NYSBA - Climate Change and the Bar

NYSBA’s ELS P2 Committee took it upon itself to meet w/ owner/operator of facilities where we had meetings/events. We discussed and left them with a hand-out, as follows:

-Heating/Cooling – could you try, maybe in discreet areas, individual rooms, increasing the temp a degree or two during warm periods and decreasing the temp a degree or two during cool periods? Were there unused rooms/areas that could be so controlled? Were different floors/areas more/less susceptible to over/under heating/cooling?

-Had the facility been audited for insulation, leaks, drafts and heating/cooling efficiency? Were its windows double-paned/lead/draft-proof?

-What did you use to heat/cool the facility? Was there a greener alternative? Do you have solar panels? Might you? Have you looked into State grants/programs? Were you obtaining their electricity from the greenest source available?

-Heating/cooling water is enormously energy intensive. Is your boiler the most energy efficient model you can use? Has it been recently inspected for efficiency? Are all pipes insulated that should be?

Lighting – Have you replaced all fluorescent lights? Have you inspected such old lights for PCBs in the light ballast? Have you replaced all incandescent lights? Do you utilize only energy efficient lighting both indoors and out? Do you employ motion sensors to turn off lights in lesser-used areas?

Water use – Do you carefully monitor water usage? Do you have low water use toilets in the rooms? Water-free urinals? Do you have water fountains with water bottle re-fillers? See additional water tips, below.

Pool/Hot tub – How do you heat the pool water and room? Is the pool covered at night and when not in use so as to retain heat and minimize evaporation? Can the pool/tub be shaded if desired (to minimize evaporation)? Can the shade be removed to help heat the pool via sun? If indoors, is the room well-insulated? Can doors/windows be opened to naturally heat/cool the room? Has the pool/tub and piping been inspected for leaks? How is the water heated? Might you use solar panels for this purpose?

Vehicles – Does the facility own vehicles/trucks/mowers? Are these the smallest, most fuel efficient vehicles possible? Do you maintain them in top working condition? Might you substitute hybrid vehicles for some of your gas-guzzlers?

Grounds - Does the facility have lawns/golf course, etc.? How do you maintain the grounds? Do you use fuel-based equipment such as blowers? Could you use non-fuel-based methods instead? i.e., a rake? Do you use toxic chemicals? Could you use greener chemicals? Do you only water the grounds at night? If the watering system is automated, does it shut off in the rain? Are you careful not to over-water and wash chemicals/nutrients off the grounds into water-ways? Do you use ‘gray-water’ for the grounds? Do you capture any rain-water?

-Do you garden? Do you grow their own food? Do you follow organic practices? Do you plant native species? Do you weed invasive species? Do you put out bird food? If bird feeders (including hummingbird feeders) are set out so guests can enjoy watching, do you safe-guard the windows so as to protect against birds flying into them?

Purchasing Power –

-Do you put your money toward the greenest products possible?

Food – do you purchase to the greatest extent possible from organic, local, farms? If you include beef, is it from grass-fed cattle? Do you purchase from large, industrial farms? Do you attempt to purchase US foods over food grown over-seas (and presumably subject to less regulation, inspection and over-sight)? Do you purchase shade-grown coffee? Do you avoid purchasing fish/animals that may be endangered or threatened? Do you only purchase from known, trusted, sources?

Materials – do you purchase from manufacturers who make a point of their green, low carbon, processes? Do you investigate the environmental records of the companies you do business with (including such issues as pesticide use, animal testing, social responsibility, treatment of women and child labor)? Do you attempt to use only items made of natural substances and avoid materials that are composites and synthetics which may emit formaldehyde and other chemicals?

Paper goods – are all paper products, including napkins, tissues, towels and TP, in the rooms and throughout the facility, made from recycled material?

Restaurants - Do you attempt to provide a wide variety of ‘low on the food chain” food options including multiple vegetarian options? Do you make an effort to offer meat alternatives to hamburger and steak (from cows which emit significant quantities of methane). If you offer ‘fine dining’ do you make excessive use of extra plates and silver-ware (i.e., using settings more for show than utility, setting out multiple forks and spoons for different courses, etc.)? Are food scraps and uneaten food composted? Is the lighting low? Are the stoves/ovens/refrigerators/freezers energy efficient?

Cleaning - Do you use toxic chemicals? Could you use greener chemicals? Are the cleaning personnel trained to make economical use of cleaning agents and materials especially water (and including limited use of one-time items like paper towels)?

Furniture – Are the couches/chairs and other items (rugs, carpets, pillows, etc.) treated with flame retardants? If so, is an effort made to keep windows open to air out the rooms?

Over-night rooms – Can one open the window easily and safely so as to avoid using a heating/cooling device? Do you encourage the use of a fan instead of the AC? Do you encourage guests to hang their towels to signal their willingness to reuse the towels? Do you give guests the option of signaling that you are comfortable reusing the sheets/bedding for multiple nights? Do you request guests to turn off lights and all energy-using devices before leaving the room? (See suggested note, below.) Do you leave a small note-pad in the room? Is it made from recycled paper? If you give guests complimentary newspapers, are you all recycled after use?

In the bath-rooms, do you utilize large, wall-mounted, refillable shampoo, soap/body wash, and conditioner containers? Or do you offer the small shampoo/conditioner bottles (which are more costly and harder to recycle as you are never really “empty”). Replacing countless barely used bars of soap is wasteful and expensive too. Do you have low-flow shower heads? Heating water is carbon intensive so lowering water usage saves money and energy. Is the TP made from recycled paper? Same with tissue paper.

The following sample note left in the room might be useful: Dean Guests,

Please help us be good environmental stewards by: 1. Only putting towels on the ground that you wish us to wash; using the fan instead of the AC when circulating air may suffice, especially over-night; ensuring that energy-using items are off when you are not in the room (i.e., AC, heating, fan, TV, lights); only placing the pillows on the floor when you wish us to wash the sheets and pillow-cases (we trust you will be comfortable using the same bedding for the entirety of your stay if only a few nights).

Recycling – Are recycling bins placed in obvious, easy to see and use locations throughout the facility? Is staff trained and instructed to recycle all recycle waste?

Transportation – Does the facility offer to pick up and drop off guests at public transportation stops (train stations, bus stops)?

Insecticides/rodenticides, etc. – Do you use poisons? What precautions do you take to safe-guard guests and non-target fauna and flora? Do you use licensed professionals? Do you first make every effort to clean and avoid attracting such pests (i.e., avoid food and other organic wastes by thorough cleaning of floors and surfaces and cabinets, etc.)?