

COMMITTEE: University Environment Committee

MEETING DATE: September 24, 2020

PERSON PRESIDING: Susan Pearce

REGULAR MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Susan Pearce, Tammy Lee, Lisa Beth Robinson, Marc Petersen, Tomika Williams, Kerry Sewell, Akshat Kapoor

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Bill Koch, Tim Christensen, Greg Kearney, Dean Smith, Chad Carwein, William Hill, Thompson Forbes, Lucas Snyder

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Terry Little, ECU Recycling Coordinator

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ACTIONS OF MEETING: Approval of August 27, 2020 minutes

Edits needed: William Hill did attend the 8/27 meeting.

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#### ACTIONS OF MEETING

Agenda Item: Plans to move natural areas toward teaching/research use: Oct. 27 Site walk-through.

Discussion: The walk-through of the Otter Creek area (and West Research campus?) will be on October 27<sup>th</sup> from 10-noon. Chad has emailed the committee with the address for your GPS. Please respond to his invitation. This will help the committee come up with a game plan for re-establishing the trails and providing safe public access to the site. The Committee's idea is that by making these areas more accessible, more faculty and students will get out into nature and include the spaces in their research and teaching.

There were also unanswered questions about what will happen to the Bike Post trail now that the business has closed.

Action Taken: Tour is being conducted on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Assigned additional duties to: n/a

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#### ACTIONS OF MEETING

Agenda Item: Building health

Discussion: Research is being done regarding OSHA assessment of buildings on campus. The NC DHHS has an indoor air quality group that ECU has used previously and we will look into that.

Action Taken: ongoing (no new actions)

Assigned additional duties to: n/a

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## ACTIONS OF MEETING

Agenda Item: Confetti concerns/reducing graduation litter

Discussion: There may be a student sign campaign to combat the confetti, which is worse than ever. Sites for signs will include the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Reade, the letters outside of the new student center, steps of the Flanagan Building, the Cupola, and the Fountain. Ideally, this will be a student peer-to-peer action. It was suggested that we get in touch with the Visual Arts Forum to see if they would be willing to make a short video PSA.

Action Taken: Chad will be working with John Gill to have Facilities put up some signs. Lucas, our SGA representative, will be working with a political group on campus to support this action. We will hear more about this in the October meeting.

Assigned additional duties to: n/a

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## ACTIONS OF MEETING

Agenda Item: Presentation from Terry Little, ECU Recycling Coordinator, on Recycling at ECU

Discussion: Great presentation! Much was learned, including the skeleton staff working recycling for the whole university; last fiscal year we had over 2000 tons of waste that was sent to our local land transfer station—this does not include hazmat or inert debris—we did have 157 tons of trash from the new student center.

An audit was conducted last year on trash to see how much material was recyclable, and what solutions might be feasible. Paper hand towels are a large part of the recyclable material but we simply do not have the staff to deal with it. Fortunately the housekeeping services, who are also understaffed, have decreased the frequency of trash pickup.

There is a statewide campaign to clarify which materials are and are not being recycled. We are getting on board with other collegiate and municipal programs.

One campus initiative that was effective was a compost operation, set up with a student group at the West End and Todd dining halls. This was very successful up to the pandemic. Once the students return this will be restarted.

Mr. Little offered to work with any student groups we can suggest/recommend.

It sounds like a recycling/composting initiative is beginning on the Health Sciences campus but is in its infancy and delayed by the pandemic.

Action Taken: Tim will continue working with the Honors students on the trash audit and future recycling initiatives when the students return to campus.

Assigned additional duties to: n/a

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## ACTIONS OF MEETING

Agenda Item: Proposed Faculty Senate resolution regarding beverage contract renewal (resolution is attached at the end of these notes)

Discussion: Terry Little and Chad present the concern with plastics and the lack of support/infrastructure/staff for recycling at ECU. A brief discussion on the history of recycling plastics, the cessation of glass recycling in eastern NC, and the dangerous potential of a ten-year beverage contract that does not commit to active recycling. The committee decided to propose a resolution to the Faculty Senate that all beverage contracts, going forward, include a sustainability/recycling clause.

If the current contract negotiations are too far underway to accommodate this resolution, it absolutely will be part of the next contract, pending approval by the Faculty Senate.

Action Taken: Susan and Chad will draft the resolution, the committee will vote on whether to approve it via email, and Susan and Chad will present it to the Faculty Senate.

Assigned additional duties to: n/a

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## ACTIONS OF MEETING

Agenda Item: Presentation of STARS Report to Faculty Senate: Preview by Chad Carwein

Discussion:

Action Taken:

Assigned additional duties to:

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## ACTIONS OF MEETING

Agenda Item: Proposing items for new buildings or renovations (bicycle-friendly; waterless urinals, dual-flushing toilets, bottle-refilling water fountains, what else?): formalizing the protocol to have the impacts on bike routes by campus construction considered during planning processes

Discussion: Chad is being added to the Construction Standards Team committee and will bring news back to the UEC about these issues so that we can weigh in on it. This includes the bike lane that will (hopefully) provide access to the 9<sup>th</sup> Street/new Biotech building.

Regarding the leaf-blowing issue, we discussed the dearth of staff in the grounds crew compared to the acreage of campus and how these also cause health issues for the employees.

It was suggested that the committee put together a list of items to discuss with John Gill, then invite him to our next meeting.

Happy bee report. The west campus hives are doing well!

Action Taken: n/a

Assigned additional duties to: n/a

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ANNOUNCEMENTS: none.

NEXT MEETING: October 22, 2020

ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED:

- Put together a list of environmental issues to discuss with John Gill (director of Facilities) and invite him to the next meeting.

ADDENDUM: Resolution on Beverage Contract approved by UEC members and voted upon via email October 1-2, 2020, to be proposed to the Faculty Senate:

**UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Resolution on Beverage Contract**

WHEREAS, the University Environment Committee is charged with promoting sustainability efforts on campus, which include energy and resource conservation, recycling, and the reduction of waste; and

WHEREAS, the current Safety and Environmental policy states, "ECU will strive to protect and enhance the environment by pursuing environmental sustainability initiatives"; and

WHEREAS, the ECU Sustainability Plan establishes a goal to "Eliminate single-use plastic bags, straws, and bottled water over the next five years..." and this plan was unanimously approved by former Chancellor Staton and his Executive Council; and

WHEREAS, the bottling industry has developed new and innovative alternatives to single-use plastics, including plastic bottles that contain a percentage of plant-based materials and aluminum bottles that can be recycled more easily and for financial gain, and

WHEREAS, the University is scheduled to sign a new, 10-year beverage contract with a supplier; and

WHEREAS, the University Environment Committee supports an effective, convenient, environmentally sound and fairly financed recycling program; and

**WHEREAS, the** University Environment Committee supports strategies to divert and reduce waste to the greatest extent possible in all aspects of ECU operations, and

WHEREAS,

- Less than 10 percent of plastic has ever been recycled
- Plastic degrades each time it is reused, meaning it cannot be reused more than once or twice
- Making new plastic out of oil is cheaper and easier than making it out of plastic trash, but this practice is not sustainable
- The oceans now have at least 150 million tons of plastic in them, which will soon increase to an amount that surpasses the weight of all the fish in the sea
- Certain soda companies are sourcing water for bottled water from drought-prone, low-income areas

WHEREAS, environmental activists have particularly named ECU's current beverage supplier, Coca-Cola, for the proliferation of plastic waste globally and for its depletion of water from drought-prone regions,

THEREFORE, Be It Resolved, that the Faculty Senate supports the efforts and strategies of the

Committee to request that 1) the soda company that is selected is committed to

reducing these environmentally destructive practices and 2) a clause be added to this contract that will reduce the amount of single-use plastic bottles sold on campus by 2.5% each year and 3) ECU Materials Management will establish measures to include the University Sustainability Manager in future contract negotiations related to achieving goals laid out in the ECU Sustainability Plan.

Remaining Meetings for the year:

- November 19, 2020
- January 28, 2021
- February 25, 2021
- March 25, 2021
- April 22, 2021