

Green Newton School Connections

MINUTES

Thursday, February 14 at 3:45pm
Newton Free Library - Druker Auditorium
(330 Homer Street, Newton)

Attendance: 18 people (parents, students, educators, city committees, city officials)

Carolyn Lattin, Joana Canedo, Margaret Ford, Heather Tausig, Kelly Dissing-Oleson, Julie Winsett, Molly, Skye Tausig, Becka Smillie, Anndy Dannenberg, Kathryn Teissier du Cros , Meghan Martineau, Andrew Thompson, Waneta Trabert, Diana Fisher Gomberg, Conni Melia, Deb Crossley, Amy Mah Sangiolo

1) Sustainability Director

Joana: We want to apply for the [MassDEP's School Recycling Assistance Grant Program](#). We had a meeting with Waneta, Conni, Heather T. and Allison to go through the process.

A summary of the information can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qesZ73Ft54tcvmF-pFXq6Q_9152NtpOVOMiNz1hc5Q6U/edit?usp=s_haring

We need to set up a team to work on the application. Please let us know if you want to participate.

Main task: City Officials (including Superintendent, Facilities Manager, Chairman of the School Committee, municipal Fire Chief, Board of Health Chairman (or Health Agent), and principals) need to sign a Letter of Commitment supporting of the grant and committing to continue the work after the grant is over.

It's important to note that "Programs implemented through this grant must be institutionalized and sustained after the grant funding ends".

Comments

Enlarge the mandate? Make it part of the curriculum? Dir of Sustainability should revamp whole curriculum. Not just tackle waste. The education system needs to be re-focused. Sustainability needs to be in the core of education. There's a lose connection between garden and classroom.

We are trying to create the building-blocks. This grant would be a first step to achive city-wide coordination. Once we start, we can move forward to enlarge the scope.

3 other towns near us and similar to Newton used this grant: [Arlington](#), Greenfield, Fitchburg
They had to write and approve recycling policies -- 2 included language around encouraging teachers to implement curriculum. A recycling policy is mandatory for the grant approval.

Amy Sangiolo met with school committee members. Steven Siegell seemed interested in speaking with educators about curriculum.

Diana Fisher-Gomberg can reach out to School Committee and Superintendent once we have a case ready to show them

The Grant Team will prepare this case - highlighting why we need the grant, that schools are not doing a good job with recycling, that there is little coordination between city departments (schools, facilities, public works. etc.), so no one owes the problem and nobody really takes responsibility.

Once we have this case, School Connections can ask for volunteers to reach out to different satke holders, including principals of every school.

When can we calculate savings to city? WT: there isn't really a cost-saving to city. It's a long-term cost. Mass DEP will provide this to cities and towns, provided city will continue position past end of funding. Nominal saving comes from fewer dumpster pickups

2) Signage for recycling and waste in schools

The signage is now available at the Sustainable Materials Management website, on the "get Involved" page (scroll to the bottom): http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/dpw/recycling/get_involved/default.asp

We are going to have it on the Green Newton website too.

We will also have a Handout on how to place bins, signs in classroom to maximize impact and correct usage, a Best practices guide.

- How to get more bins? - Please contact Waneta at DPW. They can provide classroom bins for free.

Students

- Students at NNHS are frustrated. Why sort in classroom if it's just going to be thrown out eventually?
- They say: " you know things aren't being recycled at NNHS?" Students would like a day in the year they can call a Sustainability Day, where they would hear on how to recycle, what to recycle, what happens if you don't do it. Need custodial buy-in.
- Angier has a powerpoint presentation to teach Elementary School kids how to separate trash from recycling

Custodians

- How to educate/coordinate with custodial staff - It's important to have the custodians involved and interested
- DFG: facilities is making a concerted effort to educate custodians
- Equipment failure: custodians need 2-barreled bins at NNHS so they don't have to dispose of materials 2x.
- WT and CM met David Stickney and Joe Crossen. Asked if they could train the custodians. DS and JC prefer to do the training themselves. Turning into process discussion on roles and responsibilities, who handles what. What should custodian do? School system has no way to deal with. Neither does DPW. No one has an answer to probs like that.

Stand off between Facilities and DPW. No one has the answers. Until recycling crisis 2018, it wasn't a problem. Now it's a problem. It's another reason schools need a designated person to deal with the issue.

3) Solar canopies at schools

Deb Crossley chairs the subcommittee on public facilities at City Council.

Thank you for coming to our meeting to introduce us to the the plan to add solar canopies to schools.

City is installing solar panels on municipal facilities - such as parking lots and schools. Now the project is on phase 3. First 2 included rooftop at Day, NNHS, NSHS, canopies at NSHS, DPW yard on Eliot St, ground mounted on Rumford.

1 and 2 generate equiv of 21% of total municipal electrical demand (city facilities, not city-wide). Phase 3: if install remainder of what's on list (not yet rejected) will go up to 40% of municipal use.

A few places were Rejected: Countryside (they will go through a major renovation project). Bigelow lot refused because 20 trees would need to be cut. Albemarle park project rejected by parks and rec.

All roof sites moving forward (schools and ed center: Zervas, Angier, Cabot gym, Wms)

The parking lot canopy sites are more controversial.

Ed center approved. Oak Hill middle school parking lot approved. NNHS - 2 sites - Walnut St canopies in middle of lot OK. Lowell St -- some limits, but probably not a problem.

Brown and Library are still under discussion. Lots of people come in from around the city to give their feedback. Usually adult citizens that are concerned about the project. Hear from people who have time.

Tend to hear negative more than positive. The committee doesn't usually hear from kids. Rarely from parents of young children. Kids care deeply that we're doing things to solve problems, not just hand off to them.

Brown Middle: issues people raise: some families oppose because they don't like the looks of the canopies. People express opinions at public hearings.

School Committee approved all of it first -- in Dec -- without much discussion. Helps bottom line significantly. City has responded to concerns about planted buffer zone and saving trees.

At Brown, school parking lot at front of school. 3 rows of panels proposed. Entire row was removed to accommodate neighbors.

New idea -- put up panels in front of school. Shelter and shade and lighting provided also by canopies.

Long-term, it would be great if kids in schools could be more deeply aware.

Could PTO promote an event?

If both arrays could be installed at Brown, 96% of own energy would be generated.

Brown and Library will be postponed from Monday vote, as 4+ counselors are away for vacation. Will take up in 2.5 weeks.

Deb's ask: Green teams could get kids energized to support these canopies.

Try to generate participation. Where should students go to be advocates?

Any member of the city can write to City Council on any subject. All materials are on city website ([Public facilities January 23 Report](#)).

Suggestion: Write letters of support of solar panels in school's parking lots, in particular Brown's. Letters should be addressed to city council (any member) or to clerk's office for distribution to all council members. Letters should be submitted by the last week of February, as the next City Council meeting is at 7:45pm on March 4.

Emails are preferable to letters. Send one email to clerk and he'll distribute. Clerk is David Olson.

More information here:

- [Solar Power Plan](#)
- <https://www.greennewton.org/solar-phase-3-improving-our-plans-a-message-from-mayor-fuller/>
- <https://www.greennewton.org/in-the-world-of-energy-choices-newtons-solar-phase-3-proposal-is-as-good-as-it-gets/>

4) New NPS FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT contract

Can our group do anything about the upcoming change on the food services in NPS? Lots of people agree that the food being served now is not of good quality and that there's too much plastic and waste. We agree that not only the food could be of better quality and greener (healthier, from organic/local sources), but the service could be more sustainable too.

Proposals are due 2/28; interviews 3/29 on; contract award date 4/12. New contract starts July 1. Are students involved in interview process. Small group does interviewing.

This is the city request for proposals:

<http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/bids/inc/blobfetch.aspx?blobid=94598>

There are four companies bidding on the food service. There is a mention of sustainability in the RFP:

"6. Locally Sourced Ingredients and Sustainability:

FSMC emphasizes the use of locally grown fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables. FSMC demonstrates the ability to provide local and organic products. FSMC offers recycling and composting programs and is willing to participate in current and future district sustainability programs. Attach sample materials."

And a mention on the quality of food:

"5. Nutrition, education and menu selections:

FSMC offers varied, visually appealing, flavorful, and nutritious meals and menus that satisfy State and Federal nutrition and dietary standard for elementary, middle, and high school students while utilizing proposed the pricing structure for NPS. In addition, FSMC offers nutrition education programs and resources to the NPS. Attach samples of menus and education materials and program descriptions."

WT thinks language is broad enough. Can parents and students still influence selection? Liam is key contact. We could let him know that students and families value this really highly. Decision will be made this spring. But there's also time to plan transition if necessary.

Contracts are 1 year. Renewable for 5 years.

We can all write to the school committee (Matthew Miller is the liaison in food related businesses) and ask that the quality of food and sustainability approach should be valued when choosing the company to provide such important service to the students. Say what we value really highly those aspects.

Water in schools - including fountains - are tested regularly. Students can drink from fountains. For repair of broken fountains, ask the principal, start in building level. They can direct you to the right person.

Food waste recovery modeled on Wellesley program. Amy Sangiolo is leading this project.

Sodexo is meeting with Marcia and Sunwoo about food waste recovery program.

Angier and Zervas are piloting composting program

4) Earth Day activities plan

Meg Martineau brainstorming for Angier. Anyone else in same boat, and want to collaborate?

Schoolwide initiative: earn tickets for engaging in sustainable behavior. 0 waste lunch; reusable water bottle; didn't contaminate recycling. Class with most tickets gets extra recess.

Create environmental coaches per grade or per class

Bigelow has ideas - water bottles pledge and/or recycling bins effort

We invite everyone to share ideas for the day.

Thank you!!!

NEXT MEETINGS

Thursday, March 14th, 3:45pm - venue TBD

Thursday, April 11th, 3:45pm - venue TBD