

Green Newton School Connections

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 17 at 3:45pm
Newton City Hall, room 205
(1000 Commonwealth Ave., Newton)

Attendance: 27 people (parents, students, educators, city committees, city officials)

Carolyn Lattin, Sunwoo Kahng, Joana Canedo, Margaret Ford, Heather Tausig, Heather Friedman, Wendy Sheu, Allison Kelley, Kelly Dissing-Oleson, Amy Volk, Skye Tausig, Audrey Kissin, Kate Esbenshade, Andy Gluck, Becka Smillie, Anndy Dannenberg, Kathryn Teissier du Cros, Meghan Martineau, Andrew Thompson, Deanna Hoffman, Diana Fisher Gomberg, Waneta Trabert, Conni Melia, Tish Upton, Diane Becker, Amy Mah Sangiolo, Karen K Slote

1) Sustainability Director proposal

Joana Canedo: We delivered the letter to the School Council on December 10th. Now we need to decide how to move forward. But first, how did the School Council receive it?

Diana Fisher Gomberg: Are we focused on city (DPW) or school dept? Lobby both sides? Money is tight all over. Not a big allocation of funds. Lobby city side, too.

Waneta Trabert: lobbied for 2 years to get Connie's post. Unrealistic to expect another full time position to be added to DPW. Would be great if District and city communicated smoothly; not so at present.

Ownership is problem: schools do not feel owner of waste

So should come from school district; someone who takes ownership, improves access, adds programs and services. Even with one F/T person, would still require tons of volunteer engagement. WT cannot advocate for another person in her department.

Andy Gluck: weak link is facilities. Back end is the problem. We need to be able to work better with Facilities. One spends 1-2 hours every day managing, sorting, talking to students, janitors into creating recycling streams needed. Got to get janitors on board. Facilities department needs to work with janitors.

Heather Friedman and Wendy Sheu: Not having a body in the building is an enormous challenge. Principal is welcoming, but the institutional barriers are enormous. We need someone who is able to be IN the schools -- so a person in the school department would be better.

Meg Martineau agrees. Critical piece is having a person in the schools. One can personally build relationship with custodians, but this takes time. It should be institutionalized.

Anndy Dannenberg: It needs to be someone in district who can be in buildings and coordinate with custodians. Cost savings to city as argument?

WT: no, tough to do. In existing contract, ends 6/2020, we are only charged on number of pickups (both trash and recy), not tonnage. Moderate savings if we could decrease some of our pickups. Commercial services. Waste is charged by tonnage. Case could be made for *some* savings.

DFG: If we need someone in the building to make sure things are recycled, we need to spell out what we're seeing on the floor for David Stickney (Director of [Facilities](#)). He's in and out of buildings. Ask him to emphasize. That's not a budget issue.

WT: DS has been here a couple of times. WT works with him to discuss these types of problems. WT will meet next week with David Stickney and Joe Crossen, direct supervisor of all custodians. Big sticking point is custodial contract. We will discuss how to better instruct custodians, because we don't want them to decide if something is contaminated. They shouldn't put both in same bin ever, because it erodes faith in entire system. Tomorrow (Friday, 01/18) am, they'll discuss immediate problems, such as pallets in trash, filing cabinets in recycling, etc. With global recycling chaos in 2018, Waste Management is cracking down, enforcing our contract. Without that "stick", there hasn't been immediacy of issues. Issues are larger than we thought. We need to improve overall waste streams. Set a policy about everything in recycling bin gets recycled. Then work on front end to make sure only recyclables get in the bin. Becomes a band-width issue. NNHS custodians laugh. No band width. Can't get regular work done. It is not a priority yet.

We need it to be prioritized by the school district. A resolution from the School Committee could be one way of doing it. Who drove those in other cities? Could we find examples of some to share with the School Committee?

Amy Sangiolo: met with SC members, and there was no sense of urgency among other SC members about this position.

DFG: SC members care, but the understanding is that recycling and waste management is improving in schools under Dave Stickney.

Heather Friedman: We are lacking a culture of sustainability. We are disconnected with other important community actions: Newton Power Choice, solar panels -- why nowhere in schools? All this should be embedded in schools! Waste management is symptomatic. We consider ourselves a green city. But these values aren't reflected in school curriculum or systems.

Heather Tausig: parents assume schools do a good job of recycling. If you release the survey data (done in 2018 with all NPS, about waste management), you'll have a more informed constituency. Every school has a recycling dumpster. (That's improvement) How much is that access consistent throughout school? Education component? Any encouragement do educate? Data makes it look like recycling receptacles are there, but education is lacking. Struggle is with bandwidth in processing the data.

WT: The reason the survey is not available yet is because we did not have time to organize and analyze the raw data. As soon as we can, we will make it available. However, I don't believe the data will be helpful to inform about the reality of schools. It shows that schools have bins, but not how they are used.

AG: Does DS have bandwidth even to bump it up a little? We need a "Champion of Sustainability". An Amy Kelly of Sustainability. She had a grant behind her funding her position. [Amy Kelly is District Leader of [Social and Emotional Learning](#), hired in 2014]

JC: The EDF fellowship is an option (<http://edfclimatecorps.org/hosts>) , but city needs to fund it. We need to write down clear description of our needs and then look for grants, EDF or others. NEXT STEP: clearly state what we need, how many hours, responsibilities, energy? Waste? Curriculum? Send job description to School Committee, Facilities Department , possible grantors.

WT: [MassDEP](#) offers grants to schools. It is extremely competitive. Much more likely to go to a town that doesn't have a recycling dumpster at every school. Deadline June 12. Annual grant. Challenge is that district must buy-in. Top-down. Letters of support from School Super, all principals, etc. Lots of effort to get everyone on board and very competitive. We might not get. Whether or not DEP would see the need is not clear. Other municipalities have less, so have more chances to get the grant.

DFG: probably worth it, given how tight the budget is. Full-day KG is probably going to take any growth money this year. Going through that process would pull all that info together, so we'd be ready to go for other grants, etc. It should not be a problem getting sign-offs. DS supportive, Liam too. Amy Kelly's position was grant-funded too.

AS: City council usually cautious about accepting grant money if not likely that school district will continue the position. Positions is for one year, then scrambling for a year.

WT: In order to get the funding, need city's commitment to continue funding after departure.

Kathryn Teissier du Cros: Responsive Classroom revolutionized our teaching; all teachers are now TRAINED on it. We should have the same thing for sustainability, a mandatory program, so the front and is aware of what should be done. [ASU - Teachers Sustainability Academy](#). They are leaders in sustainability, who can come to Newton and offer an all-day workshop or 2-3 day workshop. You'd get a biggest bang for buck. Could reach more people. All teachers were required to go to Responsive Classroom. How to get this into PD?

HF: what would school committee need to hear from the public in order to prioritize?

Meghan Martineau: EDF connection: fellows placed in corp, muni enviro. You have to pay \$15,000. Sometimes they can offset the cost with EDF. We need to offer host, office. General efficiencies. Austin \$1.7 - 5 mill. Well-oiled. They know the questions to ask, who to ask them of. Would it be beneficial to have someone come in and do this analysis?

Use their job description to craft description for our own sustainability coordinator. Should we fundraise for that?

DFG: School committee public comment limited to 3 min. But send something in writing. SC will read. Central Management will read, too. Send more detailed analysis by email.

Wendy Shu: What would give this person the authority to do training, etc? Parents aren't empowered to get fac or staff.

School Dept chooses PD. Principals decide what happens in faculty meeting. Difference between volunteers and someone on payroll? Latter will have authority.

Deanna Hoffman: Bandwidth is a major issue. Pair job with stipends or building champion in each building. Give a stipend to point person in each building. Time! Teachers don't have time for one more thing. Time is maybe even more important than stipend.

Next steps: narrow down to needs and how to fund the position; costs and benefits

We will continue discussion on google docs. Keep working in writing.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZOsdmknEK9uOaW0BM-1ibstS4TptY-HUjtQFFM14o8/edit?usp=sharing>

2) Signage for recycling and waste in schools

Front-end education. Educate teachers, students, custodians. Signs were created by the Sustainable Materials Management Department last year. The PDFs are now available on the [Get Involved](#) page of the site, under Educational Materials. http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/dpw/recycling/get_involved/default.asp

Green Newton can host those docs as well. Data from survey will be there as well, when we are able to prepare it. We will have a table of how many bins in each school, so we know how many signs are needed. WT is crafting a step-by-step process for printing, posting. Graphics department at NNHS can print for very low fee or use school budget for signs. He prints, delivers to school. Even if not free, it will be very inexpensive.

Next steps: publish number of bins per school and step-by-step on where to put the signs in the schools.

3) School Connections website

We are creating a website for School Connections. Sunwoo and Joana are working on it, so we can have all our resources in one place. What features would you like to see? Email Joana if you have suggestions. Becka suggests a Forum area, chat or blog, so teachers can talk and share ideas.

4) Schools updates

Zervas and Angier have started a composting program. It's a pilot and those schools started because they are new buildings and have space for that.

Kelly. At Zervas Kelly prepared a presentation and presented for 5th graders in Nov. They've gone to individual classrooms. Students liked it a lot. Then launched last week the composting program.

MM: At Angier there was an assembly 12/17. Kick off compost and recycling. Videos of what to do and why. Started Green Team -- 60 kids signed up. Gave every kid a waste reduction pledge. Verbal check-in.

85 back! Green climbing robe bracelets. PTO has helped for the first few weeks. MM spent a lot of time talking to people beforehand. Answered questions beforehand. Parents were super supportive.

Zervas: harder, there was 4 parents. No one "inside". Do we know about budget for next year?

WT: trying to add composting to city's budget \$30k to add composting for ½ of the schools. Does not know yet the criteria for choosing the schools. Institutional, infrastructure barriers. Advocate for other schools as soon as the pilots work. Grant money, city budget. Goal - have the city pay for it. If a school is facing a cost issue - wants to be composting on site. There would be money, but not operational.

5) Food recovery in cafeterias update

Amy Sangiolo is leading this project: "I am working with Sunwoo, Waneta, Marcia, and Alison Cross of Wellesley to get a [food rescue program](#) going in our schools and hopefully throughout the broader community. We had an initial meeting with food services staff and the health department to talk about the program and will hopefully schedule a walk through of the current kitchen/food prep process in February. I have also been meeting with School Committee members to inform them of this effort and to see if we can get "buy in" from them. One problem is that the food services contract is up for bid but the good news is that because of my meetings and timing, Matthew Miller was able to bring this issue of sustainability practices up during an RFP meeting so hopefully it will be incorporated in whatever contract they sign on with a food services vendor. (We know Whitson's understands these practices as they are the food services provider in Wellesley). I have also drafted a Standard Operating Procedure which I will send to our current food services provider and the health department to make sure that we incorporate current practices and that they understand the legal requirements to undertake this program.

Upcoming event, all are invited:

[‘Massachusetts’ Waste Problem, Recycling in Crisis, and Why We’re Focused on Food Waste’ on January 31](#)

6) "Use Less Green the Rest" talk

Tish Upton, from [Mothers out front](#), introduced the work of the Newton Chapter. They would like to offer free talks to parents in schools about Energy Efficiency. How to get access to PTOs?

"In this informative workshop we will share simple solutions to stop wasting money on utility bills and start making our homes greener and more sustainable while moving away from Fossil Fuels. Energy efficiency is our bridge to a clean, green future , free of fossil fuels. Join us to protect the climate for us, our children, and our grandchildren!"

Next School Connections Meeting: Thursday, February 14th, at 3:45pm at City Hall.