

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY SENATE
Campus Environment Committee

Meeting of February 12th, 2020, 1:00-2:20 pm
SVP for Finance and Administration Conference Room, Administration 221

MINUTES

Attendance: Tom Wilson (Chair), Frederick Walter, Sean Deery (acting Secretary), Michelino Puopolo, Gary Kaczmarczyk, Malcolm Bowman, Melanie Smith, Clifford Knee, Arek Norford, James Pizaro, Chris Sellers

Meeting called to order at 1:07pm.

Minutes from the 01/29/20 meeting were approved with no edits after a motion by Sean Deery and second by James Pizaro.

Chair Report

Chairperson Tom Wilson introduces the new videoconference service, Google Meeting, which will be used for remote access to future Environmental Committee meetings. This effort is meant to increase accessibility for committee members and was recommended by Mark Land who is an IT professional at SoMAS.

Open discussion was had on the topic of recording the meetings in addition to videoconferencing the meetings. No strong opinions were presented for or against recording the meetings, but it was suggested that the recordings could be taken off of the shared Google Drive after one week in order to allow members to watch the recordings without making them completely "public." Privacy is the main concern of recording the meetings and meeting minutes already serve the purpose of overviewing the meaningful content.

Sub-committees

The Natural Environment and Preservation group overviewed the research study being performed by Tom Wilson, Malcolm Bowman, Mateo Mezic, and Kristen Hutz on Lake Briana. Lake Briana was constructed as a recharge basin originally, but was naturalized over the past decades - now occupied by various forms of wildlife. The study is meant to determine if the lake can continue to be a natural recharge basin or if it must be managed more intensively based on the water levels discovered in the study.

Tom Wilson presented some of the early findings which showed that the level of the water rises quickly from rainfall events that happen after periods of drought, but when the water level is already high there is less of an impact on water level from precipitation events. Malcolm Bowman's initial reaction was that the mud on the bottom of the basin is not very permeable, but once the water level rises to the sandy sides of the lake the water can more easily soak into the ground - thus limiting how high the water can get. Wilson mentioned that small rainfall events tend to simply soak into the ground and if the soil is already wet rainfall soaks into the ground even more easily.

Questions and comments on the presentation were presented by Fred Walter and Gary Kaczmarczyk. Walter questioned what the groundwater level for Lake Briana is and presumed that the groundwater level is close to where the telemetry instrument records “low points” in the data. Kaczmarczyk noted that the stormwater recharge basin on the east side of Nicolls Road is at a higher elevation than Lake Briana. There was consensus that groundwater levels are different for each geographic region of Long Island. Walter also posed a question about water quality within the basin and Wilson suggested that the wildlife currently occupying the basin seem to be doing well, but there is potential to study the water quality in the future.

Tom Wilson also presented graphs that showed data from the weather station in Islip, and rainfall trackers at South P Lot and the HSC Building. This graph showed that precipitation on Long Island is very localized and could play a factor in the data collected from Lake Briana.

Tom Wilson also discussed the latest efforts to officially preserve the Ashley Schiff preserve. Assemblyman Steve Engelbright’s office expressed interest in updating the Ashley Schiff Preserve legislation that was drafted long ago so that new legislation can be easily given to the new President of Stony Brook University, once named. This legislation would declare permanent preservation of the Ashley Schiff Preserve and make it a part of the State Park system. Wilson suggested the phrase “51 and Done!” as the new slogan for the preservation campaign. Wilson mentioned that the University has a policy to limit the ability of faculty and staff to lobby an elected official to draft legislation - mainly to limit their ability to “represent” the University.

Wilson would like the Senate to create a blanket policy that Senate members are allowed to lobby elected officials with approval from the University Senate Executive Committee. Students already enjoy such a blanket policy and could be used to push for preservation legislation in the meantime. Wilson’s final thoughts were that it never gets easier to preserve land and that if there were to be a place on campus that was set aside as a preserve, it would be hard to find a more meaningful spot than the Ashley Schiff Preserve.

Chris Sellers asked if there was any way to get other local groups to support the preservation effort and Wilson mentioned that the Friends of the Ashley Schiff Preserve facebook page is growing very popular and active. Malcolm Bowman reminded the committee that he had students research all universities with on campus preserves and this list of these universities could be used for advocacy efforts. Bowman also had a petition signed by 3,000 students (now alumni) who supported preservation that can be used for advocacy efforts.

The Efficiency, Recycling, Livability group is still making progress on the Smallware Rental Program, Education at Orientation, Water Bottle Refill Stations, and other projects. Jeanne Charoy was at a conference presenting her research so Sean Deery gave updates on projects. The Smallware Rental Program is slowly making progress, but interest has been hard to muster. Deery also emailed administrators from SUNY to inquire about building codes related to water fountains on campus. Deery hopes to find a way to get new construction/renovation specifications to require water bottle refill stations to be installed rather than standard water fountains to increase the use of reusable water bottles and avoid unnecessary retrofits.

Fred Walter did some experiments with the water bottle refill station bottle counts and thinks that the bottle count is based on volume poured from the refill spout rather than the number of times someone uses the refill spout.

Transportation group was not present because Mona Ramonetti (group coordinator) was at the University's newly formed Transportation Committee meeting - a committee composed of faculty, staff, administration, and the transportation consulting firm Timothy Haas & Associates, Inc. This Transportation Committee is tasked with studying and improving the entire transportation services of the campus, including parking, mass transit, and alternative transportation methods. Dean Tufts, Vice President for Facilities and Services, has been the Environmental Committee's point of contact for parking issues, but Ramonetti will now be the Committee's main point of contact. Documents from the University's Transportation Committee are to be kept in the committee - not public information yet. The Transportation Committee's next meeting was postponed to 02/14/20.

Tom Wilson overviewed the timeline and objectives of the Transportation Committee, which was provided by Ramonetti. Wilson mentioned that he would like to get George Volz into the UFS EC meetings because Volz is the Manager of Busing and Transportation Enforcement. Wilson also suggested that any new construction on campus should be transportation neutral to avoid adding cars without adding parking spaces, a parking garage could be placed next to LaValle Stadium and the Student Union, and student residents should be offered Uber service down to the R&D park so residential lots can be converted to faculty/staff lots. Sean Deery suggested that idle free zones should be implemented to avoid having commuters who wait in the parking lots for spots to open and to reduce the amount of workers who run automobile engines during when not in productive use.

The Research group wants to look into having campus facilities directors (like Thomas Lanzilotta and Michael Martino) come to the UFS EC to discuss renewable energy on campus. Michelino Puopolo would like to create a list of best practices based on other Universities who are implementing renewable energy on campus. Malcolm Bowman mentioned that Denison College in Ohio generates 15% of their energy from solar panels.

Old News

Tom Wilson brought up the South Campus recharge basin that was drained and restructured over ten years ago. Malcolm Bowman explained that "Tasha's Pond" was worked on in 2007 because there were complaints that the basin was not discharging properly - even though it was a beautiful ecosystem for wildlife. The University added a new drainage system and reconstructed the basin's bank, but the water level is currently back up to the same height as the former recharge basin level. Bowman also explained how there are pipes and culverts in the South Campus buildings that do not have properly.

Wilson concluded that the reconstruction of "Tasha's Pond" might not have been necessary and that data could have helped the campus make a better decision about what work needs to be done.

Wilson would like the University to buy a telemetry monitoring system to keep track of the water levels at all recharge basins to be sure proposed work actually needs to be done, evaluate the impact of work done on basins, potentially save money, and offer a great project for students of the campus to work on.

Gary Kaczmarczyk mentioned that "Tasha's Pond" is not discharging properly and the University is looking into cleaning the brush around the edges of the basin and cleaning the inside of the basin to get it working properly. Kaczmarczyk will schedule a meeting with the Environmental Committee to tour our members around Tasha's Pond.

New Business

Malcolm Bowman asked if changing the time of the meeting was possible. Tom Wilson did not want to change the times for the remainder of the semester, but would be open to a new time for the fall semester.

Wilson also put forth his concerns about Campus Life Time being encroached upon by class times and asked that Fred Walter asked the Senate Executives if they know about this issue.

Next meeting is 03/11/20 at 1pm in Administration 221.

The meeting adjourned at 2:28pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sean Deery
MBA in Marketing Candidate '20