

Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes

November 4, 2015

9:30 am, Lang Center Keith Room

In attendance: Adina Spertus-Melhus, Ben Berger, Deb Kardon-Brown, Eric Wagner, Giovanna Di Chiro, Mark Davis, Melissa Tier (notetaker), Nathan Graf, Ralph Thayer, Sheila Magee, Sibelan Forrester, Tao Wang

Carbon Tax Proposal

Summary of Changes

- Recent changes to the proposal incorporated discussion from the last SusCom meeting
 - More data on carbon emissions included
 - More developed discussion of various models of a carbon tax
 - More concrete, 3-part proposal specific to Swarthmore

SusCom Questions & Comments

- What will SusCom's role be?
 - SusCom tasked with helping 1) to monitor the disbursement of funds; 2) to develop and assess new initiatives
- How old is our data?
 - The carbon tax will be based on data from 2014
- Will the carbon tax affect the cost of construction projects?
 - It will more likely affect the decisions made in design
- The word 'tax' sounds negative, might make people think this is punitive
 - Can we address this concern directly with a sentence of two in the proposal?
 - Of course, many of us are aware that there probably will eventually be a national carbon tax
- Should we consider a higher initial cost of carbon? It is at least worth acknowledging?
 - Generating a very large lump of money right away may not be the best way to support projects, though

SusCom Endorsement

- The Sustainability Committee endorses this proposal
- Eric and Ralph will send an email of our endorsement to Betsy Bolton

Trash2Treasure

Summary of Current Challenge

- Trash2Treasure will not be operating at the same time as in the past
 - Operating the sale right at the end of the spring semester is extremely costly
 - Deb & Melissa in conversation with Greg Brown about changes
- We want to reduce the amount of waste coming out of the dorms
- We'd like the sale to occur when students are on campus
- We are, however, still involved with the United Way and would like to continue the partnership
 - The United Way named Swarthmore the Impact Partner of the Year
- Main challenges for the proposed new timing of the sale:

- Storage over the summer
- Space for the sale in the fall

SusCom Questions & Comments

- Problem appears to be that Swarthmore students buy too many items that they waste
 - Part of this discussion must include considering policy changes to dorm rules
 - One possibility presented by Laura Cacho was to offer all of the good items to incoming students to rent for a low cost instead of selling all items at once
 - Not enough good quality items in order to offer to all incoming students; mini-fridges should also be a separate conversation
- Requiring LED-lamps would mean that they could be passed to new students and more likely to continue to work
- Need to allow for special requests, at least, for students who require a fridge in their room
 - A rental option or some sort of subsidy would handle this problem
 - Rental prices at other schools are very high
 - Few food options on this campus make fridges more essential here, but we could probably institute a rental price fairly equivalent to the sale price
- In the past for many schools, all students had to take all of their things out of the dorms – which encouraged very different behaviors; also, we need a centralized, recycling/waste management center on campus
 - We can't expect behavior change without putting in policies that support the changes we want to see
- What are other colleges doing?
 - The Green Advisors will be doing research on just that
- How available are common-room refrigerators?
 - It varies a lot; we built in this problem when we didn't build suite-style housing
 - Does this then become a question of retrofitting dorms?
 - Students are only thinking about four years of college, they're not thinking of buying items that can last for 10 years; the College needs to set policy in place to change the way students make cost assessments
- Perception among students that they can throw things away for free, but there is actually a cost to those behaviors
- Let's think very carefully about what items are a necessity, what it means to have a good life
- A sub-committee should be created which will plan next steps for addressing this problem; possibilities include a campus-wide survey, a charrette, an external assessment, etc.
 - We do, for the first time, have a paid group of students who can seek out information for us

Sub-Committee on Consumption, Consumerism, and Behavioral Change

- Led by Deb (Trash2Treasure facilitator)
- Members: Melissa (Green Advisors facilitator), Mark Adina, Sibelan, Giovanna

ACUPCC Changes

Summary of Changes & Upcoming Decisions

- Swarthmore became a signatory of ACUPCC in 2010

- Commits to be carbon neutral by 2035
 - Created a Climate Action Plan, GHG Inventories, etc.
- ACUPCC is now the Climate Leadership Network (both organized by Second Nature)
 - Swarthmore now a Carbon Commitment Leader
 - We have the opportunity to become a Climate Commitment Leader by adding a Resilience Commitment
- Key components of ‘resilience’
 - Increase adaptive capacity
 - Partner with community
 - Address assessments, indicators, inclusivity
- We have to make a series of decisions
 - Sign or don’t sign Resilience Commitment?
 - Sign during initial signatory period (by January 1) or later?
 - Submit newly-annual GHG Inventory & Carbon Progress Report this year (by January 15) or wait until next year?
 - Val is already highly interested, but looking to SusCom & Office of Sustainability for more details
- The Resilience Commitment entails all efforts not directly tied to meeting our carbon neutrality target

SusCom Questions & Comments

- Need to better understand what ‘resilience’ means to Second Nature & us
- How do we define ‘community’?
- What is the feasibility of taking this on?
 - We would only need to sign the commitment in the next two months. Then we would have another two months to identify members of a campus-community task force, and then another 10 months before a first Resilience Assessment is due

Next Steps

- Everyone will look at more resources (Melissa will send around)
- Melissa will also make Aurora aware of this issue & will bring more concrete steps to the next committee meeting

Other Agenda Items

- We should have a welcome reception for Aurora when she gets here (Eric will present options next time)

End time 10:29

Respectfully submitted, Melissa Tier