



GREEN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

3:30 p.m.

Committee Members: Eric Zwerling, Chair
Elizabeth Fiore

Administrative Staff: Dr. Jonathan Hart, Superintendent; Jason M. Bohm, SBA/Board Secretary; Don Race, Facilities Manager; Dr. Ann DeRosa, Principal; Kristen Higgins, Principal; Sharon Moffat, Principal; Sarah Pauch, Supervisor of Math, Science and Technology; Jim Belske, IT Coordinator

Other Members: Betsy Freeman, Coordinator of Green Initiatives and Sustainability; Steve Foster, Township of Readington; Neil Hendrickson, Township of Readington; Marlene Orlandi, Township of Readington, former BOE

1. Cafeteria Food Waste Handling – Andrew Johnston, Director of Business Development, Trenton Renewables / Eric Zwerling

Eric Zwerling opened with a discussion of the 10-year quest of the District to compost the organic fraction of all the cafeterias' waste, including the substitution of compostable service wear from the current disposables (e.g., foam plates, bowls). Limitations previously preventing implementation were briefly addressed: lack of a commercial food waste composting site, hauling complications, contamination issues, aerobic composting limitations, etc. He then thanked Steve Foster for bringing to his attention an innovative firm, Trenton Renewables, which conducts full-scale commercial anaerobic digestion of mixed organic food waste.

Andrew Johnston, Director of Business Development, Trenton Renewables, was contacted and agreed to present at the meeting with only a few hours of notice (thanks!).

Trenton Renewable's process has the following advantages:

- [Introductory Video](#)
- digests entire organic fraction of waste stream including paper, waxed cartons, meat, dairy, oils, etc.
- high level of stream contamination acceptable (e.g., food wrappers, service wear, recyclables) and does not trigger load rejection
- sorts out inorganic fraction (plastic, metal) and diverts for recycling
- generates, captures and utilizes large amounts of biogas (methane) to power the facility, as well as thousands of homes. It is a Class 1 Renewable Energy Facility
- electric generation includes cogeneration which efficiently captures waste heat from combustion for use in other onsite processes
- avoids release of methane (potent greenhouse gas) from organic waste if landfilled
- production of compost and fertilizer
- work closely with haulers to collect waste stream
- competitive tipping fees
- New Jersey Food Waste Law Qualified Outlet
- regulatory and sustainability reporting (useful in submissions to Sustainable Jersey, etc.)
- calculation of environmental equivalencies (e.g., trees planted, car-miles avoided), data could be used in curriculum

Administrative staff (Jason, Don) will begin a review to determine if this is implementable in the District within operational and contracting parameters, understanding Covid response/reopening is priority.

There was additional discussion with Readington Township representatives about implementation of this program for homeowners in the Township with a central collection location, as well as the District serving as a model for Hunterdon Central. Previously, the Readington School District lead the way in mixed-stream recycling collection in this area, after a thorough investigation of its feasibility.

2. Green Initiatives, Sustainable Jersey Updates – *Betsy Freeman*

Sustainable Jersey is offering a 1-year extension for the certification process, as many districts are currently otherwise occupied and many of the activities for which they might collect points are not possible under current conditions. There was discussion on the merits of accepting the extension and the Committee agreed this was prudent. especially if we desire to retain Silver status. Sarah Pauch noted that nonetheless the gathering of data and review of the schools' applications should continue at some pace and not just be shelved for a year.

The Digital Star Schools Program (and Future Ready Schools, now subsumed) was addressed by Dr. Hart.

There was discussion regarding the US Green Building Council, District initiatives, and curriculum (biomimicry and art classes).

Native gardens were discussed with Marlene Orlandi, including renovation of the RMS garden, volunteers, introducing a water feature.

3. [Columbia University Climate Ed Youth Summit \(Feb 10\)](#) - *Betsy Freeman*

Ms. Freeman discussed her students' presentation "Growing Food and Resilience in the Garden State". Students team up with Columbia researchers, who normally only work with high school students, but they have found Readington's students to be prepared/motivated enough to qualify (!)

4. New Jersey American Water Grant – *Betsy Freeman*

WHS may apply for a grant

5. Sustainability Websites - *Dr. Jonathan Hart / Jim Belske*

Update on progress – uniformity, consolidation, formatting, content, etc. Green Committee meeting dates on website. Work in progress - be patient.

6. Walking Trails at the Schools - *Neil Hendrickson*

Discussion regarding on-campus opportunities for walking trails and guided walks with volunteers of varying expertise (forestry, ornithology, etc.). Possible collaboration with Township and listing of dates on their website(s). Discussion regarding public access to school property.

Similarly, discussion of working with Township Waterwatch Advisory Committee to schedule stream walks/cleaning, lessons, etc.

7. Our next meeting is to be held on April 13, 2021 at 3:30 p.m.