

GREEN RIDGEWOOD MINUTES
March 5, 2026
RIDGEWOOD VILLAGE HALL, SENIOR LOUNGE

Attendees: Green Ridgewood: David Refkin – Chair; Justin Manger - Vice chair; Bill Armbruster, Jane Rouse, Pam Perron – Village Council liaison, Jill Fasano – Ridgewood Water; Miles Luo - RHS staff, Anika Mukkatira -- Student liaison. Green Team: Joe Ferrante, Richard Krauser, Manpreet Tyagi; Julia Grant – Student liaison; Mary Lou Handy – BOE liaison
Guests: Devyn Letscher (student guest); George Wolfson

Administration

1. Welcome and Attendee Introductions. Rich Krauser introduced himself. He has lived in Ridgewood for 35 years. He worked for both the Army Corp of Engineers and the EPA.
2. We approved the February 5th meeting minutes.

Updates/Discussion/Strategy

3. Chair Report, Green Ridgewood highlights (David)
Joan Hubertus has resigned from Green Ridgewood. We have one opening on both the Green Team and Green Ridgewood. Rutgers is hosting a New Jersey Climate Change Research Symposium on Wednesday June 10 in Piscataway.
4. Village Council Liaison Report (Pam)

The Council voted Wednesday to accept a \$250,000 grant from the [Bergen County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund](#) to help cover remediation costs at Schedler Field, plus a loan of \$1.35 million, for a total of \$1.6 million.

The Council approved the addition of Hillsdale to our Styrofoam densifier shared services program.

We have to adopt the [Bergen County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) this year.

The Council adopted the five affordable housing ordinances.

The Village is moving the community garden, currently located behind the Stable, because of flooding there. The new garden will be located at Habernickel Park.

5. 2026 Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair (Earth Day Subcommittee)
 - a. Theme, Materials & Logistics – The theme will be Sustainable Yards. We looked at the two posters that we'll be showing at Super Science Saturday to promote Earth Day and Project 1,000 acres.
 - b. Scavenger Hunt/Sustainability Partners, Prizes – Visitors will stop at various vendor stations. We'll need to look at applications from the vendors to see if they are engaging in sustainable practices. There will be three prizes – an electric lawn mower; an electric leaf blower; and a rake and some seeds. Jane

suggested that another prize could be composting equipment for residents to use in their own backyard.

Spinning Wheel Questions/Discussions – The Communications Subcommittee will work on questions. We want to make the wheel interactive by including questions such as what are you doing to make your yard more sustainable.

- c. We will get 2 tents from the Village; vendors need to bring their own tents. Pam will get a tax-free form and give it to Jane, our treasurer.
- d. Tie-in with schools – Mary Lou Handy is working on posters. Jane and Beth are dividing up businesses to approach about displaying posters.
- e. Sponsors – There will be four main sponsors, including Valley Hospital, Ridgewood Water and PSE&G.

6. Super Science Saturday (Bill, Miles, Julia, Anika)

Bill, David, Jane, Rich, Joe, Peter and George will be there to man the Green Ridgewood table. (Note: Bill was sick and unable to attend.) Devyn will be presenting on invasive species.

7. Students Update, Projects & Sustainability Day (Julia, Anika, Miles)

For Sustainability Day (Friday, April 24, at the high school), we will have 24 tables, with two others pending.

Some students will also be participating in a program at Ramapo College on March 16.

Travell School will have a sustainability day on April 22. Anika said the students have come up with an idea for Earth Day, focusing on wildflower meadow.

Miles said the recycling number provided by IWS (the waste collection service for the school district) is 1.9%, which makes it look as though they are not recycling cardboard. He said he knows they are doing it and that the rate should be 15% to 20%. Schools get 10 points from Sustainable Jersey if they achieve a 60% rate.

8. Climate Resiliency Planning Grant/March 14th Meeting/SRWA (David)

We are using the name “Saddle River Watershed Alliance” for the group of seven towns that will be applying for a new grant from NJ DEP. We got a letter from DEP showing that our application in the last cycle was rejected. Paramus was not included in the application but it will be represented at the March 14 meeting by Tom Donahue. Glen Rock is on board, as are Fair Lawn, which has a new young person who will represent it, and Rochelle Park. David has spoken with the Rochelle Park township committee, and its mayor has been very helpful. It will have three people at the meeting. Saddle Brook now has a green team. David hasn’t reached out yet to Lodi but will do so soon. Bill Sheehan from Hackensack Riverkeeper will be at the meeting. The woman who represents Governor Sherill in this region may be there. We want to build a grassroots organization that will be permanent.

Justin did an OPRA (Open Public Records Act) request on who got grants and why. There were 7 applications. The two winners were Montclair (the prime sponsor, together with Essex County) and Monmouth. The Montclair request was 75 pages. The Bergen County application, in which we participated, ranked 6th. Justin said one problem with our

application was its limited scope, and that we would have done better if we had included benefits of reducing the heat island effect.

9. Resource Management & Conservation Subcommittee (Pam)

- a. Leaf Blower Strategy Moving Forward
 - i. Municipal fleet – Maplewood trip in January was postponed due to snow removal. The new meeting will be in early April.
 - ii. S 217 – (Leaf-blower transition bill.) We will ask the Council to do a resolution supporting the bill after the Maplewood meeting.
 - iii. Landscaper registry – Pam has to discuss this with Heather Mallander, the Village clerk.
- b. Food Scraps – Next steps to expand the program. New statute requires a 50% reduction in food waste from 2022 levels by 2035. Sean Hamlin, our Recycling Director, wants to get two more 65-gallon containers, but they would cost a total of almost \$10,000. Sean’s ultimate goal is to have universal curbside pick-up. Joe said [Natural Upcycling](#), the company that handles our composting, does a good job. Joe estimated that we could save at least \$100,000 annually in dumping fees at the landfill if we could get a 50% reduction in food waste.
- c. Skip the Stuff –The new law takes effect August 1. DEP will have a public outreach campaign for 180 days, but as of now we don’t have any materials. We could perhaps do a presentation to the Chamber of Commerce. We might ask the students to do a door-to-door campaign with merchants. Jill suggested getting the Health Department to put something out.
- d. Ridgewood Water (Jill)

[PFAS](#) remediation continues. 12 projects are under way. It’s going slowly but they’re pushing. Two facilities are up and running; nine more will be completed this year, and the last one in early 2027.
They are moving ahead with lead service line replacements.

10. Green Team Meeting and Update (Joe, Pam)

They had a social event at Park West Tavern recently and had some discussion of MS4. Joe is taking the Rutgers Green Infrastructure course.

11. Resilience, Flooding & Stormwater (David, Justin, Pam)

David will chair this subcommittee following Joan’s resignation.

David, Justin, Pam and Peter had a meeting on Feb. 27 with James McGrath, the new village engineer, who previously was municipal engineer in Paterson. The engineering department will be repairing our riparian buffers. They will be de-snagging and desilting, but not dredging, focusing on the Hohokus Brook.

Regarding permeable surfacing, McGrath said it works best in passive areas that don’t get much traffic. He also said the Village will not be building a dam.

12. Board of Education Meeting/Discussion (Beth, Bill, Jane)

There was discussion of the no-idling ordinance and how the police department will enforce it, as well as the school district's partnership with Table to Table for getting unused food from the school cafeterias to people in need. (See this [article](#).)

13. Communications Subcommittee (Justin)

There will be a Green Ridgewood Google docs shared folder
The newsletter will come out in early to mid-April.

14. GR Event – Trail Blazing (Pam)

This is something we would like to do as a group activity likely over the summer. More details to come.

15. ANJEC Training, Sustainable NJ Conference – May 15.(David)

Seven of us were signed up for it.

David and Geri will go to the Sustainable New Jersey Conference on May 15.

16. Green Building/Sustainability Subcommittee. (David, Justin)

Potential new study with Columbia University – This would be in early 2027 and focus on resiliency and how we manage when we have more extreme heat and extreme cold. Alina is working on a general application.

17. Finance – Discussion/Approval of 2026 Budget (Jane, David, All) –

The opening account balance this year was a little over \$19,000.

We voted and approved \$2,000 in expenditures:

Earth Day - \$600

Conferences - \$600

Support for the James Rose Center – \$500 (for native plants and planters)

March 14 meeting with officials from other towns --\$300

18. New Business

Joe Ferrante brought up green amendments to state constitutions, guaranteeing residents the right to clean air, clean water and a healthy environment. Pam advised that the Council passed a resolution in support of a NJ green amendment

19. Future Meeting Dates 2026: April 9th, Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair -April 26th, May 7, June 4

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Armbruster
Secretary