**Environmental Issues Committee Meeting Minutes**

October 24, 2014, 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm

Room 249, Columbia

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Brian Gillis—Art

Erin Moore—Architecture (Chair)

Holly Lynn—Biology

Marie Swarrigim—Campus Planning, Design, and Construction  
Shabnam Akhtari—Math

Eric Beeler—Student Sustainability Coalition   
Steve Mital—Office of Sustainability

Sonya Carlson—Office of Sustainability

**WELCOME AND SELF-INTRODUCTIONS**

Erin welcomed the committee back, welcomed new and returning members, and committee members introduced themselves.

**MISSION AND MEMBERSHIP**

Erin highlighted the importance of the EIC mission. Steve discussed the membership composition. During that discussion he noted that students have not been appointed by ASUO yet. The students will be welcomed into the group once they have completed their appointment process.

**RECAP OF 2013 ANNUAL REPORT**

Discussed the previous request to protect and codify Agate chimney for Vaux’s Swift migratory habitat. The University had already provided some protection for the chimney as a migratory habitat, but the discussion unearthed a different problem. Agate /chimney is not seismically sound. Steve noted that a study had been approved to review this problem and that the $2500 needed to fund the study had been allocated. Contractors have been hired and are expected to deliver the report sometime in January of 2015. When that report is completed it will come back to the committee for consideration.

Erin gave the committee examples of other issues that have been reviewed or acted upon by the EIC including a Temperature Set Point Policy and River Front Report. Steve then elaborated by including the actions taken to update the Recycled Paper Policy and the introduction of flexible schedules/virtual workstations as a way to reduce employees’ carbon impact.

**COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN (CEP)**

Steve gave a primer on the history of the CEP including the delays that have occurred as a result of the creation of the Policy Library procedures, high turnover in the President’s office, and evolving faculty senate review process. The 7 Guiding Principles, that have been adopted, are being reviewed by the Office of Sustainability and will eventually result in actionable plans from within relevant departments. As this project progresses the EIC will review and provide guidance as needed.

**CLIMATE ACTION PLAN**

Steve gave an overview of the goals of the climate action plan. Just as 800 other universities and colleges have done, the UO has adopted the goal to eliminate campus emissions by 2050. In order to move towards that goal, the EIC has selected three or four projects, which have almost all concluded. It will be the charge of the EIC to help identify and recommend new projects. Marie asked how these projects are chosen. Steve noted that he would bring the Sankey Diagram that they have used in the past to help inform their decisions. Airplane travel and heating are UO’s two primary sources of carbon emissions. Brian suggested a cost/benefit analysis of effects of deferred maintenance and short staffing.

**BUSINESS TRAVEL TAX**

Erin raised the proposal by Frank Stahl to tax business travel. As business travel is a significant portion of UO’s carbon footprint, the proposal’s goal would be to reduce travel and/or offset the impact by using funds raised to implement other green house gas mitigating projects. Erin noted that Lauire Jacoby, UO’s Travel Manager, will present during the next EIC meeting. Erin and Steve requested the groups’ feedback on the information needed to analyze this proposed policy with a specific focus on the questions the group would like answered from Laurie Jacoby at the next meeting.

Questions/Thoughts raised:

* Travel is very broad, Holly, would like to get a sense for what kind of travel would be included and excluded. Furthermore, she would like to know the amount of the tax and how the tax would be implemented or calculated.
* CAS has a new budgeting model, how would their travel be billed?
* What is the breakdown of business miles traveled?
* How are those figures calculated? (Brief explanation: estimate of Airline miles traveled and gallons of gas).
* What is the reimbursement policy?
* Eric would like to hear from the IT staff about virtual travel. Have other corporations and universities implemented similar programs and what their success has been?
  + Erin suggested that this could even be reviewed as its own project outside of the scope of this policy.
  + Brian noted on that local businesses might be able to use shared facilities, which would further increase the impact.
  + Holly has heard that larger virtual conference rooms in the area are booked many months in advance and that those available in the library will soon be taken offline when the new construction begins.
  + Marie highlighted that this discussion raises an important point about resources on campus. There doesn’t seem to be an orientation for staff about the availability of services, nor a central office where staff can inquire about such services.
* Brian would like to know what the impact on users would be? Who would be hardest hit?
* Marie would like to know how much travel is for conferences, meetings, other?

Other Issues Discussed:

* Large difference between the carbon footprint of an airline trip vs. a local car ride.
* Video/Teleconferencing.
* Brian believes there may be policies in place that cause a suboptimal outcome (ex. Tech staff ride bus home to get car to pick up something and then drive around for 15 minutes because departments are not allowed to purchase day parking passes).
* A $30/ton tax on airline travel would raise roughly $1.2 million a year.
* Would need to look at individual department model.
* University requirements may inadvertently cause travelers to choose flights with a larger carbon impact. For instance, only the lowest cost flights are reimbursed, but that cheaper flights may require multiple stops that increase the distance travelled and thus the carbon impact.
* Revolving loan fund (initial investment $1 million), which is recharging at a rate of $50,000/year funds carbon reduction projects. There is a group on campus, which allocates those funds based on certain criteria, such as projects must have a seven year payback period and tie-in to seismic upgrades is also considered among other requirements.
* Airlines, which are shifting fuels and becoming more efficient and thus are cutting emissions.