

Senate Plant Utilization and Planning Committee

Minutes-

Monday Feb 1, 2010

Present: Lisa Pilewski, Michael Ramsey, Patty Irrgang, Susanna Leers, Buck Favorini, John Wilds, Paul Supowitz, Eli Shorak, Laura Zullo, Joe Fink, Tracey Olanyk, Paul Munro, Irene Frieze

Introductions were made.

The minutes from the 12-14-2009 meeting were approved.

Update on buildings and renovations-

- Falk School project continuing
- Sports complex project continuing
- Benedum Hall continuing renovations
- Preliminary design discussion for the Graduate School of Public Health
- Salk Hall progressing in design process
 - o Will involve a new entrance and public space for the hall
- Midcampus project- hope to get off the ground next month
 - o Involves OEH, Thaw, Nuclear Physics, Allen, SRCC
 - o All internal renovations- upgrading labs, ventilation/other systems
 - o Dean's office will notify about how it will proceed once that has been determined
 - o

Buck asked about stimulus money

There is a three year stimulus fund- last year, this year and next year. The NIS stimulus funds are the largest amount of money we've received, the money for the Biotech center is a smaller grant.

Buck asked if there were provisions or opportunities for sustainability with those funds

There are no requirements for these funds but we are always looking for sustainable options and the possibility for LEEDs certification.

- Lothrop hall- offices are being converted to single rooms- this should add 50 beds by this fall
- There is an expansion in the planning stages now for Bouquet Gardens that should add another 150 beds.
- Master planning process with city

- Going in front of the city tomorrow, this is a draft form for viewing by city council
- Eli will get us copies once it's more final

Buck asked about dual flush toilets and where they fit in these renovation processes

Facilities will look for chances to utilize sustainable options as long as they feel it won't be a maintenance issues or lead to power concerns (for automatic flushes). There are also Code issues as to what can or can't be installed. They are also looking at automated blow dryers

Buck asked if it was done on a building by building basis or done on a general policy

Laura replied that once they are comfortable with the reliability of a particular product, it is built into their future planning policies.

- University club- continuing to do well, growing, many lunch and evening events, and third party usage

Update on disability issues relating to fire evacuations-

Paul said that Chief Delany talked about it at the last meeting. Any staff/student that self identifies has a self plan for any event. Evacuation routes are on maps in hallways and elevators with areas of refuge marked. It is the responsibility of a person with a disability to get to the area of refuge. Police and first responders check that area first and assist in evacuation.

The original concern was about transient people, it is still their responsibility- signs are posted. People with disabilities are more attuned to keep an eye on the evacuation routes.

Landscaping and grounds-

Kathryn Trent gave a power point presentation on the changes they have been doing in landscaping on campus.

- Changing up flowers, more color, wider variety of plants, even tropical plants outside the student union (these are wintered under lights in Melwood to try to keep them from year to year), new grasses..
- They use local suppliers (Renfrew, Zelenople, Strip district)
- They used native plants on the Benedum roof- should be able to survive on rain water
- In her tenure, green spaces have expanded, more parkettes can be seen
- They did a soil test on the Peterson bowl and re-landscaped this time they included a tree grove and more drought tolerant plants

- Trees have been added to more sidewalk areas
- Extensive work has been done to the Cathedral of Learning to address problem areas
 - o Boxwood down slopes
 - o Hosta garden- 300 varieties, one of the hybrids is even called the Cathedral of Learning plant, it is the largest hosta garden in the Western PA
 - o Hydrangea garden
 - o In all over 22 thousand plants we planted, by hand around the Cathedral of Learning
- They are using more drought tolerant plants
- No chemical fertilizers are used on flower beds, they use mushroom manure, they do use fertilizer on the hanging baskets once a month
- Very limited spraying in general- limited even for dandelions
- Mulching lawn mowers are used- clippings are dropped back on the lawns to reduce the need for fertilizer, although when the grass is growing faster in the spring they might pick up the grass clippings then, because there are too many of them
- Many hillsides have been planted in ground cover to reduce mowing
- All plant material is picked up by an outside contractor for composting- they are investigating possibilities for composting landscaping waste on campus
- All mulch used on campus is recycled
- Trees
 - o Many new trees have been planted
 - o Diseased and damaged trees replaced
 - o They are in the process of developing a more detailed tree maintenance program
 - o Irrigation is limited
- Automatic irrigation systems have been installed in selected areas to allow for water at optimal times- resulting in reduced water use
- They use a water aquifer to fill the water buffalo used to water hanging baskets
- They are working with Falk school to create a natural habitat garden
 - o Will use native plants and is designed to encourage the presence of wildlife
 - o This area will be used in their curriculum
- They are now using a very effective green snow melting material on sidewalks (Meltdown by Central Salt) to reduce damage to plants and lawns. They do still use rock salt for roads and parking lots. The salt is purple in color- the purple is the wetting agent.

- Many bike racks have been installed across campus to encourage the use of bicycles

Mike asked about tree planting on Forbes/Fifth aves

They were talked about when they were doing the bump outs- but they reduce visibility, business owners had concerns about leaves being problematic. But different groups have been looking at street trees in Oakland

Kathryn brought up the fact that there problems with keeping trees alive in tree wells- salt, pollution, and they can't spread- tree wells need to be twice the size of the root ball.

- Lawnmowers/tractors- large one runs on diesel, other ones are mulching mowers that use two cycles so they can cut on hills

Buck asked about electric mowers

Kathryn said there are some out there with 2 batteries- but the mowers are used 8 hours a day. she will look into any recent upgrades to see if they can handle the work load

Paul brought up an undergraduate student complaint- the student feels that it is ugly and congested along 5th ave. from Lothrop st to Soldiers and Sailors.

University properties from Lothrop to Soldiers and Sailors have been done. It was pointed out that there are a lot of non-University properties in that area (UPMC, Pittsburgh, Public Schools, Churches..) and some of the plantings along there are by the city and those are not always maintained.

Kathryn is looking for more concrete areas to rip up and plant.

There is money built into the new sport complex for landscaping

Falk school also has a green roof.

Mike asked about budget

They have 24 ground keepers (couple recent retirements)

Summers they have an additional 10/12 students hired to do weeding and mowing

Tracey mentioned the lack of possibly for landscaping out at Thomas Blvd and asked about using the roof for gardening out at Thomas Blvd. it was pointed out that the roof would need testing for load bearing.

Future agenda items-

Draft/update on master planning process

Buck said that he would be the regular liaison for the Sustainability Subcommittee

Meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting scheduled March 1, 2010. B-23 Alumni Hall.