

GREEN RIDGEWOOD MINUTES
January 8, 2026, 7:30-9:30 PM
RIDGEWOOD VILLAGE HALL, SENIOR LOUNGE

Attendees: Green Ridgewood: David Refkin – Chair; Justin Manger, Vice chair; Joan Hubertus, Bill Armbruster, Peter Jerdee, Jane Rouse, Pam Perron – Village Council liaison, Vicky Van Dyke – Parks & Recreation liaison, Miles Luo - RHS staff, Anika Mukkatira -- Student liaison. Green Team: Joe Ferrante, Geri Atwood, Sean Elliott, Manpreet Tyagi; Julia Grant – Student liaison
Guests: Gia Battaglia and Devyn Letscher (student guests); Robert Zeller, Richard Krauser; Carolyn Jacoby.

Administration

1. Welcome and Attendee Introductions
2. We approved the December 4^h meeting minutes.

Updates/Discussion/Strategy

3. Chair Report, Green Ridgewood highlights (David)

The application filed by Bergen County on behalf of six communities including Ridgewood was denied. David and Pam just prior to the meeting received an explanation from DEP – see #5 below.

We have major aspirations for this year.

4. Village Council Liaison Report (Pam)

January is radon action month.

Ridgewood Water just entered into a 2-year contract for PFAS lab work (with Pace Analytical). We hope by the end of two years to have the ability to do it on our own.

Council just authorized a first-year contract for solid waste disposal to landfill for \$872,860 (for an estimated 9,500 tons with I.W.S. Transfer)

Mark Kaplan was reappointed to a three-year term on the Green Team. It will expire at the end of 2028.

Remediation at Schedler will cost the Village a lot of money.

The Village has been trying for at least 15 years to clear up with NJ DEP a problem regarding the Village's disposal of park property on S. Broad St. We came up with two substitutes – (a portion of) Marlboro Rd, a paper street (adjacent to) Kings Pond Park, and a property at the end of Hammond Road. The DEP approved the Village plan on Dec. 15. The Village also will have to pay a fine.

In response to a question from David, Pam also gave an update on the Village's fair share affordable housing plan. The Council is considering five ordinances to meet its Fair Share Housing obligations. A public hearing on these five ordinances will be held on Jan. 14.

- Ordinance 4071 deals with three properties at the corner of Maple and Franklin. This would be an assisted living facility. Back in August, the Council rejected an earlier plan for such a facility at this property; therefore, Kensington, the developer, came back with a new concept that is already permissible within the Village's B-2 Zone, with the exception of the floor area ratio. The project calls for 115 beds, of which 10% would be set aside for Medicaid recipients. Some residents are worried about noise, traffic, truck deliveries, and the potential for stormwater flooding.
- Ordinance 4072 would allow town houses to be built at 299 Goffle Rd.
- Ordinance 4073 – On Chestnut Street between Douglas Place and Robinson Lane, multifamily housing and commercial uses would be allowed.
- Ordinance 4074 applies to the Central Business District (B-1 and B-2). It would increase the allowable density from eighteen units per acre to twenty units. Fair Share Housing objected, saying that was not enough, so the Council came up with certain areas on S. Broad Street that could go up to twenty-four units per acre.
- Ordinance 4075 states that the set-aside for affordable units in multi-family housing anywhere in Ridgewood must be 20%, regardless of whether the units are for sale or rental.

A question was raised about the impact on the urban heat island effect in and around the CBD, which is already 85-90%. David noted that there seems to be no communication between Fair Share Housing and DEP.

5. Climate Resiliency Planning Grant/Columbia Recommendations- Next Steps (David, all).

a. Bergen County Application

There's another application process opening up in early 2026 for the Climate Resiliency Grant. David thinks we could submit a much better application if it addresses three points in the rejection letter from DEP. The reviewers questioned why certain communities were not included, an obvious reference to Paramus. They also noted that the application did not offer a uniform approach to climate change. David said it's very clear how this can be fixed and that it should be easy. David has talked with officials in Paramus, Glen Rock, and Rochelle Park. He wants to put more pressure on the county administration. The question is whether the county really wants to step up. David said failure to act on the potential for flooding risks could easily result in a disaster that would affect property and put lives at risk. In short, he said, it was a poor application and hence it got rejected.

A question was asked about the deadline for a new application. David said he does not know but that we could rewrite what the county filed. It probably needs to be filed by the county. Pam suggested that we could approach the county and say we will volunteer to draft it. Joan suggested meeting with Bill

Sheehan of Hackensack Riverkeeper, the nonprofit that was part of the application.

David said he has been in touch with State Senator Holly Schepisi (District 39) about the application. David and the Senator discussed the possibility of a roundtable meeting that could be organized by Senators Schepisi and Lagana (District 38). It should also include our state senator, Kristin Corrado (District 40).

6. Resource Management & Conservation Subcommittee (Peter)

a. Leaf Blower Strategy Moving Forward

The major development in the past month was Pam's meeting on Dec. 12 with Village Manager Keith Kazmark and some village staffers. They agreed to attend a January 29 meeting in Maplewood, with Maplewood's head of the DPW. Maplewood & Montclair use only battery-powered leaf blowers. Matt Andreula, the parks department supervisor, is going, and maybe also Nancy Bigos, director of Parks and Recreation, and perhaps Keith and Pam.

Joe Ferrante said he had spoken with the [Kress](#) distributor of electric leaf blowing equipment in Mahwah, a company called National Lawn Equipment. Kress is an electric leaf blower manufacturer. The distributor is willing to come to Ridgewood and lend the Village equipment for 2 weeks use.

i. Conversion of municipal fleet of leaf blowers to electric: As a practical matter, this is essential to proceeding with a leaf blower ordinance.

ii. S-217

Senator Bob Smith's bill is not on the agenda during the lame duck session of the state legislature but will probably be introduced next session.

iii. Advocates for Transforming Landscaping (ATL)

They're having a quarterly Zoom meeting next Monday (Jan. 12) at 6 pm. Peter, and maybe David, plan to participate.

b. Food Scraps (Peter)

We'll know later this month whether the two additional food composting units for Habernickel Park and the Stable will be included in the Village budget for this year.

Both houses of the state legislature have passed the Food Waste Reduction Act. It would require a 50% reduction in food waste by 2035. Governor Murphy has not yet signed the bill. If he does, the expectation is that the bill will lead to increases in food donations.

c. Skip the Stuff and Other Legislation (David)

The Skip the Stuff bill is stuck in the legislature. We don't know why it's not moving.

The Clean Energy Act would have required 100% clean energy by 2035, but it is not going to happen.

Open Space Tax Incentive Act passed the Senate; the Assembly has not yet acted

Sen. Smith's Extended Producer Responsibility Act would cut packaging by 50%. Eight other states, including New York, have passed similar legislation.

7. Ridgewood Water (David)

Rich Calbi, the Director, is trying to get the four communities that Ridgewood Water serves together on conservation. We're down seventeen inches on rainfall over the past 16 months. David said there is an exceedingly high drought risk this spring if we don't get a lot of rain or snow over the next two or three months.

8. Green Team Update (Green Team Members) –
Joe said he thinks there's a Green Team meeting on Jan. 29.

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

a. Parks & Rec joint project

Joan is trying to come up with a budget to get rid of knotweed in the rain gardens at Graydon Park and Vets Field. She found a company today that specializes in water and could help with this project. One of the goals for 2026 is to have new, consistently branded signs to educate the public about green infrastructure and meadows. The signs would include a QR code which would direct users to the Green Ridgewood website.

b. Communications with Rutgers

Joan asked the team at Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program if they could help us with a holistic project to see where we should put rain gardens.

She also asked if Rutgers got funding so they could provide training on rain garden installation and maintenance for landscapers who work in Ridgewood. She hasn't yet received a response to either question.

Joe suggested asking churches to install rain gardens. Joan responded that churches and schools are the best places to start.

The Rutgers Green Infrastructure training program led by Dr. Obropta starts tomorrow (Jan. 9). Members of the Resilience, Flooding and Stormwater Subcommittee were strongly encouraged to attend the training if they have not done so in the past.

10. Student Update including Student Projects (Julia, Anika, Miles)

Julia said the high school has received a new hydroponic vertical farming system called [Flex Farm](#). It has 300 places for plants. The school got it for free. It will be in Miles's classroom.

Future projects – The students are trying to figure out an appropriate display for Super Science Saturday, which will be held at the high school on March 7. Julia is thinking of doing a quiz on recycling. David asked Bill if he would volunteer to help with planning the Green Ridgewood participation on [Super Science Saturday](#). Bill agreed.

Miles is putting pressure on students in his AP Environmental Science class to come up with projects for this year. He expects to get \$3,000 via the school district from a State Climate Change grant. The rain garden at Somerville School is being funded by the school's building fund.

Sustainability Day at the High School will be Friday, April 24.

11. 2026 Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair Theme & Planning (All)

David said we had the first meeting today of the subcommittee to plan the event, which will be held at Van Ness Park on Sunday, April 26, from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm. David said the meeting participants think that Sustainable Landscaping is a good theme, but they want a catchier name. David will ask the subcommittee members, including Beth, Mike, Peter, Justin, and Sean, for their ideas.

Councilman Frank Mortimer has said that for participation to be worthwhile for vendors the fair needs to be four hours long. David suggested that Green Ridgewood and Green Team members should each volunteer to be there for either the first half of the day 9-12 (including set-up) or from 12-3 (including tear-down) , so that no one has to be there all day. A question was raised about how we can promote sponsors/vendors who have sustainable products or practices.

We have the spinning wheel from last year.

David suggested doing art posters. Beth and Jane will work together on it.

Nancy Bigos is counting on Green Ridgewood to be of more help bringing in vendors and sponsors. Parks and Recreation has done most of the heavy lifting in the past.

12. Communications – (Justin)

We plan to put out the next quarterly newsletter in March so that we can highlight Earth Day.

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

Mary Lou Handy, a retired social studies teacher, will be the new BOE liaison to GR.

14. Finance – 2025 Expenses, Discussion of 2026 budget (Jane)

We have now set up a separate account for Earth Day, which is our sole source of revenue. In the past, Green Ridgewood's expenses and revenues have been tracked in separate accounts, but now they will be in a single account.

We started 2025 with \$16,874 in our account and ended with \$19,278.

Our net profit last year from Earth Day was more than \$5,000, compared with about \$3,000-\$4,000 in previous years.

Looking ahead to 2026, we can project a budget for the first time. We're hoping for similar revenue from Earth Day. We can reuse things from last year like the spinning wheel and easels.

We could end the year with a balance of \$22,000. Alternatively, we could come up with a project that would cost about \$3,000, such as paying for one of the proposed new food scrap bins, which would cost \$3,300 each.

Joan suggested some projects related to rain gardens, such as planting flowers. The big unknown is herbicide treatment.

The Village's Signal Department will create signs for the rain garden.

15. Future Meeting Dates 2026: February 5th, 2026, March 5th, 2026, (AT THE STABLE), April 9th, Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair -April 26th, May 7.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Armbruster

Secretary