

## ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 23, 2015

Room 325, Burruss Hall

### MEMBERS:

**Members Present:** Kayla Smith (for Sherwood Wilson), Debbie Greer (for Dwight Shelton), Emily Schosid (for Jason Soileau), Denny Cochrane, John Chermak, Tim Baird, Bruce Obenhaus, Katie Reaves, Sarah Mazza, Joseph Jajonie.

**Members Absent:** Chris Kiwus, Ruben Avagyan, Steve Mouras, Rob Lowe, Sean McGinnis, David Mellichamp, Richard Benson, Devita Mccullough, Josh Barniak

**Recorder:** Emily Schosid

**Guests:** Stephanie Smith, Rial Carver, Peter Ziegler.

### 1. Welcome & Introductions E&S Committee Members; Review Charge

Mr. Mouras could not be at the meeting, so Mr. Cochrane filled in for him. Mr. Cochrane called the meeting to order at 2:01PM

### 2. Approval of Proposed Agenda

Mr. Cochrane asked for changes to the agenda, and receiving none, the agenda was approved.

### 3. Approval of February 23, 2015 Minutes

Mr. Cochrane asked for changes to the minutes, and receiving none, the minutes were approved.

### 4. Old Business

#### **a. 2014-2015 Green RFP Update: Denny Cochrane**

Six projects totaling almost \$188,000 went to the Office of Budget and Finance. The Office is still a couple of weeks away from making a final decision, though the final decisions are very close to being made. After the final memo comes through, the transfer of money into project accounts happens very rapidly. After he hears from the Budget Office, Mr. Cochrane will send emails to all of the students who had projects funded, the staff members who helped support the project proposals, and the ES Committee.

#### **b. RecycleMania at VT: Stephanie Smith**

Mr. Cochrane reminded the committee that the national RecycleMania program is an 8-week recycling competition, which ends this week. Ms. Smith gave an overview of what projects Virginia Tech did during our 3 weeks of programming, even though we are submitting all 8 weeks of data to the national organization. The first week was a very successful dining hall waste sorting project. Volunteers were stationed at the waste station at Hokie Grill and helped students sort their waste as they were leaving. The second week was a virtual scavenger hunt and social media themed week. Our social media saw a big jump in engagements and likes, and OES plans to do similar events going forward. The third event was an item for item swap market in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor atrium of Squires. There were a lot of visitors to the market, and OES now plans to do this program once every semester. Mr. Chermak asked what kinds of

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materials were being swapped, and Ms. Smith commented that it was mostly clothes, though all kinds of materials were being traded out. Mr. Cochrane mentioned that lots of materials came from the YMCA, and it was a good opportunity to get the word out about the Ytoss event at the end of the semester. Ytoss does not collect clothes generally, so the market was a good chance to focus on clothing items and recycling/reuse.

### **5. New Business**

#### **a. Earth Week 2015: Emily Schosid**

Ms. Schosid gave a quick overview of the Office of Energy and Sustainability. Earth Week coordinated by the Environmental Coalition student group, but OES will be contributing some events: Monday will have an alternative transportation showcase in the plaza in front of Squires, Tuesday will be a movie on the Drillfield, and Thursday will be a tree planting in the President's Quad and an Earth Walk led by Stephanie Smith. Mr. Cochrane reminded us that the Environmental Coalition Earth Week Coordinator this year is Brittany Walker. Mr. Baird asked what the best place to find a full calendar of events was. Ms. Schosid said the old website was [www.vtearthweek.com](http://www.vtearthweek.com), but that she would find out if this was still active.

#### **b. Local Food in Dining Halls: Rial Carver**

Ms. Carver gave an overview of the local food at Virginia Tech. Since 2010, the percentage of local food at Virginia Tech has grown about 10%, and now about 13% of all food at VT served is local. The "gold standard" for local and organic food at VT is Farms and Fields, where they do all that they can to provide local and organic options. Local food comes from the Dining Services Garden at Kentland Farm, as well as some purchased food. The goal is to have 20% local food by 2020. This number comes from a national campaign, the Real Food Challenge, which many schools are participating in. No students have wanted to head up an effort at Virginia Tech, but Dining Services has taken the goal as their own. AASHE defines local food as food that comes from within 250 miles of the school (as the crow flies). Additionally, Dining Services is trying to increase local/sustainable seafood, as well as organic food. This means that the goal is to make sure the food is both healthy and local, but some schools are cheating that a little bit. However, VT is keeping a very high standard of food that falls into the local food percentage. Right now, DS is working to get the Kentland Farm garden USDA Organic certified, which would double the value of food coming out of the garden. Mr. Baird asked how much the food would be costing if it was not local or organic. Ms. Carver said that the food would be cheaper, but not by a significant margin, since many of the sources of food would be the same either way. Mr. Cochrane asked if there was some effort by the universities in Virginia to meet with US Foods or other food distributors to try and get more local food from them or other large food distributors. Ms. Carver said that yes, there have been some efforts to get a food hub in the region, but various efforts have fallen through due to funding issues and other logistics. Ms. Mazza asked about getting protein from large scale grow houses (like Tyson), and whether this was trying to be avoided by Dining Services. Ms. Carver said that generally, DS buys food from the Animal Sciences Department, but they don't provide enough product. Unfortunately, converting completely to heritage/local/organic meats is not realistic because it would be cost prohibitive, and hard to find a supplier who can produce enough product to feed all of the students. Mr. Chermak asked about trying to educate students to eat less meat and more vegetables on campus, as well as other sustainable food choices. Ms. Carver said that it is up to everyone to think about what made all of us in the ES Committee to be interested in sustainability. For

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her, it was a class that talked about sustainable food, and she said that there are probably ways to communicate some of this in the Dining Halls, but we need to think more about how to do it. Mr. Jojone said that he thinks students are apathetic because it is both a social and environmental issue, and it would require extra studying on their part to make smarter decisions a lot of the time, and this is not something most students want to do. Mr. Baird commented that it's hard enough to get students to care about the things that they have to study in the first place. But it's a job that needs to be done over time through a variety of methods. Mr. Jojone said that it just takes getting the foot in the door with some students sometimes. Mr. Baird said that the information is sometimes surprising, and the conversation is more robust than just organic vs. non-organic. Ms. Carver said that many faculty and staff have come to her to talk about things like vegan, vegetarian options, Meatless Monday, and other food issues, but very few students have come to her about the same thing. Unfortunately, she needs the students to come to her if she wants to send it up the chain of command. Mr. Chermak said that some of the options could just happen once (like during Earth Week). Mr. Baird said that Dining Services could simply take meat off the menu once per week and start a very loud conversation about why this would be a good option. Ms. Carver said that one outreach campaign to decrease people ordering to-go and eating in saw a huge decrease in to-go orders because it creeped people out. Thinking about more campaigns that make people really think is a good way to go.

### **c. Single Stream Recycling at Virginia Tech: Denny Cochrane**

Mr. Cochrane gave an overview of the switch to single stream recycling in Montgomery County. The Montgomery Regional Solid Waste Authority (MRSWA) will be changing over to single stream recycling effective July 1, 2015. MRSWA is the place where all waste from Virginia Tech, Town of Blacksburg, Town of Christiansburg, and the county goes. So, when MRSWA changes, VT will change with them. MRSWA will become a place where the waste is collected, but it will be shipped up to Roanoke to be processed. The benefits of single stream is that it will: simplify recycling for users, streamline collections, and increase recycling rates because paper, plastic, metal, and glass can all go into the same bin (no need to sort recyclables). In the near term, the MRSWA members have been developing standardized signage, a PR campaign, replacing outdoor bins for larger collections, re-training employees who are responsible for collections, and beginning a community recycling education program. In the long term, VT would like to replace all of the indoor recycling bins on campus, standardize indoor signage, and adopt a design standard for recycling bins in all new buildings. Additionally, VT will update the Comprehensive Waste Management Plan. With this change and the expansion of compost on campus, waste management is going to be a big deal on campus for the next year or so.

### **6. Open Discussion**

If there is anyone with thoughts on our next meeting's agenda, please email Mr. Cochrane or Mr. Mouras.

**Next Meeting;** April 27, 2015 - Room 325, Burruss Hall

**Adjourned** at 3:03PM

Respectfully Submitted,  
Emily Schosid