

## **Green Ridgewood-Green Team Meeting Minutes 20211007**

Held in-person at Village Hall, Senior Lounge

Attendance:

Green Ridgewood: Bob Upton, George Wolfson, Christine Amundsen, Yvone Nava, Beth Creller, Jill Fasano (Village Staff Rep), Pam Perron (Village Council Liaison).

Green Team: Justin Manger, George Wolfson, Bob Upton, Anthea Zito, Mike Faherty, Michael Sedon (Village Council Liaison).

Additional: Miles Luo (RHS), Delfina Cinco.

### **1. Welcome/Introductions/Apologies**

Apologies for absence had been received from Ellie, Tony, and Mary.

We were pleased to welcome guests Delfina Cinco and Miles Luo.

Following a long succession of our meetings held by Zoom as a Covid precaution we have held in-person meetings in July in the Senior Lounge and in August and September out doors at the Stable. Tonight, back in the Senior Lounge, even though well spaced and following Village policy, in view of the threat of the Covid Delta variant we discussed other options. A hybrid Zoom/in-person format is not technically feasible so it was concluded to hold next month's meeting via Zoom and perhaps alternate in-person and Zoom after that.

### **2. Approve July, August and September Meeting Minutes**

The July, August and September draft minutes were distributed to members by e-mail on July 10<sup>th</sup>, August 9<sup>th</sup> and Sept 9<sup>th</sup> respectively. It was noted that the September minutes showed the next meeting date incorrectly which was changed to Oct 7<sup>th</sup>. Christine made a motion to approve the July, August and September minutes, as amended, seconded by Pam and approved unanimously.

### **3. Membership/Recruitment/Leadership**

It is expected that Village Council & Administration will follow past practice and solicit applications for new committee members as required during November so we need to determine which members wish to continue their membership into 2022 and which of those need to be reappointed and thus determine vacancies. Bob will send an e-mail to all members to verify their positions before our next meeting.

We again appealed to our Council liaisons to encourage promotion of all the volunteer committees on the Village website year round.

Leadership positions are elected by the committee members for annual terms and we have established the practice of holding those elections at the January meeting. Both Bob and George believe that involvement in leadership by other members would serve to provide leadership into the future, especially as we have no green Team Chair at present. It has been

suggested that the election of a Green Ridgewood Committee secretary might make the Chair role less onerous. Members are asked to give thought to this issue.

#### **4. Communications:**

Justin has submitted for reimbursement the annual costs he incurred for the operation of our website, hosting (\$144) and domain (\$29.95), total \$173.95. Since this is an annual renewal of an ongoing expense the committee considers it pre-approved.

#### **5. Discussion of Goals and Priorities**

Since George was away for our discussion of goals and priorities last month he asked to present his thoughts at this meeting. He offered the following thoughts:

When he joined Green Ridgewood (then REAC) 13 years ago there was little interest from residents and council members in sustainability and less focus on it in the schools. Whereas today we have Village council members who support environmental issues and a more aware and concerned citizenry, many of whom are involved professionally, and active green clubs and activities in our schools as well as inclusion in the curriculum.

So now we have the opportunity to shift our emphasis from education and suggestion to initiating action and becoming more vocal, soliciting feedback from residents and local businesses and reacting to it. Become the focal point for environmental activities in the community with other organizations and clubs, the library, churches and Village departments. Make Climate Change the sole focus.

Promote actions: Add EV's to municipal fleets, promote alternative energy sources, reduce vehicular use, change operational habits thru AI.

We must evolve our on-line and social media presence by creation of a communications committee. Also bring about change through carbon saving techniques and efforts within Village departments and institutions and use Earth Day to both inform and survey residents on environmental issues.

#### **6. Green Team/Sustainable Jersey**

Silver Recertification: While Mike Sedon had submitted our re-certification application and SJ had approved many Actions the total for Silver level was not assured. So we have taken advantage of SJ's offer to extend our current certification thru 2022. Therefore our application will now be due in June next year. Mike offered to lead our effort starting after the Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> elections.

#### **7. Sustainable Bergen Hub**

(a) There was no Hub meeting in August and September. Wyckoff will host a meeting on October 25th when Tracy Zur, Bergen County Commissioner, is scheduled to attend. The agenda is available on Basecamp.

(b) The Single Use Plastics sub-committee meeting on October 6<sup>th</sup> focused on Oakland GT's plastic reduction efforts.

(b) EV Sub-Committee: The Upper Saddle River event on October 2<sup>nd</sup> was highly successful. The variety of exhibits included EV manufacturers offering test drives and a number of individual owners exhibited their vehicles. Our own Green Ridgewood EV sub-committee with support from Glen Rock members will hold an event at the Ridgewood Farmers Market on October 17<sup>th</sup>. Justin has created an informational handout and Beth will produce a promotional flyer.

### **8. EAGER (Encouraging Alternative Green Energy for Ridgewood)**

The RGEA sub-committee will again have a table promoting the EAGER proposal at the Ridgewood Farmers Market on October 17<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the EV event.

### **9. EPS/Styrofoam Collection**

Following our September meeting where we had no quorum Bob requested by e-mail a vote to approve expenditure up to \$300 to conduct an EPS/Styrofoam collection in October or November. Pam proposed and Yvone seconded the proposal and "yes" votes were received from George, Ellie, Mary, Jill, Beth and Bob. No "no" votes were received. Mike F and Mike S also indicated support. So the motion passed which should be moot as the Recycling Department has offered to sponsor (i.e. cover the costs of) the event.

The collection is scheduled for Saturday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, with a rain date of October 23<sup>rd</sup>. It will be at the Graydon parking lot and open to Ridgewood residents only. It has been widely publicized by the Village administration, Recycling Department and on social media and will operate in the same way as previous collections except we have scheduled same day drop-off at Poly Molding in Haskell.

Thanks to Yvone who will administer the event as she did in April and we need volunteers to respond to her. So far two appeals to committee members for volunteers have resulted in 5 unavailable for Oct 16<sup>th</sup>, 4 available and 3 unsure or part time. Miles offered volunteers from RHS and we also have an offer from Ramapo HS so we expect to be OK but would appreciate more adults.

### **10. Earth Day Fair**

Rich Calbi (Ridgewood Water and Recycling Dept) has extended an invitation to Nancy Bigos (Parks & Recreation), Cynthia Halaby (Conservancy for Ridgewood Public Lands) and George & Bob from Green Ridgewood to a October 12<sup>th</sup> meeting to start planning the Ridgewood Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair 2022. Beth has agreed to join us. The event is scheduled for Sunday, April 10<sup>th</sup>. Christine has approached the BPU/Clean Energy NJ for participation. George reminded us that the Earth Day Fair is the only source of funding for Green Ridgewood activities.

### **11. Sustainable Yard Maintenance (Leaf Blowers, Lawn Chemicals, etc)**

Mike F and Anthea submitted a pre-read document to members by e-mail on October 4<sup>th</sup> and Ellie submitted a proposal document, also by e-mail on October 4<sup>th</sup>. Both are attached for convenience. Also Bob had provided a link to an AGZA webinar about Sustainable Land Care, (see September minutes).

Bob commented that the webinar was targeted at landscapers but Mike F said there was useful information about electric equipment.

Ellie's proposal, aimed at limiting gas powered lawn equipment, suggests working with other like-minded groups and starting with a presentation to Village Council. While expressing general support the committees suggest Ellie first present the proposal to these committees and perhaps research and conduct outreach before addressing the Council.

Mike F agreed that Ellie's proposal fits as a component of his & Anthea's campaign. Summarizing his remarks he pointed to concerns associated with poor yard maintenance practices of GHG emissions, high water consumption in summer, pesticide use and flow-off into rivers, harm to beneficial insects and lack of shade, suggesting retaining grass clippings and leaves. They suggest creating a sustainable yard standard.

They suggest as next steps:

Review the Village Code, definitions in particular, and enforcement and suggest revisions.

- Creating a sustainable yard standard.
- Establish best practices and award plaques to appropriately maintained properties.
- Consider creating example landscapes in public spaces, e.g. Twinney Pond, Memorial Park, etc.
- Research and apply for suitable grants to fund these initiatives.
- Incorporate practices in environmental science education in schools.
- Develop promotional/marketing strategy using yard signs, social media, other groups and Earth Day events.

Pam suggested collaborating/involving Women Gardeners, Ridgewood Conservancy and Village code enforcement. Perhaps solicit support from Ridgewood Water.

Mike, Anthea and Justin expressed interest developing this topic together with Ellie.

## **12. Letter to EPA Administrator Regan**

Ellie had sent to committee members on Sep 29<sup>th</sup> an e-mail suggesting she sign , on behalf of Green Ridgewood, a letter titled "Petition to Enforce the Noise Abatement and Control Act and the Quiet Communities Act" created by Quiet Communities Inc. In Ellie's absence and due to shortage of time and that apparently few had read the letter or petition no decision was taken.

### **13. Ridgewood Adopt-A-Drain**

Delfina and Nancy Mancison are continuing to try to develop this program for Ridgewood. Some issues need to be addressed regarding interaction of different web sites. Since some coordination with Village administration will be necessary pam will try to set up a meeting of interested parties.

### **14. Planning Board/Master Plan**

As noted previously, the September 21<sup>st</sup> Planning Board meeting included a public meeting for information & discussion about Phase II of the Master Plan. The Plan will include a Green building and Environmental Sustainability Element. Another public meeting will take place on October 19<sup>th</sup>.

It was also reported that, at its October 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Planning Board discussed the latest State requirements for EV charging stations.

### **15. Tree Protection Ordinance**

The ordinance is still being written.

### **16. Schools**

Congratulations were extended to the 5 Ridgewood schools receiving Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification. They are RHS, BFMS and Ridge, Somerville and Travell elementary schools.

### **17. New Business**

a. Bob had forwarded Ellie's proposal to cooperate with the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood to screen the movie "The Sacrifice Zone". The consensus was favorable with some wishing to learn more before making a decision. It was understood a suitable speaker would be sought to accompany the movie.

b. Several people have expressed concern about damage to the Ho-Ho-Kus Brook from recent storms and the need for a longer term plan. We will endeavor to learn if this will be addressed in the Master Plan but also understand there are problems establishing responsibility for maintenance of the rivers.

c. It was noted that Ridgewood Water had conducted two information sessions about PFAS and in spite of their laudable efforts in addressing this issue it has raised substantial concerns in the community.

### **20. Next Joint Meeting will be Thursday November 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm, via Zoom.**

Minutes submitted by: Bob Upton, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

(See 2 attachments)

**Request for Green Ridgewood Committee support:**

**I am asking for support from Green Ridgewood to present an educational campaign to stop the noise and pollution from our lawn equipment.**

**There is a national movement to ban gas-powered lawn equipment. I belong to a statewide group called: Advocates for Transforming Landscaping in New Jersey (ATL-NJ), and we are all part of Quiet Communities, a national scientific resource.**

**In brief, the noise, the pollution and harm to our environment caused by these machines are finally getting the attention of audiologists and scientists.**

**Glen Rock is also part of ATI-NJ and has proposed a ban on leaf blowers. I believe we should ban all gas powered lawn equipment, but many towns feel that leaf blowers with their 2 stroke motors do a tremendous amount of damage and we should concentrate on this. Many towns have restricted the hours and days they operate, and recently a court decision supported Montclair's law over the objection of a landscaper. Princeton reaches out in Spanish and English to meet with landscapers.**

**I would like permission to work with the League of Voters and the Climate Committee to begin an educational campaign. The first part of the campaign is to make a presentation to the Council at a work session, similar to the one we did to ban single use plastic bags in Ridgewood. Bob Upton, Lisa Summers and I made the presentation, and it did take over a year. As a result of our and many other towns, the NJ Legislature passed an even more stringent law, effective March 2022, due to the number of towns restricting plastics and Styrofoam.**

**So we have a precedent for reaching out to the Council, who ultimately make the decisions, and we have no illusions that this will be done quickly.**

**I hope you will support this effort. If you go to [quietcommunities.org](http://quietcommunities.org) and look at the research, I hope you will agree that the larger and larger mowers, and more powerful gas leaf blowers are not doing us or the people who operate them, any good.**

**Thanks, sorry I can't be there in person tonight. But if you say yes, I will give more detailed presentation at the next meeting.**

**Ellie**

## **Sustainable Residential Landscaping For Ridgewood**

### **Background/Imperative:**

*“Americans devote 70 hours annually to pushing petrol-powered spinning death blades over aggressively pointless green carpets to meet an embarrassingly destructive beauty standard based on specious homogeneity.” — Ian Graber-Stiehl*

Lawns cover forty million acres in the United States, the equivalent of eighteen Yellowstone parks. They are the largest irrigated crop in the country, with municipalities devoting almost half of their water use in support. Lawns consume seventy million pounds of fertilizer each year. The conversion of natural gas to nitrogen fertilizer for lawns leads to 70,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per annum. Seventy-eight million homes in the United States use lawn pesticides. Lawn pesticides are used at two times the rate of pesticides on food crops. Manufacturers sell five million

lawnmowers per year to maintain the national lawn-scape. Lawnmowers use over five hundred million gallons of gas and emit five and a half million tons of carbon dioxide yearly into the atmosphere. Leaf-blowers add to this total.

Lawnmowers and leaf-blowers both operate above seventy decibels, beyond the considered safe level of fifty-five. Just listen to the machining of your neighborhood on any weekday. That is the death toll of us wasting water to create ecological deserts that contribute to global warming so we can enjoy a meaningless 19th century aesthetic.

### **Green Team/Council Opportunity:**

Promote sustainably landscaped yards for Ridgewood residences.

### **Key Ideas:**

1. Review village code to update definitions of “blight” and “weeds” to allow for conversion of portions or entire yards to trees/wildflowers. (see summary of relevant Village Code below)
2. Determine policy/code on native versus invasive species.
3. Review village code to ensure proper/reduced use of motorized lawn equipment: time of day, decibel, twostroke vs. four. Align with the ATL-NJ group and noise-abatement/EPA effort (Ellie’s email).
4. Determine if code should include imperatives around electric yard equipment and fertilizer type.
5. Create volunteer “Ridgewood Sustainable Yard Standards”: reduced acreage dedicated to lawn (max 40%?), elimination of pesticides, elimination of nitrate-based fertilizers, electric power equipment, composting, retention of leaf/clippings, native trees, composting. Align with work done for SJ, Cut it and Leave it. Align with any efforts at composting.
6. Ensure Sustainable Yard Standards are aligned with science/EPA/NJ-state consensus, and that Standards jibe with AP Environmental Science class in high school (connect with ML).
7. Create role-model for Sustainable Yard Standards in one or more town parks, or portion of parks (grant funding).
8. Create plaque for residences that adhere to Sustainable Yard Standards (similar to LEED) (grant funding).
9. Fund #6 and #7 via grant from SJ (or Anjec)...SJ seminar 10/5.
10. Align/coordinate with Sustainable Ridgewood: add guidelines to site?
11. Promote via social media and website.
12. Rollout first half next year...promote at Earth Day.

### **Next Steps:**

- A. Discuss feasibility of ideas, and builds in Green Team/Council meeting: alignment with other actions, incl. noise abatement.
- B. Link with SJ programs/points? Align Sustainable Ridgewood? Align ATL-NJ.
- C. TBD discussions Ridgewood Council and Ridgewood Parks.
- D. Grant application process November.
- E. Incorporate into Earth Day planning.

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**Background: Ridgewood Village Code relevant to residential landscaping.**

175-14

The exterior of any building shall be maintained so that the appearance of the premises and all buildings thereon shall reflect a level of maintenance in keeping with the standards of the neighborhood and such that the appearance of the premises and structures shall not constitute a blighting factor for adjoining property owners nor an element leading to the progressive deterioration and downgrading of the neighborhood with the accompanying diminution of property values. Failure to do so shall constitute a nuisance and shall be subject to the penalties outlined in this article.

223-59

All premises and exterior property shall be maintained free from weeds or plant growth in excess of 10 inches. All "noxious weeds," which are hereby defined as poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac and ragweed, shall be prohibited. "Weeds" shall be defined as all grasses, annual plants and vegetation other than trees or shrubs; provided, however, that this term shall not include cultivated flowers and gardens.

172-6

The following specific acts or omissions or the maintenance or allowance of any of the following conditions is hereby

prohibited and is declared to be or to constitute a nuisance:

....

(11)

Permitting a growth of or failing to remove goldenrod, ragweed and other noxious weeds, poison ivy, poison oak or poison sumac, contact with or the pollen from which is capable of causing discomfort or injury to health.

115-2

In the event that the Director of Buildings and Inspections or his designated agent finds that it is necessary and expedient for the preservation of the public health, safety or general welfare, or to eliminate a fire hazard, to remove

from any lands situate in the Village of Ridgewood or destroy thereon any brush, weeds, including ragweed, dead and dying trees, stumps, roots, obnoxious growths, filth, garbage, trash and debris, the Director of Buildings and Inspections or his designated agent is hereby authorized and directed to notify, in writing, the owner and, if occupied

by a tenant, the tenant or tenants thereof, to remove or destroy the same. The notice shall contain a copy of this chapter. If the owner or tenant does not remove or destroy the same within 10 days after written notice from the Department of Buildings and Inspections, the Department of Buildings and Inspections is hereby authorized and directed to cause the offending material to be removed or destroyed.

275-2

Yard Waste

Grass clippings, brush, leaves, and other vegetative debris removed from a property by the occupant or owner, or employee or contractor of such owner or occupant engaged to provide lawn care, tree or shrub care, or landscaping services.

222-1

Commercial use of power tools or landscaping and yard maintenance equipment and motorized construction equipment is permitted in the Village of Ridgewood in all residential zones or within 200 feet of a residential property

line when such use is conducted on a commercial or industrial property during the following times only:

(1) From Monday to Friday, between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.; and

(2) On Saturday, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

(3) Such operation is prohibited entirely on Sundays.

(4) Such operation is entirely prohibited on all federal holidays. The federal holidays are: New Year's Day; Birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Washington's Birthday; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Columbus Day; Veterans Day; Thanksgiving Day; and Christmas Day.

[Added 7-12-2017 by Ord. No. 3602]

B.



The Village Manager shall have the authority to permit the otherwise prohibited uses in the case of an emergency and on Sundays pursuant to rules and regulations promulgated by the Manager and approved by the Village Council.

175-11

No person shall occupy as owner or occupant or rent to another for occupancy any dwelling or dwelling unit for the purpose of living therein which does not conform to the provisions of this article and the Uniform Construction Code and the BOCA National Property Maintenance Code, established hereby as the standard to be used in determining whether a dwelling is safe, sanitary and fit for human habitation.

**BOCA: Building Officials and Code Administrators International**

**PM-303.4 Weeds.**

All premises and exterior property shall be maintained free from weeds or, plant growth in excess of eight (8) inches. All noxious weeds shall be prohibited. Weeds shall be defined as all grasses, annual plants and vegetation, other than trees or shrubs provided; however, this term shall not include cultivated flowers and gardens.

**PM-308.4**

d. The exterior of the premises and the condition of accessory structures shall be maintained so that the appearance of the premises and all buildings thereon shall reflect a level of maintenance in keeping with the standards of the neighborhood, and such that the appearance of the premises and structures shall not constitute a blighting factor for adjoining property owners nor an element leading to the progressive deterioration and downgrading of the neighborhood with the accompanying diminution of property value.