



The **UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA**
Environmental Concerns Committee

Minutes

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE MEETING 10/5/2017

Call To Order

A meeting of the Environmental Concerns Committee was held in Gould Hall on September 7th, 2017. It began at 9:05 AM and was presided by Burr Millsap, with Alex Nongard as secretary.

Attendees

Voting Members in Attendance: Alex Nongard, Jeff Widener, Elena Bessarabova, Michelle Burke, Sara Mata, Allyson Wiley

Ex-Officio Members in Attendance: George Ahmadi, Jeremi Wright, Burr Millsap, Sarah Ballew, Jason Hancock, Jessica Murphree, Dorothy Flowers, Salman Hamid, Sara Mata

Agenda Items

I. Burr introduction to ECC for new guests

Burr: Welcome. For those of you new to the committee, the intention of the ECC is to bring the campus environmental groups together at the same table and be smarter in talking about these environmental issues. I am the Associate Vice President for Administration and Finance, and also the chair of this committee. We try to be a beacon for sustainability on campus and make things easier for everyone else by highlighting the good work being done and raising awareness of how things can be improved.

Brief introductions from all attendees

Burr: Last year we hosted a Sustainability Symposium, which was integrated into Housing and Food and Dot Flowers' Responsibility Fair event. We presented the inaugural Environmental Stewardship Award to campus leaders doing good environmental work. We plan on doing it again this year, with a flyer to be sent out soon advertising for nominations for the award.

Next, we will have our first presentation by a member of the OU community about what their department is doing regarding sustainability.

II. Sarah Ballew's presentation of Facilities Management's sustainability efforts

The content of this presentation can be found in the attached PowerPoint slides.

Questions from the presentation:

Sara: I see that student special events have a lot of recyclable goods but not a lot of recycling receptacles. What can we do about this?

Sarah: Student groups can actually order recycling receptacles for special events. We're considering ways to increase visibility for this service and make it easier for students to get them.

Burr: I am actually on the committee that oversees this kind of event request approval. We haven't thought about adding direct recycling bin requests to the forms required, but I can see about amending them to include more obvious options for getting recycling.

Sara: I notice that at Jim Thorpe there are only receptacles in the hallways. Can there be more permanent options?

Sarah: While we work on expanding recycling options on campus, it is perfectly alright for students to move the bins for their needs, if they return them at the end of the event.

Allyson: What about around the rest of campus? I often hear from students who say they can't find a bin and have to carry materials long distances until they find one.

Sarah: Great point. We are actually in the process of creating a map to be shared with campus of all of the recycling receptacles. This will help OU community members see their locations, as well as help us recognize where more recycling options need to be placed.

Elena: Do we need to clean the recyclables we have?

Sarah: We prefer it.

Alex: It doesn't necessarily affect how they're recycled, but it is a courtesy to the workers who handle the materials. Obviously try not to leave food waste in containers, but pouring out a bottle is sufficient.

George: I know the Union handles their own recycling, but are there other buildings on campus that handle their own recycling?

Sarah: I think it's just the Union, but potentially the museums too. I will find out and report back to you.

Sarah: The way it works in faculty buildings is: staff/faculty bring personal recycling from their offices to big containers in buildings > Custodial services collect big containers from buildings > take them to larger totes outside > they are taken off to the recycling facility.

Alex: What kind of power plants are the on-campus utilities? How much power do they supply the campus?

Sarah: The campus plants are natural gas. Of our total consumption, 67% of electricity is purchased electricity which is bundled renewable energy, meaning we also receive ownership of the renewable energy attributes. The remaining 33% is created on campus in our facilities.

Allyson: Is that why EPA says it's only 69% of our energy that is generated with wind credits?

Sarah: Yes, that's the "consumed" versus "purchased" energy.

III. Miscellaneous updates

Burr: Thank you so much. This was the first of our presentations by OU departments about sustainability initiatives. In the future, I'm sure we'll hear from EHSO, printing services, parking, etc. I will also be reaching out soon for nominations for the award in the spring. If we want to do other things for these meetings, such as potentially touring the freight farm to understand how things are going. But now I'd like to encourage student groups to tell us about the student aspect of sustainability on campus as well. Does anyone have other updates they would like to share?

Salman: I represent the executive branch of the Student Government Association. Increasing recycling is a goal of ours, but with a leadership transition because of the end of our president's term, we're trying to have continuity with whomever is elected in the new administration. The student Congress has passed some recent legislation about this topic, and at their meeting Tuesday will codify the Student Environmental Council in the Executive branch of the SGA. Thank Tim Kuketz, who has been here before and is the Congress Sustainability Chair, for that legislation. SGA wants to be involved in the student outreach side to foster that culture of recycling.

Salman: One of the projects my department is working on is called Trash to Treasure, which will handle a lot of the waste from the dorms at the end of the year from the Freshmen. Instead of donating a lot of these goods (microwaves, fridges, etc.), we'd like to try to store them and sell them at a cheaper price to freshmen at the beginning of the next year.

Dot Flower: I handle the donations at the end of the year for Housing and Food. We try to get everything to ABLE, but the things left behind can go to other students. If students need to pick them up because they cannot afford appliances, they can pick things up in the donation or trash area. We trust them to know their needs. But: ABLE is an organization that brings items to people with disabilities, and these items help finance their operations and also supply things for their group homes and people they serve. H&F has worked with ABLE for decades, and it's something I would like to see continued, rather than Trash to Treasure. We can talk in depth later. We employ many ABLE individuals on campus, cleaning up areas, etc. And their partnership is something we believe strongly in.

Allyson: One of the things that is concerning to students is landscaping, with inappropriate water management (watering sidewalks and during rainstorms), as well as wondering what happens with flowers/etc. When they're taken out. What happens to garden waste, and who manages this program?

Sarah: I can direct you to Alan King who manages landscaping, because I don't actually have any knowledge on that, since it is partitioned away from our main Facilities Management department.

Burr: That water is non-potable and so is not high quality to be lost, but it's still a great question. I can ask Alan and find out.

George: Someone from Student Congress has already spoken to him, and may have some answers on that. For the sake of avoiding redundancy and bombarding him with questions, I can find out what that report was.

Burr: I do know that they participate in City of Norman composting with the landscaping waste, like trimmings etc. I can't guarantee what happens to everything, but it's something they pursue. There is also no strict prohibition on taking extra plants that are pulled up.

Sara: What about native species/etc. Being landscaped?

Allyson: Part of the issue of what's being used is that the SAA funds a lot of things, so that's why it's tulips and mums instead of more drought resistant native plants – what gets planted is what donors want to see.

Jason: Even when you see watering during rain, the irrigation people are also managing things very carefully – they could still need more water, because Oklahoma rain doesn't necessarily saturate the soil enough. They approach irrigation very scientifically.

George: Can we invite them to speak? That would clear a lot of things up.

Jason: Yes. I can talk to some of the people I know over there to see who could talk to us. I know they're working on upgrading their entire system, so there will be more to share soon on how that goes.

Jeremi: About the golf course, which is watered with non-potable grey water from campus: OKDEQ requires a report every month that measures rain water vs. Effluent usage. If there is too much rain, we can't water with effluent for safety reasons, and they take that very seriously.

Dot: We have a Made in Oklahoma fair tonight from 5-7 on the basketball court of the Walker Adams Mall. It's a showcase of Oklahoma sourced food that we use on campus. We also have the all-campus food drive from October 16-27th to stock the food pantry, which is our final goal of 8640lbs of goods – 10% more than last year. We can have a matched \$1,000 donation from an alumni group if we meet that goal. Becky Barker will be sending out an email about that to campus soon.

Meeting adjourned at 10:04.