



## GREEN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 20, 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 Environmental Commission Chair; Carol Hample, Readington Township

**Welcome New Members: Pamela Cassidy, David Rizza & Robert Becker!** Mrs. Fiore opened the meeting and welcomed new committee members. Board Members Mrs. Cassidy and Mr. Rizza introduced themselves. Mr. Becker, the Township Committee's Environmental Commission Chair and facilitator of the municipality's Sustainable Jersey program since 2010 introduced himself and said that the township is also recertifying this year for Sustainable Jersey.

### 1. Strategic Focus for 2024-2025 School Year - Board Members / Administration

- Mr. Bohm shared the Strategic Focus and Action Plan Tracking documents with the committee and invited members of the Committee to come to the April meeting with ideas for strategic goals for next year.
- Mr. Rizza presented slides about the Green Committee's accomplishments over the years and current major initiatives. He also showed the cost savings to the district since the inception of the Green Committee. One of the Committee's strategic focus areas is communication and this presentation is a great tool to share the history and success of the district's green initiatives with the public. Mr. Zwerling thanked Mr. Rizza for the presentation.
- Mrs. Fiore presented a draft of a Climate Action Plan that was mentioned last meeting based off of discussions with Prince Georges' County School District's Climate Action Plan. This plan shows what actions the district has already taken and potential goals for the future. Committee members are invited to provide feedback and new ideas to be included in the plan. Action items from Sustainable Jersey can also be added. Mrs. Bettermann suggested that the plan include initiatives that were on previous tracking documents, such as the initiative to encourage outdoor activities in the schools such as outdoor classrooms, field trips, and recess. Mrs. Orlandi suggested that the 8th grade community service and field trip projects be added to the plan. Mr. Bohm mentioned the township's Natural Resource Inventory as a resource for items to be included in the plan.

### 2. Pillar I: Reduce environmental impact and costs - Jason Bohm / Don Race

- Referendum Public Presentation - Mr. Bohm invited members to attend the February 25th Board Meeting where the referendum will be discussed. He and Mr. Race invited members of the Green Committee to contact them if committee members have ideas about incorporating green practices into the different referendum projects.
- Solar Array Expansion - Mr. Bohm updated the committee on the progress of the solar expansion project. The legal documents are in the final stages of completion with an anticipated groundbreaking date of late June.
- Electric School Bus - Mr. Bohm updated the committee on the electric school bus grants the district has been rewarded along with a list of other districts who have also received these grants.
  - Federal Grant - 1 Electric Bus / Charger - this bus is currently in use.
  - State Grant - 2 Electric Buses / Chargers - these buses are currently being discussed in the finance committee.
  - Safety / Fire Risk Videos: Mr. Lopes shared videos with the committee about fire risks to be aware of for electric school buses. Mrs. Cassidy offered some data to show that while all buses have risk of fire, diesel and gas are more likely to catch fire.

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

- Communication - Mr. Bohm shared links to recent articles in-district and out which highlight green initiatives. Dr. Hart shared that he was selected to be featured in the NJSBA School Leader Magazine Feature for Sustainable New Jersey for School's 10 anniversary article with several of other school districts who stand out for their sustainability programs.

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

- Arbor Day / Shade Tree Commission Plantings - Dr. Hart shared a letter he received from the Hunterdon County Engineer, Dept of Public works regarding shade tree plantings on school grounds. Whitehouse School is planning to plant a tree for Arbor Day and through a partnership with the Township Environmental Commission each 3rd Grader receives a sapling to take home and plant. Holland Brook School will also receive trees.
- Wellness District Policy 8505 Update - Dr. Hart shared a link to the Wellness Policy 8505 that was approved at the Jan 21 BOE meeting. This policy helps with the district's Sustainable Jersey recertification and the final adopted version incorporated ideas generated from the Green Committee like outdoor classrooms and field trips.
- Sustainable Jersey Recertification, Grants, & Municipality - Dr. Hart reported that the district submitted the district's application in Jan during the first round. Sustainable Jersey will provide feedback and then the final application is due in June. Dr. Hart thanked all of the members of the team who helped with the application. It is a huge undertaking and their work is certainly appreciated.

### **5. Unfinished / New Business**

Mr. Livingston expressed concern about potentially disbanding the Green Committee. As a former Board of Education member and founding member of the Green Committee he touted the great successes he has seen over the years. Several other committee members expressed positive comments about the effectiveness and importance of the committee's work and their desire to see it continue.

### **6. Our next Green Committee meeting shall be Thursday, April 3, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.**