

NAGPI Conference Call (Teleconference)

Wednesday, 4 December 2003, 14h00 – 15h30



Minutes

1. Welcome to participants and roll call

Chantal Line Carpentier transmitted regards from Israel Núñez Birrueta, who has left Semarnat following the recent ministerial changes. She expressed her gratitude for his engagement, commitment and good spirits throughout the first stages of NAGPI's existence.

Chantal Line indicated that she would enquire whether he is interested in staying involved. She also mentioned that as Semarnat is reshuffling, there will most likely be another Mexican governmental representative added to this advisory group since Semarnat remains very interested in green procurement.

Mathieu Régnier was introduced by Chantal Line as the new in-house consultant to the Environment, Economy and Trade program. Under her supervision, he will be in charge of NAGPI within the Commission.

Attendees:

Bordas, Augusti
Cannon, Sandra
Carpentier, Chantal Line (chair)
Cohen, Neven
Crew, Gregory
Johnson, Brian
Kerr, Robert
King, Martha (for Legault, Loretta)
Marikkar, Rahumathulla
Park, Jacob
Plouffe, Madeleine
Polak, John
Régnier, Mathieu
Stephens, Jeff

2. Rahumathulla Marikkar's work on life cycle costing

Rahumathulla Marikkar reported on his work on life cycle costing (LCC). Mr Marrikkar apologized as the results of his report still remain to be finalized. However, the report should be available soon. He summarized his work by saying that there is a widespread notion that LCC is a relatively simple process. His report addresses the following four concerns:

1) There have been criticisms that a better design in research methods is necessary to avoid competing claims and mechanisms must be evolved to ensure a fair, realistic comparison between products. 2) LCC should integrate both economics and environmental benefits from a financial perspective. 3) There are plentiful data to consider when one wants to do LCC: analysis can start from the simple task of calculating financial benefits and extend in stages to more complex product consideration tied to hidden costs for the consumer. This takes time. 4) There is still a need for supply data; LCC tools should be designed to accommodate user data when they are available.

Chantal Line suggested that once Mr. Marikkar's report is available, it should be circulated to all Steering Committee members for comments and discussion at the next conference call.

The conference call participants expressed interest in disseminating the results to the public and in creating a policy implementation tool from the resulting document.

3. Clarification of mission statement

Along with the last e-mail and minutes to the last conference call, participants to the meeting and others interested in NAGPI received three versions of a mission statement for NAGPI.

Participants proposed a few changes to the first version provided. Some said that the use of "sustainable purchasing" encompasses all environmental purchasing while opening the door for other players. John Polak mentioned that "environmentally preferable" covers more than mere habitat protection, for instance. He added that the "sustainability perspective" increases complexity in organizational terms and that NAGPI is still small. Robert Kerr said that the messaging issue will assume importance with time and this should be made clear from the outset.

The new mission statement reads:

>>> NAGPI Mission Statement and objectives

>>> NAGPI's mission is to improve, promote, and facilitate the development of green purchasing tools and activities across North America to create markets for environmentally

preferable products and services from sustainably managed companies, thereby producing tangible economic, social and environmental benefits.

>>> NAPGPI's objectives are to coordinate and encourage collaboration between all stakeholders involved with green purchasing.

Comments on these statements should be provided before the next conference call to finalize them on that occasion.

A discussion followed on the desirability of changing “environmentally” to “sustainably.” Original members of the advisory group said that this term had been considered and discussed earlier but, given the complexity of the issue and the breath of the work under green [efforts] alone that NAGPI should focus on that initially and then widen to sustainable as the initiative matures so as not to disperse the few resources available.

Another point of concern is the underlying definition of “stakeholders.” Some participants wondered if this includes companies as well. Chantal Line recalled that there was a reluctance to include companies that could use NAGPI as a podium to promote their products. Clear criteria will have to be developed to avoid having NAGPI used as a marketing platform and yet allow the industry to participate.

Action Item

Brian Johnson felt that a list of objectives would be important as part of the mission statement. He mentioned that one of these objectives could be the identification of some product categories that NAGPI focuses on. He will communicate ideas of potential product categories to members of the Steering Committee.

When revising the NAGPI leaflet, Madeleine Plouffe suggested adding a precise list of objectives.

Action Item

John Polak suggested that it would be a good idea to think of reprinting the leaflet during the year and said he is willing to redraft the leaflet's contents for submission to the Steering Committee.

4. Interest in joining the Steering Committee and clarification on what a NAGPI “Member” is and on TOR's for Steering Committee Members

Chantal Line reminded everyone that, along with the proceedings of the last meeting, a question was sent addressed to participants of September's NAGPI meeting, in Montreal, assaying interest in joining the Steering Committee. Mathieu introduced Jacob Park as the only one to respond and said that nobody had spoken against his joining the committee. Jacob Park is an assistant professor of business and public policy at Green Mountain College (VT) and senior research consultant for governance and socially responsible investment at ISIS Asset Management. Mr. Park then joined the call and was welcomed on board by the Steering Committee.

Madeleine Plouffe asked whether there is a distinction between Steering Committee members and plain NAGPI members. Chantal Line recalled how NAGPI evolved and said that at this stage the distinction is blurred. John Polak said that NAGPI has always been a changeable, evolving initiative. In the beginning, NAGPI Steering Committee members were those willing to commit more time and participate in setting up the network.

Brian Johnson asked whether there are any definite rules to encourage inclusion of Committee members from different circles, including local governments. Chantal Line answered that there are no rules as such, but that the intention is to have a large spectrum of participants involved. Representatives from different levels of government are welcome, and that it would be desirable to increase state and provincial participation, and that of municipalities as well.

It was mentioned that terms of reference in some form could be made for Steering Committee members. Chantal Line agreed: if the group becomes too large it will become unmanageable. Greg Crew suggested that a policy on stakeholder group representation could accompany reflection about terms of reference. Chantal Line agreed and suggested that this should be done in the spirit of the 19 September meeting, where as many stakeholders as possible were invited from throughout North America.

Jeff Stephens said that the web page containing information on the Steering Committee should be clear that people listed there are Steering Committee members.

Action Item

Robert Kerr proposed sending Chantal Line a first draft on TORs.

5. Update from the Alt Rep meeting

Chantal Line thanked the environment agencies of the NAFTA Parties for keeping NAGPI on the agenda, even in the face of serious budget cuts to the CEC. NAGPI activities were funded and the implementation plan will go ahead.

She mentioned that, although there are no US and Mexican government officials on the call, the US and Mexican representatives were all very supportive of NAGPI.

6. Reminder by Robert Kerr on the need to update NAGPI's List Serve

Robert Kerr mentioned that we should make sure all people interested in NAGPI have been invited to join the listserve. The address is: <procure@nagpi.net>.

Action Item

Those interested in being added to the NAGPI listserve should send their information to Mathieu for forwarding to Robert. Members are asked to minimize use of e-mail and to respond to individuals, as opposed to sending a "Reply All," whenever possible.

7. The Green Purchasing Self Assessment Tool

John Polak and Madeleine Plouffe gave an overview of the Green Purchasing Self Assessment Tool (Eco-SAT). Eco-SAT provides guidance to best practices on green purchasing as well as relevant checklists. The intention is for professional purchasers to evaluate their organizations' environmental purchasing initiatives and identify opportunities for improvement in their purchasing strategies. Organizations will then be able to pursue an improved environmental purchasing strategy, comparing themselves against the best real world practices.

The Eco-SAT is designed to support any organization that maintains a structured purchasing system, including all levels of government (national, provincial/state and municipal levels), hospitals, schools, universities, and large corporations.

John Polak mentioned that the tool must now be tried out at the Commission for Environmental Cooperation and at Semarnat. The CEC is ready to do so from January. Madeleine Plouffe said that the tool was created to evolve with time. Greg Crew said that the New York State School System could try it out in the 60 days following reception of the draft. Chantal Line said the tool will be available for use on any of the members' web sites once finalized.

8. What's next?

Mathieu informed members of the Rainforest Alliance conference to be held next summer in Burlington, VT, on "Sustainable Communities" where NAGPI has been invited by Elizabeth Skinner to present its work. John Polak said this could be a good opportunity to launch Eco-SAT.

9. Next Meeting

Next conference call: Thursday, 15 January, 14h00, EST.

Merry Christmas.

Meeting adjourned at 15h30.