

Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 28 April 2010, Sharples Dining Hall Room 5

Attending: Carr Everbach, Linda McDougal, Debra Kardon-Brown, Camille Robertson, Nicole Lewis, David Burgy, Ralph Thayer; guest: Tom Cochrane

Carr announced that the next meeting, May 2, 2010, would take place in Kohlberg 226, rather than in the Lang Center, because of the possibility of additional visitors and the unavailability of the Keith Room (the lounge has little extra seating).

Camille had distributed electronically and proceeded to distribute hardcopies of the NYTimes proposals, which numbered three.

On an inquiry by Carr, Tom Cochrane reported that Swarthmore College dropped 400 kW during the one-hour Save-a-Watt period on Earth Day. The College will need to drop 500 kW on June 17 in a test by PECO of their brown-out reduction agreement. Ralph noted that he thought that would not be a problem, because many air-conditioning systems would be running by then and they could be shut off. The idea of a "Save-a-Watt fire drill" every semester, to accustom the community to voluntary electrical load reductions, was discussed.

Due to the graduation of two student SusCom representatives, and the request of a faculty member not to continue, there are open positions on SusCom for 2010-11. Carr asked for names of possible faculty and student members. The possibility that a SusCom representative would sit on the College Budget committee was discussed. Carr said that Stu Hain supported such a request. At a minimum, SusCom could work closely with Stu regarding the facilities budget prior to its ratification by Budget Committee each year.

Camille reported that Student Council had voted to use rollover funds for improving quality of life at Swarthmore. These improvements might occasionally involve resources overseen by SusCom, and so we would work with StuCo on these, but we would continue to administer the Renewing Fund and not these new funds.

Carr raised the issue of Rebecca Chopp's signing the Presidents' Climate Commitment, and in particular the item promising campus carbon neutrality. With ongoing use of No. 6 fuel oil, natural gas, and other fossil fuels, it is hard to imagine how the campus could truly ever be carbon neutral. A discussion ensued of buying RECs (renewable energy credits) or other carbon offsets versus doing something locally, such as buying and reforesting land. Camille pointed out that reforestation in the Amazon has a greater global effect, but Ralph pointed out that it is usually impossible to defend purchased Amazon forests from clearcutters. Camille mentioned that Wawa Dairy has property in Media that is held in a conservation trust and could be used as a farm. There was general agreement that SusCom should look into this issue and possibly support development of a farm, probably with Tri-Co partnership. Carr raised the issue of Tier 3 emissions, which is the carbon emitted indirectly, for instance to fly/drive students to campus every year (and faculty/staff to work each day). Offsetting this carbon seems to be the only way to reach carbon neutrality; it is just a question of how to offset the carbon meaningfully and

responsibly. Doing so will be a long-term project for SusCom and the College more generally.

Linda initiated a discussion of compostable plates and cups at Rebecca Chopp's Inauguration on May 8, 2010. Sharples is currently planning to use washed ceramics only, and to use "sugar plastic" (compostable) cups for the one event (lunch) that is being catered. Napkins are compostable. No fruit is planned for lunch so there will not be compostable food waste from the lunch. Linda asked, should student groups help in composting the sugar plastic cups, or would it be better for her staff to do it so that cups don't pile up and look unsightly. The tension between appearance at a formal event and sustainability was discussed. There is a Parrish Lawn reception planned until 7 (in Field house if rain; there is unavoidable resource use in planning for this contingency). Lunch 12-1 is under a tent near Sharples, rain or shine.

Carr gave an overview of each of the three New York Times Grant applications that the Committee received. The first involved supplying compostable cups to McCabe's coffee bar. Nicole confirmed that grounds will have no issues accepting more compost if the program were extended to McCabe. Camille explained that the money would go entirely to subsidizing the cups, not adding hours to the student worker's job.

The second proposal involved purchasing drying racks. Carr brought up the ideological discussion that air-drying clothes adds humidity to the building, which the college effectively pays to remove. Ralph mentioned that in the winter this would actually be a beneficial effect. Deb is going to revisit the Green Advisor's original Swarthmore Foundation Grant to see if there are already drying racks in circulation. Linda also said she really likes drying racks from Ikea, which are metal, folding, and large.

The third NYTimes proposal was for a beehive on campus. Linda confirmed that there would not be any concerns serving honey from campus beehives. Deb commented that the bees would improve plant pollination in the Arboretum. Nicole explained that the Ashton House was a good site for its sunlight and proximity to the Good Food garden. She mentioned that purchasing native bees would be a more "ecologically true" choice, but that she doubted students would be as interested.

Deb said she would like to talk to both applicants of the proposals requesting less than five hundred dollars about whether they are looking for seed funding or ongoing money. If the former is the case, she would like to talk to them about working with the Swarthmore Foundation or other funding sources she is aware of.

Tom Cochrane said he has been monitoring the very large number of elevator "up" rides in Parrish. There were over 200 in a 24-hour period, and over 60 this morning. Each one uses electrical power and many may be unnecessary. Public information campaign?

At SusCom's next meeting there will be a formal vote on recommending Rebecca Chopp sign the Presidents' Climate Commitment and on which NYTimes proposal to fund.

Respectfully submitted,

Carr Everbach and Camille Robertson



Last meeting of semester:

Tuesday, May 4, 2:30-3:30 pm, Kohlberg 226 (open meeting)
