

Environmental Issues Committee

November 18, 2010

12:00 PM

EMU Board Room

Members in Attendance:

Peg Gearhart, Alan Dickman, Nathan Howard, Lauren Wirtis, Kay Coots, Steve Mital, Deborah Exton, Christine Thompson, Wes Thompson, Roger Kerrigan, Chris Baird

Meeting Minutes

Art Farley started the meeting by addressing some housekeeping issues. Art mentioned the Office of Sustainability website as a resource for members to get a sense of what the committee's role is at the University of Oregon. In regards to student membership, the charge calls for three student member who will be Nathan Howard, Wes Thompson, and Zach Stark-McMillan. Also, the schedule for meeting will change during winter term. Lauren Wirtis will send out a Doodle soon to gauge patterns of availability. Lastly, the committee needs to approve the minutes from the October meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Next, Steve Mital addressed the carbon offset purchasing issue that the committee had moved on in the previous meeting. In October, the committee endorsed purchasing carbon offsets to support a methane collector at Lochmead farms in Junction City. Steve said that there had been a couple "snags" when negotiating price and determining how much carbon is actually being offset. First, the Lochmead project has carbon offsets selling for slightly less than \$18 per ton. Previously the UO had been paying approximately \$14 per ton for other offset projects. Furthermore, the alternate carbon offset project available this year, a methane collector located in northern Washington State, has set its prices at \$14 per ton. The Lochmead project represents about a twenty percent price increase.

The second problem is that EWEB revised its "grid intensity" numbers, meaning the number that converts megawatt-hours into the lbs of carbon that goes into the atmosphere. The number used to be 90 lbs per megawatt-hour of electricity. However, that number has changed to the regional standard (despite the fact that the UO's energy portfolio is different from the regional standard), which is 900 lbs per megawatt-hour. This means that the numbers for the Climate Action Plan need to be revised. It also affects the amount of emissions associated with the Erb Memorial Union (EMU) and the cost for covering those emissions by purchasing carbon offsets. With the increased emissions and at a price of \$14 per ton, it would cost a little less than \$20,000 to make the EMU carbon-neutral and almost \$26,000 at \$18 per ton. Steve asked for feedback regarding whether the committee thinks it would be better to buy fewer offsets from a locally-based project that can be visited by students, faculty, and staff or

to buy more offsets from a similar project that few –if any - UO people would ever see but is still in the region.

Alan Dickman asked how much we trust the numbers from the methane collectors as to how much carbon will be offset. Steve Mital replied that the calculations are stringently monitored and he feels that the numbers are reliable.

Peg Gearhart asked if Steve Mital knew what factors contributed to the different prices in carbon offsets for the two potential projects. Steve answered that he had not looked into that yet. Mostly, he said he imagined it had to do with middle man costs (in promotion, advertising, verification, etc.) which can increase cost significantly.

Deborah Exton asked what the likelihood was that the site would be used for educational purposes if carbon offsets were purchased locally. Steve said he couldn't say for sure, but that the EIC would certainly host a trip just as they did last year. The Office of Sustainability would also host a trip for students to take in the spring. Hopefully, faculty would take advantage of the project being so locally available and would visit perhaps along with their students. Art Farley followed up by saying that it might be a good idea to create a webpage about the EIC's activities to foster interest in visiting these sites. Steve agreed saying that projects hadn't really been promoted or publicized in the past other than the project making known that the University had supported them through the purchase of carbon offsets. Peg Gearhart mentioned that it would also be a good idea to publicize in the EMU what projects were being funded to make the building carbon-neutral.

Christine Thompson said she was wondering if it wouldn't make more sense to take the money that would go to carbon offsets and apply it to retrofitting the building instead of sending the money so far off-campus. Nathan Howard added that he was also thinking it would make more sense to make improvements to the EMU than send the money to a more remote location that might not be seen or visited by UO students, faculty, and staff. However, if retrofitting now would just mean having to update the retrofit in 8 years, then it would be better to support a local project that would benefit the local community.

Art Farley asked if anyone wanted to make a motion. Alan Dickman asked Steve Mital what his personal opinion was. Steve answered that he thought the local project was the better fit. Furthermore, Steve said he'd try to negotiate the price down. Lastly, the story could be "packaged" differently and the carbon offsets could be applied to a smaller building (i.e. the UO Health Center) to make that entity carbon-neutral.

Kay Coots followed up by asking if calling the EMU carbon-neutral refers to only the building on campus or other associated buildings like Moss Street and the Outdoor Program Barn. Steve Mital said that all the utilities data were "EMU-specific." Kay

replied that those associated buildings, especially the Outdoor Program barn, which already has sustainable building features, would be a good candidate for those offsets.

Alan Dickman made a motion to continue with the carbon offset project through NW Natural at Lochmead Farms, with the hope of getting a better price on the offsets. Kay Coots seconded the motion. Art Farley asked for a vote on the project. The EIC voted unanimously to continue with the Lochmead project.

Art Farley introduced Bill Kasper, a guest speaker who came to talk about green cleaning supplies purchasing, with the goal of eventually codifying a green cleaning supplies policy.

Bill Kasper began by saying, as of right now, the UO does not have a green cleaning supplies purchasing policy. In 2003, the custodial staff, headed by Jerry Dominy, started looking for cleaning supplies that were safer for custodial staff to use, for students to come in contact with, and of the best quality. When Lillis was built and trying to become LEED certified, green cleaning moved forward as a way to get LEED points. Consequently, Dominy and his group started using Green Seal-certified products. Currently, 91.1% of the gallons of cleaning supplies used at the UO are green products and over 80% of those products are Green Seal-certified. Historically, the only categories of products that were difficult to make green were related to carpet and floor care and glass cleaners. Facilities is now in the process of testing a series of Johnson Wax products in those three categories.

Procurement officers currently ask a series of questions when they look at what products to buy:

1. What is in the market right now?
2. How quickly can we get our hands on it?
3. How sustainable is it to get our hand on it (source location, packaging, etc.)
4. Does it work?

The fourth question has been a major issue. Part of the issue has to do with the user's (people walking in and using areas that have been cleaned) perception of what clean means. Some people want to smell disinfectant while others say they want to "see things shine." Often these qualities are lacking in green seal products which cause dissatisfaction with building users. When testing a new product, a portion of the custodial staff will be trained to use the product and will apply it for about one week. After that amount of time the staff will fill out a sheet about how the new product compares to the old product in various categories. This usually takes months, takes into account the input of the "campus customer," and has proven to be "tried and true" over the years.

Bill Kasper then opened up the floor for questions the EIC member had about green cleaning supplies purchasing. Art Farley commented that he thought it was a good idea

to look into the “product stream” for things like transportation distance and packaging, because those factors contribute to the overall carbon neutrality of the process. Bill Kasper said those are very important factor. However, Bill continued, since the University is so decentralized, what happens in Facilities isn’t necessarily the same thing that happens in Housing or Athletics. Even though those other groups may look to Facilities for product guidance, they are not bound to do so. Consequently, input from these other groups will be needed to construct a policy.

Christine Thompson asked to clarify that the buildings that Bill Kasper’s department didn’t clean were all of the “auxiliaries.” Bill Kasper said, yes, that Facilities cleans all of the academic buildings but not the others.

Steve Mital spoke about his meetings with Bill Kasper about codifying a green cleaning supply purchasing policy and the pros and cons of doing so. The pros would be that the practice outlives Bill’s tenure, the influence doing so would have with the auxiliaries like Housing, the UO would get more credits when rating its sustainability, and the fact that LEED requirements for all new and retrofitted buildings would automatically get points for green cleaning supplies without having to investigate the practices in each individual building. The cons could be an increase in cost, dealing with campus consumers’ perceptions of clean, and the decentralization of campus. Steve then asked Bill to describe the process they’d talked about in drafting a policy for the EIC to look at.

Bill Kasper said the policy needs to be evaluated, because it should end up having some weight and should be the standard against which current practices are measured. Thus, drafting the policy should entail getting the input and support of most all of the University, because talking to more people will make it more solid and long-lasting.

Kay Coats noted that the UO Health Center has different cleanliness standard through their accreditation that could restrict some of the capacity to regulate products. Bill Kasper agreed that this is an important issue. Steve Mital added that the policy could encompass exceptions to the general rules when it conflicts with specific accreditation.

Kay Coats asked if it would be appropriate to insert this policy into the University’s Comprehensive Environmental Policy (CEP). Doing so might be easier, because instead of creating a new policy you’re just amending an existing one. Furthermore, it concentrates all environmental policies in one location. Both Steve Mital and Bill Kasper said that they had not thought of doing so, but that it would be a good idea.

Deborah Exton asked what Bill Kasper meant when he said that a certain percentage of the cleaning products currently used were “green.” Bill Kasper answered that this means they are Green Seal-certified. Bill noted that three of the products are listed as “green” but are not Green Seal-certified, meaning they must be certified as “green” through a different entity.

Christine Thompson said, when there's a challenge to get the green product to work well, it may be a good idea to look at the surface that is being cleaned to see if that surface is required or if there is some alternative surface that is more compatible with green cleaning products.

Steve Mital described the process that would need to occur in order to formulate the policy. Bill Kasper would lead a group with Steve including the custodial staff from the various auxiliaries. Starting with a handful of existing green cleaning supply purchasing policies from other universities, the group would decide how to formulate a policy that best fits the University of Oregon. That policy would eventually come back to the EIC for feedback, review, and ideas as to whether it is inserted as an appendix in the CEP or exists as a stand-alone policy.

Christine Thompson added that something to consider is that the reason the CEP has lasted so long is because it's broad. There are pros and cons to being that way, but it might be an important factor when crafting the green purchasing supply policy.

Art Farley asked about the time frame for creating the policy. Steve Mital said that the process would probably take a couple months and that the March EIC meeting might be a good time to expect to review a draft policy. Bill Kasper agreed that was a good amount of time to get meetings scheduled and come up with a policy that could be brought back to the EIC.

Art Farley spoke about what might be on the agenda for the EIC in upcoming meetings. One topic could be the CEP, since it came up in the meeting and looking at what that policy should be encompassing (paper purchasing, green cleaning supply purchasing, etc.). Also, the Oregon Model for Sustainable Development review, which Christine Thompson will be heading. Lastly, in October's meeting there was a concern expressed about air travel and alternative transportation and electric vehicles on campus. Art said that it would be a good idea to come up with an ordering of those topics or a plan of what would be addressed in the next meeting.

Nathan Howard said the Climate Justice League is trying to craft a policy that bans bottled water from the UO campus and it would be helpful to have the EIC review the policy. Art Farley agreed that evaluating and giving advice on a water bottle policy would be within the EIC's purview and asked if the policy would be ready for the EIC to review in the next meeting in January. Nathan replied that he could have it ready by then.

Steve Mital said that, in looking back at the January 2010 minutes, the EIC had a lengthy discussion about the CEP. The policy hasn't been reviewed for 13 years and the EIC thought making sure the policy was up to date would be a good idea. Since the CEP was written, other policies have been passed that would affect it, such as the Climate Action Plan and the Sustainable Development Plan. Furthermore, neither the Office of

Sustainability nor the Sustainability Director position existed when the CEP was created, so Kay Coots' office is still charged with the policy's management. The UO Senate has also asked that the EIC review the policy. Steve concluded by saying that, in his view, reviewing the CEP should be a "top priority."

Art Farley asked if the rest of the committee thought it would be reasonable to plan for the next meeting to first address the CEP and then to talk about the Climate Justice League's water bottle policy. Steve Mital noted to Nathan Howard that in order to draw up an agenda for the January Meeting he would need a copy of the Climate Justice League's policy at least a week before the meeting date. Nathan replied that he would do so.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM.