

Energy and Sustainability Committee Minutes
February 23, 2009
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
210 Burruss Hall

Present: Michael Coleman – Chair, Melinda West for Dwight Shelton, Jack Davis, John Randolph, Lucinda Jennings for Scott Hurst, Denny Cochrane, Bruce Ferguson, Rick Johnson, Ben Myers, Sean McGinnis, Annie Pearce, Tom Tucker, Rob Lowe, Brian Perkins, Sara Murrill, and Angella De Soto

Absent: Sherwood Wilson, Madeline Schreiber, Mike Cutlip, and Kristina Hartman

Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment & Sustainability Plan Subcommittee and Guests: Chris Compton, Richard Hirsh, Steve Mouras, Scott Reed, Mary Seyler, and John Beach

Call Meeting to Order and Welcome Guests

This is a joint meeting of the Energy & Sustainability Committee and its subcommittee for developing the draft Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment & Sustainability Plan (VTCAC&SP). Mike Coleman called the joint meeting to order.

Adoption of Agenda

The Committee approved the agenda as proposed.

Approval of the January 26, 2009 Minutes

The January 26, 2009 Minutes were distributed earlier this date. Some of the members of the Energy and Sustainability Committee had not had sufficient time to conduct their review; therefore, the Committee decided to conduct an electronic vote to approve the minutes.

Old Business

- 1) Commission on University Support Resolution 2008-2009A

The University Council approved the Resolution on February 2, 2009 which adds the Director of Housing and Dining Services and the Energy and Sustainability Coordinator (renamed Sustainability Program Manager) positions as ex-officio members on the Energy and Sustainability Committee.

New Business

- 1) Status of the current draft Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment and Sustainability Plan (VTCAC&SP) and Milestones

John Randolph provided feedback on a series of recent meetings and email exchanges.

The Budget Office provided written comments on their review of the draft. John Randolph submitted a written response, and subsequently he and Denny Cochrane met with Melinda West (Assistant to the Vice President for Finance), Barry Key (the Associate Director of Budget Operations), and Brennan Shepard (Intern to the Vice President for Finance) to discuss their comments and the response in more detail. The discussions were very positive and resulted in modifying the language of several items in both the Commitment and the Plan.

The first reading of the draft Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment to the Commission on University Support was conducted on February 19, 2009. John Randolph reviewed the highlights of the draft VTCAC&SP Executive Summary and the feedback was positive.

Michael Coleman, John Randolph and Denny Cochrane met with Dwight Shelton (Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer) and Barry Key on February 20, 2009, and reviewed the current version of the draft Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment. Discussions focused on the sources of funding addressed in item #6 and included the student Green Fee proposal in 2006 and the university actions taken to accomplish the student's goal without implementation of that fee, the specific language in item #7 pertaining to LEED Silver certification, and the proposed creation of an Office of Sustainability. In this era of declining resources, we clarified that the Office of Sustainability can be established with no additional resources at this time. Especially noteworthy was this meeting provided a venue to articulate the myriad of sustainability ongoing initiatives on campus and especially those with student involvement. Dwight Shelton was comfortable with the language of the Commitment as written.

Brian Perkins stated we need to maintain flexibility in the Commitment.

Kim O'Rourke (Chief of Staff to President Steger and Secretary to the Board of Visitors) provided written comments on the draft VTCAC&SP. As a result, item #6 has had a slight modification to the text, and item #14 has been significantly enhanced to add the requirement for an annual report card showing progress toward the GHG emission reduction targets and adjustments to the targets in the future based on internal and external conditions and evolving technologies.

John Randolph provided members with a revised draft Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment with "track changes" that captured all of the recommendations to date. He welcomed feedback from all attendees.

Rick Johnson mentioned the symbolism associated with introducing a student Green Fee. Angie De Soto confirmed that the students continue to support having a Green Fee. Tom Tucker suggested that we could consider introducing an alternative to a student Green Fee by having a student Green Fund established by the University Development Office.

There was considerable discussion regarding the current wording of item #7. The Budget Office recommended that the wording "Virginia Tech will require LEED Silver Certification" be replaced with "Virginia Tech will pursue LEED Silver Certification or better." The Committee agreed with this version. There was also considerable discussion on should current capital projects in the program be treated differently than future capital projects. John Randolph suggested we table that discussion of any rewording of item #7, and stated he would circulate a new version for Committee members to review and comment on electronically later in the day.

2) Communication and coordination activities to support the draft VTCAC&SP

John Randolph proposed sending a copy of the draft VTCAC&SP Executive Summary to the Chair of the other Commissions in the university governance system and to offer them the opportunity to receive a briefing on the draft VTCAC&SP prior to its first reading to the University Council. Denny Cochrane will handle that task.

Angie De Soto reported that she has briefed the members of the Environmental Coalition and the Coalition for Campus Sustainability and the SGA Executive Board. All are very supportive of the draft VTCAC&SP. She is scheduled to brief the SGA House and Senate soon and will give a presentation on the draft VTCAC&SP to the Earth Sustainability Series Course on March 5, 2009.

3) Community Action Grants for Energy Research

Richard Hirsh announced the Office of the Vice President for Research is soliciting proposals in the field of energy and sustainability research that promote collaboration between Virginia Tech researchers, the university community, and the local community. Proposals must be submitted to Don Leo, Special Advisor to the Vice President for Research on Energy Initiatives, by March 6, with the anticipated start date of April 1, 2009. A written announcement containing eligibility, project duration, project budget limits, the proposal format, and review criteria, was provided to all members prior to this meeting.

4) Sustainability & Energy Conservation Presentation to the Staff Senate

At the request of the Staff Senate, Chair and Associate Vice President for Facilities Services Michael Coleman gave a presentation titled “Sustainability and Energy Conservation.” The presentation addressed the recent initiative to cut back the thermostat setting to 68 degrees Fahrenheit in accordance with the Campus Energy and Water Policy 5505. The presentation slides may be viewed on the sustainability website at www.facilities.vt.edu/sustainability

5) 2009 Governor’s Environmental Excellence Awards

Virginia Tech’s “Tree Campus USA” project and the YMCA “Y-toss?” program will each receive a Bronze Award to be presented at the 20th Annual Environment Virginia Symposium on the campus at the Virginia Military Institute on April 1, 2009.

Future Meetings

All future meetings will be held in the Presidents Board Room, 210 Burruss Hall, from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm. The next scheduled meeting dates are as follows:

March 30, 2009

April 29, 2009 (this is a change)

May 18, 2009 (only if needed)

Adjourn

It was moved and seconded to adjourn.