



GREEN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

3:30 p.m.

Committee Members: Elizabeth Fiore, Chair
Paulo Lopes, Board Member

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: Gargi Adhikari, Teacher; Dr. Neil Hendrickson, Readington Township; Steve Foster, Readington Township; Marlene Orlandi, Readington Township; Christina Albrecht, Readington Township; Eric Zwerling, Readington Township; Jodi Bettermann, Readington Township

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

- Strategic Focus - Mr. Bohm referred to the Strategic Focus document which lists the 3 Pillars of Green Ribbon Schools and shows our 2024-2025 goals associated with each pillar.
- Prince George's County Public Schools Climate Change Action Plan - Mrs. Fiore introduced the Prince George's County Climate Action Plan that she received from a session speaker down at NJSBA Workshop in Atlantic City. The committee discussed using this document as a framework to plan out future green initiatives and long term goals.

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

- Referendum Public Forum - Committee members were invited to attend the Referendum Public Forum on December 3 at 6:30 p.m. Board of Education Conference Room
- Solar Array Expansion Update - Mr. Bohm informed the committee that the solar expansion project is moving forward and construction will begin once permits are acquired, likely in the Spring. The timing of this project could not be more perfect as the district was notified that the NJSBA ACES savings program could not negotiate a cost savings to districts, so the district will have to pay the utility rate for electricity at a drastic increase beginning in June 2025.
- Electric School Bus Update
 - Federal Grant - 1 Electric Bus / Charger - Mr. Bohm notified the committee that the district's first electric school bus will be arriving in a few weeks with an anticipated date to begin service in January 2025. Electric charger has been installed. Training has already begun for the Facility and Transportation departments. Communication and rollout for this bus will be discussed in the Finance Committee.

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

- Communication - Administration - Mr. Bohm shared the links to the newsletters and Genesis Blasts that pertain to sustainability efforts in the district.
- 4th Grade Field Trip / WaterWatch Committee / RVCC - Sarah Pauch / Gargi Adhikari - Ms. Pauch gave an overview of the new 4th Grade Field Trip that was created by the Townships' Water Watch Committee in collaboration with RVCC. This was an idea pitched by Mrs. Adhikari in a previous Green Committee. Students walked the Lachenmayr trail and stopped at 4 stations

manned by RVCC students. Students will return in the Spring to the same trail to compare their findings. Special thanks to Mrs. Pauch, Mrs. Adhikari, Mrs. Orlandi, Mrs. Huelsebusch, Mrs. Fiore, and Mr. Vornlocker (as well as the students from RVCC) for making this field trip a success.

- Capital Projects Update / IRS Tax Credit - Mr. Bohm shared a slideshow of capital projects completed by the district that align with sustainability goals, including the RMS Main Office/Nurse, WHS Art Room, and WHS Preschool Playground. Mr. Bohm also informed the committee that as a result of a flyer that Mrs. Fiore brought back from the NJSBA Workshop to Mr. Bohm, the district was able to apply for an IRS tax credit on several completed capital projects. This equates to a savings of at least \$50,000 for the district if accepted by the IRS.

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

- Sustainable Jersey Recertification Update - *Administration / Principals* -Dr. Hart reported that the Leadership Team is working on the Recertification application from Sustainable Jersey for Schools that is due in the Spring.
- TBS Sustainable Jersey \$2K Grant - *Dr. Kristen Higgins* - Dr. Higgins informed the committee that TBS received a \$2k grant from Sustainable Jersey for a traffic garden, this project is in partnership with GoHunterdon.
- RMS Sustainable Jersey \$10K Grant - *Tim Charleston* - Mr. Charleston mentioned that RMS received a grant for \$10k for an EcoAction News student led project.
- Policies - Dr. Hart shared that the district Wellness Policy 8505 is being reviewed by the Policy Committee. Updating this policy will help with Sustainable Jersey recertification. Dr. Hart also shared the link to the district's Sustainability Policy 7461 for members to review.
- WHS participates in EmPowered Schools - *Dr. Ann DeRosa* - Dr. DeRosa shared that WHS is participating in EmPowered Schools which brings STEM and energy saving initiatives to the school.
- School Clubs and RMS Encores that relate to Green Career Pathways - Mr. Bohm shared the link to curriculum documents for RMS's new encore classes that pertain to Sustainability and green career pathways. He also mentioned that there are many after school clubs that students can participate in which align with green initiatives.
- Student Climate Challenge - *Beth Fiore* -Mrs. Fiore shared the link to Sustainable Jersey's Student Climate Challenge if anyone was interested in participating.

5. **Unfinished / New Business**

- Mr. Foster praised the work of the staff and committee and supports communicating this information out to the Township Committee and the wider community.
- State Grant - 2 Electric Buses / Chargers - Mrs. Bettermann asked about the timeline for the NJDEP State Grant for 2 additional eclectic buses totaling \$640,000. These are being discussed in Finance.
- Mr. Zwerling reported that the district did an energy audit about 10 years ago and suggested it would be good to see about reviewing our progress and completing another one if possible.
- Mr. Zwerling asked about the Green Coordinator position, if there were interested candidates, and Mr. Bohm shared that the position was revamped but it remains unfilled to date.

6. Our next Green Committee meeting shall be Thursday, February 20, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.