Minutes of the Meeting of the Clean Coal Review Board

November 20, 2014
Room 100
Illinois State Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Agenda: Department of Energy at SIUC
President Randy Dunn to lead discussion

Senator Dave Luechtefeld called the meeting to order at 8:30 am.

Senator Luechtefeld: “First of all, thanks for being here. I would like to certainly recognize and welcome the new President of SIU, Randy Dunn, a very important and powerful person, so please join me in welcoming him.” <applause> “Also, I guess our new Congressman will be here – Mike Bost – and I also invited a young lady who will be in the House of Representatives, Terri Bryant, likely, if this Board would continue to exist, I would recommend that she take Mike Bost’s spot. Let’s bring this meeting to order....”

“First of all, approval of the meetings of April 30, 2014.”

Report of Projects by Tomasz Wiltowski.

Tomasz Wiltowski: “You all have the booklet in front of you and there are 3 projects left. The three final reports are included in the booklet.”

Senator Luechtefeld: “And all of these projects will be pretty well paid up, correct?”

Tomasz Wiltowski: “Yes.”

Senator Luechtefeld: “One of the main reasons we’re here is to study the University’s proposal entitled the “SIU Energy Boost”. We have discussed this a lot here over the last year and a half – you know, just to review for everyone or if you’ve not been in here, a year and a half ago or so, it was actually Tomasz’s idea, not my idea, to maybe establish a Department of Energy at SIU. They have been putting that together over the last year and it was important, I think, that we all sort of buy into that, and important that we understand that this money will do something that we will be able to see 20 years from now. I think the University itself has really seemed to have bought into the idea of this, they’ve put a project in front of us, that hopefully we can approve. So, why don’t I let President Dunn maybe lead the discussion and answer questions that you might have......President Dunn?”

President Randy Dunn: “Thank you, Senator, I appreciate the opportunity to be in front of the Board and speak to this proposal and not being a technical expert in this field, obviously, in addition to Tomasz, we have with us from SIU Carbondale today, our Dean of College Engineering, Dr. John Warwick, back there and between the two of them, I’ll defer any technical questions accordingly. Let me just try to
share a couple of comments in regard to this. As the Senator has indicated, I think there really is a great opportunity here to provide a legacy project for the Clean Coal Review Board. A means to establish something that has staying power long into the future, again, as a testimonial tribute to the work that’s been done by this body. Many of you know what we refer to as the Coal Research Center on campus by it’s shorter name, the CRC, but we’re in the 40th year of that enterprise and it’s something that’s been an anchor to the research strength of our university for the time it’s been in existence and in no small part due to Tomasz’s work and leadership as well as others, John Mead, etc....people who know. And I see this as an opportunity to take that entity on campus, elevate it, allow it to innovate in some new ways to again have currency for the national conversation on energy for the future. Let me just say a couple of things about this, in more detail, and I know we have to watch our time because you have Session today. We still want to ensure that as we’re looking at advanced energy generally, that coal is central to this work, so it’s not about kind of removing the focus or losing what has been the anchor for 40 years of work at SIUC but rather to expand from there to be additive but not replace the strong focus on coal we have the national position, we have the research being done, but to really widen that scope, but still have coal as the center of that work. Another element, as you know, as you get these project updates from Tomasz, but as we go forward we’re going to continue focusing on the full range of work that will take place all the way from extraction processes going through the entire continuum to think about policy, to think about business applications, economic development, kind of the full range of work that would take place to advance not just the coal industry, but energy production, generally. Another element is you have a chance to review this, this really is an integrated approach. Now we’ve talked about this stuff a long time and often in campuses. We’re going to be integrative, we’re going to put groups together, we’re going to try to do something and it’s a lot easier said than done. But I can tell you that we’ve spent, certainly in my 6 months on the job, a great deal of time together, with all of the disciplines represented, everyone sitting around the table talking about what these pieces are that need to be fulfilled for this to be a truly integrative project and I feel as confident about this, fulfilling that goal, as I have anything that I’ve been involved with, and beyond what you see in the proposal, we have future opportunities that will exist particularly with Colleges of Agricultural Sciences, we haven’t gotten into that much in the proposal, the focus has been more in the science and disciplines, but with what we can start here, I see nothing but the ability to expand in a truly integrative fashion for work in energy, whether related to research, production, marketing, and what have you. Last couple of comments to close before questions....I think it’s important that however we proceed here, we do have a means to tie back to the work of this body. And again, while we’re still anchored in the coal work, as we take on these other approaches to energy production and advancement, we want to make sure we have a means to pay tribute to this body – whatever it is – Tomasz and I will talk about it – to have some means to show what has been accomplished with this, whether it’s a plaque or something on our campus. We really see this, and we talk about this all the time with various organizations and units at the University, you get to a level and then you plateau, and you do that for a time and then you figure out what’s the next way to innovate, to kind of jack it up to the next level, to move it forward. If this proposal is funded, it allows us to do that – and I always forget our new initials, Tomasz – the old Coal Research Center, we’re now the ACERC which shows we’re moving in this new direction but it will really allow us the opportunity, whether with infrastructure, whether with start-up help on research, whether with faculty to really provide that next generation of work in energy. So, that’s one thing we’ll use – the foresight of this body to move us in that direction. The 2nd thing I’d like to share with you, I’m pledging that we’re going to take this and be serious about it. The Chancellor for the Carbondale Campus has a seat on this body and I’m pledging that the pieces in this will move forward and get done. And I feel very comfortable in saying that because I’ve been sitting in on the meetings where we’ve kind of sorted all of this out. And to allude to the Senator’s comment, when you have a bunch of professors sitting around a table, it can take some time. But, we’re there and I feel very good that we’re sitting on the
same playing field to make this something that puts us, I don’t want to get too cosmic, but I do think if this goes the way people see it could go, it puts us in this pantheon of schools doing advanced energy research with coal at the center, and there are only a handful of them in the country. MIT, UK in Kentucky, and just a handful of others and if we get this done correctly, we’re going to be named in that group. So I’m glad to answer questions I can, we’ve got 2 technical experts on hand to answer questions, so.....

Mike Bost: “I’ve got one, and by the way, sorry I’m late. A concern that I’ve had and I think you touched on it some...because I’ve worked with the University for so many years, I don’t want to see this go the way of the Friction Study School, which was great and renowned worldwide – is when this is included in the University’s budget – and all of a sudden when we allowed the University to take control over their own budget, a line item in the budget, and they decide that’s the one that was dropped. I want to make sure that this doesn’t fall into that. I want to make sure that this is something that is long into the future. Our hope is that we grow the industry and even if it has grown this will be an opportunity for those kids coming into the field of work that this will be available to them.”

President Dunn: “I’ll first say that this is a very legitimate concern, because if you follow universities, generally, not just ours, that is always something that can happen and different people come and agendas get pushed forward, etc. So you always want to have that in mind but I will tell you that I think here we’ve got every peace to suggest that won’t happen if we get this done the right way and here’s why I would say that. After a certain amount of time (and by the way, Friction Studies was in your college, Dean, but we won’t....that was before your time) – if we can get this critical mass together, in terms of the research enterprise, we can find out what start up needs to happen there. If we get those key faculty hired, if we can keep pulling all of these people together, in this way to talk about projects we’re taking on and what we do then that critical mass exists....we can start to get traction on some things. Research funding around this broad discussion of energy production, etc., all of the things that you work on, the research starts to come in for that. That builds that mass or that builds that base to provide even more traction. And as there’s early success it creates an infrastructure that then doesn’t have to rely on us pulling a bunch of props around the table and saying we’re going to make this work and we’re going to see this happen. If it’s done the right way, the economic development it brings in, not just to Southern Illinois, but the state generally. I feel about as good about this as I have any proposal I’ve worked with.”

Senator Luechtefeld: “Any other questions?”

Phil Gonet: “With all due respect, Mr. President – I think this really misses the mark of what I believe – I’m not going to speak for the board members here – but, I thought the charge was to create a free standing Department of Energy, and in fact, the first proposal that we saw from Tomasz had one million to establish, or 1.2 million...and I think, at least from where I’m sitting and where the coal industry is – we’re buried in state government, we’re not a Department of Energy there, we’re buried in DNR and it really isn’t a priority for them. At least I don’t think so. And here, a campus where we have such a strong basis for coal research with the CRC – let me get back to my original point – the creation of a Department of Energy and when we talked with Chancellor Cheng about this, we talked about the steps that are required and we understand that it takes time. I don’t think we’re in a hurry to get this done and I think if this board is going to award a grant of this magnitude to the University, I’d like to see a free standing Department of Energy that emphasizes energy as an important resource in the state and can attract students and researchers to work on oil and gas and coal. I think we need to highlight that and not bury it within the University structure.
President Randy Dunn: “Let me share a couple of comments on that – if you look at the objectives in the proposal, on page 8 or 9, you’ll see item 4 that speaks to the Department of Energy. Let me talk about that element for a minute – what Chancellor Cheng presented to this board is one of the things we dealt with that I don’t want to say a promise was made for that, as I reviewed the record, but it was pretty clearly communicated that SIU Carbondale would do a Department of Energy. With all due respect to our former Chancellor, she over promised this board at that meeting. Independently, she didn’t have the authority, it sounds like she did make reference to the fact it would go through the proper processes at the University, etc. But to be able to promise that or even to say in this proposal we shall is something we cannot say at this point. In fact, there was a great deal of debate about how to work that objective for and how far to go and what to say. The University will commit to full work and a good faith effort to work to create such a Department. We’ve got some of the pieces. If you look within John’s College, of course mechanical engineering, you have an energy group with mining and mineral engineering, you have those folks able to do work in such a field. We have degrees that deal with energy, in the titling of the degrees as opposed to a ‘Department’, per se. What I’m saying is, I’m committed for us to go forward to create such an entity to create a collegiate unit for that legacy. But until we can come in with the Professors who would create the core of such a Department, until we prove we have the ability to attract the research, to attract such Professors it us and get something of that nature built, there’s no way in the world we can go to, not even just the BHE, but even our own faculty Senate. They’re going to say, ‘alright, you want to create this Department of Energy. Where’s the money? Are you hiring Professors? Are you going to steal them from other departments?’ Until we can build that infrastructure, we’re going to have a hard time moving forward to create this department. What I’m saying is I’m committed as we start to build this to go forward and make that request to do that. I also understand that you may want to protect your interest as a Board a little bit and I think about how you flow the funding to see if we can make good on that and I get that, too. But we have to do something to start with. To build at least a base for a unit. Go, then, make those proposals. Get the approvals. And then with that come back. But to sit here and say we’ll get that done, we cannot promise it in a proposal. What I can promise is to make a good faith effort to go through the proper channels to get that established.”

Dean: “As a labor rep, I agree with Phil completely. We’re not looking at what we looked at originally. We’re going to have to have a lot more study and a lot more idea of exactly what we’re doing. Our vision was creating a Department of Energy with an Energy degree. Apparently, Ms. Cheng did not have the authority and just told us what we wanted to hear. I don’t think we’re prepared to vote on what we have today.”

Rep. Cavaletto: “I thought we were talking about an Energy Department that would have clean coal. I guess we’re talking about people getting degrees and going to work. I understood the money was to be used to research clean coal. Wasn’t it supposed to be that, Tomasz?”

Thomasz Wiltowski: “Yes. It was my idea to keep coal at the center of the research. This still is the focus.”

Rep. Cavaletto: “We’re the center of all the energy in the United States, as far as the coal business is concerned.”

President Randy Dunn: “We can call it an energy program, right now.....as far as a ‘Department’, it’s going to take time.”
Senator Sam McCann: “I can’t support sending them off to support ‘the next best thing’”.

Joe Angleton: “I’d like to make a motion to table the proposal”.

Senator Luechtefeld: “From the beginning, I feel like we’ve spent 20 million dollars and don’t have a lot to show for it. Do we want to continue to go down the same road we’ve been going down? We can get rid of this money, disband this Board and then say ‘what the hell did we do?’ Do we just get out, close this meeting, and then do another meeting?”

President Randy Dunn: “We want to be responsive to what this Board wants. Energy, focus more on coal, and if that’s what you want as a Board, we can do that.”

Senator Sam McCann: “Thank for realizing what we’re going for.”

Senator Forby: “I hear we have this money here, we have a million dollars. Have we got a plan? I don’t see a plan”.

Joe Angleton: “Chancellor Cheng showed us some things we could work with and now we can’t.”

Senator Luechtefeld: “We’ve learned it is not simple to create a Department of Energy. We have a motion to table the proposal.”

Senator Sam McCann: “I second that motion.”

Senator Luechtefeld: “Do we adjourn? Meeting adjourned.”