

MINUTES

Mayor's Sustainable Business Initiative Task Force
Roundtable—Sustainability Education, Training, and Technical Assistance
Community Conference Room—Fire Station #1
Eugene, Oregon

October 6, 2005
1:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Rusty Rexius, Mayor's Sustainable Business Initiative Task Force Co-Chair; Jim Lindley, Chris Nystrom, Liz Cawood, Regina Hauser, Deb Brewer, Shawn Winkler-Rios, Charles Biggs, Pete Chism, Alex Cuyler, Kristina Payne, participants; Vera Kawane, Mark Desmond, Michael Adams, Mike Barnes, observers; Stephanie Swanse, Portland Office of Sustainable Development; Claudia Villegas, Deb Noble, Ame Arden, Roger Ebbage, Sustainable Business Initiative Task Force; Bob Doppelt, Sara Mazze, Ray Neff, University of Oregon.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Rexius welcomed participants and observers to the roundtable.

2. Purpose, Agenda, and Expected Outcomes of Meeting

Mr. Rexius noted that the roundtable was the second of several that had been scheduled. He recalled the Eugene City Council's charge to the Sustainable Business Initiative Task Force, which included the development of an educational element for the public regarding what sustainability was. He said the task force was looking for strategies encourage existing businesses to take advantage of sustainable business practices already available and make them more profitable and competitive. He said the task force was also attempting to identify sustainable business niches to strengthen the economic base. The roundtable was being held for the purpose of soliciting ideas on those topics.

At the request of Mr. Rexius, those present introduced themselves.

3. Overview of Status, Trends, and Opportunities for Sustainability

Mr. Doppelt overviewed the meeting agenda. He called participants' attention to the background paper sent out prior to the meeting.

Mr. Doppelt summarized the result of research done by graduate students in regard to the issue of sustainability education, training, and technical assistance for local businesses and the public agenda.

Our Interviews Found:

- Significant need and desire
- Some offerings, but not at the scale needed

- SLA research may provide starting point to understand what businesses want/need

Vision from Practitioners

- Sustainability as a shared value in local businesses, government, and the community
- Many local businesses with strong network of information and technical support about sustainable practices and products

Possible Opportunities

- Develop consortium of local academic institutions, government, private organizations
- City and Chamber of Commerce can highlight and promote successful examples
- Local trade associations can offer workshops
- Mayor suppliers could offer workshops (e.g., Jerry's)
- Organize local "entrepreneurial league system"

Some Constraints

- Need to better define and describe sustainable practices/products
- Polarization over economy versus environment
- Limited resources among all providers (UO, LCC, City, Chamber of Commerce)
- Perceived high costs
- Perception that Eugene is not business-friendly
- Lack of easy quick access to technical or product information
- Lack of consumer awareness
- Lack of awareness in business community

Suggested Actions (examples)

- Define Eugene as "center of excellence" and build consortium to educate private, public, and others to achieve it
- Create one-stop shopping center/site for information
- Produce articles and publicize successes describing "triple bottom line" benefits
- Survey local businesses to determine education and training needs
- Attract high-profile firm to Eugene
- City generate demand via purchasing

2. Presentation: Portland's Office of Sustainable Development

Stephanie Swansen of the Portland Office of Sustainable Development provided a presentation on the activities of that agency, highlights of which were recorded on easel pads.

Portland Office of Sustainable Development

- Created five years ago through the initiative of Dan Saltzman
- Funded by combined garage tipping fees, some general fund dollars, and outside grants and contacts
- Voice of sustainability for City of Portland—benchmark government/community progress
 - offer vision
 - offer solutions, technical assistance

Blue Works Business Program

- PSU—waste auditors and technical assistance in reducing waste stream for businesses—300 businesses served annually
- No fee for Blue Works audit—funded by Metro grants and provided through contract by PSU
- Leads to business assistance on other fronts
- Partnerships key to success

Green Building Program

- Regulation and policy basis
- LEED Gold Standard—connection to dollars, technical assistance
- Events
- Facilitate permitting
- Rethink program—from 5 LEED buildings to 45-50 such buildings

Green Investment Fund

- \$2.5 million, five-year fund
- Provide grants to encourage innovation, technical investments around green building

Work with Energy Trust of Oregon

- One-stop shop for incentives, etc.
- Multi-family access to State dollars for weatherization

Recognition Programs

- BEST awards for sustainable business practices
- Blue Works awards for company recycling

Other

- City considered as driving both supply and demand
- City goal to have 100 of renewable operations by 2010—wind power by 2010
- LEED standards for City facilities
- Blue Works Priorities—varies by size, sector; example, law, architectural firms _ paper
- No structured program for toxics—think will happen eventually
- Plastic, metals, energy conservation top priorities
- Expect sustainable food systems approach next—sustainable agriculture and local food markets and suppliers are a big topic—recently hired someone to look at role of City government—clearing house, policy, marketing? Yet to be determined
- Ecobiz: Coalition of organizations _ certification
- Portland still has diffused responsibility for sustainability and centralized office—we “jump-start” issues with other departments and they’ve taken ownership

- Support for program from mayor and commissioners
- Office acts as “gateway”—no infrastructure or capital improvements
- Departments have created green teams internally
- Looking at ways to make BEST award more comprehensive, and change it as market and technology changes occur

Goals

- 100 percent renewable energy is idea goal—power, buildings, operations, using wind power, biodiesels, solar panels?
- Evaluate cost of renewables by evaluating against cost of PGE and PacificCorp—stability of source is an issue, and seeking a provider guarantee of 20 years minimum
 - Portland: 13 percent now, B80 in fleets
 - RFP states cost must be equal to the current cost, stable for next 20 years
 - \$31 million/year, close to a contract
- Partnership
 - Focus on large industries/clusters
 - Offer incentives
 - Emphasize importance of one-on-one consulting
- Certification Program for Sustainability
 - High standard, but labor-intensive, costly, and assumes goal is doing good
 - Economics not as great a motivator here as in Portland

Incentives

- Document and publicize savings
 - Total costs of ownership
 - Must be well-documented, from the source
 - Look beyond current costs – depends on client

Mr. Doppelt then elicited suggestions and comments from participants, which were recorded on easel pads:

- Add efficiency to conservation
- Providers of sustainability consulting
 - Good company
 - University of Oregon Business School
 - Lane Community College
- Business School: Oregon Assistance Corps, First-Year Projects

What is the current state of sustainable business practices?

- Highlight local sustainability successes
 - Business Network:
 - Meeting every two months
 - Ownership from business community
 - Chamber has roundtables

- Emerald Awards _ videos, stories, articles _ focus on increasing competition
- Need central clearinghouse/data base
 - City?
- Licensing is way to connect with businesses
- Do we need a new network?
- Incorporate Lane, Springfield into clearinghouse
- Revolving fund for sustainable development grants
- Must ID need
 - Practical training
 - Understanding of sustainability
- Challenge of changing public opinion
 - Making goals clear
- Reinforce current message
- Highlight current successes and identify as sustainable
 - Tours for public
 - Take advantage of green marketing
- “Train the trainers”
 - Educate community leaders
- Make clearinghouse electronic
- Increase local “buzz” around sustainability
 - Opportunity to be-all, end-all
- Award program
- Focus first on educating public
 - Schools, immigrant community, etc.
- Need materials (videos, etc.) to share with community
- Networks—formal and informal for different communities
- Different processes for smaller business
 - Example, small business: speakers, workshops; large businesses: one-on-one
 - Small businesses need to start with profit
- Master recycler program a model for grassroots education effort _ 35,000 contacts yearly
 - One-on-one creates business and consumer connection
 - Businesses come in and present

- Expansion?
- Neighborhood newsletters
 - Monthly article in City's "breaking news"
 - City's TV show
- English as a Second Language _ support entrepreneurs
 - Throw out methods of sustainability/savings
 - Must look at skills of entrepreneurs
 - ELS supports move from micro (25,000 in Lane County) to small business
 - Inventory needs of entrepreneurs/businesses and provide what they need
 - Coordinate service providers and entrepreneurs
- Market small steps _ series; example, monthly goal = 35 percent recycled paper
- Find commonality
- Make survey specific, example, why aren't you doing X? Why not? What do you need?
- Use what already exists—example, Energy Thrust

Follow-up

What do businesses want?

- Perpetual and profitable are goals for all businesses
- Method of paying family wages, social capacity
- Educate that environmental benefits often mean economic benefits as well
- Survey _ Next step
- Network
- Who will create survey?
 - EWEB
 - City of Portland survey?
- Teach young people
- Yearly award for sustainable businesses from City Club
- Students as resource
- Acknowledge how far we are
- Businesses can provide their own sustainability

Mr. Rexius thanked those present for their participation, and determined there was interest in holding a follow-up roundtable.
(Recorded by Kimberly Young)