Farm Star Committee Meeting Minutes
February 26th, 2016

In Attendance:
Fred Wirth (Chair, NS)
Beth Hooker (Director of Food, Farm, and Sustainability)
Nancy Hanson (CSA Manager)
Brian Schultz (NS)
Grace Adzima (Staff Representative)
Josh Minot (Div III Student)
Alice Grendon (Div I Student)
Owen Aptekar-Cassels (Div II Student)
Jess Marsh Wissemann (Minute Taker)

Absent: Mark Feinstein (CS), Kara Lynch (HACU), Annie Rogers (CSI)

Review of Faculty Development Call for Proposals*:
Subcommittee consists of Annie, Brian, Kara, and Beth
*See accompanying document

- Eva was delayed in sharing the call with faculty. It went out mid-week (Feb 24th). Joan Barret will share in NS meetings
- The new deadline for proposals: 2 weeks from now (start of spring break).
- Fred will receive the submissions and distribute to the subcommittee for review via email.
- Sub Committee will take 2 weeks to review and decide

Review of “Egg Room” solar thermal system proposal
*See accompanying document

- As part of NS-0385, Sustainability Seminar, Fred proposes to retrofit the Solar Thermal Hot Water System and restoring it to working/productive condition.
- Transitioning the Egg Room’s hot water energy source from Natural Gas to a Solar Thermal System can offset and reduce related Carbon Dioxide emissions of about 972 pounds each year.
- When properly functioning the system can provide the equivalent of 3,353 kWh each year. This translates into a savings of up to $369.00/year (approximated at $0.11/kWh). The egg room uses an estimate of 8320 ft³ of natural gas each year or about $113.00 worth of energy. (2,400 kWh/year.) Payback on this investment is along as seven years or as quick as twenty-six months, a short time for an economically productive and academically priceless tool.
The conversion process would provide a teaching opportunity. This system will provide a living/working tool for future Sustainability, Agriculture, Physics, and Energy related classes like Sustainable Technology, Elements of Sustainability, Sustainability Seminar, and other summer courses. Beth suggests that the project could also possibly be funded from the NSF grant.

Next steps:
- The system as it stands works- but requires supervision because the pump can run out. This system should take care of itself without supervision when converted.
- Need to know the condition of the heater
- NS is buying certain parts, the proposal requests funding for plumbing parts
- Need to determine a source for purchasing the parts - ebay?

Announcements:

1. SARE Grant:
   - Pete and Brian have been awarded a SARE grant
   - Going to be buying in 24 pigs dividing into 6 groups in a rotational grazing management system (will include grain ration and supplemental veggie waste). Pete and Brian will be looking at the effects of grazing on plant populations, what regrowth is like, soil tests before and after, replant in some sections. See what grows back with and without replant.
   - Agro-ecology- rotational pigs, how crops and animals combine.
   - Brian is a consultant on the project, will handle soil sampling, plant sampling, working with classes etc
   - Arion Thiboumery (hamp alum who runs Vermont Packinghouse slaughterhouse) will be looking at the carcass quality of the pigs.
   - Also included: travel expenses for students to attend Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture Farming for the Future conference

2. New cultivating tractor purchased for CSA.
   - Ford 1720 high crop cultivator – it is the most updated version of a tractor that will do the sort of mechanical cultivation needed.
   - Includes fertilizer hoppers (farm is transitioning to banding rather than broadcasting fertilizer so it will waste less).
   - The expense will be paid through capitalization fund- not the operating budget.
   - We will keep the Allis Chalmer Gs and the Cub is not worth selling.

5 Year Plan:
• Fred says that meeting once a month is not ideal for building a 5 year plan.
• We need to designate subgroups that can meet more often.
• Brian - this semester is almost over, can we prioritize? The 5 year plan should be more broad. Do we have a timeline?

Subgroup designations so far:

Academics: Kara, Josh, Brian
Farm: (land use, physical land) Nancy, Pete
Community:
Physical Plant: Fred

Brian’s Comments (paraphrased):

• What's the justification for having a farm if there is only one faculty member consistently involved (Brian)?
• NS is conducting a search to fill faculty vacancies, they might hire a botanist who specializes in forests and genes but probably not farm related areas.
• The evolution of the Farm Star committee came across as “we don’t need you” – if the farm makes the faculty expendable, the faculty make the farm expendable.
• The farm is falling out the curriculum because faculty don’t want to work at the farm.
• Brian implies that there are personal conflicts between faculty and farm staff that are at play “Some faculty do not feel welcome here. Its not anyone’s particular fault, but should be acknowledged”
• Brian’s goal is to integrate the farm into the curriculum more so that we can still have a farm in 5 yrs, 10 yrs.
• Faculty could become more invested if they were more closely involved through a farm policy committee
• He suggests that the farm only exists because the current president sees it’s value but that his successor may not continue to support the farm.
• He says the farm could easily be viewed as a huge drain on the budget, and if faculty don’t use it, then there is no justification for it to exist.

Beth’s Comments (in response to Brian’s comments):
(paraphrased)

• The farm is viewed as a blended auxiliary and academic program.
• Faculty, Staff, and students were all represented on the farm strategic planning committee that led to the formation of the Farm Star.
Feinstein, Jason Tor, and Sue Darlington (faculty members). Beth Hooker and Nancy Hanson (staff members). Rys Szal and Walter Poulsen (students).

- The farm strategic planning process included surveying the entire Hampshire community and we learned that the community values not only the academic components of the farm but also the social and physical elements.
- We have been working to build across all of the areas identified in the farm strategic planning process to bolster why the farm is important.

Fred’s Comments (in response to Brian’s comments):
(paraphrased)

- Are there better systems that could be employed for linking the farm to the academic program?
- People come and go, personalities might conflict, but good systems could help ensure the farm and the curriculum coalesce
- We need a decision making body that can address this

Discussion about how to improve curricular ties to the farm:

- Alice says that if teachers were to create more specific curriculum, that would seem to help with planning and getting to spend more valuable time on the farm.
- Nancy says that more is needed on the faculty end in terms of coordination.
- Brian says he could adjust his courses to “fit the farm” better, by including more labs, planning classes in advance, etc.
- Alice comments that it is strange that so many faculty have stopped teaching at the farm because from here perspective there is student interest and those students are having to go to Stockbridge to take ag classes.
- Owen agrees: the ag related classes at Hampshire have not been quite what he wanted.
- Beth says that faculty are working through a proposal for a sustainability centered curriculum that might build out more around agriculture
- **Nancy says that she would like to see a formal mechanism for farm staff to participate on DIV committees (everyone seem to agree that this would be good)**
- Fred says if the farm were going to have an academic component- having centralized records and access to that for faculty and students would be key
- Outreach, communication, community outreach, school meetings or more events could be hosted at the farm?
- Fred says we need a faculty member in each school who is involved in some way with the farm on a committee or otherwise
• Nancy says the work requirement for some classes is sort of a draw- for some students it’s good, for others you are forcing them to do something they don’t want to do and it seems to be hard to get students to engage unless they are getting paid.

Nancy on Messaging:
We need to be conscious of what messaging is going out about the farm. We need to make sure that the farm is being well represented.

Future Meetings:

➢ We will aim for Friday mornings at 9am on weeks that are offset from the Environmental Committee meetings.
➢ Fred will send out meeting dates for the rest of the semester.

Our next meeting tentatively is: April 1st 9am