

Sustainability Committee meeting minutes

10 September 2010, Kohlberg 115

Attending: Ralph Thayer, Nadine Kolowrat, Maurice Eldridge, Linda McDougall, Alexa Ross (soph; Good Food-GF), Amanda Bayer, Yvonne Socolar (soph; Green Advisors-GA facilitator, GF, Earthlust-EL), Erin Curtis (soph; GF treasurer, EL; organic lawn), Nicole Lewis, Lee Smithy, Carr Everbach

Carr welcomed members to a new year on “SusCom” and asked each member present to introduce her/himself. Especial welcome to new members, including the three students (who are all sophomores and affiliated variously with the “green groups” Earthlust, Good Food Club, and Green Advisors). Lee Smithy, of Sociology/Anthropology has chaired the Peace & Conflict Studies program. Carr also listed the members not present, and said nice things about them.

The meeting schedule for the semester was reviewed (listed below). Meetings originally scheduled for Monday mornings have been moved to Monday noontimes, to allow more members to attend (unfortunately, lunchtime meetings are difficult for Linda, who has duties at the Dining Hall then). Members are welcome to bring their lunches to noontime meetings, and breakfast meetings are all scheduled for Sharples, where food is available.

Carr made some opening remarks about the general policies and goals of the Sustainability Committee, noting that meetings alternate as closed and open to the public and encouraging SusCom members to invite people on those days. Carr will try to send out an agenda before each meeting, as well as emailing the minutes of the previous one.

Nadine mentioned that over the summer she had attended a conference that noted the key predictors of success in sustainability efforts are student interest, faculty-staff-student mutual trust, and leadership. She expressed hope that we have all these and can make progress in the year ahead.

In that light, Carr reviewed some of the successes of the previous year’s SusCom, including establishing the Renewing Fund for Resource Conservation (RFRC); initiating a Greenhouse Gas Inventory as part of a multi-municipality grant for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA-DEP; Greenbox suggestions; Rebecca Chopp’s Inauguration panel on Sustainability; her signing of the American Colleges and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC; <http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org>) and attendance at upcoming meeting in Denver in October. Carr mentioned that the College had committed itself to reporting sustainability targets as part of the American Association of Sustainability in Higher Education’s (AASHE; <http://www.aashe.org>) program Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS; <http://stars.aashe.org/>). Carr and Yvonne, on behalf of SusCom, will be attending the AASHE10 meeting in Denver in October that dovetails with Rebecca Chopp’s PCC meeting. Some of Monday’s meeting will be devoted to a more detailed discussion of the STARS program and Swarthmore’s obligations under it.

An issue arose of whether and how the College should participate in “green” rating systems by various organizations. This is a Public Relations issue as well as one for recruiting students and staff. Carr expressed his view that the College should consider no longer responding to those whose rating systems are opaque and instead focus on STARS, which is a better fit for our institution and is very transparent. Over the summer, Carr, Ralph, and Nadine filled out the “College Sustainability Report Card” survey (see <http://www.greenreportcard.org/> for 2010) which was huge and required information that the College does not track. The organization also asked for a \$1700 processing fee, which the College declined. It is not clear what will happen to Swarthmore’s grade if the College does not pay the fee or respond to the survey next year. Nicole asked if the News and Information Office had opinions about this, and Nadine noted that Nancy Nicely reviewed the survey and was in the loop. It will be up to SusCom, however, to make recommendations regarding this issue in the year ahead.

Nicole then spoke on the issue of the first RFRC item, the Mertz Organic Lawn. Erin will be working with her on this project, following up on Camille Robertson’s efforts over the Summer of 2010. Consultant Eric T. Fleisher was hired with RFRC funds to help Swarthmore eliminate synthetic pesticides and fertilizers on a 5-acre portion of turf adjacent to Mertz. “T” Fleisher made a campus visit and presentation in July, followed by a lunch attended by faculty, Penn State Extension, Longwood Gardens, Morris Arboretum, other public garden representatives. Nicole, Camille, Carr, and Rebecca installed lysimeters (water sampling devices) in the Mertz lawn and also on the Sharples side of Magill Walk in August. Nadine asked if there would be signage explaining these devices or the project in general. Nicole responded that T’s followup will include his delivering a printed program, and that 2 ‘ by 4’ outdoor signs are almost ready. Camille wrote two blog articles on the Scott Arboretum’s website (<http://blogs.scottarboretum.org/gardenseeds/2010/06/organic-lawn-care/>). Nadine asked if the project could be featured on the College homepage. Nicole noted that a Newspaper article on the Organic Lawn project has already been featured there (see <http://www.swarthmore.edu/x30505.xml>). Nadine said that the grants office will continue to investigate long-term funding for this project (the RFRC loan is to be repaid from savings on lawn chemicals and mowing).

Ralph described the Interruptible Load Response program that the College has entered into with the electrical grid operator, PJM Interconnect. If the College voluntarily reduces electricity consumption during a brownout emergency, we earn money. Once as a test in June, and once as an emergency in July, the College was able to reduce its electrical power more than the 500 kW requested; indeed, we were able to cut back almost twice that amount. A description of the events will be posted on the SusCom website.

Carr demonstrated a possible LED lightbulb replacement for the wagonwheel light fixtures in Sharples Dining hall. The candidate bulbs are whiter, and slightly brighter, than the 6-watt incandescent bulbs currently in place but use only 2.4 watts. Each bulb is guaranteed for 5 years, but may last more than twice that (the 6W incandescents last 6 months and so we replace all of them twice a year). Some discussion ensued regarding the esthetic issues and SusCom members were asked to visit Sharples and see the LED lights in one fixture.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carr Everbach

Future meetings:

Monday, September 13, 11:30 am-12:30 pm in Keith Room, Lang Center (open meeting)

Wednesday, September 22, 8:30-9:30 am in Sharples Room 4

Monday, September 27, 11:30 am-12:30 pm in Keith Room, Lang Center (open meeting)

Friday, October 1, 11:30-12:30 in Kohlberg 115

Monday, October 4, 11:30 am-12:30 pm in Keith Room, Lang Center (open meeting)

Wednesday, October 20, 8:30-9:30 in Sharples Room 4

Monday, October 25, 11:30 am-12:30 pm in Keith Room, Lang Center (open meeting)

Friday, October 29, 11:30-12:30 in Kohlberg 115

Friday, November 5, 11:30-12:30 in Kohlberg 115 (open meeting)

Wednesday, November 10, 8:30-9:30 in Sharples Room 4

Monday, November 15, 11:30 am-12:30 pm in Keith Room, Lang Center (open meeting)

Monday, November 22, 11:30 am-12:30 pm in Keith Room, Lang Center

Monday, November 29, 11:30 am-12:30 pm in Keith Room, Lang Center (open meeting)

Friday, December 3, 11:30-12:30 in Kohlberg 115

Monday, December 6, 11:30 am-12:30 pm in Keith Room, Lang Center (open meeting)

one final meeting after classes end TBA