



GREEN COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday, March 3, 2025

3:30 p.m.

Present: Pamela Cassidy, Beth Fiore, David Rizza, Dr. Jonathan Hart, Jason M. Bohm, Timothy Charleston, Dr. Ann DeRosa, Dr. Jonathan Moss, Gargi Adhikari, Dr. Neil Hendrickson, Dr. Kristen Higgins, Marlene Orlandi, Eric Zwerling, Jodi Bettermann

Absent: Richard Pieros, Sarah Pauch, Don Race, Betsy Freeman, Denise Birmingham, Blair Alber, Steve Foster, David Livingston, Christina Albrecht, Robert Becker, Victoria Gregorio, Carol Hample

1. Strategic Focus for 2025-2026 School Year

- Mr. Bohm provided updates for the Green Committee's 2025-2026 goals in the [Action Plan Tracking Document](#). Committee members offered suggestions on execution strategies for each of the three pillars, linking the school district's Strategic Planning sessions to the sustainability initiatives laid out in the Action Plan.

2. Pillar I: Reduce environmental impact and costs

- Mr. Bohm presented a referendum update, providing public links to the school [referendum progress website](#) and [status tracking](#) for the first wave of projects funded by the referendum. The district is in process of selling bonds by June, with funds anticipated in July. Outdoor spaces are a main focus for this year, with new playgrounds at TBS and WHS already approved for purchase, followed by the HBS outdoor track, HBS Life Skills suite, and parking lot lighting improvement funding proposed for upcoming board meetings. These projects require minimal planning and design with short lead times, and are estimated to be completed this summer through the fall.
- Mr. Bohm and Dr. Hart shared information on the 5 Yr Strategic Plan and the [Letter from the Board President](#) to communicate Strategic Planning input opportunities: advertisements were placed in the CHronicle, a [Strategic Plan website](#) was launched, a [digital survey](#) has been distributed, and multiple in-person and virtual forums scheduled in March for district parents and community members. The Strategic Plan is targeted for approval in June 2026.
- Green Committee members offered input on linking a sustainability goal to the 5 Yr Strategic Plan by embedding the high-level three pillar strategy into the strategic plan goals. Readington has historically demonstrated that investing in an energy conservation consultant and training students and staff has reduced electricity costs for the district. Using a similar baseline and monitoring energy consumption in the district will prove that green initiatives save money in addition to the environmental benefit.

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

- Mr. Bohm provided an outdoor spaces update from Ms. Freeman, who has several grants pending approval, including a drones project for students and staff, to learn coding and operate drones in a secured area with FAA licenses. The Trees for Schools project grant is approved and will commence at RMS in April. Volunteers are needed to help with planning, preparing the site by clearing, grading and fencing the property, and planting trees. Committee members shared that the Department of Public Works and approximately 20 watershed ambassadors are engaged to support the project, and further suggested reaching out to Readington residents to advertise the volunteer opportunity and build community connections. NJ Monthly is interested in

documenting the Trees for Schools Project at RMS, since tiny forests and walking forests are growing in popularity and Readington is the only school district pursuing this initiative.

- Mr. Bohm reiterated that referendum communications will continue as related to this pillar.

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

- Mr. Bohm provided an update on the solar projects at all four Readington schools. Since our last meeting, the financing had fallen through with EZEnergy, who had contracted with the district two years ago. [Solect Energy](#) has offered to take over the contract, and is attending the Finance Committee on March 5, in order to meet the July 5th deadline for financing credits and intend to build the solar infrastructure by December 2027. Solect Energy is a Canadian firm working primarily in Massachusetts and northeast NJ, and trying to expand further into the NJ market. With energy rates rising dramatically, this contract would offer a 25 year warranty, a flat energy rate for the next 15 years, and an opportunity for buyout after 15 years. The entire committee thanked Mr. Bohm for his tireless efforts to pursue the completion of the solar project, which will bring continued value to the district for decades.
- The proposed Biodiversity Audit was reviewed, as little progress has been made to date, although it benefits each of our schools through ten [Sustainable Jersey](#) credits. The district will have an additional year to make progress on certification since Sustainable Jersey will be on pause for school districts next year. Mr Bohm shared a sample [School Grounds](#) biodiversity audit instruction and record, with the goal of the audit to improve biodiversity on school grounds, provide hands-on ecology education and awareness, and potentially reduce mowing and landscaping. Dr. Moss offered to begin the audit at HBS, and Dr. Hart proposed using HBS as a pilot to assess the scope and success of the biodiversity audit of the school grounds prior to expanding to the other schools. Dr. Higgins offered TBS as a second location for the biodiversity audit beginning in September, after the Forrest Hill project is complete. Ms. Fiore emphasized that the audit must be executed between April and September to maximize plant identification, and after school to engage both volunteer and student participation. Local experts in plant and animal identification and interested students, both in Readington and Hunterdon Central, and community members are encouraged to participate in the planning and audit execution. Mr. Zwerling recommended photographing plants and animals to create a Readington field guide to identify local species.

5. **Unfinished / New Business**

- The committee reviewed multiple [proposals](#) for the \$4,000 funding allocated in the 2025-2026 Budget for a Green Coordinator. The funds must be approved prior to the June Board meeting. The committee considered using it for energy monitoring, although Mr. Race already tracks energy use. Dr. Hart recommended it be used as a stipend to an interested staff member to coordinate the biodiversity audit; one Green Committee member volunteered to take this role and will pursue further with administration to lead this initiative. Ms. Bettermann shared how air quality monitoring programs are being implemented in nearby schools; inexpensive wifi-enabled air quality monitoring devices are several hundred dollars to purchase and install, measure particles in the air, and can provide long-term STEM education tools to connect students to publicly issued air quality ratings. Mr. Zwerling suggested building upon the original energy plan developed by an outside consultant, and proposed crowdfunding to source donations for green initiatives in the schools.
- Ms. Bettermann asked about planned Earth Day activities at the schools. Dr. DeRosa is dedicating the May newsletter to the Green Scene at WHS. Dr. Moss mentioned that HBS is holding an assembly starring the Grand Falloons, an earth science circus program focused on sustainability.
- Mr. Bohm shared Mr. Foster's [Fresh Air, Fresh Fun!](#) newsletter with local outdoor activities, which will be further distributed in Dr. Hart's community newsletter.

6. The next Green Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 5, at 3:30 p.m.