

(March 31, 2023) Good evening – David Refkin, 401 Wastena Terrace and Chair of Green Ridgewood.

Green Ridgewood serves as an advisory committee for Village Council. This year we are focused on implementing the recommendations of the new Master Plan, also the theme of this year's Earth Day Fair and Daffodil Festival on April 23rd. To accomplish this task, Green Ridgewood has established subcommittees on: Green Building and Sustainability, Resource Management, Resilience, Flooding and Stormwater, and enhancing our Sustainable New Jersey status and acquiring grants.

The Village's master plan was approved by Village Council last October. The Plan has 214 recommendations focused on a broad range of issues related to land use, economic development, sustainability, open space and recreation, recycling and other elements.

Green Ridgewood is concerned that funding for key issues addressed in the Master Plan will be cut or removed from this year's budget. Specifically, money for drainage, improving stormwater management, dollars for removing trees damaged by emerald ash borer and planting new trees appear to be at risk. There are likely other cutbacks in the budget that could harm efforts to protect our environment.

It is easy at times like these to take challenging long-term issues and simply kick the proverbial can down the road. However, our village, and our society face challenges that demand effective planning and actions to protect residents. The Master Plan has recommendations related to flood resilience, adapting to flooding, improving air quality (including phasing in EVs), actions to enhance the village's tree canopy, increase recycling (including public space recycling), composting and other important initiatives that need funding.

The village needs to increase funding for and improve its emergency management communications – as of last week the Village's Emergency Management plan was not on the Village's website and evacuation routes are not identified for residents. We have seen the impact of Superstorm Sandy and other extreme weather events throughout the US– we need to be planning for future events where power is lost,

flooding takes place, roads are closed, extreme heat occurs, and not just be reactive. We can't be sitting at meetings in this building when it's raining and be worried that our cars will get flooded or our fields and homes will get severely damaged yet again. By adequately addressing the issues and providing funding for the Master Plan recommendations, we protect the health and safety of our citizens, maintain the value of our homes and we can continue to enjoy this special village. `

There is one other issue to bring to Village Council's attention. While the members of Green Ridgewood have professional backgrounds in a broad range of fields and a passionate interest in the environment, we are not experts on the subject of artificial or natural turf. However, given the discussion surrounding the Schedler property, we would advise Village Council to diligently look at the health issues of artificial turf. There does appear to be a growing number of communities who are concerned about the health impacts of artificial turf, such as the City of Boston which has banned artificial turf, and at least two states have bills pending in their legislatures to the same end. And recently, the EPA has dramatically decreased the acceptable levels of PFAS in water. These chemicals are used in the production of artificial turf....so we encourage Village Council to carefully examine the public health impacts of artificial turf.

Thank you, we look forward to working with Village Council and the Planning Board as we all work to implement the recommendations of the Master Plan.