



## GREEN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, April 3, 2025

3:30 p.m.

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Committee Members: Elizabeth Fiore, Chair

Pamela Cassidy, Paulo Lopes, David Rizza, Board Members

Administrative Staff: Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent; Jason M. Bohm, SBA/Board Secretary; Don Race, Facilities Manager; Timothy Charleston, Principal; Dr. Ann DeRosa, Principal; Dr. Kristen Higgins, Principal; Dr. Jonathan Moss, Principal; Sarah Pauch, Supervisor of Math, Science and Technology

Other Members: Betsy Freeman, Teacher; Gargi Adhikari, Teacher; Denise Birmingham, Teacher; Blair Alber, Teacher; Dr. Neil Hendrickson, Readington Township; Steve Foster, Readington Township; Marlene Orlandi, Readington Township; David Livingston, Readington Township; Christina Albrecht, Readington Township; Eric Zwerling, Readington Township; Jodi Bettermann, Readington Township; Robert Becker, Readington Township

### 1. Strategic Focus for 2024-2025 School Year

- Sustainability goals were presented by Mr. Bohm. The Green Committee aims to reduce environmental impact and enhance school sustainability during the 2024-2025 school year. Some of the items listed in the presentation are as follows:
  - Sustainable NJ re-certification, aiming to achieve silver status.
  - Referendum Project: The committee received board approval for sustainability projects, including HVAC upgrades, outdoor space enhancements, and LED lighting.
  - Reduce waste, increase energy efficiency, enhance environmental education, and expand solar energy to all schools, adding solar to Whitehouse School and Three Bridges. Also, expanding on RMS and Holland Brook will give us 100% electric independence particularly in summer. Current solar provides 35-40% of the district's electricity. The solar expansion will provide free electricity after 15 years, saving over \$250,000.
  - Improving health and wellness with an updated Wellness policy.
  - The school district has a new electric school bus.
  - 4th Grade Field trip to Lachenmayr Trail to learn about local plants, trees, and wildlife.
  - Partnership with Scouts, planting 19 trees around the Holland Brook track with the help of Dr. Neil Hendrickson.
  - Students went on Field trips, learned about recycling, reusing, composting.
  - Working with Maschios on obtaining locally sourced food.
  - \$10k RMS EcoAction News Grant.
  - School Clubs.
  - Waste reduction.
  - During professional development, food trucks were brought in to provide staff with lunch and reduce the environmental impact by having staff eat outside on a nice day instead of driving to lunch. Staff still had the option to go out to lunch if they desired.
  - \$2k grant for Three Bridges partnering with Go Hunterdon to educate children on bicycle safety.
  - Betsy Freeman is recognized as a sustainability hero.
- Betsy spoke on how her students worked on inventions that monitor outdoor air quality—working with Monmouth University. Eric Zwerling pointed out the committee's foresight on solar in light of rising electricity costs. Eric also mentioned that we should add this information to the website. Steve Foster mentioned cooperation with the town led to successful results of the outdoor trip and wanted to say thank you. Neil was impressed by Betsy's students' help in protecting the environmental resources. Mrs.

Adhikari coordinated with supervisor Sarah Pauch and the town to make the outdoor field trip happen and stated the students match the standards of NJES, Science learning outdoors.

**2. Pillar I: Reduce environmental impact and costs**

- Referendum – Jason highlighted the referendum vote shall occur on Tuesday, November 4. More communication and events forthcoming!
- Solar Array Expansion – Jason stated district is waiting on JCP&L/BPU for authorization to proceed.

**3. Pillar II: Improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff**

- NJSBA “A Decade of Progress” - Dr Hart highlighted an article from NJSBA. Out of the three school districts mentioned, Readington was one of them. Jodi asked if we could promote this article in the Chronicle. Dr Hart is looking to publish the article in the Superintendent **Sentinel and other outlets.**

**4. Pillar III: Provide environmental education (STEM, civic skills, green career pathways, etc.)**

- HBS Scout Project - Jason wanted to thank Pamela, Dr. Moss, and Dr. Neil for helping and supporting the Scouts in planting the trees around the Holland Brook track. The Scouts learned how to plant and create for trees.
- EcoAction News Grant update – Brief update provided by Betsy.
- Three Bridges School \$2,000 Sustainable Jersey Grant - Dr Higgins elaborated on the details of the \$2k grant and the partnership with Go Hunterdon.
- Trees for School Grant - Mr. Bohm mentioned that there is a grant by Sustainable NJ for tree planting, the grant is between \$10k to \$250,000 and includes two years of maintenance. Betsy spoke about looking at all four properties and devising a plan for a meadow to reduce mowing and incorporate tree planting. Jason mention these goals are for next school year.

**5. Strategic Focus Brainstorming for 2025-2026 School Year**

- Beth previously shared a draft Readington Township Public Schools Climate Change Action Plan.
- The Sustainable Jersey Trees for School Grant was mentioned again.
- Referendum communication as shared as an idea for sustainability and wellness projects.
- Dr. Hart stated that the website will be redesigned, and when it does, he will look at the green site.
- Marlene Orlando mentioned interweaving tree planting with the type of trees to plant, the size of the hole to dig, and the type of soil to add.
- Jodi mentioned at her last environmental commission meeting that they focused on biodiversity, native plants, and trees. Air quality was discussed as well.
- Neil mentioned that Betsy’s student project on air quality could potentially feed data to the State EPA. He also discussed native vs. non-native trees and how deer eat certain trees and plants, causing invasive trees to take over.
- Robert Becker spoke on how students could collect sap off trees at Three Bridges learning woods. Dr Higgins would walk the learning woods path and take a look.
- Mrs Adhikari spoke on having a sitting area with wildflowers and rainwater collection at Holland Brook.
- Eric Zwerling mentioned posting an article and more communication on the website.

**6. Unfinished / New Business**

- 7. Our next Green Committee meeting shall be in the summer of 2025 for strategic planning with administration and board members only.**

Minutes from prior meeting