



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE February 27, 2020 from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm NFH 101

Present: Leila Tjiang, Sustainability Co-Chair
Tara Costello, Building President Representative - Annesley Hall
Ray DeSouza, Bursar and CAO
Vikas Mehta, Director Physical Plant
Lyndon Nobre, Director of Business and Ancillary Services
Shainiya Balachandran, Dean's Office

Absent: Aminah Attar, Sustainability Commissioner
Lauren Allison, Building President Representative - Burwash Hall
Christina Alcena, Dean's Office (alternate)

Recording Secretary: Véronique Morris, Physical Plant

Introduction:

Vikas Mehta initiated a round table introduction of all participants.

Minutes:

Motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on October 18, 2019. Carried.

Business arising from previous meeting:

- Blue bin signage in Rowell Jackman Hall: Vikas Mehta reported that the blue bin signage was installed in all recycling rooms in Rowell Jackman Hall. Lyndon Nobre mentioned that not all plastics are recyclable, a message that needs to be communicated to all students living in residences through additional signage as well as during orientation. Vikas noted that there has not been any improvement in waste diversion so far, so the conversation must continue. The Committee agreed that the change of culture will take some time with a combination of specific signage, the addition of blue bins in all residences and in the Goldring Student Centre and ongoing talks with students.
- Isabel Bader Theatre stage lighting LED switch: Vikas Mehta announced that the LED switch has converted into an annual savings of 26,000 kWhr. In the future the light bulbs won't need to be replaced as often.

- Application for funding with Natural Resources Canada: The University application was rejected and so did most other universities'. The University will look into the price of conducting its own energy audits to create a baseline for the future. The audit will require two seasons (heating and cooling) over one year.
- Report from Food Services on waste log initiative: Food Services has taken on some initiatives:
 - the Lug-A-Mug program, which started in December 2019, encourages students to bring their own mug and receive a discount. Lyndon Nobre noted that it will take three months to measure its efficiency.
 - Food Services introduced compostable packaging for salads and sandwiches in Ned's Café: the students leave the packaging on a separate table and the staff collect them to be diverted into proper bins. Food Services is meeting with VUSAC on a monthly basis and VUSAC will communicate these initiatives to the students. Vikas Mehta suggested posting large banners on how to control organics.
 - Lyndon Nobre spoke about a waste pilot in the Burwash Hall kitchen that Food Services is tracking; the pilot is in its early stage with a six months to one year term of tracking to obtain proper data. The objective is to encourage the students to take less food from the two hot stations; food waste contributes to the cost of meal plans. It does not apply to the soup and salad stations. A discussion followed on the best way to educate the students and other methods to control waste diversion: Ray deSouza suggested inviting a nutritionist to help the students; Vikas Mehta suggested providing the Health Canada Food Guide; another idea would be to use less trays but keep enough for students who want them or with mobility issue; lastly Tara Costello suggested communicating leftovers to students via social media.

Report on Vic Zero Waste pilot project:

- The Zero Waste pilot project conducted over the past two months on the second floor of Annesley Hall has been very successful, with no incidence of contamination. The pilot will be expanded to two more kitchens in the building and will be monitored on an on-going basis. Housekeeping to add two more bins. Leila Tjiang supplemented the pilot with very graphic and colourful posters and quarter-page specific notes on doors to help the students. Following a survey, Leilia Tjiang indicated a 31% approval to expand the project; one student expressed concerns with the smell and pest control.

Comments and questions:

Shainiya Balachandran emphasized that the continuity of information year after year is essential. It was recommended that the Sustainability student co-chairs send their notes to the Dean's office and to Vikas Mehta to provide progress reports to the next Sustainability group of students every year. Leila Tjiang suggested establishing a student executive position on the Sustainability Committee to be hired in the summer and who would oversee the work of the students. Tara Costello suggested an elected position per building as well.

Vikas Mehta indicated that Meghan Kilty, Director of Communications, is working on adding a sustainability tab on the web site; update to be provided at the next meeting.

Ray deSouza inquired about other student bodies dealing with sustainability: VUSAC is the main group with smaller groups like the Environmental Fashion Show and the LEAP group. Residences work with the Sustainability Committee as well through their “green” representatives and the Sustainability Commissioner meets with VUSAC regularly.

Tara Costello would like the menus to be more transparent; will send email to Lyndon Nobre.

Shainiya Balachandran updated the Committee on the Commuter Dons’ work that encourages the students to bring their own mug and to use re-usable utensils instead of plastic. Vikas Mehta suggested bringing on board a waste management consultant to educate the dons on waste diversion. Shainiya expressed interest and will send Vikas dates for a 1-hour presentation in the summer.

Leila Tjiang suggested a new pilot project to have separate bins in the bathrooms with a green bin for compostable paper towels.

Shainiya Balachandran and Vikas Mehta thanked the students on the Committee for their work.

Next meeting:

The next meeting will be scheduled in late September or early October 2020, time and place TBD.