

Green Ridgewood
February 6, 2025
7:30pm to 9:30pm

Attendees:

Green Ridgewood Members: David Refkin: Chair, Beth Creller – Vice Chair, Justin Jonsson, Julia Grant, Vivian Ewell, Jill Fasano, Mike Faherty, Miles Luo, Joan Hubertus, Justin Manger, Pam Perron, Mark Kaplan, Manpreet Tyagi, Guests: Joe Ferrante, Jane Rouse, Geri Atwood, Kieran Ozaydin, Anika Mukkatira, Ariadna Kardie

Admin

- Approved minutes from prior meeting. Three openings for Green Team and Green Ridgewood. Interviews have been conducted, and new members will be announced shortly.

Village Council Liaison Report (Pam)

- The Tree Protection ordinance introduced at the council needs more changes, so it will be voted down and changes made
- N Walnut & Franklin Ave parking lot - Six of nine underground storage tanks have been removed.
- Central Business District advisory committee will meet at 8:30 on Feb 13 via Zoom to discuss contaminants at Town Garage and that parking lot.
- “Master Library” now manages reservations for village rooms, fields, patios, and other spaces.
- Schedler Property - Remediation company LSRP (Licensed Soil Remediation Professional) will accept written questions and give written answers. They’ve answered 195 questions so far.
- Habernickel Park - a small contaminated (not necessarily hazardous) area was remediated and there will be a pavilion there to provide some shelter
- USDA Food scrap grant was denied.
 - Your personal composting must be covered because the nuisance ordinance prohibits malodor and decay, among other things
- Water Pollution and Control Facility needs over \$1m in replacement parts.
- ¼” height difference in sidewalk heights constitutes a tripping hazard. Trees can cause this easily, or contractors that are removing bits of sidewalk to assess tree roots.
- ANJEC (Association of NJ Environmental Commissions) training is March 18-20, both online and in person. Highly recommended; please notify Pam Perron if you are interested. Can accommodate seven individuals.

Green Building and Sustainability (Beth Creller) subcommittee update:

- Had an open brainstorm (2/6) with the public for our CEPG energy planning grant.
- Will submit planning ideas to Village Council as part of a presentation at the end of the month in a ten-minute session so that we can move forward with submitting the grant application.

- **Justin J. to confirm** with Poornima what we do and don't need as far as energy/facilities inventory.
- **Jill Fasano may provide** educational ideas/materials for fifth grade Girl Scouts to do a water conservation art project.
- We do have a SAGE account/number, per Pam Perron.

Earth Day

- April 27 is the Daffodil Festival/Earth Day Fair
- A key theme is water: conservation, flooding, quality.
 - We settled on “**H2Optimize**: Protecting our Water”
- Another key theme is Reduce (lawn equipment usage), Replace (it with electric), Relax (now that it's quiet).
- We'll run in two shifts. Justin Manger will arrive with tables and start setting up with the first shift.
- Beth will display schools' art posters.
- We need another tent. David will ask Parks and Rec for one.
- Banner is missing - David to check if he has it because Mike does not.
- Subcommittee formed to organize (David, Beth, Justin M, Mike, Joan)

Donation

- Someone has offered a donation to Green Ridgewood. **Pam to discuss with Bob Rooney to see how to accept it.**

Bergen Hub meeting (David)

- First meeting of 2025 was hosted by Ridgewood.
- Rich Calbi discussed water in Ridgewood and advised other towns on how Ridgewood has managed its water. Mike Cohrs of RW discussed water conservation.
- There was a lot of discussion around privatization and the negative effects it has had on water services in other towns.
- Lois Kraus, Westfield Green Team, and leader of ATL (Advocates for Transforming Landscaping) spoke on 2-stroke gas leaf blowers and efforts to reduce plastic.
- “Obsolete” equipment can be written off for landscapers' taxes.
- One goal is to create a landscaper registry.
- It would be good to gather the personal health impacts of leaf blowing. David will collect that from Lois. Or we can get it from Quiet Communities.
- Lois and Brian Thompson (Ex. WNBC NJ reporter) discussed plastics pollution and efforts to promote change.

Ridgewood Schools (Vivian, Julia, and Myles)

- There are two wildflower patches / rain gardens now. Signage is being developed and will point people to a website (still being designed) informing people of what the garden is.
- Sustainability Day (April 25) will have 50+ students involved showing at least twenty tables. Two years ago, there were only seven tables.

- How might GR help on Super Science Saturday, March 1st from 9 to 1 at the High School? We'll have a table led by Bill Armbruster. David, George W and Pam will represent GR also.
- How might GR help on Sustainability Day? Might it be good to have Pam at a panel again?
- Recycling rates have anecdotally improved. There are lots of new paper / bottle / trash combo bins that help recycling compliance. Recycling rates can be obtained from RWS, but they are not always forthcoming w/ that information.
- Tree Protection Ordinance - it is frustrating that dozens of trees can be removed without consequence.
- March 29 is a large conference in Lyndhurst about Climate change.
- Some students in Green Club are interested in speaking to the science supervisor, going to a Board of Ed meeting, and discussing the lack of climate change education.

Recycling

- Justin Manger spoke to Sean Hamlin about recycling. Recycling contract is up for renewal so they're going out for bids. Village is going to bid and try to actually recycle rather than letting private companies do it at questionable quality. This would also include food waste and help get the food waste program going farther. Bid should come in March to start in July.

Communications (Justin M)

- **Justin Manger will complete the 4th quarterly Newsletter this weekend**
- Mike Faherty & Justin Manger want to combine websites (Green Ridgewood & 1000Acres & Sustainable Ridgewood). These websites are all aligned in mission so we could probably more consistently communicate through one modern website.
- \$850 to refresh GR and 1000 Acres into one site. Sustainable Ridgewood site migration would probably require another couple of hundred. Would also be approximately \$200/yr to maintain.
- **Mike to send out a scope doc for new website project for review and then approval of funds.**

Resilience, Flooding & Stormwater (Joan)

- Citizen Advisory Flood Committee meeting. Seven residents met with Keith & Siobhan. Joan represents GR at the meetings. Future meetings will be more accessible, on Swaglt.
- Army Corps of Engineers can advance on our project, meaning they can conduct a two-year study of the project. That is funded. The implementation of the plan is not funded and will lean on advocacy from the Citizen Advisory Flood Committee.
- Their focus will be Ho-Ho-Kus Brook and Saddle River, not on stormwater.
- This means we need to solve stormwater ourselves.
- Rutgers is going to create two work products for us:
 - Aligning with MS4 (Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System)

- How do we align affordable housing requirements with the fact that the remaining land is in flood zones?
- Rain Gardens are being installed and evaluated by the High School.
- Landscapers should be trained up on rain garden maintenance. Rutgers is willing to give a landscaper-focused four-hour session in October that includes planting gardens. Jill volunteered a Ridgewood Water plot of land.
- AmeriCorps reviewed the waterside damage at Saddle River County Park and understood the need for action.
- Army Corps of Engineers will be invited by Keith to do a presentation to the Citizen Advisory Flood Committee.
- Ridgewood has a CRS rating of six which should allow a 20% reduction in flood insurance. This was discussed with members of the Good Trouble Group (Ridgewood, Saddle Brook, and Rochelle Park – could include more towns in the future).
- The Hackensack River Watershed organization is hosting a conference at Fairleigh Dickinson on Tuesday Feb 25. David Refkin would like to attend for \$60 total. Green Ridgewood approved a \$60 budget for this trip.

Parks and Recreation

- The Cross-Committee meeting between GR, Parks and Rec. Joan will report out more details next month.
- Nancy Bigos okayed a temporary rain garden set up for the Daffodil Festival. Need to figure out what this would be and where it would go.
- More rain gardens at Ridge, Travell, and Willard.
- Signage for rain gardens across Ridgewood will be branded the same way, at schools, at Daffodil Festival, etc.
- High School is going to test No Mow Grass and Pearl's Premium.
- Recommend asking the Village Council to plant these at the Town Garage to show what these grasses look like.

Other

- Note that we have received astonishingly small amounts of precipitation since the end of August (49% below "normal"), and we should expect droughts in spring. Hopefully, we will not see a repeat of the fires west and north of Ridgewood that occurred in the fall of 2024.

Next meeting is Thursday, March 6th at 7:30 PM – Village Hall, Senior Lounge.

Submitted by Justin Jonsson