



GREEN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 15 2023

3:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Committee Members: Jodi Bettermann, Chair
Elizabeth Fiore

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; Paul Nigro, Principal; Sarah Pauch, Supervisor of Math, Science and Technology

General Members: Betsy Freeman, Sustainability Coordinator; Gargi Adhikari, Teacher; Dr. Neil Hendrickson, Readington Township; Steve Foster, Readington Township; David Livingston, Readington Township; Christina Albrecht, Readington Township; Eric Zwerling; Readington Township

1. The agenda is being reformatted so that it can organize the efforts of the Green Committee and align with the three pillars used in the Green Ribbon Schools recognition program which all of our schools have successfully achieved.
2. **Pillar I: Reduce environmental impact and costs**
 - The district's solar arrays have been in operation for five years and have reached a point where Ameresco (our solar PPA provider) reviews the data with us to determine if our five year electricity production guarantee was met. Don Race reviewed the details with the Green Committee explaining that Ameresco uses NREL (National Renewable Energy Laboratory) insolation values to weather-adjust the expected production. Insolation is a measure of the solar energy available to be converted into electricity by the solar panels. All solar arrays exceeded the weather adjusted guaranteed production amounts. The next review will occur in another five years.
 - The Committee reviewed the locations for the solar expansion plans at all four schools which will allow us to generate up to 85% of the electricity used by the school facilities. Now that the Finance Committee has recommended this project move forward, engineering work is underway. On March 14, 2023, the Board of Education also approved the hiring of an attorney to being work on the legal aspects of the solar expansion which includes drafting of an RFP (request for proposals). A sub-committee will be formed to assist with the review of these proposals when needed. A rough timeline for the project was discussed which will depend on supply chain issues.
 - Additional capital projects focused on sustainability were reviewed including grants available for electric school buses and charging infrastructure for which the district will submit applications. Sustainability based capital projects to be completed this year include LED lighting at RMS and HBS, outdoor gardens at WHS, and additional water bottle filling stations at RMS.
3. **Pillar II: Improve the health and wellness of schools, students, and staff**
 - Mrs. Freeman discussed an opportunity to fund outdoor classrooms from Project Green Schools' Outdoor Classroom Challenge. Applications are due by March 26th and will award one \$10,000 prize. Dr. Hendrickson offered the support of local volunteers to assist with tree based seats or benches as part of any outdoor classroom projects. Mrs. Albrecht gave an update on plastic bag collections that go toward Trex benches. Readington Middle School is finished with their collection and next will be a collection for a bench in the Whitehouse School garden.

- The district will be hosting an Earth Day celebration on April 26 at Three Bridges School, and Green Committee members were invited to attend. This event will celebrate the many sustainability achievements of the district over the past several years including Sustainable Jersey for Schools silver level certifications and Green Ribbon Schools designations for all four schools, green infrastructure installations at Three Bridges School (bioswale) and Readington Middle School (rain garden), National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitats established at Holland Brook and Readington Middle Schools, and award winning school gardens at Whitehouse, Three Bridges, and Readington Middle Schools. The district is partnering with Maschio's, the Holland Brook School Cooking Club, and local vendors to provide food and refreshments for the celebration. A press release will be issued to publicize the event.

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

- The Three Bridges School bioswale project is complete, and Rutgers staff are coming for an observation and check in. Creation of signs explaining the installation are underway, and Mr. Foster was thanked for his sign donation. Preparation of a video highlighting the installation and community partners who made the project a reality is underway as well.
- Mrs. Freeman discussed an EcoRise Student Innovation Grant open to students in grades K-12 who complete a sustainable pathway in their curriculum which includes audits of water, waste, food, and transportation, etc. Students pitch a solution to what they discover in the audits and apply for EcoRise to assist them with expertise and also with up to \$700 in funding.
- Students at Readington Middle School and Whitehouse School are participating in the EmPowered Schools energy education program. Readington Middle School students are creating math problems for students in grades K-5 using data from our solar dashboards. The intent is to provide math challenges that can be used during Earth Week.
- Green Committee members were invited to attend the district's Parent Academy Night on March 28 to be held at Holland Brook School. There will be a student keynote address about leadership and two sustainability focused offerings on energy and climate change related to trees.
- Mrs. Adhikari discovered and successfully received a grant from the NJ Department of Education for a Climate Change Pilot for approximately \$6,660. An internal survey was circulated to staff for suggestions on how to spend the funding which has to be expended by May. Ideas generated included butterfly gardens, Lego kits, and curriculum supplies for student environmental education.

5. Mr. Zwerling brought a NY Times article about food waste to the attention of the Committee and asked members to review and to bring thoughts to the next meeting.

6. Unfinished / New Business -

- Mr. Foster thanked WHS for Science Fair invitation. He was pleased to participate.
- Mrs. Albrecht shared Readington News might cease publication.
- Mr. Foster highlighted virtual backpack utilized by school district.

7. The next Green Committee meeting shall be on June 7, 2023 at 3:30 p.m.

- Committee members were asked to bring ideas to the next meeting about sustainability projects and goals the Green Committee should consider in its summer planning meeting for implementation next year.