

## **Energy & Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes** **04/27/20 2:00 - 3:00pm | Zoom Meeting**

**Attendees:** Nick Woods for Ken Miller, Dean Paul Winistorfer, Jon Clark Teglas for Chris Kiwus, Mike Dunn for Liza Morris, Blake Bensman for Frances Keene, Denny Cochrane, Scott Kerklo, Rob Glenn, Rob Lowe, Virgilio Centeno, Elena Lind, Matt Eick, Erin Hopkins, Jamie Stein, Brandon Burkey, Gustavo Ventura Gargioni, and Natalie Koppier

**Guests:** John Randolph, Todd Schenk, Mary-Ann Ibeziako, Sean McGinnis, Jody Booze Daniels, Nathan King, Nick Quint, Ellen Garcia, Yasmine Sikder, and Josh Trump

### **Welcoming Remarks**

**Meeting Agenda Approved:** Rob Lowe motion to approve, second by Virgilio Centeno

**Approval of Minutes from February 24, 2019 Meeting:** Scott Kerklo motion approve, second by Virgilio Centeno

### **Old Business**

#### **2019-2020 Green RFP Summary**

Denny Cochrane reviewed the milestones and current status. 19 proposals presented to the Office of Budget and Financial Planning (OBFP) on March 12. A complete list of proposals are in the minutes from the previous meeting on March 23. Of the 19 proposals, he believes 16 have a good chance of being approved, and fully or partially funded. The EV Charging Station proposal has interest, however, it has a number of issues to address and may need more time to review. Given the current sensitivity to health issues, the Electric Hand Dryer proposal was not supported. Finally, the Ceramic Mug proposal for Deets Place must be put on hold pending the outcome of the proposed Dietrick Dining Hall Plaza project.

Dean Paul Winistorfer asked if funding for the Green RFP Program could be adversely impacted by the anticipated reduction in state funding to the university. Denny Cochrane said it could, but we simply don't know at this time. Faced with serious funding shortfalls, the university will have to decide if, or how, it can fund the 2019-2020 Green RFP Program. The Green RFP Program is a very popular one with our students, as well as with our university senior leadership. They could decide to fully fund, partially fund, or hold funding. When a decision is made, the announcement memorandum will come directly to the Energy & Sustainability Committee, and the Office of Sustainability will implement it.

### **New Business**

#### **Climate Action Commitment Working Group Update**

Once again Professor Emeritus John Randolph, Chair of the Climate Action Commitment Working Group (CAC WG), joined us and provided a comprehensive summary of their progress to review and provide recommendations for the revision of the current Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment.

As a way of review, Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer Dr. Dwayne Pinkney has tasked the CAC WG to provide him with the CAC WG final report in June 2020. They have two

deliverables. The first deliverable is to document the progress the university has made in achieving the goals of the 2009 Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment and the 2013 revision. It will compare our progress to that of our peer and exemplary institutions. The second deliverable is provide recommendations for revising the current VTCAC.

To date, the CAC WG has identified 14 preliminary goals and pathways to achieve those goals, and Professor Randolph reviewed each one. He mentioned that in the 2009 and 2013 revision, the first goal was for “Virginia Tech to be a leader in campus sustainability.” We have become a leader and we want this to continue, and he will likely add make this a 15<sup>th</sup> goal and position it as the first one. So this is his idea: “Virginia Tech will continue to be a leader in campus sustainability and be carbon neutral by 2030.”

Beginning on April 22 (Earth Day), he and Vice Chair Todd Schenk have been hosting a series of Zoom Meetings with each one focused on the work of one of their 12 Subcommittees. The intent is to seek participation and feedback from our university faculty, staff and students, as well as members of the local community. Originally this would have been done in a series of open meetings, but COVID-19 made go to a virtual platform. The Zoom Meetings will extend through April 28, and thus far have been very informative and useful. On average each meeting has had 20 to 30 participants.

E&SC Comment: For goal #3, there may be some better alternatives to our backup for coal.

Professor Randolph: That’s a good point. We have a need for a backup, and currently coal is our backup. We have to wait and see if better alternatives for backups become present. We should be as specific as possible on our backup currently.

E&SC Comment: When you look at the 14 preliminary goals, it’s striking how many are new and were not there in 2009. Many of these goals complement each other.

Professor Randolph: Our intent is be bold. We’ve already made headway on some of these goals and he shared some examples. We would love to see more of these goals put into action and very soon. A strong commitment to these goals has been seen by so many faculty, staff, students and community members.

Professor Randolph concluded his remarks by noting many members of the Energy & Sustainability Committee are active members of the CAC WG and Subcommittees. He mentioned about 35 of the 125 members involved are from the Facilities Department, and he was most appreciative of their commitment and dedication.

## **Earth Week Highlights 2020**

Nathan King provided an overview of Earth Week 2020 (April 19-28). Earth Week 2020 was far from normal as many events were meant to be in-person before covid-19. Leadership by Emily Vollmer and Jennylynn Johnson was irreplaceable as we transitioned to a digital Earth Week format. We decided to have “themed days” for Earth Week with Earth Day itself being “Climate Action” to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. There was great activity on our electronic channels as VT facilitated approximately 26 events/activities. #TRASHTAGNRV was put in place to influence a cleanup of the New River. A documentary series was held throughout the week. Thanks to everyone who was able to help and support along the way. This digital format can serve as a model moving forward for social media engagement about Earth Week.

## **Open Discussion**

PhD Candidate Ellen Garcia provided an update on the Green Lab Assessment Tool. This project is a partnership between her and a Senior Design Team led by Yasmine Skider, and Rob Lowe in the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS). She announced we now have a functioning tool for labs to go into their E profile to take an assessment of the sustainability of their lab. A certification process follows. This tool is still being finalized with EHS. Rob deserves a tremendous amount of credit for his support and offer to have EHS serve as the hosting platform.

Professor Randolph noted the CAC WG can include this work in the Green Labs emissions reductions portion of their final report. .

## **Recognition of Members for Completing Their Term**

Denny Cochrane recognized those members of the Energy and Sustainability Committee who are completing their term and thanked them for their contributions. Those members include: Dean Winistorfer, Rob Lowe, Virgilio Centeno, Brandon Burkey, Gustavo Ventura Gargioni, Natalie Koppier, and Brogan Dineen.

## **Electronic Approval of April 27 Meeting Minutes**

The Committee agreed to have an electronic vote of the draft minutes for this meeting.

## **Adjourn**