

# ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 28, 2016

Room 325, Burruss Hall

## MEMBERS:

**Members Present:** Kayla Smith (for Sherwood Wilson), Savita Sharma (for Dwight Shelton), Denny Cochrane, Ruben Avagyan, Steve Mouras, Rob Lowe, Bruce Obenhaus, David Mellichamp, Devita Mcculough-Amal, Melvin Amos, Sam Gittelman.

**Members Absent:** Chris Kiwus, Jason Soileau, Frances Keene, Sean McGinnis, John Chermak, Tim Baird, Katie Reaves, Richard Benson, Allison Homer.

**Recorder:** Emily Schosid.

**Guests:** Emily Schosid.

### **1. Welcome & Introductions E&S Committee Members**

Mr. Mouras called the meeting to order at 2:02PM. Because there was a new member, Mr. Gittelman, the committee introduced itself individually.

### **2. Approval of Proposed Agenda**

Mr. Mouras asked for changes to the agenda, and receiving none, the agenda was approved.

### **3. Approval of February 22, 2016 Minutes**

Mr. Mouras asked for changes to the February 22 minutes, and receiving none, the minutes were approved.

### **4. Old Business**

#### **a. 2015-2016 Green RFP Status and Prioritization: Denny Cochrane**

Mr. Cochrane gave an overview of where the Green RFP program is currently. Earlier in the month, Mr. Cochrane and Elizabeth Hansen from the Facilities Business Office briefed the 18 Category 1 projects to the Budget Committee. Overall, the projects were well-received by the committee. The Budget Committee had a few questions about projects like the occupancy sensors in Oak Lane and the new recycling bins, but it looks as though most of the projects will be partially or fully funded. Projects 14-18 on the priority list are not likely to be funded. Ms. Sharma asked whether all of last year's Green RFP projects had been completed. Mr. Cochrane said that yes, they all have.

#### **b. Campus-Wide Sustainability Outreach: Emily Schosid**

Ms. Schosid gave an update of the Sustainability Engagement process so far. Earlier in March, five focus groups met to talk more specifically about sustainability issues at Virginia Tech—energy, waste, water, alternative transportation, and communication. While about 80 people expressed interested in participating in such sessions after the survey was complete, only about 12 people expressed interest in each of the 5 sessions, and only 2-7 people (unaffiliated with the E&S Committee) showed up at each session. The groups were generally interested in meeting several times each semester and working on some kind of concrete projects to be completed within a single academic year. Ms. Schosid then opened the conversation up to comments and questions from the rest of the committee. Mr.

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Mouras then reiterated the original intent behind the focus groups and other background information. Mr. Avagyan suggested that there has been good luck engaging people online, and perhaps there was some way to conduct an online action group. Ms. Sharma suggested that if we communicated more directly with student groups and faculty members who we know are engaged about sustainability, we may see better participation with the working group. Mr. Amos said that he heard feedback suggesting that the survey was poorly timed at the end of last semester. He suggested that if the survey was conducted further away from the end of the semester, and then the focus groups would be within the same semester, we might see more participation. Mr. Gittelman asked whether groups like the Environmental Coalition were invited directly. Ms. Schosid said that yes, sustainability leaders, including the president and vice president of the EC were invited directly. Mr. Gittelman suggested that perhaps meetings should be scheduled to talk face to face at club meetings to see better engagement. Mr. Mouras indicated the Office of Sustainability thought having one larger group, which could decide to take on one or more projects, might be more successful than having five separate groups. Ms. Smith suggested that the working groups could be in some way tied to the Student Sustainability Leadership Forums that are already planned each semester. Ms. McCullough-Amal suggested maybe having just one or two groups who get together whenever they are able. Mr. Mouras closed the conversation by saying that if others had any further suggestions, they should feel free to email them to him. Ms. Schosid said that if anyone is interested in having a leadership role with the group next year, to let her know at the next meeting.

### **c. Energy Update: Ruben Avagyan**

Mr. Avagyan gave an update on energy projects on campus. The natural gas line is now 100% complete and natural gas is being used in larger quantities in the steam plant. Two of the natural gas boilers have been upgraded and a third one is being upgraded in the fall. However, this is not enough capacity for the steam plant to run entirely on natural gas. In order to make that happen, more of the boilers will need to be converted or replaced. A consultant has been hired to identify the best option moving forward, although nothing will happen for probably 6-8 years. Progress continues to be made on the five programs that are part of phase 1 of the 5-year energy plan. The North Chiller Plant is being upgraded to a better technology which will allow us to reduce the number of pumps from 6 to 3. This will make the plant more efficient and reduce energy use in the plant—about \$300,000 in annual energy savings. Reducing the number of chillers will also allow for space to add more chillers and increase capacity for the plant. The energy audits are almost finished, and have uncovered nearly \$1 million in annual energy savings, which will cause payback times to be between 2 and 5 years for the various energy retrofits. Steam meters are planned to be fully installed by the fall of 2016. Finally, an energy management program was selected, and the integration for phase 1 is planned to be complete in spring 2017. Mr. Gittelman asked whether LEED certification for existing buildings would be something that Mr. Avagyan would consider. Mr. Avagyan said that LEED certification is very expensive, and he suggested that it might make more sense to spend money on existing projects, rather than submitting an official certification request.

## **5. New Business**

### **a. Earth Week Update: Emily Schosid**

Ms. Schosid gave an overview of Earth Week events. Events are scheduled from April 18-24, Monday through Sunday. The Environmental Coalition has the lead on the project, but the Office of Sustainability supports their program with coordination and event planning. There are two big events

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that the Office of Sustainability are heading up: on April 19 at 1PM there will be a tree planting along West Campus Drive. Laura Sands intends to be at that event, as she expressed an interest in participating in some aspect of Earth Week. On April 20, at 1PM, there will be an unveiling of the new solar charging table in the Pritchard Hall quad. President Sands will be in attendance and will offer some remarks. At the Spring Game, the OofS Recycling Interns will be running a large effort to improve tailgate recycling. Mr. Mouras will send out the website with the full list of events.

### **b. Stroubles Creek Tree Planting/Cleanup: Emily Schosid**

Ms. Schosid explained that The Office of Sustainability at Virginia Tech has partnered with the Office for Sustainability at UVa, and created a competition called the RiVALry Cup. This event puts VT head-to-head against UVa on one sustainability event every month. In February both schools did waste audits in their dining halls to measure food waste. UVa won that event, but it is because they have done the waste audits in the past. This month, the event was a stream cleanup and tree planting along Stroubles Creek. Over 100 volunteers came out to help with the effort at VT and only 47 came to UVa's event.

### **6. Open Discussion**

Mr. Cochrane asked for Ms. Schosid to talk about the other RiVALry Cup events. Ms. Schosid said that *Caught Green Handed* would take place during Earth Week and Ytoss would be the subject of May's competition. She also mentioned that the RiVALry cup has been useful for making sure there are a good number of interesting and new events throughout the semester. Mr. Gittelman asked whether the waste audit in the dining halls would be repeated in future semesters. Ms. Schosid said that it seemed like the intern teams would like to do a similar thing every semester. Mr. Amos asked why the RiVALry cup has been mostly used as an internal tool rather than a larger marketing opportunity. Ms. Schosid explained that it was a new program that both school had big plans to promote the competition, but both have found that it has worked much better for an internal planning tool more than anything. Mr. Mouras explained that it has often been difficult to communicate to the campus community in a way that gets them to participate in the various programs that we coordinate. Ms. Sharma asked if this was a common issue for universities. Mr. Mouras said yes, that it was not unusual for other sustainability programs to have difficult in campus wide communication.

**Next Meeting;** April 25, 2016, 2PM - Room 325, Burruss Hall

**Adjourned** at 3:02PM

Respectfully Submitted,  
Emily Schosid