

## **Environmental Issues Committee**

April 20, 2011

12:00 PM

Rogue River Room

### **Members in Attendance:**

Art Farley, Alan Dickman, Christian Pich, Jennie Leander, Peg Gearhart, Zachary Stark-MacMillan, Wesley Thompson, Christine Thompson, Doug Brooke, and Steve Mital. (Committee Guests: Anthony Martin, Emma Newman, Aynes West)

### **Meeting Minutes**

Art Farley opened the meeting with a discussion about last month's minutes. Alan Dickman made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as submitted and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Art Farley announced that he is part of the group Friends of the Ridgeline (in reference to the Ridgeline Trail in Eugene, Oregon) and that the group is holding its first annual 'Celebrate the Ridgeline Day' on Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Steve Mital also made several announcements. First, requests to go on the carbon offset field trip to Lochmead Farms need to be in by the end of the day on Thursday, April 21<sup>st</sup> in order to finalize van numbers. The trip is going to happen Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM and the group will be returning around noon. Second, Steve said 'thank you' to everyone who participated in the Eco-Challenge. The University actually surpassed the 200 participant mark, there was an article in the paper this morning, and people are beginning to use the blog function on the website to talk about their experiences.

Emma Newman announced that Earth Day was going to be largely celebrated this year thanks to Louisa de Heer, the new Sustainability Coordinator. On Earth Day there will be workshops going on in the Erb Memorial Union's river rooms and events in the amphitheater and on the campus quad.

Next, Art Farley mentioned that all of the Environmental Issues Committee (EIC) members had received a copy of the impacts document from the Take Back the Tap (TBTT) campaign. He then turned the floor over to student representatives from the TBTT campaign who were requesting a letter of support from the EIC committee. Emma Newman stated that the goal of the TBTT campaign's presentation was to "ask the EIC to coauthor this [TBTT campaign] report which will be submitted with a policy to Frances Dyke... to end the sale and use of plastic water bottles on [the University of Oregon] campus by the end of [the 2010-2011 academic year]." Emma highlighted some important parts of the TBTT report:

- A Brief History of the Campaign: The TBTT campaign started in January 2010. In the first six months the campaign was able to pass a resolution through the Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) Senate that stopped the purchase of bottled water using money from the Student Incidental Fee. The ASUO currently supports a campus-wide ban of bottled water. The purpose behind the TBTT campaign is to draw attention to the fact that Eugene has some of the cleanest tap water in the country and people should take advantage of that fact rather than buying bottles of water. This has been done in part by installing spigots around campus that encourage people to fill up reusable water bottles. The TBTT campaign has gathered 20 statements of support from various groups, including Greek Life and University Housing.

- Nationwide Support for TBTT: There are many universities nationwide that have TBTT campaigns and have succeeded in either the full or partial banning of bottled water on their campuses.
- Reasons to Use Tap Water:
  - *Economic*: It costs Nestle only eleven cents per gallon to extract, process, and package bottled water, but charge consumers six dollars per gallon.
  - *It's Still Tap Water*: Some bottled water companies use tap water.
  - *Water Cleanliness*: Tap water is tested multiple times per day and localities are required to publish the results. Bottled water is only tested about 52 times per year and the companies are not required to make the results public.
- University of Oregon and Bottled Water
  - The campus currently sells over 350,000 bottles of water per year

Art Farley asked where the campaign received the money for the spigots installed around campus. Emma Newman replied that the TBTT campaign received a grant from the University's Student Sustainability Fund (SSF) that funded the spigots and the purchase of 1,400 reusable water bottles that were given away to students at various events.

Steve Mital noted that he was surprised to see that the numbers in terms of bottled water consumption for athletics were relatively low compared to campus housing, and asked if the TBTT campaign thought the numbers were accurate. Emma Newman replied that she believed the numbers were accurate and the difference could be due to the fact that bottled water is priced high at athletic events. Christine Thompson also mentioned that there are only a certain number of athletic events, whereas campus housing is open every day of the year.

Alan Dickman asked if there were groups that the TBTT campaign had approached for support that have declined their support. Emma Newman said 'no' and that, in the past year, the campaign had received statements of support from eighteen different groups without ever being declined. Alan followed up by asking what the TBTT campaign saw as the roadblocks to their success. Emma replied that the main resistance came from bottled water companies who wanted to sell their products. The University's contract with the bottled water companies ends in 2012 and the TBTT campaign hopes that the University will try to negotiate with them. Christian Pich asked if the vendors (e.g., Panda Express) would show any opposition. Emma answered that the profit from bottled water was so little for them that it wouldn't make a large difference.

Steve Mital asked if the TBTT campaign had any support from groups that *did* financially benefit from bottled water sales. Emma said that Food Services had given a statement of support that also addressed how a bottled water ban could be implemented. Tom Driscoll who is in charge of food services for University Housing said that the fact that students used a point system to purchase their food meant that they'd be buying and using the same number of points and that a ban on bottled water would not make a significant difference in the number of points students bought and used. As far as contacting the Athletic Department, there is someone from the TBTT campaign sitting on an athletics sustainability committee who is trying to get Athletics to purchase reusable bottles for their athletes rather than bottled water (which currently makes up about 0.3% of their budget, \$15,000 per year, on water).

Peg Gearhart asked if the TBTT campaign had approached individual departments. Emma Newman replied that no official decision had been made as to whether to ban the water coolers used in a lot of university departments and that the main goal of the campaign was to ban the bottles of water sold in

vending machines and through the vendors around campus. However, Emma added, “eventually, it’d be great to transition all departments into drinking clean water from taps.”

Christine Thompson said that she thought it would be helpful for the TBTT campaign to talk the people who represent faculty and staff, such as the University Senate and the Officers of Administration (OA) Council. Christine continued that a couple other things to consider including cost savings from the decrease in recycling mass and making reusable containers available in facilities that no longer serve bottled water.

Steve Mital mentioned that in reviewing the TBTT campaign report he did not see an actual policy statement. Emma Newman said that the policy itself is a different document and TBTT is primarily focusing on garnering support for the report at this time. When TBTT meets with Frances Dyke on Monday (April 25) they will go over the policy together and present it later.

Art Farley asked if there were any signs up by the spigots explaining the TBTT campaign to users. Emma Newman answered that there was some push back about having signs specifically for the campaign, but that there are signs that say “free bottled water,” and, if the policy is implemented, the TBTT campaign expects to be allowed to put up signs. Christine Thompson added that a useful place to put up signs (should the policy pass) would be on or near vending machines that no longer sell bottled water and that explain why and what a person’s options are.

Steve Mital commended the TBTT campaign for their persistence in pursuing the information about this issue on campus and creating a strong report.

Art Farley asked for any final comments and then asked for an endorsing action. Zachary Stark-MacMillan moved to endorse the TBTT proposal and Peg Gearhart seconded.

Steve Mital mentioned that he would like to support with the caveat that the TBTT campaign go out and seek statements from groups that might oppose this initiative in order to get a feeling for the barriers that exist. For example, people may feel that the water quality in PLC is not adequate and would object to not being allowed bottled water. Emma Newman responded that a group had come in and tested water quality for heavy metals in some of the obscure places on campus (e.g., the top of Deady Hall) and the water quality was shown to be adequate. Alan Dickman noted that such tests may not be enough, because they do not account for other tastes in the water or odors that might make people not want to drink it. Steve concluded by saying that it would be best if the EIC said they supported TBTT’s report and general direction, but recommended that the campaign seek out potential dissenting viewpoints that would help them craft a well-rounded policy.

Art Farley asked that all in favor of an endorsement with appropriate amendments say ‘aye.’ The EIC unanimously supported the report

**Steve Mital began the discussion on the next item on the agenda: addressing and reviewing the Comprehensive Environmental Policy (CEP).** First, Steve provided a review of the original CEP. The CEP was drafted in 1997 and the EIC discussed making some changes in January 2010. Steve said he had made those recommended changes:

- Transportation was separated out from Campus Planning and Design
- A section was added on greenhouse gas emissions

- There are eight principles instead of six
- Responsibility was shifted from Environmental Health and Safety to the Office of Sustainability
- The Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS) report is set as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the policy

Steve noted that these changes were fairly straight forward. The most difficult part about amending the policy was that the original format was “fairly prescriptive” and new University policy standards require that policies be a lot broader than that. For example, instead of requiring a certain series of actions to be done, policy should establish principles that would suggest and enable those actions. Each principle would also be assigned to the appropriate department (e.g., waste management to Environmental Health and Safety). The last time the CEP was addressed, the EIC discussed putting it under the responsibility of one office, which is how it has been in the past. Originally, the Environmental Health and Safety Department looked after upholding the CEP, but the EIC had debated switching the responsibility over to the Office of Sustainability. However, upon closer examination, it seems that the Office of Sustainability does not have the authority to implement the policy. For each section of the CEP (recycling, transportation, purchasing, hazardous materials, etc.) a responsible party already exists. Thus, the goal of the amendment became to create broad principles and the oversight of those principles could be allocated to various departments.

Christine Thompson said that it is the comprehensive nature of the CEP that makes it “unique and strong” and the potential role for the Office of Sustainability is to coordinate the efforts of the different departments working under the CEP. Currently, some entities take on the responsibility of introducing sustainability into their department via the CEP more seriously than others and the Office of Sustainability could work to see that equal effort is being exerted by all parties. Steve Mital responded that in the *Implementation* section says that “The Office of Sustainability shall have general responsibility for promoting, monitoring, and updating this policy” and will “support unit’s charges [allocated by the administration] with best practices recommendations.” So , the Office of Sustainability will be playing a major role in coordinating departmental efforts.

Christine Thompson noted that the sections *Efficient Use and Conservation of Water* and *Planning and Design* seem to blend together in certain areas and it becomes clear who is charged with what responsibilities. Alternatively, Christine suggested, there could be an ‘operations and maintenance’ section to address the use of resources in buildings and landscapes and a ‘design and development’ section that would address incorporating sustainable design into buildings and landscapes.

Doug Brooke asked if the CEP applies to the auxiliaries and Steve Mital replied that it would.

Alan Dickman asked “who in the University administration would do the charging.” Also, do we know which are the appropriate units to address each principle and, if so, should that be made explicit in the policy? Steve Mital responded that some of the responsible parties for each principle were clear (e.g., recycling) and some were less so, such as environmental education. Steve went on to say that he did not name responsible units in the document, because he was uncertain whether the EIC had that authority as a legislative body and it might be best left to the central administration. The policy used to take an approach where environmental policy “was everybody’s responsibility so it was nobody’s responsibility,” and these revisions seek to remedy that problem. It is not within the scope of the EIC or the Office of Sustainability’s authority to say what all of the standards should be, but to make sure that each unit is addressing the sustainability of their practices by coming up with “goals, metrics, and strategies.”

Christine noted that while she agrees that specific units should be designated as responsible, that should not be done at the expense of encouraging anyone (a faculty member, a staff member, a student, etc.) from participating in the process. Steve Mital replied that there was a statement in the original document that said “anybody and everybody” is welcome to contribute by joining a committee or approaching the appropriate people. That statement was taken out not because it was unwanted, but because it seemed obvious. However, if the EIC believes that fact needs to be made explicit the statement could easily be reinserted into the text.

Christian Pich asked what the definition was of “successfully implemented.” Steve Mital said that the definition will be left up to the individual units that write their own “goals, metrics, and strategies” since they have the expertise.

Alan Dickman said that he still thought that it was important to make the responsible units clear in some way, because a student interested in a certain aspect may look at the document and wonder with whom he/she should speak. Art Farley suggested that the Office of Sustainability could keep a roster available somewhere that listed the parties responsible for addressing each principle. Steve Mital noted that appendixes could be developed that held that information. Art said that ‘communication’ could become an additional section of the policy that would address how the policy would be communicated to campus. Christine Thompson said that could be a component of environmental education.

In conclusion, Steve said he would be sending out a copy of the revised CEP for the committee’s review and would appreciate input on the environmental education component.

**The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM.**