

Minutes of the Environmental Concerns Committee January 13, 2016

Attendees: John Elder and Dina Schoonmaker (co-chairs), Greg Zehe (Hospitality Services director) and Lisa Wilken (Langston manager), Vera Cooke, Jim Helm (KORA liaison), Don Hultquist, Nancy Hultquist, Nancy McClusky, Marilyn Myerson, Emily Pugsley, Melissa Reed (recording secretary), Don Reeves

John Elder opened the meeting at 3 o'clock in the Green Room with a moment of silence.

Excessive Noise in the Langston. The order of the agenda was adjusted to accommodate the schedules of Greg Zehe and Lisa Wilken, who stayed only during the discussion about noise in dining spaces. They identified refrigerator compressors and stocking during dining hours as two causes of noise. They have measured the decibel level during dinner and found that the loudest point along the serving line is where hot food starts and, of course, it is quieter farther from food line. Suggested solutions include stocking the serving area before dining hours, which staff has begun doing. Re-routing refrigeration cooling lines would be expensive. Greg agreed to ask HGF, the original architects who are now involved with a Stephens Care Center project, for advice on how to lower the noise level, as they may have new ideas and new products. Baffles, perhaps like those hung from the ceiling before the redesign of the Langston, might deaden sound.

December 2015 minutes. The minutes of the December meeting were accepted as presented.

Talk by Meghan Riesterer. About 40 persons attended Meghan Riesterer's talk on sustainability at Oberlin College on January 11. John has sent her a thank you note and said he will offer her constructive criticism about problems noted in the presentation: that she spoke too fast, used jargon and was sometimes too abstract.

Water monitoring. Dina reported that the water-monitoring project being done by five volunteers is continuing. Rey Carrion, Director of Facilities, will be given the results.

Fracking/NEXUS update. John Elder reported that the fracking industry is in crisis, as indicated by bankruptcies, a decline in the number of rigs, the capping of wells, and the cessation of royalties. Downstream businesses, such as motels and restaurants have suffered as a result. Too many pipelines are being built, according to one industry representative; but in the absence of regulation, the market controls the extent of new construction. Nexus says that users have signed up of 80% of its capacity, and Oberlin News-Tribune reporter Valerie Urbanic has written on the tax benefit NEXUS claims is expected for the county. NEXUS, in its response to intervenors' comments, concludes that federal law renders them -- especially the comments of the City of Oberlin -- irrelevant. The City's response, a 15-page motion in opposition, argues that a reroute alternative should be adopted. John has also submitted a motion in which he cites the City's ordinance prohibiting a pipeline in city. Communities for Safe and Sustainable Energy will meet on the evening of January 13 to discuss the next steps.

Future programs. Rey Carrion will attend the February meeting. John Elder reported that Robert Landau is willing to arrange a tour at AgroNomix, an Oberlin company which provides automation

equipment and design services to the North American horticultural industry. The company has recently completed an addition to its plant and is seeking to enlarge its administrative area. Mr. Landau is also willing to give talk here.

Other suggestions included the following:

- a talk by a representative of Republic;
- a program linking recent layoffs by Lorain County steel pipe manufacturers with development of alternative energy;
- presentations by a nearby manufacturer of solar collectors;
- Dennis Flood on solar film; and
- wind power issues, with special reference to opposition to a wind farm in northwest Ohio.

Increasing membership. Dina will speak to JoDee Palmer about appearing at a New Neighbors meeting on behalf of the Environmental Concerns Committee.

Member Concerns. Don Hultquist commented on several solar issues. He cited Meghan Riesterer's statement that not only costs but other benefits as well should be considered in undertaking solar installations. He recalled the unusual three peaks of electric usage shown in one day in last year's data, for which there is still no explanation. The impact of geothermal on our overall energy use is not yet known.

KORA report. Jim Helm reported that KORA is considering sponsorship of a committee fair. He noted that scientists have succeeded in improving the efficiency of incandescent light bulbs, which may eventually lead to their revival. He and Nancy Hultquist plan to join Rey shortly after sunset today to survey lighting on the campus.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 10 at 3 p.m. in the Green Room.

Respectfully submitted, Melissa Reed