

SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS
MINUTES OF MEETING
DECEMBER 2, 2002

[In these minutes: Welcome and Call To Order, Chemical Use on Campus, Energy Conservation and Efficiency, Divestiture from Israel]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Mark Pedelty, chair, Ruth Taylor, Roger Beck, Karen Holtmeier, Yvonne Redmond-Brown, Greg Schooler, Julie Sweitzer, Susan Craddock, Jeffrey Crump, Margaret Kuchenreuther, Joel Helfrich, Melissa Williams

REGRETS: Jennifer Oliphant, Sheri Huerd, Susan Von Bank

ABSENT: Judi Linder, Albert Cooper, H. Jeanie Taylor, Kenneth Heller, Ben Senauer

I). Professor Pedelty called the meeting to order and asked that members introduce themselves.

II). Professor Pedelty updated the committee on his findings related to the University's use of landscaping chemicals.

Discussion highlights:

- A member stated that a lot more information needs to be collected on this topic before the committee could make an informed decision on how to proceed.
- Professor Kuchenreuther stated that the prairie style landscaping option noted by Professor Pedelty may be a viable alternative in marginal areas or areas adjacent to natural spaces but many people dislike the prairie style landscaping, particularly next to buildings, because it looks unmanaged. The prairie style landscape must be used judiciously. Professor Kuchenreuther believes the committee would encounter strong overall resistance to this type of landscaping alternative at the University.
- Because the University is a research institution, Professor Pedelty proposed instituting and promoting alternative landscaping methods that do not require the use of chemicals. Professor Pedelty recognized that such an endeavor would require a significant amount education regarding the benefits of a chemical free landscaping alternative, especially because it would look dramatically different from the current landscaping style and people may not like the appearance.
- Professor Kuchenreuther noted that the dominant aesthetic in the United States is mowed blue grass. To try and transform the entire campus or even a portion to

the prairie style landscaping would be a monumental task because many people do not find it aesthetically pleasing.

- A member suggested moving this plan forward in stages by transforming small sections of the campus. Then, use the Alumni Association and other groups on campus to educate people about the benefits of natural landscaping alternatives.
- A suggestion was made to invite representatives from both Facilities Management and the Horticulture Department to a future meeting to further discuss this issue.
- From his discussion with Grounds Superintendent Les Potts, Professor Pedely was unclear how much environmental oversight is actually occurring as it relates to chemical use on campus.
- To gather more information on this topic for the committee Professor Pedely volunteered to:
 - Forward Professor Kuchenreuther the list of chemicals used by the University to research further.
 - Contact Boynton Health Service to determine if there are any reports that may suggest the University's use of chemicals on its grounds have caused health problems for students, faculty and staff.
 - Invite the Horticulture Department to a future meeting to talk about their initiatives, etc.
 - Contact the Friends of the Mississippi River, a leading citizen organization working to protect and enhance the Mississippi River, to see if they have a list of chemicals they are concerned about.
- Other possible resources for additional information on this issue that were noted include: the University's Department of Environmental Health and Safety, the Landscape Arboretum, The Twin Cities Green Guide (www.thegreenguide.org) and Scorecard (www.scorecard.org).

III). ENERGY CONSERVATION AND EFFICIENCY: Professor Kuchenreuther recommended inviting the appropriate point person at the University to update the committee on what steps the University has taken related to the Board of Regent's 1992 Policy on Pollution Prevention and Waste Abatement and the 1997 Senate resolution recommending an energy and environment conservation policy for the University. Professor Kuchenreuther volunteered to make arrangements to invite the appropriate guest(s) to the next meeting on February 3, 2003. A member suggested Professor Kuchenreuther contact Kathleen O'Brien, the Vice President of University Services.

A member questioned what percentage of the University's energy is purchased from Xcel Energy. Assuming it is fairly significant, the University as a political entity should leverage this position so Xcel Energy would be forced to make changes in Manitoba, Prairie Island, etc. Professor Kuchenreuther noted that the Morris campus agreed to pay extra for the energy it gets from Otter Tail Power Company in an attempt to encourage them to build more wind generators. To offset the extra amount spent on power, UMM instituted conservation efforts to recoup these costs. So, rather than increasing its energy budget, UMM has redirected how the money is spent.

IV). DIVESTITURE FROM ISRAEL: Professor Pedelty asked members for their input on whether they are interested in pursuing this issue. Melissa Williams volunteered to invite guest(s) to a future meeting to speak to this issue. Ms. Williams noted that the student group, Students for Justice in Palestine are petitioning the University to divest from Israel until 4 United Nation's resolutions are complied with.

A member stated that if the committee hears from individuals in favor of the University divesting from Israel, the committee is incumbent to hear from individuals against divestment. Besides the specific issue of Israeli divestment, another member suggested the discussion be even broader and incorporate what the University's investment strategy should be in terms of countries with human rights abuses.

V). Other Business: Professor Pedelty reminded members that the committee's next meeting is not until February 3, 2003. With several issues on the table, it will be important to try to move them to action items in order to advance the committee's agenda.

Joel Helfrich announced that he would be spearheading a Mount Graham resolution.

VI). Hearing no further business, Professor Pedelty adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate