Environmental Issues Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 20th, 2014 1pm to 2pm

EMU Board Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Ron Lovinger – Landscape Architecture

Meg Mattson – Academic Affairs

Erin Moore – Architecture (chair)

Mark Reed – Geology

Steve Mital – Office of Sustainability  
Christine Thompson – Campus Planning and Real Estate

Emma Newman - Student Sustainability Coalition

Adam Jones - Environmental Health and Safety

Guests:  
Jeff Nunes - Athletics   
Blair Williamson - Athletics  
Ernie Svenson - Building Operations Manager, Campus Operations  
Larry Peterson - Lead Technician, Building Automation System Engineer, Campus Operations  
Andrew Louw- Office of Sustainability  
Tristan Oker – Oregon Leadership in Sustainability student

WELCOME AND SELF-INTRODUCTIONS

The committee introduced themselves and approved the January meeting minutes.

CAP UPDATE PRESENTATION: TEMPERATURE SET POINT POLICY (ERNIE SVENSON AND LARRY PETERSON)

Steve introduced some of the background related to building-user behavior change ideas. One idea is the temperature set point policy. Ernie and Larry briefed the committee on the existing building heat system for non-auxiliary buildings. Some aspects of the system allow for local (room-level) control while some buildings only have building-level control. The building set temperate point policy has been an ongoing discussion for over 20-years. The proposal is to set a temperature range (maximum and minimum room temperatures).

One idea related to the temperature set-point is an occupancy set-point: a scheduling policy for heating and cooling based on building typical occupancy. One concern about implementing this kind of system is that the heating systems cannot all be turned on simultaneously as this could overload the electrical system. Other concerns include air quality, the use of space heaters, and room specific designs that might make users hot or cold (such as the location of vents).

Ernie stressed that any policy needs to be enforceable and that under the current staffing constraints, this would prove challenging. As things stand, facilities operations does not have enough HVAC technicians to cope with the system’s demands. So what can be done? Almost all buildings on campus are metered and there are many potential gains that can be achieved through outreach and education. The University has not made a substantial commitment to investing the monitoring and dashboard systems that have been piloted.

Larry described the “Apogee” monitoring system and some of difficulties he sees related to a set-point policy – incuding perceived fairness issues. Some buildings may operate under more stringent policies than others based on the building system technology. Staff may complain. Christine asked the guests if they could estimate the potential savings associated with a set-point. Ernie agreed this would be a good starting point.

Ernie suggested that the role of the building manager is also very important in potential set-point conservation strategies. This is something that has been done away with in many buildings. Some fixes like re-heat coils can also help make some building more comfortable. Mark reiterated the question about temperature set-point and dollar savings. Erine remarked that when employee’s thermal comfort is compromised, this can have a negative effect on productivity. Another opportunity is to get students involved in monitoring and reporting. Again staffing support would be necessary to make this happen.

Ernie and Larry’s ideal next steps would be 1. to ensure existing employees have the technical skills they need to implement more advanced granular building control ideas and 2. meeting the existing system’s staffing needs. Ernie also suggested a pilot project on a newer building would be a helpful. There are barriers inhibiting hiring new technicians and the UO is below the average staffing/SF for PAC12 schools.

Without proposing a new policy, there are some opportunities to be gained in the existing system. Dave Smith might be able to lead such an analysis.

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS:

Follow-up discussion to the Campus as Living Lab idea and subcommittee reports were deferred to the March meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held in March. Times and location will be sent to member via email.