

SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL CONCERNS
MINUTES OF MEETING
DECEMBER 8, 2008

[In these minutes: Landcare and Recycling, Future Agenda Items]

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

PRESENT: David Fox, chair, Michele Anderson, Robert Fox, Benton Schnabel, Rebecca von Dissen, Kaari Nelson, Michael O'Day, Catherine Jordan, Mark Pedelty, Marynel Ryan, BreAnn Graber

REGRETS: Angela Carlson Lombardi, Joseph Marchesani, Timothy Sheldon, Lisa Pogoff, Amelious Whyte, Katherine Fennelly, Ajay Skaria, Barbra Springer

ABSENT: Yiyuan Zhao, Jessica Arett, Eric Brown, Christine Dolph, Jeffrey Thaler, Carolyn Wardell

GUESTS: Mike Berthelsen, Dana Donatucci, Jim Dudley, Chris Kelleher, Les Potts, Amy Short

I). Professor Fox called the meeting to order and asked those present to go around the room and introduce themselves.

II). Mike Berthelsen, associate vice president, Facilities Management, began by noting that the Board of Regents passed a sustainability policy in 2004, Sustainability and Energy Efficiency (http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/Sustain_Energy_Efficiency.htm). This policy commits the University to incorporating sustainability into its teaching, research, and outreach practices and the operations that sustain them. To facilitate implementation of this policy, President Bruininks established the University-Wide Sustainability Goals and Outcomes Committee. In turn, Vice President O'Brien established the University Services Sustainability Steering Committee, which looks at how the campus is operated. On a related note, Mr. Berthelsen reported that President Bruininks has signed the Presidents Climate Commitment (<http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org/>).

Next, Les Potts, grounds superintendent, Facilities Management – Landcare, shared information on the University's landcare efforts. Highlights from Mr. Potts' presentation included:

- The mission of the Landcare Department is to present a beautiful, safe, and accessible exterior environment to campus users throughout the year.

- Eighty-six percent of the full-time Landcare staff have a post-secondary education in a field related to landcare. They have an understanding of plant material, agricultural needs, and the ability to recognize signs and symptoms related to problems and pests. This creates an environment of commitment, pride in work, and ownership.
- The Landcare database contains information on over 9,000 trees on campus. The database tracks location, gene species, conditions, special treatments, etc.
- Landcare plants enough annuals each year to fill over half an acre of land.
- The Twin Cities campus has the equivalent of over 46 miles of sidewalk, 14 miles of streets, and 114 football fields in turf.
- Landcare prides itself on responding to customer needs.
- In terms of native plant species, the Landcare Department has been proactive when it comes to planting native shrub species and herbaceous plant material.
- Details pertaining to two of the University's sustainable practices where substantial progress has been made were shared with the committee.
 - Street sweeping program.
 - Anti-icing program.

Moving on, Dana Donatucci, facilities support supervisor, Waste Abatement Services, shared information on the University's recycling efforts. Highlights from Mr. Donatucci's presentation included:

- Waste Abatement Services' mission is to manage the University's waste in the most cost effective, and environmentally sound manner.
- The University complies with the waste management hierarchy for the State of Minnesota, which is a waste management strategy. Reduction is the best waste management strategy, landfilling is the least desirable and recycling is somewhere in the middle.
- Waste Abatement Services has 9 part-time student employees and 16 full-time staff.
- The budget for Waste Abatement Services is approximately \$1.6 million, and recycling generates approximately \$500,000 in revenue. It is important, however, to keep in mind that recycling revenues are variable. Last year, recycling revenues were quite high, but with the poor economy, Waste Abatement Services has seen these revenues drop dramatically.
- Services provided by Waste Abatement Services include, but are not limited to:
 - Waste collection and disposal.
 - Recycling collection and processing.
 - ReUse warehouse redistribution and sales.
 - Office and building cleanouts for recyclables.
 - Confidential document collection.
- Examples of environmental benefits related to recycling include:
 - Resource conservation.
 - Eco-system preservation.
 - Water conservation.
 - Energy conservation.
- The University's recycling program benefits the institution by:

- Demonstrating its environmental stewardship.
 - Saving money – recycling is cheaper than disposal in most cases.
- The University's recycling program began in 1984, and is one of the oldest institutional recycling programs in the country.
- The University's waste goes to an incinerator in downtown Minneapolis. On average, the University is recovering approximately 27% of its total solid waste stream. In terms of debris (scrap metal, electronics), the University is recovering roughly 52%.
- The University started its organics collection program in 2007. Approximately 20% of University waste is organic material that can be composted. This program is being phased in. In 2007, the University collected 100 tons of compostable material. In 2008, the University will collect over 500 tons of organic material, and by 2009, the University is expecting to collect 800 tons of organic material.
- Plastics represent the most complicated aspect of recycling because there are many different types of plastics. Recycling symbols comprise recycled symbols and recyclable symbols. Recycling coding was developed as a way of differentiating different types of plastics. Generally speaking, #1 and #2 plastics are recyclable. In the past year there was an increase in revenues for raw materials, and because of the increase in price of fossil fuels and oil, the value of plastic increased. With this increase in value, there has been an increase in the number of companies capturing additional plastics. For example, Coon Rapids launched a pilot program to recycle non-bottle plastics. Plastic recycling is very susceptible to market conditions. The University is exploring collecting #5 plastics from its laboratories.
- In terms of campus sustainability, a sustainability culture needs to be created. Having said this, the University is involved in a contest, Recycle Mania, which is aimed at reducing waste on campus through better recycling and reduced trash. This is a nationwide campaign that pits university against university, and is sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through their WasteWise Program. While the University participated previously, it did so on a small scale. This year the University intends to involve the entire campus.

Members' questions and comments included:

- Does the University use all the compost it generates? Waste Abatement Services works with agriculture services on the St. Paul campus to combine the University's food waste collection with its animal manure collection. So much waste has been collected that the University has to truck its food and manure collection (roughly 60 – 70 tons per month) to a Hennepin County transfer station where a couple companies take this material and compost it. While the University pays \$15/ton for this service, it is significantly less expense than paying \$50/ton to dispose of it by other means.
- Should the University explore making and selling its own compost? While this could make sense at some point in the future, noted Mr. Donatucci, given the growing amount of compostable materials the University is collecting, it would be difficult to know how much space should be earmarked for these purposes. Mr. Berthelsen added that another consideration is whether the University should use

its limited land for these purposes. There are resource trade-off decisions that will need to be made.

- What does the University currently compost? Mr. Donatucci noted that the University composts all of its organic plant waste. The herbaceous portion of leaves, perennials, and grass clippings is composted. In addition, woody plant material that is collected is turned into landscape mulch.
- Is the janitorial staff made aware of the University's efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle? Jim Dudley stated that custodial staff are part of the Facilities Management (FM) team. FM has a material and equipment review board that oversees the use of equipment and chemical supplies in terms of what the institution buys, uses, and generates. In addition, the University-Wide Sustainability Goals and Outcomes Committee also has oversight in this area. Mr. Berthelsen stated that the University cannot afford for custodians to sort through people's trash and take out recyclable materials. Instead, a desired outcome of its sustainability campaign will be that the University community properly disposes of recyclable materials the first time.
- The suggestion was made to leave it up to the employee whether or not to have their trash emptied each day. In these difficult economic times such a move would reduce the amount of time it requires custodians to go in and out of offices to empty trash cans, and it would reduce the number of plastic liners used. Mr. Berthelsen reported that given the budget challenges facing the University, FM is proposing that custodians only empty office trash once per week. Also, FM continues to have conversations on the best way to improve upon recycling at the University.
- Has there been any thought given to getting away from planting so many annuals, and planting more perennials? Mr. Potts stated that generally annuals are only planted in high-profile areas of campus. Annuals provide color for the entire season, whereas perennials usually provide color for a much shorter period of time. Mr. Berthelsen stated that FM is also collaborating with academics in the use of green roof technology, e.g. Williamson Hall.
- Are value-based decisions made when it comes to purchasing sustainable products? Yes, stated Mr. Berthelsen, the University considers multiple factors when making sustainable product purchasing decisions, not only price. Amy Short, sustainability coordinator, noted that the University is in the process setting its sustainability goals, and one area that is being discussed has to do with green purchasing.
- Do University custodians spend a lot of time correcting the errors that people make when disposing of their recyclable materials? No, stated Mr. Donatucci, the University community does a great job of properly disposing of their recyclable materials.
- Is the University trying to increase the types of material it recycles? This is a lifecycle cost issue, stated Mr. Donatucci. While the goal is zero waste, putting something in the recycling waste stream to avoid disposal is not always the best choice.
- In the recycling industry, is there any information/best practices sharing taking place between organizations? Yes, most definitely, stated Mr. Donatucci, the

University has relationships with recycling vendors, e.g. Eureka Recycling. In addition, Mr. Donatucci noted that he is involved in a network of approximately 200 schools that share information on a daily basis. The University's Landcare Department also collaborates with organizations such as MNDot as a means of sharing information/best practices.

Professor Fox thanked today's guests for attending this meeting.

Professor Fox asked members their opinions regarding the information they learned today. Members were impressed with what the University is doing in terms of landcare and recycling. A member suggested the committee consider drafting a statement of support for what FM is doing as it relates to sustainable landcare and recycling practices.

III). Cathy Jordan reported that she has scheduled Professor Erin Kelly, the University's parental leave expert in the Sociology Department, and Adjunct Professor Alan Sroufe, one of the University's parent/child bonding experts in the Institute Of Child Development, to attend the committee's April 13th meeting. Professor Marynel Ryan added that she is working on scheduling a representative from the Women's Faculty Cabinet to discuss the financial impact of any proposed change to the University's parental leave policy.

Professor Fox asked members for their ideas concerning agenda items for the February 9 meeting. Kaari Nelson stated that she will look into whether any of the proxy voting resolutions for social issues will be ready for distribution at the February meeting. Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, volunteered to send out a call for agenda items to members.

IV). Hearing no further business, Professor Fox adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate