

MINUTES

Mayor's Sustainable Business Initiative Task Force
Eugene Water & Electric Board Training Room
500 East 4th Avenue—Eugene, Oregon

December 15, 2005
4 p.m.

PRESENT: Dave Funk, Rusty Rexius, co-chairs; Lisa Arkin, Julie Daniel, Roger Ebbage, Lynn Feekin, Mike Miksas, Deb Noble, Scott Pope, Randy Ross, Claire Syrett, Claudia Villegas, members; Mayor Kitty Piercy; Bob Doppelt, Sara Mazzie, Ray Neff, University of Oregon, Institute for a Sustainable Environment;

ABSENT: Josh Bruce, Kartar Khalsa, Terry McDonald, Jack Roberts, members.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Rexius called the meeting of the Sustainable Business Initiative (SBI) Task Force to order and welcomed those present. Task force members introduced themselves.

2. Items from Task Force Members

Mr. Doppelt reported that the next Town Hall meeting was tentatively scheduled to occur at Willamette High School, and he would invite high school students to attend and encourage youth invitees to bring their parents. The date for the Town Hall was not known at this time but it was likely to happen in January 2006. Ms. Feekin encouraged Mr. Doppelt to involve college students as well.

Mr. Doppelt reported that participants from the Natural Foods Roundtable would hold an organizing meeting for a new local natural foods association on January 19 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Mr. Doppelt said that additional roundtables on bicycles and sustainable wood products would be scheduled soon.

Mr. Doppelt called task force members' attention to the February 9 meeting with the Neighborhood Leaders Council from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Sloat Room in the Atrium Building. The task force would meet on January 24 and its agenda would include a discussion with the Building Trades Council. He anticipated that future task force meetings would occur at different locations throughout the community.

Mr. Doppelt called the task force's attention to a summary of progress to date prepared by Ms. Mazzie. He reported that additionally, the Lane Community College Small Business Development Center was developing a sustainable education program.

Mr. Doppelt asked task force members to comment on a draft survey prepared for businesses that attended the roundtables.

Mr. Doppelt noted an idea brought up by Mr. McDonald, who suggested that space at the Saint Vincent de Paul's Aurora Building could be used as a retail outlet for sustainable local products. Mr.

Doppelt said Mr. McDonald was weighing both the market and the interest of local businesses. He asked those with interest to contact Mr. McDonald.

3. Approval of Minutes of October 25, 2005

Mr. Pope, seconded by Ms. Feekin, moved to approve the minutes of October 25, 2005. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Comments and Discussion about Roundtables

Mr. Rexus asked for comments on the most recent roundtables.

Mr. Miksas noted the interest expressed at several roundtables in a roundtable on land use and planning. He said that he was unsure of the tie to the SBI, but the topics had a large impact on the community and many were passionate about the topics. Mr. Doppelt acknowledged the interest that had been expressed and said the co-chairs had discussed the issue and its relationship to the SBI. He asked those with ideas about the issue to contact him.

Task force members briefly discussed the proposal for a roundtable on land use and planning, and agreed with a suggestion from Mr. Doppelt that the task force hold a discussion and possibly a roundtable after staff had identified which roundtable recommendations affected land use planning. At that time, the task force could ask Planning staff how it would recommend those issues be addressed. The task force also agreed it would be useful to hear some background on the topics from Planning and Development Director Susan Muir prior to that discussion.

5. Presentation and Discussion of Cautionary Principles

Attempts to contact the guest speaker, Jerald Blumenfeld, Director of the San Francisco Department of the Environment, were not successful.

Mr. Rexus left the meeting.

6. Wrap-up and Next Steps

The task force briefly discussed the recent town hall meeting and agreed it had been very interesting, informational, and inspiring, and that the task force had received good input. Ms. Arkin expressed hope that the task force could look into some of the web sites that had been mentioned at the town hall. Mr. Doppelt noted that Mr. Ebbage was working on a Web site with links to various sites focused on sustainability issues. Mr. Ebbage said that as soon as agreement was reached on groundrules for such things as the use of the logo, it would be possible to get the site up. Mr. Doppelt said that he would work with Mr. Ebbage on those issues.

Returning to the earlier topic of the land use and planning roundtable, Mr. Doppelt suggested a roundtable on the same topic could be held with economic development professionals.

7. SBI Task Force Meeting with Institute of Sustainable Ethics and Economics

The task force met with members of the board of directors of the Institute of Sustainable Ethics and Economics (ISEE): David Atkin, Russ Beaton, Mel Blankoff, Patricia Moore, Deborah Brewer, and Larry Gunn. Mr. Pope was also a member of the ISEE.

Mr. Funk provided a brief overview of the SBI effort for the benefit of the ISEE board. He noted the task force's use of the Appreciative Inquiry method, and indicated the effort was currently in the discovery phase. He said the task force hoped to forward its recommendations to the City Council in June 2006.

ISEE board members introduced themselves, briefly described their backgrounds, why they joined the ISEE, and noted how long they had been involved with the ISEE.

Ms. Brewer distributed a handout about the ISEE.

Mr. Blankoff reviewed the history of the ISEE, which grew out of the Willamette Valley Business Alliance, founded in 1993. The group developed using the concepts developed by the Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility. An early challenge faced by the group was that people had no sense of what sustainability was. Subsequently, the group decided it needed to focus on education to help people reach a common understanding of the concept.

Mr. Gunn said the group struggled with what it meant to have a sustainable community, business, or species. He said the ISEE had a focus on natural systems where there was no waste or the waste became part of what sustained the system. The ISEE recognized that everything was connected, and that one problem cannot be solved without solving all the problems. Mr. Gunn said the ISEE was still working to sort out the issues involved.

Mr. Gunn emphasized that the ISEE does not take sides in political issues. Its focus was on whether something contributed to a sustainable outcome. At the request of Ms. Noble, he defined sustainable outcome as one that continues itself indefinitely. He suggested that natural systems were the model to look to. Mr. Doppelt said he did not see natural systems doing the same thing forever; they went through cycles as events came along and reset those systems. Mr. Gunn said that such systems were still able to self-organize and sustain themselves after an event. Ms. Moore suggested such systems were highly adaptable and therefore able to reorganize; their function, rather than their form, was sustained.

Mr. Bankoff called the task force's attention to a list of the projects conducted over the past years by the ISEE. He pointed to the emphasis on education, which he believed had permeated throughout many sectors of the community. Ms. Brewer added that what ISEE had accomplished fit nicely with what the SBI task force was hearing in the roundtables and discussing at meetings. Mr. Bankoff concurred, and said the ISEE board hoped to find ways to partner with the SBI task force.

Ms. Brewer reviewed the ISEE's short- and long-term recommendations to the task force and identified various areas for partnership, such as education, a local buying campaign, and a "New Future Center" to foster entrepreneurship in sustainable business. She asked how the ISEE could partner with the SBI task force.

Mayor Piercy noted that the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce had expressed interest about a buying local campaign.

Ms. Feekin left the meeting.

Ms. Syrett, a member of the Eugene's Enterprise Zone Committee, said she would like that committee to establish a criterion related to local purchasing for companies operating in the zone, but that might not be possible under current State law. However, she thought it an important value to consider. Mayor Piercy said that removal of such barriers was an issue, and the City would have to work with the legislature and governor to remove such constraints. There was general agreement as to the importance of such lobbying.

Speaking to Ms. Brewer's questions about partnership, Mr. Doppelt said the task force was a short-term task force set up by the mayor with the job of gathering information and making recommendations to the City Council. Given that, he questioned whether there was an opportunity for partnership as much as an opportunity for the task force to support the work of the ISEE. There may be opportunities for the ISEE to partner with the City.

Responding to a question from Ms. Moore, Mr. Funk said that the task force had discussed the potential of attracting businesses to fill in clusters where the community lacked a critical mass. Mayor Piercy cited solar panels as an example of a needed commodity that was not manufactured locally.

Mr. Beacon reviewed a list of characteristics of sustainable businesses, which he termed a "blue print for anti-globalization." They included local ownership, markets, and employees, the use of indigenous resources, the use of renewable resources, healthy working conditions, and a valued work force.

Mr. Beacon emphasized the importance of promoting local businesses that provided products that now must be imported. He cited organic food and energy as examples. He said that a local focus would bring a ten-fold increase in profit back to the farmer while not raising the price of food for consumers. He believed that peak oil was a reality that must be recognized and that the end of fossil fuels meant the end of globalization. New business opportunities would arise as a result. Mr. Beacon envisioned farm land being used to raise energy products, for example. He emphasized the multiplier realized from keeping dollars in the community. However, he would not recommend limiting products to the local market as the proper scale of operation might produce sufficient product to import elsewhere. He said that current economic development strategies have been dead-end streets.

Mr. Beacon suggested that the community could be forced into sustainability by outside factors; however, he thought it the best approach for a healthier, cleaner, more prosperous future. He commended the work being done by the task force.

In response to a question from Mr. Doppelt about public support for sustainable businesses, Mr. Beacon noted that he was currently advising four candidates for State office and encouraged them to support a venture capital investment fund at the State level that communities could take advantage of to help start-up businesses.

Mr. Doppelt determined that the ISEE had no funding yet for the New Future Center, but was offering to partner with the SBI task force on the concept. Mr. Pope suggested it would be appropriate to partner with the City of Eugene as that could open additional grant opportunities.

Ms. Arkin left the meeting.

Mr. Funk solicited comment from the observers.

- "Keep going."

Mr. Funk adjourned the meeting of the task force at 6 p.m.

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)