

**GREEN RIDGEWOOD MINUTES**  
**November 6 , 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, Alina Mordkovich, Pam Perron - Village Council liaison, Vicky Van Dyke - Parks & Recreation liaison, Jill Fasano - Ridgewood Water liaison, Anika Mukkatira - Student liaison; Green Team: Mike Faherty, Joe Ferrante, Geri Atwood, Mark Kaplan. Guests: Carolyn Jacoby, Keelin Sullivan

**Administration**

1. Welcome and Attendee Introductions
2. Approved October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes.

**Updates/Discussion/Strategy**

3. Chair Report, Green Ridgewood highlights (David)

We had a second phone call today about the energy audit for Village buildings. We have an opening on Green Ridgewood. The form to apply is on the Village website.

The open space referendum passed, with 56% of the vote.

4. Village Council Liaison Report (Pam)

- About a year ago, three Ridgewood high school girls proposed a bike lane to connect all the schools on the east side of the Village: Hawes, Somerville, BF and Travelle. The section on South Pleasant between Houston and Grove Streets has been completed. Police had suggested that we make it a no-parking lane. This has caused some consternation among neighbors.
- Twelve trees have been ailing in the allée between the library and village hall. These are cherry trees, honoring the twelve Ridgewood residents who died on 9/11. They are being replaced with crab apple trees.
- Disposal - NJ DEP said the Village's sale of park property on S. Broad Street for affordable housing in 1980s violated their Green Acres regulations. As a penalty, the Village has been ineligible for Green Acres grants until it comes up with alternative park land. In response, the Village is vacating its ownership of a portion of Marlborough Road, which is a paper street, so that the property can become parkland. NJ DEP is willing to accept this as part of a settlement. This opens up grant opportunities for the Village from DEP.
- The NY-NJ Trail Conference ran its training sessions in October. We're trying to build a system for monitoring the trails in all our parks and are looking for volunteers, who would work through a section of every park each quarter and let their captain know of anything that is amiss. Captains would be other volunteers willing to spend more

time on it. It is not a big commitment. The volunteers would be asked to note problems like insufficient signage, garbage, and erosion. Contact Pam if you want to volunteer.

- The Council had a proposal last night (Nov. 5) to hire Suburban Consulting Engineers to design all aspects of Schedler Park. First thing will be to remediate the park. (The Council will vote whether to award the contract on Nov. 12.)
- There are now 5 or 6 other towns that are using the Village's Styrofoam densifier at our recycling center. The densifier makes the Styrofoam very hard and thick. The company we send it to makes it into things like moldings for homes.
- Pam spoke with Keith Kazmark, the Village manager. He agrees that it's appropriate to track the costs of turf fields and compare them with the costs for a grass field. The Village will probably have to replace Maple Field in the next few years. Pam asked Keith to allow Green Ridgewood to come up with the criteria for what they're tracking.
- There is contamination on Franklin Avenue where the Village removed 11 underground storage tanks from Village property next to the old Town Garage. The Village is trying to get a \$10,000 grant to clean up the leaks from the tanks. Joe Ferrante said the Village should go after Texaco because it used to have a gas station there. The Village bought the property that Texaco had been using.

5. Ridgewood Water Update & Conservation Plan (Jill Fasano)  
We had a meeting of the four towns served by Ridgewood Water. We're looking for a volunteer to spearhead water conservation and communication among the four towns. David noted that even with recent rainfall, we're still down 30% from normal levels over the past year or so.

6. Resource Management & Conservation Subcommittee (Peter Jerdee)
- a. Maplewood Meeting Re: Leaf Blowers  
Pam, David, Justin, and Peter attended a meeting hosted by the mayor of Maplewood on Oct. 29. Maplewood also brought its superintendent of Public Works and its Shade Tree Division foreman. Activists from Montclair also attended. The message was that other towns (like Ridgewood) could do this, too. They said landscapers had threatened to leave these towns if they passed stringent leaf-blowing regulations, but none did so, and that there has been no increase in costs for residents. Private and public properties in town look good. It's better for the health of both landscapers and town personnel who use leaf blowers on municipal property. Both towns have fully transitioned from gas-powered to electric-powered equipment. They can use the same chargers for leaf blowers that they use for other equipment such as

trimmers. One issue here in Ridgewood is our limited charging capacity. Maplewood uses all STIHL equipment that can charge four batteries overnight.

For enforcement, Maplewood initially used a call-in number but later moved to inspectors and other mechanisms. The ordinances came about by approaching this as a public health issue; they compared it to indoor smoking or the use of lead paint. Montclair had activists showing up at Council meetings for six months before the Council passed the ordinance. The meeting hosts recommended a pre-defined phase-out period (e.g., to accommodate people who had just bought new gas-powered equipment), rather than an open-ended seasonal ban. There were lawsuits in both towns by landscapers. Maplewood won theirs. Montclair's is ongoing.

b. Leaf-Blower Strategy Moving Forward

David said they walked out of the meeting feeling inspired. Pam suggested following the game plan recommended by Sustainable Jersey. David said it really registered with him when the people from Montclair said it was a public health emergency. The noise from gas-powered equipment leads to stress, and the air pollution emitted from gas blowers is the same amount that a car uses driving 1,100 to 4,000 miles. Joan noted the health effects are more severe for landscaping workers than for residents, given their much longer periods of exposure. Pam said Princeton's blower ordinance cites this as an important concern for the health of workers.

Mike said it's easier to get SJ points by doing easy stuff first. Pam said the hard part is identifying the landscapers who work in town, and that advocacy for an ordinance would be a matter for one or more independent groups to undertake. It was noted that a referendum is another potential path to regulating leaf blowers and that Morristown had done so. David said he views gas-powered leaf blowers as a big challenge, but one that we could overcome. Joe asked if the Village Council would support it. Pam said the Council would do so if Parks and Recreation supported it. Joan said the parks departments in Maplewood and Montclair fully support it. Pam said she will ask Keith Kazmark to get the Parks department here to confer with their counterparts in Maplewood and Montclair.

Joe recommends a Swiss/German equipment manufacturer called [Kress](#) that has an outlet in Mahwah. One of their customers is Real Madrid.

Pam said our Board of Education's new landscaping contract this year calls for no gas-powered leaf blowers. Jill will find out when Ridgewood Water's landscaping contract expires.

There is potential for the NJ legislature- to pass Sen. Bob Smith's bill (S. 217) in the lame duck session. The bill would eventually ban **two-stroke leaf blowers and limit four-stroke leaf blowers to nonresidential areas.** The RM&C subcommittee is going to do more research, including following up with a group called [Quiet Communities](#).

c. **Lawn Care -- Project 1,000 Acres (Mike Faherty)**

Project 1,000 Acres is an initiative designed to promote more sustainable landscaping practices in Ridgewood. We had a conversation with three RHS students who may want to take it up as a project for their AP Environmental Science class. The idea would be to help revitalize the initiative by promoting Project 1,000 Acres more effectively. Anika said all the students in the class have been assigned a project. David suggested that Mike check with Miles Luo about this.

d. **Food Scrap Update/Sean Hamlin report**

The food scrap program has surpassed the 100-ton mark **cumulatively since it began in 2021. That's the equivalent of 10 garbage trucks.** Currently we have two drop-off points - one at the recycling center and one at the train station. The Village hopes to add two more next year. Each of these storage bins costs \$3,300. David suggested that maybe Green Ridgewood could pay for one of these. Sean Hamlin, the recycling coordinator, feels it's a 10-year goal to have food scraps picked up at all residents' homes free of charge. Residents can drop off pumpkins at the recycling center or put them in composting. David noted it would be helpful to **measure the cost savings from the food scrap program. This is especially so, given the budget issues, with electricity costs and health insurance costs for Village employees skyrocketing.**

e. **Skip the Stuff**

Statewide Skip the Stuff legislation is on the agenda for the NJ legislature's lame duck session. We have spoken to officials and employees in Glen Rock and Montclair which have passed Skip the Stuff ordinances. They say the ordinances have been well received and there have been no problems. The Montclair town employee noted the importance of outreach to restaurants, **which was done through business improvement districts.**

f. **Landscaper Registry (Pam, Joan)**

Joan said we have the form.

7. **Columbia/Climate Resilience Grant Application-(David, Pam, Joan**

a. Bergen County Interaction/Application process (David, Pam)

The good news is that the grant application was completed by the Oct. 29 deadline, with Bergen County taking the lead. However, it has not been very communicative, nor has it given us a copy of the submitted application. We met with Mr. Ehrenberg, the No. 3 person in county government, and asked him to partner with us. David said he is not even sure who the seven communities listed in the application are. He thinks it's the six towns that include sections of Saddle River County Park, plus Lodi. Joan suggested using FOIA (Freedom of Information Act). The state has allocated \$10 million to be shared among the six winners of the Climate Resilience grants. David said he want to make sure that this gets done.

b. Activities with other Bergen County Communities (David)

David has encouraged Paramus to be pro-active and to be involved in it.

c. Potential third project with Columbia (Alina)

Alina said she serves as a career mentor at SIPA (Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs). She has two mentees every semester. The next project would either be next summer or the spring of 2027 and would involve four to six grad students. She referred to a recent [NY Times](#) article about Paris taking a forward-looking approach to heat resilience, looking ahead to 2050. Such a project here would count as an innovative project for Sustainable Jersey.

One potential area for the study would be a vulnerability assessment, aimed at identifying the most vulnerable populations, such as senior citizens, as well as vulnerable infrastructure, along with the best practices to protect them. This would include a short implementation road map. There would be three major aspects, including an interim report, a final written report and an oral report to the Village Council. This is all to be determined. Joan said her initial reaction is that it's way too much for just four to six students. Alina agreed. She will try to get it pushed to include more students.

Pam said she thinks that in the lame duck session there may be legislation for unified GIS (green infrastructure) mapping.

8. Green Team Report (Mike Faherty)

a. Sustainable NJ Certification Process Status

Mike said he has met with a lot of people in the last few months. Each team member is taking on different actions. We've already updated five actions.

The tree protection ordinance qualifies for Sustainable Jersey points.

SJ is not doing a recertification in 2026 because it is upgrading and revising its system. Everyone who was up for recertification in 2026 has been pushed back to 2027.

Mike will email Keith Kazmark our specific requests for documentation/information. He will then pass the requests on the appropriate departments.

9. Students Update (Anika Mukkatira)

The high school will have a pumpkin-smashing event on Nov.

16. Students will use baseball bats to smash them. Anika thinks it will be at Habernickel Park. Some students are working with Ridgewood Water on tree planting. She thinks about 10 students are interested in trail maintenance projects. Keelin said she is working on better communication with the elementary and middle schools.

BF is still in process of picking a faculty advisor.

David said we'll start talking about Earth Day at our next meeting.

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

We're meeting next week and will report on it next month.

11. Resilience, Flooding, and Stormwater Subcommittee (Joan Hubertus)

a. Parks & Recreation joint project

The Habernickel rain garden has been weeded and looks really good. We've lost some plants, but the large majority look good. Black-eyed Susans took the biggest hit. At Graydon, the rain garden is getting too much waterflow. The Vets Field rain garden is not getting enough waterflow

The Washington Post this week had a very detailed article about deadly rivers in the sky. (Here is the [link](#).) The article has lots of science. The plumes that sit in the atmosphere are getting bigger. Rain occurs only when the plumes meet up with something else, such as a mountain or a cold front. Last year there were three main areas that got hit: California; Valencia, Spain; and Southeast Asia. Climate change is affecting this. There are hot spots around the world that are vulnerable to these. NJ is a hot spot. The rain in Valencia was so powerful that it tore clothes off of people, and ripped roofs off of building. The rain fell so hard that it was like coming from a fire hose. There is 12% more water in the atmosphere now than 85 years ago.

b. Alternative grass tests

Jill said the grass planted outside Ridgewood Water is doing well. It's being watered every day

12. Communications: October Newsletter (David)

The newsletter went out last week. Justin did a great job with it. We will suggest that Carol Bialkowski include a note in the weekly email about what **not** to include in the leaf piles.

13. Finance - 2025 Expenses, Discussion of 2026 budget (Jane Rouse)  
No word yet from Nancy Bigos, director of Parks and Recreation, or Bob Rooney, the Village's CFO.

We're still trying to track down proceeds from Earth Day.

14. Green Building/Sustainability Subcommittee. (David) - 10 minutes
  - a. Energy Audit/Sustainable NJ Grant status  
This has been a royal pain in the neck. It's been going on way too long. Carol has been very involved. Jill and Pam have each been on one of the calls.  
We have received the technical assistance grant. Several people are working on it.  
We have a lot of work to do on the planning grant. If we get that, then we can apply for a \$250,000 implementation grant.  
Residential energy outreach grant would be a much heavier lift. Pam said it's much easier to get the village grant.  
David said we're going to need help to get all this work done.

15. Future Meeting Dates 2025 -2026: December 4, January 8, 2026 (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday),  
February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Meeting adjourned at 9:38 pm.

Submitted by Bill Armbruster, 11/10/25