

Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes
December 5, 2011 11:30am Lang Center Keith Room

Attendees: Alison Holliday, Kathryn Wu, Joy Charlton, Clara Fang, Carr Everbach, Maurice Eldridge, Nicole Selby, Deb Kardon-Brown

LPAC Solar Energy System Proposal

Carr began the meeting by updating the committee on the students' LPAC solar energy system proposal. Carr has spoken with Stu and Ralph about the project, and they have approved further analysis. He learned that the idea of putting solar panels on LPAC has been under consideration for several years, in fact. About three years ago, an engineering study of the roof was conducted which concluded that the roof was strong enough to support the weight of solar panels without reinforcements within the building. What we do not know is where the footers for the solar panels will go and how much that will cost. We have been working with a roof consultant to look at the logistics of putting a green roof on the roof. A Request for Proposal will go out for an alternate roof contractor in January, bids will be received in February, and a selection will likely be made in March. We won't know what the costs for the installation will be until the bids are received, then the College can decide whether to hire the alternate contractor to make the roof "solar panel ready." If it is a nominal cost, it will likely be done, but if it is a big markup then we will have to think about finding funding and persuading the College to make the investment. Construction will begin after Alumni weekend and be finished by the beginning of the Fall semester or mid-summer if possible. [n.b.: Stu Hain announced to the Board of Managers, as reported later to the faculty, that the installation of footers and electrical conduit for future panels has already been approved.]

Deb asked if the solar panels would shade out the green roof underneath them. Nicole answered that the panels will be tilted and elevated, so enough light would get to the plants. Also the plants will be placed strategically so that they receive sufficient light. The panels won't be everywhere and we can design the green roof for uneven light coverage.

Carr said that we only need to plan for the roof to be panel-ready; the solar panels themselves may not be installed for a long time. He then went on to explain mechanisms for funding the solar panels. One way is to get another entity to pay the cost of the solar system and thereby own the RECs associated with them. The panels would still be installed on LPAC but carbon credits would be claimed by the paying entity. The system is then depreciated for seven years, after which it can be donated to the college or be bought by the College. The other option is to own the panels outright as well as the carbon credits they produce.

Carr asked the Committee to take a formal vote to recommend making the LPAC roof solar panel ready. The Committee voted unanimously in approval.

Ecosphere and David Gelber update

Joy asked Clara to give an update of Friday's Ecosphere meeting attended by David Gelber. Clara said that the students from the engineering class presented their solar panel feasibility study to the group, and it was well received by all. David Gelber was enthusiastic about it and suggested that the College should conduct a study on how to go off the grid entirely. (Joy said that David Gelber is serious about this and is looking to produce a story on a college demonstrating going off the grid for his TV show.) David Gelber showed the group the Sizzle Reel, which is a 10 minute introduction to the TV series he's producing about climate change, "Years of Living Dangerously". He said that he is interested in having Swarthmore students work with him over the summer on the show. He had a Swarthmore intern last summer and had a very good experience with him. (Kathryn said that this student is now forming a new student group on climate change.) David Gelber also talked about his idea of conducting a teach-in on campus. At that point, half of the students had left the meeting in order to attend class. The students who remained responded positively to his proposal. David shared his contact information with all, and Clara offered to share his internship opportunity through the Ecosphere listserv. The minutes from the meeting will go out to all Ecosphere members.

SusCom members asked what action should now be taken. Are the students going to follow up with David or organize something? Clara said that she doesn't know, though the students exchanged email addresses with him. Kathryn said that Earthlust is not really keen on the idea of having big name speakers but is more interested in people who can bring substance to discussions.

Alison asked if David could give us a list of the people who could potentially come speak. That will give us some idea of whether or not we want to invite them. She said that bringing someone who can talk substantively would be interesting to the students who know a lot about this subject, but that wouldn't draw a crowd.

Joy said we need to know who is the audience. Is it people who need to be convinced? Or people who are already knowledgeable and want deeper content? Carr said that time is running out and if we are organizing something for March, it needs to happen soon. Joy said maybe this could happen in the Fall instead.

CAPCom

Carr had attended the CAPCom meeting on Thursday where they discussed education for sustainability. Carr was invited to talk about his discoveries on the

subject at the AASHE conference. He spoke about the need to integrate sustainability into the curriculum broadly, not just in environmental studies courses. Carr said that the committee was interested in the co-curricular strategies, such as new student orientation, and the green advisors program. They talked about bringing first-year students back one week early in January to teach them about sustainability. Carr also made a strong pitch for offering SusCom to help CAPcom next semester, including helping them write the draft of the Climate Action Plan. SusCom stands ready to assist CAPCom in whatever way is most useful for them.

Other Announcements

Carr proceeded to other announcements and ideas that have come before him. On January 11, Carr will be meeting with Donna McGowan who is an EPA representative in charge of recycling in the Northeast. They will discuss how Swarthmore can improve its recycling and its waste measurements. Currently we know how much we recycle but we don't know how much goes out as trash so we can't determine what percentage of our trash gets recycled. Nicole said that Jeff Jabco is working on getting our trash hauler to pick up just Swarthmore College trash and measure it once a week next year so that we can get some baseline measurement of the trash.

Carr also discussed two technologies that Clara had shared with individuals on campus. The first is Lucid Technologies, which has a building dashboard that can track environmental performance in a building (including energy, carbon emissions, and water use) over time in a very attractive and user-friendly format. Swarthmore currently has a homemade version that Facilities and ITS had worked on extensively. It does not have many features and it shows energy use only from the time that you open the browser to when you close it. The second item is Osorb, which is a product that's basically glass beads with surface texture that can soak up pollution from rainwater. It can be used in rain gardens, streams, and collector ponds to clean runoff. The College is considering building a rain garden at the Inn as part of its sustainability features and this could be applied there.

Nicole reminded the committee that as Carr makes the schedule for the group to meet next semester, we should think about how to meet as subcommittees. Can the subcommittees schedule to meet themselves? Allison said that there needs to be a point person in each subcommittee who can organize the meetings, otherwise everyone will have good intentions but the meetings may not happen. Should the subcommittees each have a chair? Allison also said that meeting as subcommittees outside of the all committee meeting would go over well if the number of all committee meetings were reduced.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30pm.

Respectfully submitted, Clara Fang and Carr Everbach