

OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE Meeting Notes

April 10th, 2025 – The Stable 7:00PM

PRESENT: Jim Bostler, Nancy Bigos, Matt Lindenberg, Frank Mortimer, Alex Pastore, Ralph Currey, Jim Van Goor

Public: Wren Kennedy, Elizabeth Kennedy (Mom)

Summary

Public comments in the form of volunteer compliance by Wren Kennedy started the meeting. Wren is an eighth grader working on his program to satisfy volunteer work toward a gold certificate. It is a long-term multi-year commitment which involves up to 400 hours of volunteer work in various areas of government or community service. Several suggestions were made for him to participate in places such as NY/NJ Trail Center and with the Ridgewood Community such as the Green Committee. He will also help with the upcoming Daffodil Festival. Wren is also welcome to be involved with the Open Space Committee (OSC) in the future depending on the project.

The meetings have been very positive as we continue to see progress on key issues pertaining to the OSC. The upcoming Earth Day/Daffodil Festival and Park Walks in the summer will help in raising the awareness of the OSC to the public as well as raising the awareness of open space available to the public and the need to improve and expand it.

The meeting notes will remain topical only and will not go into great details about conversations, etc. Also, the notes will stress follow-ups and the appropriate person who is responsible.

Topics and Follow-ups

I. Public Comment

Wren Kennedy as noted in the above summary.

II. Approval of February Meeting Notes

The March Meeting Notes were approved with correction of spelling of names.

III. Committee Membership Status

The status of the committee membership is still one volunteer short. Ralph Currey continues as a member to fill the void.

IV. Liaison Reports

- Village Council
 - Frank Mortimer summarized the Village Council issues as they pertain to the OSC. Most issues will be addressed in the agenda items below but Frank also brought up the need to compare the Ridgewood open space tax rate versus other towns.

- Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board {PRC}
 - Nancy Bigos talked about the success of the job fair, the NY/NJ Trail Conference Proposal and the demands placed on the PRC.
- Fields Committee
 - Nancy briefed the committee on the improvements made to the master library which should help with scheduling. Additionally, the recognition of the Ridgewood Adut League will help in further scheduling of fields.
- Planning Board
 - Jim Van Goor talked about the downtown area and the opening of a new restaurant on Ridgewood Avenue near the old theater.

V. Open Space Tax Referendum

Frank will lead the effort with the Village Council, which has been successful so far. Matt has done some work in this area and will be leading the OSC involvement in this issue.

VI. Green Acres Diversion/2024 Progress/2025 Plan/Frank Mortimer

Good news continues in this area and documents were forwarded to Trenton ahead of time. Progress seems to be ahead of schedule, and we are still hoping for September completion. This could be a big help in securing funds for future projects.

VI. Schedler Park Property/Update

Park development continues to move along slowly. The Village Budget reflects additional monies toward this project including contaminated soil removal and progress on the park plans.

VII. Town Garage/Discussion/ Update

The cleanup and wait time of this property will take approximately two years as currently planned. Tentative OSC plans were agreed to regarding this property and a tie-in with the OSC Daffodil/Earth Day involvement. A wide variety of ideas were discussed about the future use of this park, including an EV charging lot, a community park, selling the property and buying another location, etc. Other ideas are also being pursued, and a suggestion box will be placed on the OSC table at the Earth Day/Daffodil Festival on April 27th. The committee members also agreed that OSC should sponsor a community event to discuss what should be done with the property after the cleanup. Frank will communicate with the Village Council on our wishes.

VIII. Event Suggestions/Participation

Like last year, the OSC will sponsor Park Walks in 2025. A schedule was shown with individuals responsible for the walk and finalized with a presenter. The June presenters are still to be determined. Jim will work with Alex on the Pleasant Park Walk and update him with all the material used in the past. With three exceptions, all the walks will be conducted by the same presenter as last year. Publicity for the Walks will be through handouts; personal contacts like with HILT and of course the Ridgewood Village Communication email. Other means are also encouraged like word of mouth, dropping off schedules at grade schools, high school and other groups and committees in the village.

The OSC will have a booth at this year's Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair. We will build on last year's content and focus on Open Space and the protection of our water, which is this year's theme. We will focus on Open Space versus over development, open space contribution to clean water and overall awareness of the committee, current parks and their use and our key activities for the upcoming year.

Park Stewardships –

Rain gardens – There will be a one-day volunteer on May 3rd to create rain gardens. More details to follow.

Dunhan Trail – A Cub Scout volunteer clean-up was conducted on this trail.

Habernickel – Volunteer continues to enhance this park. Healthbarn planted a Nut and Fruit Tree section at the park.

IX. New Business

The NY/NJ Trail Conference proposal for a Trail Plan and workshops for 4 parks was discussed. Several groups have stepped up and contributed to funds toward this project. Groups included Healthbarn and Rotary. The trail plan would be for a walk through the parks and a document featuring trail design comments on each trail, emphasizing deficiencies and recommended improvements. Volunteer Training Workshops would also be developed to train volunteers in helping to implement the improvements required at each municipal park.

The 4 parks are Habernickel, Grove Park, Kings Pond/Gypsy Pond and Twinney Pond Park.

X. Future Meetings

The acquisition list will be updated to include current updated values.

Open Space Trust Fund will be updated and summarized for the OSC.

XII. Adjournment

Next Meeting: Open Space Thursday, May 8th, 2025 – Time 7:00 PM – at The Stable

Submitted By: James Bostler – OSC Committee Secretary/Chairman