

GREEN RIDGEWOOD MEETING

April 10, 2025, 7:30-9:30 PM

RIDGEWOOD VILLAGE HALL, SENIOR LOUNGE

Attendees: Green Ridgewood: David Refkin – Chair, Beth Gould Creller – Vice Chair, Jane Rouse, Peter Jerdee, Joan Hubertus, Justin Manger, Bill Armbruster, Pam Perron – Village Council member, Vicky Van Dyke – Parks & Rec liaison; Green Team: Mike Faherty – Chair, Mark Kaplan, Joe Ferrante, Manpreet Kalsi, Julia Grant – Student liaison; guests: Carolyn Jacoby, Maeve Schueber (student), Keelin Sullivan (student), Yuna Kim (student)

Administration

1. Welcome and Attendee Introductions
2. March 6th meeting minutes unanimously approved.

Updates/Discussion/Strategy

3. Village Council Liaison Report (Pam)
 - The Council met last night, introduced the budget, and posted it on their website. The public hearing and vote will be held May 14.
 - Ordinances passed include:
 - Setting 2025 Ridgewood Water rates and requiring proof of replacement of lead or galvanized water service lines (or arrangements to do so) before sale of property.
 - \$4.9 million bond passed for water utility capital improvements.
 - Prohibiting feeding wildlife including private property (expanded from existing prohibition on public property), with the exception of up to 3 bird feeders elevated 6+ feet.
 - Tree protection ordinance passed for third time, with further improvements.
 - Prohibiting skateboards, scooters and micromobility vehicles in the CBD. Police want to start enforcing it this season. It also prohibits regular bikes on sidewalks, making it difficult to use them as an alternative to cars. The Council is considering amendment and has asked the chief to report back in September.

- Omnibus bond ordinance includes \$165,000 for planting of trees in residential areas and annual \$51,000 artificial turf replacement sinking fund.
- Schedler soil remediation bonded, including for berm removal.
- \$108,000 appropriated for storm water system repair.
- Ridgewood Beautification Team (f/k/a Project Pride) is planting trees May 17 at 7:45 a.m. – members are encouraged to participate.
- Ordinance introduced to authorize Village Attorney to obtain underground easement at 535 E. Ridgewood Ave for Ridgewood Water pipe to PFAS treatment facility.
- Irrigating all trees the Village has planted in residential areas under 2 years old (contracts require it for 1 year).
- Authorized Sustainable Jersey PSE&G technical assistance grant of \$2,500 (in addition to previously approved \$10,000 planning grant; another grant not yet applied for is available for execution of plan).
- GR is invited to have its May meeting at the Schedler House.
- Forum on artificial vs. natural grass sports fields is moved from April 17 to May 15.

4. Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair – Plan for April 27 (Earth Day Subc.)

- All members are signed up for 1 or 2 shifts: 9:30-12:15 and 12:15-3:00
- Subcommittee met this week. We will have 2 tents. Printing of a new 6'-by-3' GR banner is approved.
- Posters to be displayed – 1. flooding (existing poster); 2. showing fire (picture from Greenwood Lake last November, 20 miles away); 3. rain gardens; 4. 1 or 2 posters on leaf blowers/Reduce, Replace, Relax (Manpreet, Peter and Mike to make content and design in coming days).
- Spinning wheel has 6 categories, subject to adjustment - climate, energy, flooding, general, lawn care, compost/recycle. Testing with RHS students was successful. Around 50 true/false questions close to complete (one set for both adults and kids).
- Adults get a raffle ticket if they get 5 stamps – 1 each from GR, RHS, RW, Recycling (Sean) and Backyard Living – and give their email address for our mailing list. GR stamp requires answering Wheel question correctly. Have stickers and candy for kids.
- The raffle prize will be an electric leaf blower - Ryobi model from Home Depot.

- A treasure hunt was discussed – kids who complete their card by hearing presentations at Frank’s bees, Frank’s honeys, animal hospital, health barn, and solar panels tables get a “Green Champion” sticker with our logo. After a discussion of whether to expand it to additional tables/vendors, it was decided to limit the treasure hunt to these 5 tables for this year – we need to get stamps for each of those.
 - Art poster contest – we have judges and a gift basket prize. The top 3 winners will be displayed in our area. Additional store front space is needed to display the other posters, so there will be outreach to some CBD businesses.
5. Ridgewood Baseball Opening Day – (Joan) Plan for April 26
- GR will have a table and will engage with residents on the same topics and with the same posters as Earth Day.
 - Set up on the north end of Vets Field around 8:30, in vicinity of parking lot.
 - Mike and Joan will attend; others are encouraged.
6. Green Ridgewood Website – (Mike/Justin - Communications subcommittee)
- The first draft of the redesigned website has been completed and reviewed by a small working group. Improvements include a better menu across the top and 9 action-oriented boxes for 9 initiatives. We may change the featured “above-the-fold” button on a monthly basis.
 - The draft is still rough. It needs to be populated with additional content, including swapping in real Ridgewood pictures and adding an action box about leaf blowing.
 - Justin and Mike have edit privileges and should be given any comments. Another draft version will be circulated to the review team. The goal is for the new website to go live before Earth Day.
 - Justin is working on the next quarterly newsletter to go out before Earth Day. It will include rain gardens, rain barrels, and Beth’s piece for kids on water conservation.
7. Leaf Blowers – Plan of Action (Resource Management & Conservation Subc.)
- The subcommittee met on Monday and had a detailed discussion about strategy. Elements of the action plan include:
 - Village partnering with equipment manufacturer(s) — Joe is looking at the public financial documents of the 3 leaf blower manufacturers used by the Village: Stihl, Echo, and Redmax – to see if it is possible to work with them downstream. Of

those, Redmax is the most promising. It has been acquired by the progressive Swedish company Husqvarna. Joe has called them and expects to hear from them in the coming days. (Stihl is a German, family-owned company and Echo is a US company now owned by a Japanese conglomerate. Both sell mostly gas-powered equipment.) Joe also plans to look into the manufacturers Toro and Worx.

- Supporting State-level legislation — The bill S-217, introduced last year by Sen. Smith, would prohibit sale of 2-stroke leaf blowers in NJ beginning 2 years, prohibit their use in 4 years, and prohibit use of 4-strokes in residential areas in 4 years. Pam will draft and share with the Council draft resolution supporting Sen. Smith's bill. David will reach out to Lois Kraus, try to get together coalition of the willing at the Sustainable Jersey conference in 1 month to discuss what to do.
- Landscaper registry — Joan will leverage the existing list of landscapers and prepare questions to ask landscapers (what equipment they have etc.) in order to be included on the registry. Pam will have a meeting of the internal ordinance working group on the subject.

8. Ridgewood Schools

a. Students Update (Julia/ RHS Students)

- The RHS green team will bring their existing stands on urban runoff and the advantages and disadvantages of artificial vs. natural turf to the Earth Day Fair.

b. Sustainability Day at Schools (Julia/RHS Students) – April 25, 9:00-2:00

- There will be 19 student-run tables and a panel that will include Miles and Vivian. RW will be there, and Pam will be there for GR.
- Tree grants – submitting 160 potential planting locations along Ho-Ho-Kus Brook.
- Grass study is taking place in the RHS greenhouse during spring break.
- Student-run installation of rain gardens is proceeding at various Village locations in May.

9. Resilience, Flooding, Stormwater Subc. Activities (Joan)

- Meeting with Assembly Members Swain & DePhillips, next steps
 - The “Good Trouble Group” had a good meeting with Rep. Swain about 3 weeks ago regarding flooding issues. Joan has put together a priorities list and

is meeting with Rep. Swain's office in 2 weeks. The group is still working on arranging a meeting with Rep. DePhillips and may also reach out to Senator Schepisi (39th Dist., Ho-Ho-Kus, Northern Bergen County).

- Bill and David are attending the Hackensack River Nation Summit on April 22 at Fairleigh Dickinson Univ.

10. ANJEC Training

- Bill, Joe, Geri, and Manpreet participated in the annual ANJEC training event March 18-20. Recordings of the training sessions are available for others.
- On May 3, an in-person session on Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions is being held.

11. Parks & Recreation/Green Ridgewood Rain Garden Project (Joan)

- Our joint subcommittee with Parks & Rec has earmarked restoration of three rain gardens on Village property – Habernickel, Graydon, and the Stable (which is already underway, led by the Conservancy for Ridgewood Public Lands) – and construction of one new rain garden in Habernickel Park.
- Photos of the Graydon and Habernickel rain gardens, which were built 13 years ago, show rain is stuck in the lot pavement rather than moving into the gardens, and that they look unattractive (mostly weeds; and in the case of Graydon, mostly invasive species).
- Joan talked to Nancy about the existing Graydon, Habernickel and Stable gardens, focusing on making sure they're effectively processing stormwater runoff. We and Jovan Mehandzic of the Engineering Dept. are satisfied that these are viable rain gardens. Their bases are working. But the slope and buffer are not working well as they are filled up with silt etc.; accumulated stones burn the plants in heat; and improper drainage creates a breeding ground for mosquitos.
- The major restoration work at Graydon and Habernickel is scheduled for May 3. Nancy has arranged for 2 Parks & Rec staff to handle the labor-intensive tasks with 6 volunteers from Grace Church. Jovan needs to be there to supervise.
- The estimated expenses for these two restoration projects are \$2,250, consisting of \$1,150 for supplies (plants, mulch, delivery charges), \$500 for Ridgewood Engineering overtime (Jovan), \$200 for 2 signs (done by Ridgewood Signal Dept.) and \$400 for 8 weeks of watering.

- Because of funding cutbacks, Parks & Rec does not have available funds for this, and Nancy is asking GR to fund them.
- Carolyn noted that the first year is critical for weeding and watering and 8 weeks of watering is insufficient to sustain the gardens through the first year. Joan will be on water lookout duty this summer.
- Some members expressed concern about the Village not funding these projects and setting a precedent of relying on GR for them. It was noted that this is partly a function of budget timing and that trees are typically viewed as more a part of infrastructure than small projects of this kind. But future rain garden projects may be a greater funding priority for the Village – the MS4 stormwater runoff treatment plan is due in January 2026 and rain gardens are important part of that.
- It was generally agreed that the restoration projects are a worthy cause, and that with a balance of around \$20,000 expected after Earth Day fair, GR can afford to fund them.
- A motion to authorize up to \$3,000 to fund restoration of the Habernickel and Graydon rain gardens, [with the stipulation that a maintenance schedule is baked into the plan for 2-3 years until the gardens become self-sustaining], was unanimously approved.

12. Bergen Hub Update (David)

- To be covered in our May meeting

13. Sustainable New Jersey Conference (David, Bill) – May 9

- David and Bill expected to attend. Funding approval at our next meeting.

Other

14. Future Meeting Dates 2025: Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair – April 27th, May 1, June 5, July 10