

**GREEN RIDGEWOOD MINUTES**  
**December 4, 2025, 7:30-9:30 PM**  
**RIDGEWOOD VILLAGE HALL, SENIOR LOUNGE**

**Attendees:** Green Ridgewood: David Refkin - Chair, Joan Hubertus, Bill Armbruster, Peter Jerdee, Jane Rouse, Pam Perron - Village Council liaison, Saurabh Dani, BOE liaison, Vicky Van Dyke - Parks & Recreation liaison, Jill Fasano - Ridgewood Water liaison, Miles Luo - RHS staff, Anika Mukkatira, -- Student liaison Green Team: Mike Faherty, Joe Ferrante, Geri Atwood, Manpreet Tyagi; Julia Grant - Student liaison

Guests:  
Christian De La Cruz, NJ Watershed Ambassador Program (Americorps)  
Gia Battaglia - RHS student, Devyn Letscher - RHS student.

**Administration**

1. Welcome and Attendee Introductions
2. We approved the November 6<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes, with one minor correction.

**Updates/Discussion/Strategy**

3. Chair Report, Green Ridgewood highlights (David)

David thanked people who worked on various projects during the past month while he was away for several weeks.

Christian De La Cruz introduced himself. He serves as Americorps ambassador for Watershed Management Area #4, covering the Lower Passaic and Saddle Rivers. He volunteered to assist us with our work. He can be reached at [wma4njwap@gmail.com](mailto:wma4njwap@gmail.com)

4. Village Council Liaison Report (Pam)

On Nov 12 the Council awarded a contract to Suburban Consulting Engineers for work at Schedler Park. In addition, the Council has hired Matrix to do the remediation at Schedler Park. There was discussion of using bioremediation and bringing in biota, but [bioremediation](#) can be unreliable. There was discussion about removing the berm at Schedler Park because of solid waste. Saurabh said this would be challenging.

The DEP will hold a hearing in Trenton on Dec. 15 regarding the Village's proposal for disposal of certain property to satisfy Green Acres requirement for actions taken years ago. Pam hopes this will be the final step. If successful, Green Acres will no longer penalize the Village and we will be able to secure grants in the future.

Pam addressed the status of the property that was previously the site of a Texaco gas station on Franklin Avenue. The Village will have to dig monitor wells at this property.

The meeting to consider expanding the use of electric leaf blowers with the Parks Department and Streets Department will be on Dec. 12. Pam will ask the Parks Dept. to confer with the Maplewood Parks Dept. to discuss their successful transition from gas to electric leaf blowers.

5. Resource Management & Conservation Subcommittee (Peter)

a. Leaf Blower Strategy Moving forward

i. Building Village Support

ii. Research and Website Content

We've found more information on public sources. We've been putting together a working document. Joan said there have been some concerning statements from doctors about the health effects of gas-powered leaf blowers.

Pam asked if we can have a draft memo to the Village manager in the next five days (before the meeting on Dec. 12.) Pam suggests focus should be on the health of our employees. Peter, chair of the Resource management and conservation subcommittee, will lead this effort.

iii. Legislative Support - There had been some hope that Sen. Smith's leaf-blower bill would move forward in the lameduck session, but apparently it's not going to happen.

We have a draft resolution by the Village Council of support for the Smith bill.

We're working towards some kind of local ordinance which might become less urgent if the state ordinance is passed. Smith's bill would not prevent municipalities from passing their own ordinances which could take effect sooner.

It was noted that many states are passing extended producer responsibility legislation, which would make the original producers of plastic products, such as packaging companies, financially responsible for recovery of their materials.

b. Food Scraps

Recycling Dept. has put in a budget request for two additional food scrap locations. These would be at Habernickel Park and the Stables. They would cost \$3,300 each.

- c. Recycling-[Ridwell](#) presentation (Joan)  
Pam, Geri, Carolyn and Joan attended. Ridwell is a company that started in Oregon focused on recycling plastics that are not typically recycled curbside. It's working with about 225 partners who take recycled materials and turn it into something else, such as creating wallets from tires and Trex board from recycled plastic film. Ridwell is relatively inexpensive and is much cheaper than Teracycle, a competitor. Ridwell is looking to put a warehouse in the tri-state area.
- d. Skip the Stuff  
This legislation is considered likely to be part of the legislature's lame duck agenda.
- e. Landscaper Registry (Pam)  
We have an ordinance working group. The idea is to require every landscaper to get a permit to dump leaves at the Lakeview composting facility.

6. Climate Resilience Planning Grant Application (David, Joan)

a. Bergen County Application

Application that was submitted listed six towns -- Fair Lawn, Lodi, Rochelle Park, Ridgewood, Saddle Brook and Glen Rock, but not Paramus. The county only submitted a budget request for \$100k to administer the grant. Joan said we should reach out to Hackensack Riverkeeper, the community-based organization listed in the application. Paramus did not know that it was not included.

b. Activities with other Bergen County Communities (David)

David will be in contact with Team Rochelle Park in two weeks to update them on the Columbia Saddle River Project.

7. Green Team Report (Mike)

a. Sustainable NJ Certification Process Status

Geri has done a lot of work in the past month. Ridgewood does a lot, but it's very disjointed. Geri is focusing on creative parts such as library activities.

Mike said we went through the list of questions we want to ask the village regarding the waste-management report.

Pam suggested including the Mayor's Wellness Campaign in the application to Sustainable NJ.

8. Students Update including Student Projects (Julia, Anika, Miles)

Anika said there are various projects, including composting bins around town, bioswales, and green infrastructure in Midland Park (because it is part of Ridgewood Water.)

Miles said the high school may be getting a vertical hydroponics garden in his classroom. He also said the heating system in the high school doesn't work properly. The temperature in some rooms is 85 degrees, 15 degrees warmer than some other rooms

9. 2026 Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair Theme (All)

David suggests sustainable landscaping as the theme as it relates to our work on leaf blowers, rain gardens and past efforts such as No Mow May and promoting native plants. Jane suggested energy conservation. Schools are moving ahead with this. David said the municipality is a bit behind, but that we expect to get the energy audit by August. He said energy conservation may be a better theme for 2027. There was discussion about the environmental impact of pesticides and weed-killers. These could be tied to Parkinson's disease.

Pam suggested that Ridgewood trails could be another theme.

10. Board of Education Meeting/Discussion (David, Beth, Miles, Bill, Saurabh)

Issues at the last meeting included the school district's table-to-table initiative for disposing of unused food, as well as electric buses. The district's energy audit results will be discussed next week. We discussed no idling initiative. The Village has an ordinance but it's not enforced. The signs are very faded now. Saurabh said that if the signs are on school property we can get new ones.

Saurabh said the BOE has been approached by sports clubs to consider artificial turf at the Benjamin Franklin school field. If Green Ridgewood has a position on this, it should be presented in the early stages. Saurabh is concerned about the health impacts of PFAS. If it rains, water might seep through and contaminate the groundwater. BF field replacement is imminent. We should act soon; two months from now might be too late. There was a discussion concerning the appropriate role that Green Ridgewood should, or should not play related to a school owned property.

11. October Bergen Hub Meeting (David)

We met six weeks ago. We had a presentation about Green Streets regarding potential Sustainable Jersey points.

12. Resilience, Flooding, Stormwater Subcommittee Activities (Joan)

a. Parks & Rec joint project

We had a meeting about rain gardens at Graydon Park and Vets Field. Rather than installing new rain gardens elsewhere, we should focus on improving the existing gardens. Joan found knotweed in the area around the rain gardens. She plans to make

the area around the gardens bigger and removing invasive species. She said maybe we could ask Dr. Obropta, director of the Rutgers Green Infrastructure Champions Training Program and his teams for advice on where we can and should build rain gardens.

13. Finance - 2025 Expenses, Discussion of 2026 budget (Jane)

We found a \$4,000 accounting error in our favor. This gives us a balance of \$19,277, up about \$3,000 from the beginning of the year. The reason was a successful Earth Day fair. The overall expenses for the Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair were \$3,800. However, revenues were an all-time high and our share of the profits were about \$5,000. We spent about \$3,800 on Earth Day, but we brought in much more than that in vendor fees. We spent about \$1,000 this year on communications, mainly for the website, but most of that was a one-time expenditure. In the future, it will just be \$180 a year.

14. Green Building/Sustainability Subcommittee. (David)

a. Energy Audit/Sustainable NJ Grant status

The audit is moving ahead. It's been a slow process but we're moving forward.

New Business

Miles said a company called McKay is asking the county for permission to build a 50-story cell tower at Ramapo Reservation in Mahwah. Miles said it would speed up stock trades by 0.1 seconds. He suggested we try to get the county to oppose this. Here is an [article](#) about plans by environmental activities opposing the tower.

Future Meeting Dates: January 8, 2026 (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday), February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026, April 9<sup>th</sup>, Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair -April 26<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Armbruster