

Environmental Issues Committee

January 21, 2010

12 PM

Rogue River Room, EMU

Members in Attendance:

Zach Stark-MacMillan, Dan Rottenberg, Mark Reed, Terrie Scharfer, Christine Thompson, Wes Thompson, Peg Gearhart, Mark Nystrom, Lauren Wirtis, Steve Mital, Mary Wood, Art Farley, Deborah Exton, Jill Forcier

Steve Mital introduced Lauren Wirtis, undergraduate office assistant in the UO Office of Sustainability, saying that she will now be in charge of taking minutes, scheduling meetings, and conducting any follow-up research that the committee may require.

Steve Mital checked to confirm that everyone was on the EIC list serve, all confirmed.

Steve Mital initiated a discussion about future meetings. Lauren Wirtis announced that the next two meetings would be on Tuesday, February 23rd from 2-3 PM and Tuesday, March 9th from 2-3 PM. Rooms for the meetings would soon be booked and an e-mail would notify everyone confirming date, time, and location of the meetings. Steve Mital next announced that the April meeting would be a field trip out to Cascade Sierra Solutions Project in Coburg. Last year, the Student Sustainability fund gave \$7,500 to Native Energy for carbon offsets, which contributed to Cascade Sierra Solution's I-5 corridor project that electrifies truck stops. The purpose of the trip is to learn more about the effectiveness of this contribution and decide whether or not the committee likes the notion of carbon offsets. The trip will require that the meeting time be scheduled for an hour and a half during the month of April.

Art Farley opened up discussion about the November meeting's minutes. Mark Reed commented that November's minutes were "outstanding." The minutes were unanimously approved.

Art Farley opened the discussion about forming a Senate committee to look and review current UO environmental policy.

The policy has not been reviewed since 1997 and it should be updated to include new UO policies such as the Climate Action Plan (CAP).

Christine Thompson asked the question: "Did senate body initiate the construction?"

Steve Mital replied by speaking briefly about the anticipation of having President Lariviere sign the CAP. He said that the next step is to determine how other UO policies should be modified because of CAP's adoption. Steve took that question to Peter Gilkey, head of the Faculty Senate, for some direction. Peter took the question to Frances Dyke, VP for Finance and Affairs. Frances said that she would like to refer the question to the EIC to get their feedback and recommendation about modifying the Comprehensive Environmental Policy and the Sustainable Development Plan to make them consistent with CAP.

Mary Wood asked: "So the methodology is not established yet?"

Steve replied that the EIC's job is to advise Frances Dyke as to the next steps for policy revision.

Christine passed out copies and began to give a history and overview of the Comprehensive

Environmental Policy (CEP)

Comprehensive Environmental Policy- Page 15, Appendix B

Christine brought up the question of who the author of CEP was in 1997 when it was established.

Steve said he recalled that it was contracted out to the community service center, a unit inside PPPM, and a team of graduate students put CEP together.

Christine goes on to describe CEP

- comprehensive, far-reaching, vague
- general goals and strategies
- main policy: UO try to “balance fiscal and environmental responsibility in making decisions and in general university practices”
- Overview of sections: (1) education, (2) purchasing (choices and policies), (3) efficient use and conservation of water and other resources (work with CAP), (4) solid waste production (commit to comprehensive recycling program), (5) minimize hazardous waste and toxic materials on campus, (6) environmentally responsible campus design and planning principles
- Section 6: where the Sustainable Development Plan (SDP) intersects with CEP
- absence of policy in sections other than purchasing
- last paragraphs:
 - “follow-up, review, and update units” – What are they? Do they exist?
 - What about doing bi-annual reviews?

Art opened up discussion about CEP

Art brought up the question of whether or not the committee wanted the Senate to take the lead on this issue. However, CEP mentions the EIC as a regulatory body. Christine concurred that it made more sense to evaluate CEP within the EIC and then go to the Senate to ask for comment and input.

Steve Mital clarified that Senate involvement only extends so far as confirming policy changes the EIC might suggest.

Christine Thompson commented that if the EIC were to want to make any changes to CEP that they should refer to the EIC's bylaws.

Terrie Scharfer said that she questioned the Office of Environmental Health and Safety being the ones responsible for administration and monitoring because of the existence of the Sustainability Office.

Christine Thompson agreed that the “procedural aspect seems awkward.” So, would that require an entire review and update?

Art Farley asked if the committee thought it was necessary to put this on the EIC's agenda

Mark Reed responded that there seem to be some specific areas where new language could be inserted and changes could be made. He suggested that a subset of the EIC could create a new draft.

Christine Thompson asked if Mark meant revising items beyond the procedural aspect

Mark replied that he just thought there were small areas, pointed out in the overview that could be modified or adjusted. Mainly the language is important

Steve Mital agreed that a subcommittee could be put together to create a draft, which would be shared with the full committee for approval and then sent forward to Frances Dyke as part of the EIC's annual report.

Art Farley asked if there were any objections to forming a subcommittee

Mary Wood said she thought that CEP should go out to departments and that the reason CEP was put on the shelf was because of ambiguity, such as terms like "update units." In the departments it could provide guidance and get to a level where change might happen.

Christine Thompson said she thought CEP was supposed to be like the diversity plan in that it would have a broad scope application across campus. Christine said she be more interested in focusing on the implementation and effectiveness of CEP.

Art Farley added that an update of CEP would provide an opportunity to get the word out about its existence. Reevaluation is an opportunity to publicize the university's successes and address areas that have fallen through the cracks. He then asked for volunteers, saying that he assumed Steve would take part. Steve agreed.

Mary Wood said that there should also be an opportunity for individual suggestions and that those could be compiled in a list. Art agreed saying that the list of individual issues could be addressed by the subcommittee.

Steve Mital suggested that everyone be given a month to submit their suggestions (due by the end of February). Then, he and Christine will incorporate those suggestions during March, and the new draft could be shown to the committee at the May meeting (not April because of the field trip) so that it can be submitted in the final report for the academic year and be implemented sometime over the summer and fall.

Christine Thompson mentioned that it would be important to look into whether anything ever happened regarding the "follow-up and update unit." Steve remarked that he would take the question to Kay Coots.

Christine began to give her overview of the Sustainable Development Plan (SDP)

An implementation measure under section 6 of CEP

A specific sub-policy of the campus plan, which covers all design and development for the campus

Page 3: What all buildings must consider during construction

- most requirements are covered by LEED

Problem: LEED Silver requirement and CAP don't address everything in enough detail, which is why the SDP was created.

Review would have to come through the campus planning committee to redesign the SDP or make it more "user-friendly" and relate it to CAP.

- Have to wait for CAP to be signed off on.

Dan Rottenberg introduced the issue of the Riverfront research plan

Art Farley said that the EIC needs to decide whether or not the committee thinks it is the EIC's place to comment on this issue.

Dan Rottenberg summarized the issue saying it revolves around Riverfront Research Park continuing their 1989 master plan that expired in October 2009. The university is attempting to get a 3-year extension for the plan so that two sites can be developed. The most controversial one is the site north of the railroad tracks on the south bank. It is 4.3 acres with about 250 parking spots. In March 1998 the EIC was involved in a 9-person committee with President Frohnmayer to evaluate the site. The EIC asked that a student be involved because the environmental impacts needed review. This request was denied. Main environmental concerns include: the areas existence as a former industrial waste site, its proximity to the Willamette greenway, and a recent DEQ report of heavy metal leaching into the Willamette River.

So far both the student and faculty Senates have asked for a review of the master plan before continuation. The Architecture and Landscape Architecture departments have gotten involved and written letters supporting the Senate's position. The Faculty Advisory Committee has also been involved in the discussion.

Dan wanted to reopen a conversation within the EIC to see if the committee would like to express its concerns over continued development.

Art asked the committee to comment on whether they wanted to make a statement and, if so, what they wanted it to say.

Christine Thompson asked, for clarification, what the applicable policies are. When the master plan was developed in 1989 the university decided to separate from Riverfront Research Park, which was given its own design committee. Therefore, the SDP does not apply because it is part of the Campus Development plan. She continued that if the committee does choose to comment it should refer to something the university has agreed to and adopted. The CEP was adopted after Riverfront Research Park was formed, so it would be the most applicable because there is nothing in it that says it doesn't apply to a certain area.

Mary Wood commented that she thinks that the situation is clearly within the committee's purview and that the committee should take a position. She said seconded the notion that the position should be linked to a policy and that she recalled something about future generations in CEP. She added that she personally believed that there shouldn't be waterfront development at all.

Christine Thompson said that CEP is so broad that it makes it hard to pin point one rule. Instead of saying that CEP prohibits development, it would be something of which to remind the administration.

Mary Wood said that because the riverfront is public trust property there may be a specific public trust duty that could apply in this situation.

Mark Nystrom asked who the Riverfront Research Park development team answers to.

Christine Thompson replied that there is a separate planning office with its own staff.

Mark asked, if the university wanted to “sidestep anything” could they just set up another group?

Christine said that she was unsure of the exact reasons why a separate body had been established, but part of it was that the Riverfront Research Park used to be a joint venture between the university and the city. When this separate body was established they received a conditional use permit indicating areas that could, and were projected to be developed.

Mary Wood commented that the university is still connected with the riverfront’s planning group and that the extension would have the university’s name on it.

Dan Rottenberg concurred and said that Rich Linton and Diane Wiley who are in charge of applying for the extension on the university’s behalf.

Peg Gearhart mentioned that within CEP, section five on hazardous waste might apply to the riverfront.

Art suggested that it would be a good idea to subject the master plan extension to new environmental policies the university has enacted since 1989.

Zach Stark-MacMillan said that a good basis for a letter would be to suggest that Riverfront Research Park could apply for a new permit that would comply with current university standards.

Mary Wood said that the concept of future generations in CEP encompasses the heart of the matter of objections to riverfront development.

Dan Rottenberg agreed, saying it’s best to take a holistic view.

Steve Mital said the letter should address the fact that extending the permit should require Riverfront Research Park to develop in a way that reflects current university policy. He also stated that it would be best to keep the statement simple and let the administration come to its own conclusions rather than have the letter trying to direct the conclusion. Christine Thompson, Dan Rottenberg, and Art Farley concurred.

Deborah Exton asked to whom the letter would be directed.

Christine Thompson and Steve Mital both replied that Frances Dyke should receive the committee’s recommendation.

Deborah tried to clarify if the university was behind the plan and the committee was trying to sway its position and that the letter would stay within the university.

Zach Stark-MacMillan asked, “we can write to whoever we want, can’t we?”

Steve Mital answered that the committee reports to Frances Dyke and any letter the committee produced would go to her.

Mary Wood mentioned that the letter could be CC’ed to the President.

Steve replied that it would be Frances Dyke's responsibility to take the letter to the President at their weekly meeting.

Mark Reed added that the letter could be copied to the Register Guard.

Steve said that CC'ing the letter to a lot of people runs the risk of negative feedback from Frances Dyke, because the committee overstepped its jurisdiction. Frances could decide that she couldn't trust the committee with difficult, sensitive issues. Steve, therefore, thought it would be a bad idea to go past her.

Mary Wood asked if it could be copied to the university senate. She stated that the EIC is a public body and that widespread discussion on this topic would be beneficial, so it should be copied to the President and the faculty and student senates.

Dan Rottenberg mentions that the senate president CC'ed people whenever he tried to pass legislation and that he thinks it comes down to a judgment call on the committee's part.

Art Farley said that the committee needed a motion so that everyone would know what they were agreeing to do. His impression was that the committee would write a letter expressing their concern, send it to Frances Dyke and copy it to the President, the Faculty Senate, and the Student Senate. The letter would say that any extension of the master plan would need to be submitted to review so that it would comply with current university environmental policy prior to any further development.

Christine Thompson asked if CAP applied to this situation.

Steve Mital replied that CAP hasn't been enacted yet and that it does not proscribe development but only gives emissions goals.

Mary Wood said her suggestions for the letter included emphasizing the change of circumstances over the last 20 years and quoting the second sentence out of the first paragraph at the end of CEP.

Steve Mital pointed out that this issue is fairly time sensitive, and that the committee should come up with a plan.

Mary said that the committee still needed to pass the motion.

Zach Stark-MacMillan asked for clarification before the vote

Art Farley stated that letter is going to say that policy conditions have changed since the passing of the 1989 master plan. Most specifically, CEP in 1997 indicates a change in university policy that the extension of the master plan would need to comply with before development continues.

Dan Rottenberg asked who would be writing the letter.

Art said that he would be writing the letter. He then asked, "All in favor?" Art stated that "the motion was passed unanimously."

Art finished by saying that the key thing on the February agenda would be purchasing policy.

Steve Mital said that there will be a speaker, Cathy Sussman, from Purchasing and Contracting to come and share what their office does, what they will do, and what they want to do regarding environmentally-oriented purchasing. She also will want feedback from the committee as to what they would like to see happening in purchasing.

Zach Stark-MacMillan made an announcement about the debate going on over the Murkowski Amendment saying that Oregon's senator, Jeff Merkley, has been doing an amazing job fighting the amendment that would strip the EPA of its authority to regulate carbon dioxide. Zach asked that, if the committee members have time, they call Senator Merkley to express their support.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM.