

## STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY SENATE

### University Environment Committee

Meeting of March 11th 2020, 1:00 - 2:20 pm

Virtual meeting on Google Meet

Attendance: Thomas Wilson, Sean Deery, Hiya Panja, George Volz (Manager of Busing and Transportation Enforcement), Clifford Knee, Gary Kaczmarczyk, Joanna Kaczorowska, Frederick Walter, Shakeb Zia, Malcom Bowman, Jeanne Charoy.

This meeting was held online due to COVID-19 precautions. It was recorded.

Meeting called to order at 1:10PM.

Gary Kaczmarczyk spoke first about the University emergency management plan because he had to step out of the meeting early. He briefed the committee on some of the updates from Stony Brook University with regard to the COVID-19 situation. The University administration, along with the office of emergency management, has been working very hard with SUNY and state local health departments to develop and implement a response plan. The University has taken steps to communicate with faculty, staff and students and additional messages will be coming soon. In addition, the University has a webpage dedicated to COVID-19 where any updates from the president and provost will be uploaded (e.g. updates on travel advice) as well as other resources.

Kaczmarczyk explained that the campus staff has already implemented upgraded cleaning protocols (e.g. cleaning high touch areas, computer labs). There are also plans in place to bring additional cleaning forces on campus if necessary. Finally, there will be additional things going out for resources on online learning, travel, and about preparing labs. Do what the CDC recommends: take care, cough in your elbow, and wash your hands. Stay home if you are sick and keep an eye on the University's communication. Committee members had no follow up questions.

**Chair report.** Consideration of the minutes of the February 12th meeting. Thomas Wilson entertained a motion to accept the minutes. Shakeb Zia moved and Sean Deery seconded. None opposed and the minutes were accepted.

Chairperson Tom Wilson reminded the committee that elections for the Senate are coming up. The committee will need one representative from Humanities and Fine Art, two from the Health Science Center, and one professional representative (Wilson will go up for reelection for the professional position). A link will be sent out and the election will be announced in the third week of March. Candidates can only self-nominate (you cannot nominate others). Next Wilson introduced the meeting's guest speaker, George Volz who manages busing and transportation enforcement on campus.

**Guest speaker.** George Volz talked about his background: he has worked at University for 10 years and worked with the University police to handle parking enforcement. This is how he became part of many transportation related subcommittees. Volz confirmed that there is a master plan for transportation being devised by a consultant hired by the University. The president and the VP of transportation services are looking at it. Volz has heard many parking situation anecdotes through appeals (about transit, parking and busing, which all go hand in hand). To the extent that this impacts the University from an environmental standpoint, Volz noted that there are lots of vehicles on campus and that the carbon footprint has increased but not without good reason. He mentioned that they have been tasked by the VP and director transportation of parking to look into cost and ways to introduce electric buses on campus. We should anticipate that in the future electric buses will be part of our fleet. Volz opened the floor for questions.

Wilson asked how much flexibility Volz has in terms of bringing additional buses if needed. There are reports from colleagues suggesting that the buses get very packed with people, especially when the weather is not good. Volz answered that he has been working for the better part of the year to replace the existing tracking system with better bus trackers. They have implemented on board commuter counts on various routes at various times to determine supply and demand (in the past these counts were handwritten). Having quicker access to the data gives Transportation management the ability to respond in a shorter time format. It does not facilitate anticipation of larger groups due to bad weather, but it does allow to plan routes better.

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to add a bus at an additional time and when it does happen it is usually dedicated to the South P lot. Volz noted that he is aware that the railroad buses can max out, but those peaks in users typically occur when all the bus routes have high demand (e.g south p lot, halls). In particular, the 9:30-10 clock time is maxed out everywhere, and traffic is bad at that time so all buses are caught up in that traffic. Given available staff and equipment it would be possible to add buses and still have students who can't get in. Volz has noted that this semester, the railroad bus (which has a schedule that coincides with the train) is constantly leaving early and full. Transportation management is contemplating how they can better serve the population that comes in on the trains.

Wilson asked whether Volz knows the person to talk to about enlarging the bus stop shelter at the North P lot so that bus users don't have to wait in the rain. It would be good to make the railroad attractive to avoid overloading the traffic system. Volz answered that that would definitely be a possibility. There have been discussions to improve the lighting at the shelters for safety reasons, and there is a program to replace the batteries so the solar powered lights are restored.

Malcom Bowman asked whether it would be possible to better publicize the bus to faculty members. Volz answered that transportation provided on campus is fully funded by the transportation fees that students pay - so while no one is ever excluded, advertising to faculty members is something that should be discussed with Dean Tufts.

Bowman mentioned occurrences where drivers don't stop when the buses are discharging passengers and have their lights and a flag out. Volz said that this is a phenomenon he is aware of and something he has discussed with Chief Olsen. There is a debate about whether we are truly school buses or not, but police are advised to pursue if there is an infraction and bus drivers are instructed to report the plate to the police. But ultimately this issue comes down to the driving habits of particular drivers. We could add flashing lights but ultimately driving habits is what causes this to happen. A pedestrian was hit recently at a crossing despite the lights being engaged.

Bowman suggested that stop signs be put up on Marburger Drive at the South Campus entrance. Volz said he would bring it up to Terrence Harrigan and Dean Tufts as a way to increase the safety of that area.

Wilson asked whether Volz had any insights he'd like to share given his parking enforcement duties. In particular are some parts of campus worse than others with regards to parking. Volz answered that the east campus enforcement is done mostly by the University police, and that they've taken some measures to expand their parking lot and shuttle to the R&D park. There are also valet systems in some places. And people will enforce as needed if handicap spots are misused. Volz's particular staff is only involved with the hospital garages.

Wilson mentioned the old app (sbu transit) for campus transit is still on the app stores and it might be better to take it off of it. Volz answered that for what he understands, the app was automatically removed from the Apple app store but it is not possible to remove it from the Android store.

As a final note, Volz said that one of the areas of concern that his team takes very seriously is the improper use of handicapped parking permits and accessibility on campus. Over the last 8 years he probably confiscated over 100 permits on campus, mostly through anonymous tips. So if anyone sees anything that doesn't look right, although we can't profile disabilities through physical appearance, people can email the information, time and place and Volz's team will look into it. Last week he took two permits from people who were using their parents permits - it is important people don't do that and that the spots are used by people who rely on them.

Finally, Volz noted that in response to the COVID-19 situation, the buses have been cleaned on a nightly basis.

### **Working groups.**

*Transportation working group* (coordinator: Mona Ramonetti). Mona Ramonetti was absent so Wilson gave a quick report in her stead. Ramonetti has been working with a transportation group - they have distributed a survey to campus so committee members should make sure to answer it. Bowman mentioned that the VP talked about cutting roads from the South Campus

entrance through the woods to the R&D Campus entrance. Wilson said he has not heard more about that and Clifford Knee said he was not familiar with that project either.

*Efficiency, recycling, and liveability* (coordinator: Jeanne Charoy). No substantial updates from this group. Sean Deery is pursuing his silverware rental project but is not getting responses to his emails. Wilson suggested that Deery write a proposal or publication about this project so the committee can keep an archive of the work done for someone else to restart the project in future.

*Research group* (coordinator: Michelino Puopolo). Michelino Puopolo was absent. No new business from the research group.

*Natural Environment and Preservation working group* (coordinator: Thomas Wilson) This group continues to collect good data from the East Recharge Basing / Lake Briana. Mateo Mezic and Kristen Hutz are working with Malcom Bowman and Tom Wilson on this project. So far they have collected three sets of rainfall data. There are some locations where rain fell for a couple of days so they may have to combine these days to analyze the data. Overall the levels go up and down about ½ meter. Mezic plotted the water levels on a logarithmic scale and we can see that the recovery follows a linear trend. This will help understand how long it takes for the water levels to come back to equilibrium after rain events. Bowman noted that the data shows that the expected return to recovery is exponential. He added that they are interested in what is the highest height the lake will ever rise to after a historic rain event.

Regarding the Ashley Schiff preserve, the Senate Executive has confirmed that members of the committee can approach and engage with local legislators. There are some concerns about making sure that we represent ourselves as the University Senate and not the university but the bottom line is we do now have permission to contact legislative offices and see if it would be possible to add the Schiff preserve to the park system. When the new Stony Brook University President comes the committee will also bring this project to their attention.

**Old business and new business.** Frederick Walter said that he noticed that the view-obstructing berm had been removed by the north parking lot on Circle Road. Knee said had been working on pushing that up to facilities and that it is good news it's been removed.

The topic of COVID-19 was brought up again. Wilson said that he had been fairly impressed with the University information as it is important to get information from a good source. Knee added that good communication is paramount and that the administration has been very careful as to how they are delivering the message. There are so many aspects and people involved and the University wants to make sure all the students are safe and everyone is taken into account.

Bowman mentioned that there may be problems in the dorms because they are significant clusters of people. Running labs may also become problematic. Walter said that he was not terribly impressed by the University public response and is not sure what to tell his students,

even though he knows administration is working really hard behind the scenes. Uncertainty is a problem.

Shakeb Zia (undergraduate representative) seconded Walter's view and added that the undergraduate students have felt left behind with regards to information. While the student body is fully aware that there are discussions to go online, this information was distributed through rumors, not official communication, and it generated a lot of anxiety.

Knee said that administration understands the anxiety but that they are trying to make a good decision while considering many factors on top of health and safety. Zia answered that while he understands this, an email on Monday 3/9 to inform that discussions were taking place would have helped.

Joanna Kaczorowska asked Knee whether individual departments could make their own decision regarding going online, independently from the University. Knee answered that this is not the kind of decision he is positioned to take, but from a health and safety standpoint he doesn't think that would be the best approach.

The next meeting will be March 8th, 2020 from 1:00pm to 2:30pm

Wilson entertained a motion to adjourn. Walter moved. None opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 2:25pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeanne Charoy