

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY SENATE University Environment Committee
Meeting of October 18, 2023, 1:00 PM EST Online meeting (Zoom)

In attendance: Thomas Wilson, chair, Frederick Walter, Peg Spitzer, Sian Piret, Christopher Sellers, Sara Poon, Malcolm Bowman, Joanna Kaczorowska, Maggie Li, Michelino Puopolo

Meeting called to order by Chair at 1:00pm.

Adoption of draft Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2023, May 9, 2023, and July 12, 2023—moved by Christopher Sellers, second by Joanna Kaczorowska. Without objection minutes are adopted.

Update on Parking: Memo states the possibility of reconstituting the University Parking Committee

Energy Working Group:

Christopher Sellers: After the feedback from the Fred and 4 people from sustainability in last month's meeting, I went back and listened to the recording of what was being said and made corrections. I think we're in good shape. I believe that we've answered sort of that round of observation critique addition, and so on. And you know, I think we're ready to have a vote here.

Thomas Wilson:

The nine bullet points of recommendation in the brief:

- Recommendation #1: Expand plans for onsite solar.
- Recommendation #2: Seek more alternatives for off-site clean energy supply.
- Recommendation #3: Plan to phase out the Cogeneration Plant.
- Recommendation #4: Envision renewable alternatives to our reliance on gas-generated steam.
- Recommendation #5: Address administrative constraints and complacency.
- Recommendation #6: Explore and develop on-site energy storage.
- Recommendation #7: Enable bottom-up initiatives to keep improving energy efficiency.
- Recommendation #8: Address Stony Brook's greenhouse emissions from transportation.
- Recommendation #9: Involve more of the campus in efforts to transition from fossil fuels.

While the report does not satisfy everyone's point it does include what the university needs to do in the next 10 years. Show where we need to go. Show that we're not getting there fast enough.

Motion to approve response to clean energy plan moved by Malcolm Bowman, second by Peg Spitzer

Ashley Schiff report

Thomas Wilson: After 53 years, the Stony Brook President has finally committed to preserving a significant portion of Ashley Schiff. However, there's no clear definition of what "substantial"

actually entails. Unofficially, I've been informed that there are plans to expand South Campus. Consequently, there's a desire to withhold a couple of acres at the north end of South Campus, potentially encroaching on Ashley Schiff for this expansion. I'm awaiting clarification on what "a couple" specifically means. If it signifies 2 acres, resulting in a permanently protected area of 24.67 acres instead of the initially promised 26.67 acres, I might be inclined to accept that.

Currently, Bill Herman, the Vice President of Facilities, is commissioning a new survey to ascertain the actual situation on the ground. The Senate Executive and I, along with a few others, are scheduled to meet with them to determine:

- 1) The precise area designated for permanent formal preservation. What is the actual extent? Where will the definitive boundary lie?
- 2) The methodology behind this preservation. What precautions or safeguards will be included?

Bike Path Connections (New Project):

Thomas Wilson: There's a notable contrast in the bike paths east of the university, but there isn't a safe bike lane from the university's end to the town. Biking around there poses dangers. Would anyone like to spearhead this project?

Christopher Percival: I'm interested in taking on the biking project if Fred needs assistance or prefers someone else to lead it.

Sian Piret: Count me in for the project too.

Thomas Wilson: Alright, Chris, Fred, and Sian will collaborate on the biking project. We can reconvene next month to discuss the plans and ideas.

Lake Brianna (New Project):

Malcolm Bowman: On campus, just north of the entrance, nestled within the woods, is a lake—a recharge basin, technically speaking, as per the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. It's classified as a freshwater wetland and is thus protected. A decade ago, someone proposed the idea of turning this into an on-campus field site for marine ecology. Recently, I, along with two other professors, met with Barbara Chernow, the administrative Vice President, and we collectively recognized its potential as an excellent ecological field site for studying ecology on campus. However, the idea was somewhat abandoned. More recently, Tom and I developed a research program. We conducted a long survey tracking the fluctuating water levels during rainfall, observing how the wood from the roads affects these fluctuations. Additionally, Tom installed a weather station atop the Health Sciences Center. We correlated this data with the weather patterns and precipitation.

Thomas Wilson: Yes, we have the data available. If we were to find students interested in undertaking a Senior Honors project, we already have the dataset prepared for them to work on. They would graph rainfall against basin rise. We've forwarded this information to the

engineering staff. However, I'm uncertain about their current progress, as I haven't received any updates.

The next step involves demonstrating that the basin functions naturally and adequately meets the university's requirements. There's likely no necessity to invest in excavating or dredging it. If anything, my assumption is that they might need to upgrade the pipes.

Composting Project:

Sara Poon: Hi, everyone! As you know, I'm new to the committee and hearing about the issues you're passionate about has sparked some thoughts related to my current work. I'm currently an RA at Chavez Hall in East Campus, and one of the programs I recently launched is a composting initiative. Perhaps you're not aware, but there's a Roth composter situated right behind Roth, near the life sciences building, managed by Anthony Gentile, who's incredibly passionate about composting. This initiative has been running for almost a decade, though it's not widely known, especially considering the considerable student interest in environmental issues like waste disposal. Many lean towards recycling until realizing that we don't recycle here at Suffolk.

Expanding my passion, I introduced composting in the residence hall, starting in Chavez. However, my goal is to extend this to other residence halls, especially those with kitchen facilities. Composting is a straightforward process requiring machines and land, which we have access to. Our dining halls generate substantial organic waste, making this initiative viable. Educating our community and fostering empowerment among us is crucial.

While considering the scale of projects discussed in this committee, I believe making composting more accessible and streamlining the process could be valuable. I'm eager to collaborate with all of you on this and can share the materials I've already gathered.

Thomas Wilson: Alright, here we go! I mentioned that if you're passionate about something, you could end up leading the working group. So, would you like to? Would you be able to find the time to put together a brief presentation—whether it's a PowerPoint, Google Slides, or just a collection of images? Next month, would you be willing to talk to us about the Roth composter's composting efforts? Show us their operations, how it aligns with the university's overall functioning, and then delve into the program at Chavez Hall, discussing its functionality. Share some information with us, and we can brainstorm ideas and potentially draft a report or propose its expansion.