## Alternative Technology Review Committee Meeting Minutes – April 7, 2008

## In Attendance:

Ed Vranizan – CH2M Hill, Architect and LEED AP

Jennifer Allen – Portland State University/BEST Center (Bio-Economy and Sustainable Technologies)

Aron Faegre – Aron Faegre & Associates, Architect, Engineer and Landscape Architect Ron Hays – Eagle Creek Natural Buildings, Remodeling Contractor and Natural Builder Joshua Klyber – Living Walls – Natural Builder and Portland ReCode Member Andy Peterson – BDS Plan Review/Permitting Services Manager Terry Whitehill – BDS Plan Review Section Manager Jed Scheuermann - BDS Plan Review Section Manager Debbie Cleek – BDS Green Building Specialist

## Discussion:

\* Note: In the minutes for ease of description the term "product" has been used to describe the type of technology the committee's would review, but it should be noted that the committee would not be limited to only reviewing manufactured products, but also building systems and construction methods.

Debbie summarized changes that had been made to the proposed decision path flow chart based on the discussion from the previous meeting. An "Initial Assessment" phase was added to the top of the chart to determine if the Alternative Technology Committee was the proper path to address the identified problem. In addition the language in the "Is it Green" criteria box was changed. Under "Analysis" a box called "Establish testing parameters" was added. This box represents the committee giving the applicant guidance on what aspects of the product need further testing, to help minimize the amount of testing necessary, and ensure that the testing will be able to address the specific problem.

The group discussed whether "green" was the correct term to use in the criteria box. Green is a term that seems to be over used and has lost some of it's meaning. It was suggested that "green" should be replaced with "sustainable". The term "sustainable" is more encompassing, and relates to being both the exterior environment as well as the occupants of a space. It was agreed by the group that "sustainable" should replace "green" on the criteria.

Debbie summarized research she had done on various organizations who have created a sustainable criteria to evaluate building products and materials.

- SERA Architects Sustainable Vendor Questionnaire
- Pharos "Wiki" website supported by Cascadia Green Building Council
- BuildingGreen.com's GreenSpec extensive list of green products and their attributes
- ASTM E 2129 (American Society for Testing and Material) an optional questionnaire to query product vendors about the environmental attributes of their products.
- AIA Convention 2007 spreadsheet showing 11 different green product rating systems and what attributes they consider in their ratings. The topic of the

presentation was that it is confusing to spec green products because there are so many rating systems with competing claims.

The conclusion from this research was that the City should not consider creating their own green criteria, since so many others already exist.

The various criteria were discussed by the group. It was suggested that if an applicant can provide documentation that the product had already been certified by one of these other organizations then the City should consider it to be green. However, these rating systems only review existing technology and would leave out anything that was so new that it hadn't been reviewed yet. The rating systems also preclude site-built and natural materials. In addition, because most of the rating systems are focused on manufactured products they would not include other green attributes like limiting site disturbance or managing stormwater. However, Pharos does look at issues of social equality.

The group discussed the overall purpose of the green criteria. The green criteria creates an entry point into the system for a product or technology that cannot meet the building code. There are many products that do not meet code requirements, but the City is only interested in helping to promote and approve products that are green. Non-green products can still use the standard appeal path. The green criteria serves as a doorway to determine what technologies should be reviewed by the committee.

The group discussed how green a technology would need to be in order to be considered (whether a product would just need to have one green attribute; or be 360 degree, cradle-to-cradle green). The review process would not result in the City endorsing the product as green - only that it can meet the building code - therefore the green criteria can be fairly minimal. In addition, the committee may not see that many applications at first, so the criteria should not be overly prohibitive. It was suggested that a product would have to be able to make the case that it was green in at least one area, and will not do any harm on any other environmental fronts. The group felt that no product can claim to do no harm, since every product uses some sort of resources and has some trade-offs. It was decided that one green attribute would be enough to qualify a material for entry into the review process. However, if the committee starts to see products that are questionable the criteria can be ratcheted up.

It was determined that it would be the applicants responsibility to show how the product was green, through a narrative that would be submitted with the application. The applicant could document that the product has been certified as green by an existing rating system, or address how the product would be able to meet the standards of one of the rating systems. It was suggested that Pharos would be a good choice because of their broad scope and because it is a local entity. The City could provide applicant with a list of recommended standards to address. In addition, there should be the ability for an applicant to use Portland specific criteria, if there is a regional aspect to the product's sustainability.

It was decided that the next meeting should involve a beta-test of the system with an actual product. It was determined that Air Krete – an insulation product – would be evaluated by the group.