

GREEN RIDGEWOOD MINUTES
February 5, 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, Alina Mordkovich; Pam Perron – Village Council liaison, Julia Buckley– Parks & Recreation liaison, Miles Luo - RHS staff, Anika Mukkatira -- Student liaison. Green Team: Joe Ferrante, Geri Atwood (Chair), Manpreet Tyagi; Julia Grant – Student liaison
Guests: Gia Battaglia and Devyn Letscher (student guests); Richard Krauser, George Wolfson

Administration

1. Welcome and Attendee Introductions. Mary Lou Handy, the new BOE liaison, introduced herself. She replaces Saurabh Dani as the BOE liaison.
2. We approved January 8th meeting minutes.

Updates/Discussion/Strategy

3. Chair Report, Green Ridgewood highlights (David)
Mike Faherty has resigned from the Green Team because of other commitments. Geri Atwood has agreed to take over as chair.
4. Village Council Liaison Report (Pam)
The Village had to reject all the bids that came in regarding contaminated soil removal at the Schedler property. The lowest bidder withdrew, the second lowest was disqualified, and the rest were too high. The Village went out for rebid. The lowest has come in at \$2.6 million, so the Village will be looking for grant funding.
As to what can be built on the vacant property on Franklin Avenue under DEP guidelines, the report by the LSRP (licensed site remediation professional) is now expected in the spring.

Affordable housing. Twenty-seven NJ towns (not including Ridgewood) filed a federal district court complaint challenging the state's new affordable housing program. Because a decision was imminent in that case, the Ridgewood Village Council postponed the Jan. 14 vote on five affordable housing ordinances introduced back in December. U.S. District Judge Zahid Quraishi held that the plaintiffs lacked standing and therefore dismissed the case. The Third Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed. The Council will vote on the ordinances on Feb. 11.

5. 2026 Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair (Earth Day Subcommittee.)
The Steering Committee (including Pam and David) met today. We had about 8 people, including two representatives from the [Ridgewood Conservancy](#), our co-sponsor for the event. It will be held Sunday, April 26, from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm at Van Neste Square.
 - a. Theme, Materials & Logistics
Manpreet has developed a poster. It focuses on our theme – Sustainable Yards. The Conservancy has embraced it. We will ask Green Ridgewood and Green Team members to volunteer for either of two shifts -- 9 to 12 or 12 to 3 – so that nobody has to be there all day.
 - b. Promoting Sustainable Landscaping, Project 1,000 acres
 - c. Scavenger Hunt/Sustainability Partners, Prizes
Will have 3 prizes – an electric leaf blower, a rake and an electric lawn mower
 - d. Other issues

Jane said she and Beth have spoken about promoting the poster contest. Their goal is to get the notice out to the schools possibly as soon tomorrow, and if not, then next week. Last year we had 300 posters. Next step will be to try to recruit businesses to display them. Miles will recruit high school students to help with hanging the posters.

6. Climate Resiliency Planning Grant/Columbia Recommendations- Next Steps

- a. Bergen County Application Status (Saddle River County Park/flooding)
The new application process has not yet started. David said the new DEP commissioner, Ed Potosnak, probably wants to take a look at it. Pam noted that the nominee for deputy commissioner, Joseph Seebode, has a background with the Army Corps of Engineers.
- b. Activities with other Bergen County Communities and Officials –see below.
- c. Strategy moving forward – Pam, Justin, Joan and David met last Friday (Jan. 30) with Keith Kazmark, the village manager. He said we don't want to get the county commissioners too agitated. Paramus has a new head of its Environmental Commission, Tom Donohue. It's possible that Paramus was not included in the application because it got its materials to the county too late.

We will organize a meeting of the 7 communities and we're targeting Saturday, March 14, as the date. David is confident that Paramus, Glen Rock, Rochelle Park and Saddle Brook will want to participate. The only town David has not yet been in touch with is Fair Lawn. We will probably seek to involve Lodi as well because they have a severe problem with flooding. People there have died from flooding.

David said Keith suggested that we can provide the county with a solution – that the towns prepare the application so the county doesn't have to do it.

Pam suggested we should get copies of grants that succeeded so we can find out why they got it. We can apply under NJ Open Public Records Act. The public can ask for documents as long as they're not privileged.

7. Resource Management & Conservation Subcommittee (Peter)

- a. Leaf Blower Strategy Moving Forward (Peter)
 - i. Municipal fleet conversation – The meeting in Maplewood with their DPW officials that had been scheduled for Jan. 29 had to be postponed because DEP staff were exhausted from snow removal after the big snowstorm a few days before. The new date has not yet been scheduled.
 - ii. Advocates for Transforming Landscaping in NJ (ATL-NJ) – Peter attended this nonprofit's quarterly meeting a couple weeks ago. No newly passed NJ leaf blower ordinances were reported. PSE&G gives a \$25 discount for purchases of electric leaf blowers and perhaps other electric equipment from participating dealers including Home Depot and Loew's.
- b. Food Scraps – Meeting with Sean Hamlin (Peter)
On Jan. 29 Peter and David met with Sean (director of recycling), Johanna Luttrell (recycling aide), and Rich Calbi (director of Ridgewood Water) to discuss the newly passed NJ Food Waste Reduction Act. The Act requires each County to reduce food waste going to landfills by 50% below 2022 levels by 2035.

c. Skip the Stuff (Peter)

The NJ legislature passed the bill during the lameduck session. It takes effect Aug. 1 and has been described by the National Council of Environmental Legislators as “[the strongest ‘skip the stuff’ legislation in the country.](#)” Under the legislation, dine-in restaurants and take-out businesses can provide single-use cutlery and condiments only if requested by customers. There are exemptions for schools and health care and correctional institutions. No funding is attached to the bill, so it will mostly be up to municipalities, environmental commissions and committees, and groups like Green Ridgewood and [ANJEC](#) (the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions) to get the word out.

8. Ridgewood Water (David)

Rainfall is still 25% below normal (19 inches) over the last seven months. David said he is worried about fire risk. Rich Calbi, director of Ridgewood Water, really wants to push conservation.

9. Green Team Update (Geri)

David and Geri attended the Bergen County Sustainability HUB meeting on Jan. 27 in Rutherford. Steve Mariconda of the Saddle Brook Green Team gave a presentation on Dark Skies (light pollution). Next Bergen Hub meeting is April 27 in Glen Rock.

Sustainable Jersey has created a new Facebook page named [Sustainable Jersey-Bergen County Hub](#). Geri encouraged everyone to request to join the group.

There was a presentation at the meeting by two brothers from Wayne who formed a company called [Vital Signs Media](#). They produce eco-friendly kiosks with jugs that dispense free sunscreen and hand sanitizer. The kiosks can display advertising. Geri thinks it would be very worthwhile for Ridgewood to have one of these kiosks for the public to use during summer festivals, concerts, etc. Sustainable Jersey won't be offering new certifications until 2027 but we can use this year to prepare.

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

The team at Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program Rutgers got back to Joan. They're focused mainly on MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) watershed inventory and assessment reports as part of a NJ State grant. They want to know where we are with respect to these two reports. Both the watershed inventory (due 1/2026) and the assessment report (due 1/27) are a lot of work, including updating GIS. The inventory report requires documenting inflows, outflows, pumping stations, green infrastructure and even gray infrastructure. If the TMDL – total maximum daily load – of pollution is over a certain level, then the municipality has to plan for remediation.

Besides offering to help on those two reports, the Rutgers team is also willing to help with education for a Village Green Infrastructure Concept Plan, which was part of our original request.

James McGrath has been appointed Village Engineer, replacing Chris Rutishauser who retired earlier this year. Green Ridgewood is working to set up an introductory meeting and the potential of leveraging Rutgers will be raised then.

Joan met with with Parks and Recreation about the herbicide treatment for the knotweed in/near two existing rain gardens. It will likely take multiple applications over a few years, Since the knotweed

in Vets does not encroach the High School's rain garden, we will just look at treating Graydon. Joan has a lead on a person who could potentially provide education for landscapers on rain gardens.

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

Julia said some high school students did an inventory last year on food scraps at one of the elementary schools. Much of the food had never been touched.

They were working on at least six projects for Sustainability Day (Friday, April 24, 9 am to 2 pm. This event is not open to the public.

They are also doing outreach to the Environmental Club at Hawes Elementary School. Students are also working on the benefits of tree planting, bats, AI, green roofing, and the rain garden at Somerville School.

Super Science Saturday will be March 7 at the high school from 9 am to 1:30 pm. Miles said his students will have two stations. Bill volunteered to be there. David can be there part of the time. Peter and Jane said they could also be there.

12. Board of Education Meeting/Discussion (David, Mary Lou)

The last meeting with the BOE Sustainability Committee was Jan. 20. There was lots of talk about the campaign to discourage parents from idling their cars while waiting to pick up their children after school. The BOE wants to improve signage related to the campaign. They will start in April. Police want to do it gingerly. Ridgewood is the first school district in the state to implement table to table.

13. Green Building/Sustainability Subcommittee. (David)

Energy Audit/Sustainable NJ Grant status -- The goals are to reduce the Village's carbon footprint and to save money.

14. Finance – Discussion of 2026 Budget (David, Jane, All)

Jane will send the budget to everyone in the next couple of weeks. She has shared a form for budget requests that will ask how people want to participate in a project. Justin has a project related to the James Rose Center that might cost \$500. He recently met with the director.

15. New Business

George Wolfson said the Shade Tree Commission is focusing on the types of trees and plants that could be put in hellstrips, the narrow area between the curb and sidewalk.

16. Future Meeting Dates 2026: March 5th (**AT STABLE – Downstairs**), April 9th, Daffodil

Festival/Earth Day Fair -April 26th, May 7, June 4. For the March 5 meeting, David suggested that people try to park near the top or close to the building. Enter from the back.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Armbruster