which represented 59 basis points (0.59%) of the unencumbered endowment (i.e. unrestricted endowment). Of this approximately \$7.5M annual flow, \$2M was used for maintenance, especially critical repairs, and this was Ralph's maintenance budget. Over the years, unexpended funds have accumulated a \$5M budgetary reserve. However, since the downturn, Stu Hain has promised not to draw on the endowment at all and to spend the budgetary reserve down to protect staff jobs that otherwise would have to be cut.

The Facilities budget now (maintenance and capital) is at about \$3.25M (instead of \$7.5M), will remain so for next three years. The operating budget will only supply \$1.2M annually (instead of \$2.5M), and there is no money for discretionary funds because the reserve is now being used for operations.

However, the news is not all dire for sustainability efforts. Money has been allocated to renovating energy management systems to achieve improved efficiency (Tom Cochraine). Replacement windows for Worth are in the deferred budget (will be on hold for three years).

What is the potential for raising capital outside the existing framework (endowment, operating budget) by alumni donations or floating tax-free bonds? Swarthmore College is AAA rated (highest rated category) for borrowing, but this rating was based on its endowment being worth \$1.4 billion, now worth only \$1 billion. In response to a question about how the College has planned for electricity rate hikes in 2011, Mr. Hain told SusCom that the Administration has been building a reserve in the endowment to pay the difference, if necessary.

Carr asked about energy management strategies that might save money in the long run but would require a capital outlay now (at least before the rate hikes occur): local generation of electricity from natural gas (co-gen) using small units. The electricity would “run our meter backwards” and the waste heat would offset the heat draw from the steam pipes (number 6 fuel oil).

Stu Hain pointed out that the administration and board will focus on making the College financially sustainable with a decreased endowment. Eric asked about a planning effort for sustainability, possibly with help from an outside consultant. Mr. Hain responded that Master Plans are always shaped by us – whether or not we are working with consultants. Indeed, College already has a master-planning process underway with consultants.

Carr asked if SusCom can meet with existing consultants for college master plans, and ask them what they can do to help us increase campus sustainability? Mr. Hain responded that the consultants can meet with us in the Fall. He and Ralph will also, as a courtesy, present their preliminary allocations for capital projects and maintenance projects to SusCom prior to presenting them to the Board. SusCom can then discuss possible options.

There are several iterations of the budget, and we would have to define an appropriate place for SusCom input, possibly late September or early October annually.

Stu Hain expressed some worry that dividing up endowment planning into “sustainability projects” will disrupt the holistic process and undermine the goal of creating a more systematic plan. We can break up infrastructure into a green component, similar to how it is now broken up for Dept. of Justice/ ADA projects. Presentation of master planning to President Chopp will not occur in detail until sometime next Fall.

H.G. offered a proposal to reach out to alumni by forming an alumni advisory board for sustainability that would include executive consultants (see attached outline). We could start with a town hall meeting on sustainability during Alumni Weekend.

Thank you to Stu Hain for coming – invitation for him to attend future meetings

Jeff Jabco to talk at next meeting:

1 May 2009 – 11:30 am in Lang Center

From HG Chissell

Proposal: Create an alumni advisory council that provides an opportunity to expand alumni engagement in the college's sustainability goals and actions

Swarthmore Sustainability Committee Alumni Advisory Council

Create a series of seminars focused on specific sustainability issues facing the College. Invite a select group of alumni, special guests, faculty and students to join SusCom members. 12-15 people max

Provide those alumni who show interest an opportunity to join the alumni advisory council.

Convene an annual sustainability town hall meeting during alumni weekend open to all alumni. [Can we carve out a space and time for this alumni weekend?]

Convene an annual sustainability summit placed strategically during the year (alumni council weekend, after the LAX Conference, etc)

Designate one meeting per month open to the alumni advisory council.

Additional things to consider:

length of service on advisory council

expectations of alumni advisory council members (attend X% of meetings)