

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE MEETING

February 22, 2016
Room 325, Burruss Hall

MEMBERS:

Members Present: Kayla Smith (for Sherwood Wilson), Debbie Greer (for Dwight Shelton), Jason Soileau, Denny Cochrane, Ruben Avagyan, Steve Mouras, Rob Lowe, Sean McGinnis, Tim Baird, Bruce Obenhaus, Katie Reaves, David Mellichamp, Allison Homer, Melvin Amos.

Members Absent: Chris Kiwus, Frances Keene, John Chermak, Richard Benson, Devita Mccullough-Amal, Sydney Lavery.

Recorder: Emily Schosid.

Guests: Emily Schosid, Rial Carver.

1. Welcome & Introductions E&S Committee Members

Mr. Mouras called the meeting to order at 2:02PM

2. Approval of Proposed Agenda

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

3. Approval of January 25, 2016 Minutes

Mr. Mouras asked for changes to the January 25 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 update on the Green RFP program progress. After a thorough review, 18 proposals were advanced in Category 1, and 17 proposals were held back in Category 2 (5 proposals) and Category 3 (12 proposals). A couple of proposals in Category 3 are being funded outside of the Green RFP program—water bottle refill stations in Lane Stadium are being bought by Athletic Dept directly and SGA will be purchasing Reusable To-Go containers like they did last year. Mr. Cochrane reminded the committee that its job is not to decide where the money comes from, but to simply decide whether the projects are good enough to advance to the Budget Office. On February 12, the Green RFP sub-committee met and prioritized the projects in Category 1, and the full committee will vote on that prioritization list at this meeting.

Mr. Cochrane then gave a brief summary of each of the 18 Category 1 projects in order of greatest to least priority, as determined by the sub-committee. In all, the Category 1 projects came from 12 different student groups and total \$517,805. Ms. Homer asked whether it was more likely that all proposals would receive some kind of funding or that some projects will get full funding while others will get no funding. Mr. Cochrane said that in general, the Budget Office looks at ways to get funding to all of the projects, as the Budget Office rarely turns whole projects away. That said, there has never been this number of projects sent to the Budget Office, so we do not know exactly how they will react.

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Mr. Cochrane reminded the committee that the Budget Office has always said not to worry about a funding ceiling, as they Budget Office will always work to fund all good projects. Mr. McGinnis asked about the Recycling Bin proposal (priority 5), as it cost \$200,000 and saves no energy. Mr. Cochrane said that saving energy is not the only priority, as the goal of the Green RFP is to advance all parts of the Climate Action Commitment, including increasing the recycling rate. Mr. Mouras said that this project can easily be reduced into phases if need be. Mr. Baird said that the per-unit cost looked to be very high. Mr. Mouras said that extensive research was done to make sure the bins met all fire marshal needs, custodial needs, and educational needs. Mr. Avagyan asked what would happen to the existing bins if the recycling bins were funded. Mr. Cochrane said that the existing “slim-jim” bins would be moved to classrooms, common spaces, and maybe offices. Mr. Baird said that he would like to see recycling become easier as it is sometimes inconvenient to walk down the hall to recycle a piece a paper. Mr. McGinnis expressed concern that a smaller proposal would not get funded because such a big ticket item was so far up the priority list. Mr. Cochrane said that this has never been a problem in the past.

Mr. Mouras entertained a motion to approve the priority list as presented. The motion passed unanimously, and the priority list will be sent to the Budget Office as is.

b. Campus-Wide Sustainability Outreach: Emily Schosid

Ms. Schosid gave an update on the Sustainability Survey progress. The working group met and decided that there would be 5 separate focus group meetings, during lunch, on March 1, 2, 15, 16, and 17. Each meeting will be dedicated to one of the following topics: Energy, Water, Waste, Communication and Outreach, and Alternative Transportation.

c. Sustainability Student Forum: Steve Mouras

On February 17, 2016, the Office of Sustainability hosted a Sustainability Student Leadership Forum that brought students from a variety of student groups together to collaborate. This semester’s meeting focused specifically on Earth Week. About 40 students attended, which was a larger group than the fall semester, and it was considered a successful event by all attendees.

d. Composting in Dining Services: Rial Carver

Ms. Carver gave an overview of the composting history at Virginia Tech. From 2009-2012 Dining Services increased compost collections by adding units. In 2015 the old composting company (PME) went out of business, so this year the compost collections have been down considerably. In the fall semester, several units got together and did a composting feasibility study to determine what the best next step would be. Options were to create some version of a composting facility on campus, send the compost to another large-scale composting facility, or do no composting at all. The findings of the study said that the operating costs of keeping composting on campus did not lower operating costs and had a significant up-front cost. The best option that the study found was to send 100% of the compost to Royal Oaks Composting, which is what Dining Services has opted to do. Mr. McGinnis asked what the operating costs were made up of. Ms. Carver said that for on-campus operations, it was mostly labor costs. For Royal Oaks, it was mostly transportation costs.

In moving forward with using Royal Oaks, there is a short term plan and a long term plan in place. In the short term Bob’s Refuse Service will collect compost on campus and haul it up to Royal Oak

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Composting. In the meantime, a 3-year contract is being reviewed by the Legal Department which would allow Royal Oaks to bring a larger compost dumpster to campus and haul the waste themselves. This will lower the carbon costs, as they will have to make fewer trips with the larger dumpster. Mr. Lowe said that Royal Oaks appeared to be a better option even than PME because they are a larger operation that is more economically stable than PME was.

5. New Business

None.

6. Open Discussion

None.

Next Meeting; February 28, 2016, 2PM - Room 325, Burruss Hall

Adjourned at 2:59PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Emily Schosid