

Stony Brook University Senate
University Environment Committee
Meeting Minutes: September 11, 2024, 1-2:30pm

Approved at the UEC meeting of 10/8/2024.

Attendees: Tiffany Freidman, Jennifer Gilday, Timothy Gonzalez, Peter Joyce, Joanna Kaczorowska, Gary Kaczmarczyk, Cliff Knee, Maggie Li, Sian Piret, Michelino Puopolo, Chris Sellers (co-chair), John True, Frederick Walter, and Tom Wilson,

Meeting called to order by Sellers at 1:05pm. Wilson was designated as recording secretary.

Co-chair Sellers welcomed everyone to the meeting on behalf of himself and co-chair Mona Ramonetti. Sellers will be leading the meetings for the first few months because Ramonetti has a conflict, but both will be working outside of meetings. Please feel free to reach out to either co-chair at any time.

Sellers invited everyone to introduce themselves and why they were interested in the work of the committee:

Chris Sellers: Department of History, has worked on environmental and urban history, member of the committee for 5-6 years.

Peter Joyce: Senior undergraduate History and Political Science double major, active in undergraduate student government.

Timothy Gonzalez: Junior Environmental Studies major. On the Ecology and Evolution Club e-board.

Tom Wilson: semi-retired professional from SoMAS, happy to see new leadership of this committee and volunteering to be recording secretary.

Michelino Puopolo, Associate Professor in the Department of Anesthesiology.

John True, faculty in Ecology and Evolution.

Jennifer Gilday, program manager at the Collaborative for the Earth (C4E).

Tiffany Friedman, academic advisor in Educational Opportunity Program.

Cliff Knee, Safety Training Manager in Environmental Health and Safety.

Gary Kaczmarczyk, Associate Vice President of Environmental Health and Safety.

Maggie Li, Junior, working on the composting project.

Sian Piret, faculty in the Department of Nephrology.

Fred Walter, faculty in Astronomy. New liaison to Senate Exec. Research involves the physics of climate change. Teaches a course titled "Welcome to the Anthropocene."

Joanna Kaczorowska, faculty in the Department of Music.

Sellers called for consideration of minutes from June 11, 2024. With correction of file name to reflect the correct date (2024 not 2025) the minutes were approved without objection.

Sellers noted that there is a committee opening for a west campus professional. If a person can be located, the name is forwarded to the Senate Executive for a one year appointment, thereafter to stand for a 3 year term. Sellers requested that if anyone knows of an interested professional please inform Ramonetti or himself.

The meeting time for the coming year was discussed. Consensus was that the October meeting would begin at 12:30pm on the second Wednesday to synchronize with the new Campus Lifetime start time. Sellers will send out a WhenToMeet poll to determine whether Monday or Wednesday and what time is best.

Gilday asked about the charge of the committee. It can be accessed at:

[University Environment Committee - Senate](#)

Sellers explained that all the working groups were formed in response to challenges and projects within the committee's charge.

There was a discussion of damage on campus from the storm of August 18-19. Kaczmarczyk volunteered to give a preliminary report:

- 1) This was an unprecedented storm. Two dorms flooded out. Those dorms flooded after a rain event several years ago, an analysis was done and pumping capacity was increased. The August storm overwhelmed this increased capacity and another look will be made.
- 2) The Chemistry building took some damage, Contractors building penthouses were not watertight water poured into buildings and elevator shafts.
- 3) More water damage in Union, a lot of other buildings on campus.
- 4) The University is looking for reimbursement for emergency costs and restoration work. Repair and may need to replace elevators.

Kaczmarczyk could arrange a more detailed presentation in a few weeks.

General discussion followed:

- 5) True: areas including dorms with no elevators, accessibility issue.
- 6) Kaczmarczyk: there is a major capital plan to modernize and replace elevators.
- 7) Joyce: elevators disabled in Ammon and Grey. Problems in Tabler and Tubman, still a lot of damage.
- 8) Kaczmarczyk: important to plan for the future and more severe weather.
- 9) Wilson: During the event, the SoMAS weather stations on campus measured 10 inches of rain at HSC and 12 inches of rain at Lot 40. The 2021 storm was a 500 year storm, the August storm was a 1,000 year storm.
- 10) Gonzalez: Very problematic for students.
- 11) Walter: Educational mission. Must build in expectation of extreme events and educate people that these events
- 12) True: Living world public lecture series. A good subject would be a public lecture on the consequences of the August storm. Fred Water suggested Malcolm Bowman.
- 13) Sellers will ask for an expert to provide a written report on the dimensions of the event as well as having a speaker come to a UEC meeting. Kaczmarczyk will make this request.
- 14) Kaczmarczyk: A campus stormwater study is being undertaken.
- 15) Sellers: UEC may set up a stormwater working group at some point after we receive some more information. This is climate change coming home to us.
- 16) Gilday: C4E and Alda Center will be presenting "Science on Stage - Climate Edition" on October 28th. Original musical piece "Carnival of the Endangered Animals" plus three short one act plays about climate change. More information at: [Science on Stage - Climate Edition](#)

Fred Walter and Sian Piret gave a presentation on the bike path study.

- 17) A draft report from the working group was recently forwarded to the committee.
- 18) Genesis of this report was a report from 6 years ago expressing concerns about the connection between campus bike paths and bike paths to the east of campus.
- 19) There is no safe connection between campus bike paths and bike paths to the east.
- 20) Navigating East Campus and crossing Nicholls Road on a bicycle is problematic.
- 21) The report makes several recommendations to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety from the east of campus, through East Campus, and crossing Nicholls Road.
- 22) A future report will make recommendations on access to campus from west of campus.
- 23) Piret shared two new video clips showing the point of view of a cyclist coming from Daniel Webster Drive to the Wang Center and the reverse route. The route is challenging for an advanced cyclist. For a student who is bicycling because they cannot afford a car it would be even more difficult.
- 24) Walter requested feedback and suggestions from the University Environment Committee. The working group would hope to have the report approved by UEC at the next meeting.
- 25) Piret requested and received authorization to share the draft report with the HSC Environment Committee for feedback and comment.

General discussion followed:

- 26) Sellers asked what Administration groups are most involved with the issues raised in this report. Kaczmarczyk replied that two groups would be MAPS (Mobility and Parking Services) and Campus Planning Design and Construction (CPDC).
- 27) Kaczmarczyk noted that grant funding had been received and a study was underway to study increasing pedestrian and traffic safety on campus, including crossings on Nicholls Road. He suggested sharing the draft with the study group and volunteered facilitating a meeting between those conducting the study and the committee.
- 28) Sellers noted that increasing the number of people walking and using bicycles wasn't just about safety but about decreasing automobile use.
- 29) Wilson said that this report is timely. Anna Toplovik is administering the grant for improving safety, which is reportedly \$1 million, perhaps some of that money might be available to address low hanging fruit as regards safety. There have been multiple deaths of people attempting to cross Nicholls Rd., it would be nice to address those issues before there is another tragedy.
- 30) Gildan: riding a bicycle on Christian Avenue is a death wish.
- 31) Wilson suggested a presentation to the full Senate on this issue, since there has been little movement on the issue in the last six years.
- 32) Gildan asked if there was a report on pedestrian fatalities. Kaczmarczyk suggested we contact Topolovik to see if they have data. Walter will share the draft with Topolovik, Kaczmarczyk suggested the report be shared with Bill Herrmann as well.

Tom Wilson presented on the status of Ashley Schiff Preserve formal protection:

- 33) Some progress has been made but some questions remain.
- 34) The original 1970 preserve was 28.3 acres. This was encroached upon by the expansion of Circle Drive and the construction of Nassau and Suffolk Halls. The boundary was redrawn in 1998, encompassing 26.7 acres.

- 35) On May 6, 2024, the Stony Brook Council approved ASP for permanent protection but was misinformed that the area was just under 20 acres.
- 36) On May 10, 2024 a new survey was published that moved the southern boundary of the preserve slightly north but encompassed 25.6 acres. On July 25th the SB Council approved these 25.6 acres for permanent preservation.
- 37) Permanent preservation of the 25.6 acres is in line with Senior Vice President Judy Greiman's representation of President McInnis' Earthstock 2022 pledge that there would be formal and permanent protection of the current 1998 preserve bounds, minus a "couple of acres" along the southern boundary to allow a potential expansion of South Campus in the future.
- 38) Several questions have been raised to the administration but not answered:
 - a) What was the exact motion approved by the Stony Brook Council?
 - b) What are the next steps for formal protection and the expected timeline?
 - c) To what extent would this protection be permanent, and to what extent could protection be undone by a future less enlightened administration?
- 39) Wilson thinks it is important to get answers to these questions. The Administration trimmed 1.6 acres from the Preserve between 1970 and 1998. It has now trimmed off another 1.1 acres. This might be a win, but only if it results in real formal and permanent protection.
- 40) Wilson requested directions for how to proceed.

General discussion followed:

- 41) Walter is happy to carry any questions to the Senate Executive. He is of the opinion that anything more than 20 acres will require off campus approval.
- 42) John True made a motion authorizing Wilson to draft questions regarding ASP protection for Walter to take to the Senate Executive Committee. This motion was seconded and approved without dissent.

John True reported for the campus planning working group:

- 43) The wooded area where the new Engineering Building is planned was not cleared over the summer.
- 44) True is interested in any ideas on how to encourage the University to build upward and downward on existing cleared areas as opposed to clearing additional forested areas.

General discussion followed regarding heating and cooling issues in the buildings.

- 45) True: what is the issue of cooling in the summer when many areas of buildings are vacant.
- 46) Joyce reported problems with rooms that are too hot and issues with mold in residential spaces developing when the rooms are vacant over the summer because of the lack of air conditioning.

- 47) Walter: there was a May 3rd email from Bill Herrmann giving standards for building heating and cooling.
- 48) True: rooms that are too cold or too hot can be reported through FIXIT. In some cases issues can be addressed in minutes through remote reprogramming of building HVAC systems.

Sellers thanked everyone for contributing to the meeting. The next meeting will be October 9th, beginning at 12:30pm. The meeting was adjourned at 2:37pm.

Respectfully submitted
Tom Wilson