

GREEN RIDGEWOOD MEETING

May 1, 2025, 7:30-9:30 PM

RIDGEWOOD VILLAGE HALL, SENIOR LOUNGE

Attendees: Green Ridgewood: David Refkin – Chair, Jane Rouse, Peter Jerdee, Joan Hubertus, Justin Manger, Bill Armbruster, Pam Perron – Village Council liaison, Jill Fasano – Village Staff liaison, Vicky Van Dyke – Parks & Rec liaison, Vivian Ewell – Student liaison, Miles Luo – RHS Faculty; Green Team: Mike Faherty – Chair, Joe Ferrante, Julia Grant – Student liaison; guests: Carolyn Jacoby, Yuna Kim (student), Ariadna Karole (student)

Administration

1. Welcome and Attendee Introductions
2. April 10th meeting minutes unanimously approved.

Updates/Discussion/Strategy

3. Chair Report, Green Ridgewood highlights (David)
 - David and Pam thanked all members and volunteers, especially the setup crew, for the hard work at Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair last week. Despite the trying weather conditions the event was a real success in terms of outreach and education, for Green Ridgewood as well as the other participating organizations. This is attributable to the tremendous planning and preparation efforts this year.
4. Village Council Liaison Report (Pam)
 - Ridgewood Water has filled Twinney Pond with well water. The well was opened up for the first time in years; the pond cannot be filled with treated water.
 - The Ridgewood Beautification Team will plant flowers in CBD May 17.
 - Earth Day Fair had more vendors (50+) and brought in more money than ever before. Everyone is encouraged to patronize the vendors. A list of the vendors will be circulated. Pam is in contact with a different potential drone operator for next year.
 - The Council set new water rates reflecting PFAS treatment charge.
 - Ordinance passed requiring sellers to prove lead or galvanized water service lines have been replaced or that there is a plan in place for replacement.
 - Ordinance passed prohibiting feeding of wildlife, now including on private property, with an exception for bird feeders with certain requirements and restrictions.
 - Tree protection ordinance amendments also passed.
 - Ordinance prohibiting operation of skateboards, scooters and anything powered in the CBD passed April 9 and went into effect April 29.
 - Bond ordinance passed including \$165,000 for residential tree planting in strips outside people's homes – amounts to about 300 trees in residential areas.
 - Bonded \$108,000 for de-snagging the brooks and repairing storm water system.

- Over \$1.5 million bonded for Schedler soil remediation – removal of berm and testing of rest of the soil for permeability. A contract for 14 test pits has been approved. The test data will be needed to design the storm water system.
 - The \$2,500 Sustainable Jersey/PSE&G technical assistance grant has been received. The sister \$10,000 energy planning grant must be implemented by October.
 - \$5,000 has been authorized for a third party engineering firm to apply for a grant to cover up to 75% of the remediation cost for the lot at N. Walnut St. & Franklin Ave. Interim use of lot for next 2-3 years is still undetermined.
 - Authorized second change order to remove underground storage tanks at N. Walnut.
 - Authorized application for \$121,000 grant to pay for Citizens Park field improvements.
 - Food scrap recycling program improvement – collection box has been installed at end of train station (NY bound side). It has not been activated yet.
 - The Committee discussed the July 4 Committee's (private group) plan for a military flyover during Village's July 4 event, this year or the following year. There was general agreement that from an environmental point of view, the impact would be negligible.
5. Review of Earth Day: What worked, what can we improve on? – (All)
- About 50 raffle cards were returned completed, to be added to GR email list. Justin suggested we look into electronic capture of new additions to the email list (ex. iPad) to save time typing.
 - The spinning wheel was very successful. It should be continued, but with some easier questions, especially for elementary and younger kids (True-False format preferred).
 - The official event hours should be kept at 11:00 to 2:30, partly to ensure it is long enough to be worthwhile for vendors (not possible for them to stay past closing time).
 - The RHS and RW liaisons considered the event a success for their organizations too.
 - Seed bombs should be left for elementary schools to do in the future.
 - Several activists from an outside, non-vendor organization were very vocal, and in some members' experience, overly aggressive. The matter will be discussed with the Village Attorney, including ways to enforce limitation of public speech to the designated portion of Van Neste Park.
 - The posters submitted for the contest by around 200 elementary school students were excellent and very thoughtful. The 3 winners are on display and GR will keep digital versions of them. More should be done next year to promote the artwork.
 - The sustainability question on the vendor questionnaire was, are you a member of NJ Sustainability Registry. 8 said yes, around 20 said no, most didn't answer. Next year, the "yeses" will be recognized at their table (and the sign up form will state this).
 - There should also be a display thanking the vendors.
 - Total event revenue was about \$14,400 – GR will net about \$5,500 from it.

- GR should start tracking the volunteer hours of members and other community volunteers, including with appropriate hourly billing rates. A google spreadsheet will be set up in the GR shared folder for this purpose.
6. Ridgewood Baseball Opening Day – April 26 (Joan, Mike)
 - Mike and Joan were set up at a table and tent from 9:30 to noon. There was not a lot of engagement, primarily because parents were too distracted by their young children playing in the bouncy houses, etc. It was not worth the effort. There was general agreement that GR should not participate in this event next year.
 7. Green Ridgewood Website; Communications Subcomm – (Justin M, Mike)
 - The redesigned GR website looks great. Further changes will be easy to implement by Justin and Mike who have direct edit access.
 - Ridgewood pictures are needed to replace various stock pictures. Some can be copied from the 2024 Columbia report.
 - The site will highlight rain gardens next.
 - The GR newsletter will go into Village email blast next week, with a few changes.
 8. Resilience, Flooding, Stormwater Subcomm Activities (Joan)
 - a. Citizens Advisory Cmte. /ACoE
 - The advisory committee has not met again. The Army Corps of Engineers came in and is proceeding with their plan.
 - Looking into funding for a bigger initiative.
 - Next meeting early June, with committee members going to areas that flood.
 - b. Rain Garden Project with Parks and Rec.
 - Two 4-person teams are reconstructing the Habernickel and Graydon rain gardens this weekend. Discussion about GR signage to follow.
 - c. Rain Gardens/Landscaper Outreach/Rutgers – October
 - Because Rutgers lost funding, Dr. Obropta said he and his team can't give a funded presentation in October. A half day training session would cost \$3,000. We will explore alternative funding, including partial funding by landscapers/landscapers' association, given that through this project we're trying to develop a new line of business for them.
 - If the event proceeds, we would have 3-4 teachers from Rutgers, including design, mechanical/technical, and Dr. Obropta. The same people would be on site for the rain garden build.
 - A location for this rain garden would be needed – possibly a church or other organization that could use one and supply their own labor; GR could

possibly donate the plants. The garden would be on the scale of Habernickel with a full drainage system, etc.

d. Meeting with Assembly Members Swain & DePhillips

- David, Joan and Sam Bouveron from Rochelle Park met with Rep. Swain and with Rep. DePhillips's Chief of Staff and gave a presentation containing four recommendations on what we should be doing collectively – 1. fund Rutgers (their grants ended); 2. anyone who implements a stricter-than-standard stormwater ordinance (as Ridgewood has done) should get a \$25,000 grant to implement it; 3. reduce impervious surfaces, replacing them with permeable surfaces or vegetation/open spaces; 4. mitigate impervious surfaces with green infrastructure (raingardens, bioswails) and planting trees.
- They expressed concerns over lost/tight funding, and decided they need to work on getting more Assembly members to the table to make real progress.

e. Hackensack River Nation Summit: Apr. 22nd at FDU (David)

- David attended the majority of the summit. The major topic was how to implement MS4 this year. A publicly available map of the town's stormwater system is required by January 2026.
- Ridgewood needs to determine whether our engineering department can do this or we will need consultants. Princeton's website is helpful on this, and we need to see the engineering team's current plan and the existing map.
- Three Bergen County commissioners were there. David spoke with Mary Amoroso and is awaiting followup from her office.

9. Potential Saddle River Clean-Up with AmeriCorps – May 31 (David, Joan)

- The Committee discussed and decided against participating in this project planned by AmeriCorps' local representative.

10. Ridgewood Schools

a. Students Update (including Earth Day) and Projects (Julia/ Vivian/Miles)

- Landscapers mowed over the RHS wildflower meadow by the tennis courts. The extent of damage is still being assessed. It has been fenced in to prevent this from recurring.
- Rain garden planting is underway at Stevens Field, followed by Ridge and then Willard and Travell.
- The District is applying for tree grants of up to \$250,000.

b. Sustainability Day at Schools – April 25 (Julia/Vivian/Miles)

- The event was very successful, with great engagement. At RHS there were 19 tables. 54 students presented, including many very engaged freshmen

and sophomores. A seminar panel included Pam, Mike Cohrs (RW), Miles, Vivian, and Sam (RHS sophomore). Wildflower meadow tours were also given.

- One of the tables/groups was on artificial turf vs. grass fields and raised awareness of the “precautionary principle” – if something is harmful to environment and could harm people, let’s not do it.

11. Artificial Turf vs. Grass Sports Fields (Pam)

- The forum planned for May 15 has been cancelled for now.
- Pam was seeking doctors to participate. This proved challenging because of strict adherence to “evidence-based medicine” – i.e., practitioners tend to avoid taking a position as long as there is less than definitive proof on adverse health effects of artificial turf vs. grass (including from presence of toxins).
- Pam is exploring an alternative, costs-based approach to engaging the public on this topic – taking into account both acquisition and maintenance costs.
- A discussion ensued that included: potential medical speakers on health effects/injuries; that these include heat stroke/heat island effect, turf burn; noting the panel on microplastics at last year’s Sustainable Jersey summit; perspectives of student athletes; that the upcoming Soccer World Cup in the US is being held only on natural grass, at the insistence of players and players’ associations; and the importance of maintaining grass fields properly and finding and learning from communities that have done so (including some in NJ).
- Schedler turf – the manufacturer could not guarantee the absence of PFAS. The microplastics issue is separate from PFAS (which is in the manufacturing process) and is more likely to be an issue with the turf.
- The Council bonded years ago to pay for artificial turf – but has not authorized the payment and is not required to spend the money.

12. Community Energy Planning Grant/Measurement: Green Building/Sustainability Subc. (Beth/David) -- Beth will convene a subcommittee meeting next Friday at noon.

13. Bergen Hub Meeting – April 28 – Key Takeaways (David)

- The featured topic was food scraps. Table to Table and others were present.
- 371 people have signed up for Ridgewood’s food scraps program – most in county.

14. NJ Sustainability Conference – May 9

- Bill and David are planning to go. The Committee approved a motion authorizing expenditure of up to \$200 to cover the costs of their attendance.
- Lois Kraus of Advocates for Transforming Landscaping in NJ is trying to get 15 communities together to coordinate strategy on the leaf blower issue.

Other

15. Future Meeting Dates 2025: June 5, July 10, August 7 (Annual Get together at David's home), September 4