

A REGULAR PUBLIC WORK SESSION OF THE VILLAGE COUNCIL OF THE VILLAGE OF RIDGEWOOD HELD IN THE SYDNEY V. STOLDT, JR. COURT ROOM OF THE RIDGEWOOD VILLAGE HALL, 131 NORTH MAPLE AVENUE, RIDGEWOOD, NEW JERSEY, ON APRIL 23, 2025 AT 7:30 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER – OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT – ROLL CALL – FLAG SALUTE

Mayor Vagianos called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and read the Statement of Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. At roll call, the following were present: Councilmembers Mortimer, Perron, Weitz, Winograd, and Mayor Vagianos. Also present were Keith Kazmark, Village Manager; Heather Mailander, Village Clerk; and Matthew Rogers, Village Attorney.

Mayor Vagianos led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Before the commencement of public comments this evening, Mayor Vagianos explained that Mr. Kazmark would give a brief budget presentation, in order to answer some questions that have arisen from the public.

2. BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Kazmark said that since the 2025 Municipal Budget was introduced a couple of weeks ago, he has received some inquiries from residents concerning the impact of the taxes assessed against Valley Hospital, since they moved their main campus to Paramus, and how these new ratables would affect Ridgewood residents' property taxes.

Mr. Kazmark explained that prior to Valley Hospital moving their main campus to Paramus, Valley Hospital was assessed a community service contribution based upon the number of licensed beds on the campus, which is often called the per-bed tax. In 2021, Governor Phil Murphy signed into law a statute authorizing the per-bed tax. The first time that the Village received revenue from the per-bed tax for Valley Hospital was in 2022 in the amount of \$481,383.90, based upon an allocation of 430 beds. In 2023, revenue in the amount of \$524,658.30 was received from Valley Hospital by the Village, based upon 446 beds. In 2024, the Village received revenue of \$148,919.40, based upon 446 beds (this amount was prorated from the beginning of the year through Valley Hospital's move to Paramus in April of 2024).

Mr. Kazmark stated that following Valley Hospital's move to Paramus, the Valley Hospital property was added to the tax rolls through an added assessment by the Village Tax Assessor, who carries out State law relative to property values and assessments. Mr. Kazmark said that he has received inquiries from Ridgewood residents regarding how the addition of the Valley Hospital campus to the tax base would impact their property taxes. He stated that adding Valley

Hospital to the tax rolls adds \$200 million in new ratables, over last year, to the tax base. For comparative purposes, the amount of \$17 million was added in new ratables in 2024 over 2023. The addition of \$200 million in new ratables in 2025 changes the net valuation (value of assessed property) of the Village from \$5,930,301,800.00 in 2024 to \$6,133,035,300.00 in 2025, a 3.5% change in net valuation. Mr. Kazmark noted that there is a pending tax appeal on the Valley Hospital property filed by Valley Health System. Since this matter is currently in pending litigation, it cannot be discussed publicly at this time. Mr. Kazmark explained that the additional ratables in 2025 results in the portion of taxes paid by each property owner being further spread out.

Mr. Kazmark stated that there were 7,863 taxable properties in Ridgewood in 2024 and 7,866 taxable properties in 2025. With the Valley Hospital campus being taxed at \$5.2 million as a new taxpayer, the owners of other taxable properties will pay slightly less taxes. Mr. Kazmark stated that Robert Rooney, Chief Financial Officer, does not have any discretion to include or exclude a taxable property in Ridgewood in budget considerations. State statute must be followed in preparing the Municipal Budget, which must include all taxable properties in the municipality. If any taxpayer becomes delinquent in paying their property taxes, they are subject to a tax sale. When a Tax Sale Certificate is sold, the winning bidder must immediately pay the municipality all taxes and interest to date, and a lien is placed on the property.

Mr. Kazmark stated that without adding Valley Hospital to the tax rolls, the increase in taxes for 2025 would likely have been more than 3.14%, depending upon what additional cuts were made to the budget or if more surplus was used to offset a tax increase. He said that the administrative team at Village Hall would not have presented a budget with a tax increase larger than the 3.14% tax increase that was introduced two weeks ago. Mr. Kazmark said that the information being bandied about on social media about a 5% or 6% tax increase is false.

In 2024, the average home in Ridgewood was assessed at \$710,168.00, resulting in a municipal tax of \$4,760.84. Mr. Kazmark explained that the municipal portion of taxes represents approximately 24% of the total tax bill. In 2025, the average home in Ridgewood was assessed at \$712,700.00, with a municipal tax of \$4,910.47. This translates to a difference in taxes from 2024 to 2025 of \$149.63 per year on the average assessed home (slightly over a 3% tax increase over 2024). He said that this anomaly (of significantly increased ratables from one year to the next) is also affecting the Board of Education (BOE) budget. The BOE budget was introduced with a 2% increase, resulting in a \$251.00 increase in school taxes on the average home. With the additional ratables from Valley Hospital, Mr. Rooney projects that there will be a reduction in taxes on the School Board portion of taxes in 2025. Mr. Kazmark said that the BOE budget is scheduled to be adopted next Monday evening (April 28, 2025), so these numbers are subject to change.

Mr. Kazmark then showed a pie chart on the screen showing a breakdown of the various portions which make up the total tax bill. He cautioned that none of these budgets (Municipal, Schools, County, Library, Local Open Space and County Open Space) have been adopted, so the percentages shown are subject to change. Both the Village and the County are scheduled to adopt their respective budgets on May 14, 2025, and the BOE is scheduled to adopt its budget on April 28, 2025. The municipal portion of the tax is 24.01% (\$0.689), the County portion is 10.87% (\$0.312), the school portion is 62.80% (\$1.802), the Municipal Open Space portion is 0.172% (\$0.005), the Library portion is 1.667% (\$0.048), and the County Open Space portion is 0.487% (\$0.014).

Councilmember Weitz said that he felt that the presentation given by Mr. Kazmark cleared up a lot of questions from the public, since it explained the Valley Hospital issue very succinctly. He said that the Village Councilmembers cannot talk about the pending litigation (tax appeal) by Valley Hospital, but conceded that there is risk associated with any litigation. Councilmember Weitz said that the 3.14% tax rate increase will result in an increase of less than \$150.00 per household for the municipal portion of the tax bill in 2025. He praised Mr. Kazmark on showing transparency to the public.

Deputy Mayor Perron said that she was thankful for the explanation given by Mr. Kazmark, because the community service contribution is not an easy concept to understand. She stated that the Valley Hospital is now being billed as a regular taxpayer and not pursuant to the community service contribution. She said that the questions from the public about why property taxes are not decreasing, considering the additional tax revenue from Valley Hospital in 2025, are reasonable. Deputy Mayor Perron asked Mr. Kazmark if the taxes of \$4,910.47, which he previously mentioned, represented quarterly taxes on the average home. Mr. Kazmark replied that the increase of \$149.63 for the average assessed home is annual.

Mr. Kazmark said that it was difficult to predict what the County portion of the 2025 taxes would be, but he stated that, overall, the County portion is increasing by 4.93%. It is hard to predict how this will impact the residents in Ridgewood, until the County apportionment is figured out. Mr. Kazmark said that the Board of Education is also receiving more revenue, for the first time, from the taxes generated from Valley Hospital. Mayor Vagianos thanked Mr. Kazmark for his succinct and clear presentation regarding the 2025 budget.

3. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Boyd A. Loving, a resident of Ridgewood, said that he will reserve his comments concerning the 2025 budget until the Village Council meeting on May 14th. He said that Valley Hospital filed its tax appeal on March 26, 2025, and the budget was introduced to the public at the April 9, 2025 Village Council meeting. He said that the public is first hearing about this appeal by Valley Hospital at this evening's meeting. Mr. Loving said that a lot of angst, headache and heartache among

Village residents could have been avoided if the presentation given this evening had been given prior to the introduction of the budget. He wondered why the presentation was not given in a timelier manner, since the Village was aware of the appeal two weeks ago.

Amy McCambridge, a resident of Ridgewood, said that on May 1, 2025, she will be hosting a public panel featuring Dr. Sara Evans from Mount Sinai Hospital; Keith Fisher, who is a former Yankee Stadium Field Manager and nationally respected expert in natural grass fields; and representatives from the Sierra Club. She said that these individuals have “voices” based upon facts, science and experience, voices which the Village Councilmembers never made a true effort to hear. Ms. McCambridge agreed with Mr. Loving’s comments that it would have been nice for Village residents to hear Mr. Kazmark’s presentation earlier than this evening, and she described the delay in giving the presentation as “shady.”

Ms. McCambridge stated that the Village Councilmembers have lost the trust of Village residents, as a result of closed-door decisions and a blatant refusal to engage with their constituents. Ms. McCambridge said that she and her husband wanted to meet with Mayor Vagianos to discuss certain issues, but Mayor Vagianos refused to discuss certain matters. She said that there is no transparency shown by the Village Councilmembers, only a “steady stubborn march” towards something the public never asked for. She said that the Village received a grant from the Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund, and the Village Councilmembers are in breach of the purpose of that grant, which was to foster environmental stewardship. She became emotional and stated that the Village Councilmembers are putting residents at risk, particularly the children, by supporting the installation of a turf field at the Schedler property.

She spoke about how both she and her husband served in the military, how one of her husband’s military buddies died today, and how many men he lost while serving in action. She said that military leaders understand the magnitude of every decision they make. Ms. McCambridge expressed the hope that the Village Councilmembers would attend the panel discussion on May 1st.

Cynthia O’Keefe, a resident of Ridgewood, said that Ms. McCambridge organized the panel discussion on May 1st because she cares about the Ridgewood community. Ms. O’Keefe said that the Village Councilmembers were closed minded. She said that the decisions being made by the Village Councilmembers will impact the health and well-being of “real people” who live in Ridgewood. She asked the Village Councilmembers to keep an open mind regarding the use of artificial turf. Ms. O’Keefe said that David Refkin, Chair of Green Ridgewood, spent hours on a presentation which he gave before the Village Council, and afterwards he became very frustrated that only one Village Councilmember was “anti-turf.”

Ms. O’Keefe said that at the last Village Council meeting on April 9, 2025, she stated that the approved plans for the Schedler property were terrible. This statement was supported by the fact

that almost every resident in the Schedler neighborhood signed a petition against the use of artificial turf and installation of a large playing field on the Schedler property. Ms. O’Keefe stated that she did not say it was a terrible thing to develop a park for children and families to enjoy. However, she said it would be a terrible thing if children had to play on toxic soil, and she was grateful that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) stepped in and ordered testing of the soil and environmental cleanup on the Schedler property.

Ms. O’Keefe said that the Village Councilmembers are making decisions over “wants” and not “needs.” She said that the Village Councilmembers ran on a platform of “Ridgewood United,” but she said that they are not uniting the Ridgewood community. She asked the Village Councilmembers for transparency and for them to “walk the talk.” She also asked them to choose people over plastic. Ms. O’Keefe expressed the hope that the Village Councilmembers would attend the information-gathering session on May 1st.

Dolores Carpenter, a resident of Ridgewood, said that she wanted to speak about the new Wildlife Feeding Ordinance recently adopted by the Village Council, particularly the restrictions on bird feeders in private backyards. Ms. Carpenter remarked that she has not spoken before the Village Council since the controversy of the Valley Hospital expansion. She said that the bird feeding ban originally started with the State of New Jersey, although the State has not yet passed or enacted this legislation. She said that Ridgewood decided to “jump the gun” and pass their own ordinance, and she stated that she felt that the public was not properly informed about the proposed ordinance before it was adopted.

Ms. Carpenter indicated that the State initiated the wildlife feeding ban due to bears roaming around in residential neighborhoods in northern New Jersey; however, the State decided that the ban would apply to all New Jersey counties. She said that the Village Councilmembers passed the Wildlife Feeding Ordinance, because of the hazards of bird flu, Lyme disease, and rabies. She said that bears have been roaming in Bergen County since she was a child in 1941. She said that the incidence of bear sightings has remained static over the years, throughout the State. Ms. Carpenter stated that there has not been any dramatic rise in cases of Lyme disease or rabies for many years. She said that New Jersey has one of the lowest percentages of wild bird flu in the entire country, and no cases in humans.

Ms. Carpenter said that the hazards posed by backyard bird feeders have been blown way out of proportion by community and State officials. The enjoyment by residents of watching birds and wildlife in their backyards cannot be undervalued or disregarded. She said that, unfortunately, humans have spent many years destroying habitats and food supplies of wildlife, especially in heavily populated areas of the country. Ms. Carpenter said that this has resulted in a tremendous hardship for birds and wildlife in finding food on their own. She said that the rules and regulations established by the Village, governing the use of bird feeders in private backyards,

will make it virtually impossible for most residents to continue their commitment to, and enjoyment of, helping wildlife.

Ms. Carpenter said that New Jersey is proposing that bird feeders be ten feet off the ground, while Ridgewood set the limit at six feet off the ground. Ms. Carpenter said that she would have to climb on a ladder to replenish the food in her bird feeder every day, which she said was not a very good idea for an 86-year-old woman. She stated that this sudden removal of the food supply for wildlife will result in extreme hardship, physical harm, and eventually death to a large percentage of the wildlife population. The new ordinance will also result in elimination of the peace of mind and health benefits that residents derive from feeding and watching wildlife.

Ms. Carpenter concluded by stating that she could not hear anything that was being said on the dais. Mayor Vagianos said that the Village Councilmembers are well aware of the acoustical problems in the courtroom, and he apologized to Ms. Carpenter. He said that they are in the process of trying out some new microphones, in an attempt to improve the sound quality in the room. He asked for people in the audience to raise their hand if they cannot hear what is being said on the dais.

Saurabh Dani, a resident of Ridgewood, said that there was an email sent out last night by Mr. Kazmark which stated that there was some disinformation, and misinformation, being posted on social media. Mr. Dani asked for public clarification and specific details about what specific disinformation and misinformation was posted. He stated that the information that he personally posted on social media was with regard to the 2025 tax levy “across the Village” and how the Village Council stated that the 3.14% tax rate increase in property taxes for 2025 was consistent with the rate of inflation. Mr. Dani stated that if the Village is increasing its expenses in proportion to inflation, then the tax levy should be increasing by 3.14%, not the tax on individual households. He said that he stands by his comment that the tax levy increased by 6.55%. Mr. Dani said that it was shameful that the Village Councilmembers and Mr. Kazmark have not yet acknowledged this fact. He said that Mr. Kazmark is sending out email blasts and posting on social media that Mr. Dani is posting disinformation and misinformation on social media. He said that he and the Village are using different units of measure.

Mr. Dani said that Mr. Kazmark’s presentation this evening, as well as his email blast, stated that as a result of Valley Hospital become an additional ratable in the Village, there will only be a 3.14% tax increase. He said that even with Valley Hospital generating \$5.2 million in new taxes, the tax increase for Ridgewood residents is still going to be 3.14%. Mr. Dani said that Mr. Kazmark and Robert Rooney, Chief Financial Officer, are developing the budget based upon the wishes of the Village Councilmembers. Mr. Dani said that he was speaking in his personal capacity and not on behalf of the Board of Education (BOE), since he serves on the BOE. He said that the BOE passed a tax levy of 2% and, as Mr. Kazmark indicated, the impact on the property taxes for each Ridgewood household will be in the negative. The Village tax levy is

6.55% and the impact on each Ridgewood household, despite the significant increase in ratables due to Valley Hospital, will be in the positive (3.14%). Mr. Dani indicated that property taxes have risen 25% over the past five years in the Village, as compared to school taxes which have risen only 11% over the past five years.

Rurik Halaby, a resident of Ridgewood, said that he wanted to follow up on an email which he sent to the Village Councilmembers and Mr. Kazmark. He read his email for the record: “I have been following what the Village Council is trying to do with the CBD, but the nature of the beast is such that an inordinate amount of your time is spent on responding to residents’ gripes about small issues. I call it the impossible syndrome, which clouds your ability to look at the big picture. I think we need a world-class urban designer to help us look at Ridgewood, where we have been, where we are, and where we can be. I think we need an urban planner who would look at Ridgewood’s needs from a strategic point of view, starting at 35,000 feet and then drilling down into details, an urban planner who would help us lay the groundwork for a vital Ridgewood, from an economic and environmental point of view. A few months ago, I contacted IMM Design Lab, a global urban design company that is part of the architectural faculty of Politecnico di Milano, the MIT of Italy, that has undertaken projects globally from Milan to Rio de Janeiro. I had several discussions with them, and this led to an informal proposal from them entitled ‘Enhancing Ridgewood’s Urban Future,’ copies attached. All indications, based on many communications with them, is that they appear to be quite interested in working with us in Ridgewood on a suburban project in the United States. May I suggest that a committee of knowledgeable and interested Village leaders be formed to look at recommending to you how to respond to the proposal. With that in mind, I am copying various such leaders for any insights they may have. With thanks for your consideration.”

Mr. Halaby said that the Village Council is busy trying to solve problems, but they cannot delay strategic plans for the short term. He spoke about Napoleon’s ideas for infrastructure improvements, such as tree-lined highways in France. Napoleon felt that having these trees would allow his soldiers to rest in the shade. When he proposed this idea to his superiors, they scoffed and said that it will take 20 years for the trees to grow high enough to provide shade. Napoleon responded, “Well, don’t wait until tomorrow.” Mr. Halaby encouraged the Village Councilmembers to “get the ball rolling.”

Mr. Halaby thanked Mr. Kazmark for his budget presentation earlier this evening.

There were no further comments from the public.

Addressing Mr. Loving’s previous comments, Mayor Vagianos said that Mr. Loving stated that a lot of “angst, headache and heartache” would have been avoided if the presentation given this evening had been given sooner. Mayor Vagianos said that there was no confusion regarding the budget and that it was very straightforward. Mr. Kazmark gave his presentation because

questions arose from the public regarding the budget. However, Mayor Vagianos said that the questions asked were unfounded and the Village Councilmembers saw no reason to do a “deeper dive” on this issue. In addition, four to six multi-hour budget meetings were held and no members of the public showed up at any of the meetings. If residents had attended the budget meetings, they would have had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the budget.

Addressing Ms. McCambridge’s use of the terms “shady” and “closed-door decisions,” Mayor Vagianos stated that no decisions regarding the budget were made behind closed doors. On the contrary, they were made openly in the public. He said that Village Councilmembers do not call one another to make their decisions. Instead, all decisions are made on the dais during Village Council meetings. Mayor Vagianos said that it is Ms. McCambridge’s prerogative to use the word “shady,” but he said that the use of this word is completely inaccurate.

Addressing Ms. O’Keefe’s comments, Mayor Vagianos said that he and Mr. Refkin discussed the presentation Mr. Refkin gave before the Village Council for over two hours at lunch. Mayor Vagianos said that the Village Councilmembers are not closed minded, but just disagree with Ms. O’Keefe’s opinions. Addressing Ms. O’Keefe’s comment that the Village Council is a “Turf Council,” Mayor Vagianos said that he found out Councilmember Mortimer’s position regarding the Schedler property after Councilmember Mortimer was elected to the Village Council.

Mayor Vagianos thanked Ms. Carpenter for speaking before the Village Council this evening. He said that it was refreshing to hear her position regarding bird feeders.

Mr. Kazmark said that he appreciated the comments made by Mr. Loving this evening. He said that he has discussed the Valley Hospital tax appeal matters with the Village’s Tax Attorneys, specifically how far the discussion regarding same would go with the public. Mr. Kazmark said that the Village was trying to be cautious and sensitive to the pending litigation. He said that he regrets not taking some elements of the presentation given this evening and putting them into the budget presentation that he gave at the April 9, 2025 Village Council meeting. However, Mr. Kazmark stated that he was being guided by some of the legal opinions rendered by Village Tax Attorneys, in order to protect the Village’s positioning in the pending litigation. Mr. Kazmark expressed the hope that the presentation he gave this evening was helpful.

Addressing Ms. Carpenter’s comments, Mr. Kazmark said that he appreciates what she said regarding the recently adopted Wildlife Feeding Ordinance. He said that the Health Department has received many complaints about residents feeding wildlife. He said that one of the purposes of adopting this ordinance was deer management. Some residents complained that they were not comfortable letting their children outside to play, because their neighbors were constantly feeding deer. Mr. Kazmark said that he understands Ms. Carpenter’s concerns about the bird feeders.

Addressing Mr. Dani's comments, Mr. Kazmark stated that he feels that he and the Village Councilmembers have gone above and beyond in trying to provide Mr. Dani with all of the requisite information regarding the Village's 2025 budget. Mr. Kazmark said that he has responded to Mr. Dani's requests via email and social media. He said that Mr. Dani was given the opportunity to speak with Mr. Rooney, for an extended period of time, regarding his concerns about the budget, at the end of which time Mr. Dani stated that he understood the Village's position regarding the budget. Mr. Kazmark said that Mr. Dani indicated at the end of this meeting that he would be sending Mr. Kazmark and Mr. Rooney some additional correspondence, which Mr. Kazmark said was never received. Mr. Kazmark said that Mr. Dani posted something on social media two days ago, on one of the community pages, wherein Mr. Dani stated that a 6.6% municipal tax increase is off the charts.

Mr. Kazmark said that Mr. Dani has posted dozens and dozens of other posts perpetuating the fact that municipal taxes in Ridgewood were increasing by 6.6% in 2025, which Mr. Kazmark said were patently false. Mr. Kazmark reported that the municipal taxes on Mr. Dani's house are projected to go up an additional \$203.93, based on a 3.14% property tax increase for 2025 over 2024. Mr. Kazmark said that the "same phenomenon" is happening with the Board of Education, where Mr. Dani sits as a Commissioner. The Board of Education budget was introduced, with a 2% increase, translating to a \$250.00 school tax increase on the average home in Ridgewood assessed at \$712,000.00. Mr. Kazmark stated that with the additional ratables of \$200 million from Valley Hospital, there will most likely be a 1% reduction in the school portion of the tax bill. He said that he and others have "spent day and night" trying to articulate to the public the nuances of the complicated budget as clearly as possible and in its most simplistic form. Mr. Kazmark said that when the new tax bills are sent out to homeowners, they will see a 3.14% increase in the municipal portion of their taxes.

Councilmember Winograd thanked Ms. McCambridge for her comments. She said that she will be unable to attend the May 1, 2025 information-gathering meeting. She asked Mr. Kazmark if he would be tape recording the meeting and if he could send her, and other Village Councilmembers who may also not be able to attend the meeting, the link at the conclusion of the meeting. Councilmember Winograd said that she is available at any time to meet residents for coffee to discuss their concerns.

Councilmember Winograd stated that the Village Councilmembers have met with David Refkin on multiple occasions. She said that members of the Open Space Committee and Parks and Recreation Department have met with the members of Green Ridgewood, and there is an ongoing dialogue between numerous Village committees and Mr. Refkin.

Regarding the Wildlife Feeding Ordinance, Councilmember Winograd stated there is a group called "We Care" that can help Ms. Carpenter fill her bird feeder. She said that there are many Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts who would welcome the opportunity to help Ms. Carpenter.

Addressing Ms. Carpenter, Deputy Mayor Perron explained that the impetus for the prohibition against feeding wildlife is not limited to just birds, but includes all wildlife. She said that her neighbors in the Somerville School area found that their children were contracting Lyme disease, a very debilitating neurological disease that is hard to diagnose and/or cure. In addition, deer eat a lot of expensive plants and shrubs near homes. These residents asked the Village Council to take some affirmative action to prevent residents from feeding wildlife. Deputy Mayor Perron said that she organized a forum in 2023, with representatives from Bergen County Pest Control in attendance who spoke about ticks (one of the ways that Lyme disease is transmitted). Also in attendance at the forum were representatives from Tyco, the Village's pest control vendor, and Dawn Cetrulo, Director of the Health Department. Deputy Mayor Perron said that there were clearly only two options. Either the deer herds could be culled through hunting, such as was done in Saddle River, or residents could stop feeding wildlife because deer are attracted to birdseed.

Deputy Mayor Perron said that a study was done of local municipalities which had regulations prohibiting the feeding of wildlife, including birds. Some towns had an outright ban against the feeding of all wildlife, but it was felt that this was too stringent for Ridgewood, because some people like to watch birds. This is the reason why the Wildlife Feeding Ordinance allows the use of bird feeders, which must be at least six feet off the ground and contain a baffle underneath for collecting spilled seed. Deputy Mayor Perron said that birdseed that falls on the ground attracts rats, and the Village wants to avoid a rat infestation. Pending legislation at the State level was initiated primarily due to bears roaming in residential areas. This pending legislation would require bird feeders to be at least 10 feet off the ground, and the bird feeders would have to be brought inside every night.

Councilmember Weitz said that, some time ago, a couple of his friends told him that they were afraid to send their children outside to play, since their neighbors were feeding the deer. At that time, it was not illegal to feed deer on private property. He felt that this was a sad state of affairs, where children had to be kept inside for fear of contracting Lyme disease from tick-carrying deer. Councilmember Weitz said that Councilmember Mortimer and Deputy Mayor Perron took great care to develop the ordinance as narrowly as possible, so that residents could still enjoy their bird watching. He said that some residents have suggested to him that the deer herds should be culled, but this was unappealing to the Village Councilmembers.

Councilmember Mortimer said that the Wildlife Feeding Ordinance does not place a ban on bird feeders whatsoever. He said that when talking about deer, he is not talking about one or two "Bambis" wandering around. He said that there are literally 20-plus deer at a time which roam residential neighborhoods. In addition to spreading Lyme disease, the deer are also defecating in residents' yards.

Mayor Vagianos added that deer create car accidents, which presents a danger to Village residents. He said that at one time, he had between 15 and 20 bird feeders in his backyard.

However, this caused a significant rat problem by his home. He apologized to Ms. Carpenter that the new wildlife feeding regulations are impinging upon her enjoyment of bird watching.

Addressing Ms. McCambridge, Mayor Vagianos said that he understood that today is a tough day for her. He assured her that all of the Village Councilmembers commiserate with her. He thanked both Ms. McCambridge and her husband for their service to the United States and for the sacrifices they have both made.

4. VILLAGE MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Kazmark began his Village Manager's report by announcing that, this week, his office will be submitting grant applications to the New Jersey Historic Preservation Trust Fund for the pedestrian tunnel by the Train Station. In addition, a grant application will be submitted to the Bergen County Historic Preservation Trust Fund regarding the pedestrian tunnel as well. The Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund application this year will be earmarked for renovations to Citizens Park. He thanked Carol Bialkowski, Director of Communications and Special Projects, as well as the Parks and Recreation Department, for working so diligently on the aforesaid applications.

Mr. Kazmark said that he was pleased to report that the Engineering Department successfully submitted its plan for the West Glen Avenue sidewalk project (north side of the road) to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). Between Alpine Terrace and Heights Road, there is a ditch area with a stream, which is regulated by the NJDEP. On the south side of West Glen Avenue, the Engineering Department is in the process of putting together the bid specifications for the sidewalk construction, which will require the use of retaining walls, easements, and right of access agreements. One of the affected residents lives in California, so discussions with the property owner are ongoing. Another affected resident has some concerns about their property, and discussions are ongoing with this property owner as well.

Mr. Kazmark congratulated the Ridgewood Chamber of Commerce on organizing a very successful "Easter in the Park" this past Saturday. He gave a big shoutout to the employees in the Village Clerk's Office who, amongst other things, handle the Village's insurance claims and interactions with the Joint Insurance Fund. Due to the successful efforts of all Village departments, the Village received the Gold Award for all of the safety incentive and risk management efforts developed by the Village. This award was presented at a Safety Awards Breakfast, last Thursday, at Seasons Catering.

Mr. Kazmark announced that a scope of work has been developed by the Engineering Department for renovations to the train trestle that spans Franklin Avenue. This proposal will be sent to New Jersey Transit for their review and consideration.

Mr. Kazmark said that the Village is in the process of starting the application to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) regarding the Schedler property. Some revisions are being made to the last application submitted to SHPO, and the application should be completed and submitted to SHPO sometime later this spring.

Mr. Kazmark stated that irrigation regulations are in effect, which limit watering to two days per week. Residents with even-numbered addresses are permitted to water on Wednesday and Sunday, and residents with odd-numbered addresses are permitted to water on Tuesday and Saturday. No irrigation is allowed on Monday, Thursday or Friday.

Yard waste collection began earlier this month. Residents should check the Village calendar for pickups in their specific area.

The next Council Chat will be held on Saturday, May 3, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. in the Caucus Room on the fourth floor of Village Hall. Residents may contact the Village Clerk's Office to schedule an appointment. Walk-ins are welcome, but those with reservations will be given priority.

The Opening Day Parade for the Ridgewood Baseball and Softball Association will take place on April 26, 2025. The parade will commence at 9:00 a.m. at the Ridgewood Train Station and will continue down East Ridgewood Avenue, to Maple Avenue, and end up at Veterans Field.

The 2025 Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair will take place on Sunday, April 27, 2025, in Memorial Park at Van Neste Square, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Activities include goat yoga, a petting zoo, musical entertainment, educational displays, demonstrations and crafts, as well as vendors specializing in sustainability and natural products. The highlight of the event will be the Daffy Dog Parade, which will commence at 12:30 p.m. Registration for the parade begins at 12:00 p.m., at the Ridgewood Veterinary Hospital booth.

The Ridgewood Guild will be holding a Spring Marketplace on Saturday, May 3, 2025, rain or shine, from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Memorial Park at Van Neste Square. It is anticipated that over 80 vendors will be participating in this event.

The Health Department will be sponsoring their annual Dog Rabies Clinic on Wednesday, May 7, 2025, at the Graydon Pool parking lot, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Dog license renewals are due before June 30, 2025. All dogs attending the clinic must be licensed, in order to have their rabies certificate validated.

Upcoming Village Council meetings are as follows: Work Sessions on May 7 and May 28, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.; and Public Meeting on May 14, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., during which time final adoption of the 2025 Budget will take place.

5. VILLAGE COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilmember Mortimer reminded everyone about the Ridgewood High School fundraiser being held for the graduating class of 2025. Faux customized street signs can be ordered for graduating seniors online at tinyurl.com/pg25streetsign.

Councilmember Mortimer said that the Ridgewood Arts Council met this past Monday. He stated that an “Artist Talk” will be held at the Ridgewood Library tomorrow night beginning at 7:00 p.m. John Luckinbill, the current Ridgewood High School Marching Band Director, will be the featured artist. Reservations are not necessary to attend.

The Open Space Committee met on April 10, 2025, and the Green Acres diversion was discussed during the meeting. The appraisals have been sent to the NJDEP Green Acres Program for review. Councilmember Mortimer said that the dates for this year’s Park Walks have been finalized. The first Park Walk is scheduled to take place on Saturday, April 26, 2025, at Dunham Trail at 10:00 a.m. The walk will be led by Dave Sayles.

Councilmember Mortimer reminded everyone that the 13th annual Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair will be held on Sunday, April 27th in Memorial Park at Van Neste Square, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The Open Space Committee will have a table at the fair and will educate the public about the value of open space in the Village. Councilmember Mortimer said that there were only 12 vendors at the first Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair held in 2012, and this year there will be 62 vendors, demonstrating how this event has grown in popularity.

Councilmember Mortimer stated that the Citizens Safety Advisory Committee (CSAC) met on April 17, 2025, and discussions revolved around Saddle River Road. The Ridgewood Police Department sent out 130 surveys to residents who live in the area, regarding the possibility of installing rumble strips on that road. Only 12 responses were received back, with eight residents against the installation of rumble strips and four in favor of the installation. Based upon these results, the installation of rumble strips on Saddle River Road is being tabled at this time. Sight triangle obstructions were also discussed, and Councilmember Mortimer said that more summonses have been issued to residents with such obstructions on their property. To date this year, about 37 summonses have been issued, resulting in almost 100% compliance in rectifying these obstructions. Councilmember Mortimer stated that thermoplastic stop signs will soon be installed at the intersection of Kenilworth Road and Laurel Road, as well as the addition of signs on Kenilworth Road warning motorists that they are approaching an intersection.

During the CSAC meeting, Councilmember Mortimer said that there was a discussion regarding Racetrack Road. It was determined that lights are needed on Racetrack Road, but it was discovered by the Police Department, after investigating the area, that the poles needed for such lights are situated in Ho-Ho-Kus, since one side of Racetrack Road is located in Ho-Ho-Kus and

the other side is located in Ridgewood. When the Ridgewood Police Department contacted the Ho-Ho-Kus Police Department, they were told that no Ho-Ho-Kus residents had ever made complaints regarding Racetrack Road. Councilmember Mortimer said that it would be up to Ho-Ho-Kus officials to request Public Service Electric & Gas (PSE&G) to install lights on Racetrack Road.

Members of CSAC want to start a safety campaign in Ridgewood, and this initiative will be launched with the assistance of Ms. Bialkowski in the Village Manager's Office. The campaign will consist of proactive reminders for pedestrians and motorists, to warn them about certain things to look out for while on the road and sidewalks. Councilmember Mortimer said that his favorite is the "Stop, Look and Wave" campaign, to educate pedestrians that they have a responsibility to ensure their own safety, as well as motorists.

Councilmember Mortimer said that the Parks, Recreation and Conservation (PRC) Board met last night. During the meeting, two residents requested that two additional pickleball courts be installed at Glen School (which would bring the total to six courts). The grounds were measured, and these residents stated that there is enough room to install two additional pickleball courts. Councilmember Mortimer stated that this was a timely request, considering the fact that the existing courts will soon be resurfaced. The Engineering Department will measure the area and confirm whether or not there is enough room to install two additional courts.

Councilmember Mortimer stated that installation of the new pavilion at Habernickel Park is almost completed. During the PRC meeting, there was a discussion about future uses for the pavilion. Councilmember Mortimer stated that the newly renovated field near Hawes School will be opened this coming Monday, April 28, 2025.

Councilmember Weitz stated that there was a Ridgewood Library Board Meeting held last night, and the members expressed their gratitude for the capital appropriations in this year's budget. New carpeting will be installed and the bathrooms will be renovated. Prior to the Ridgewood Library Board meeting, there was a meeting held by the Kasschau Bandshell Committee. On May 1, 2025, Steel Wheel will be donating 25% of all lunch and dinner proceeds to the Kasschau Bandshell. Councilmember Weitz encouraged everyone to patronize Steel Wheel for lunch, dinner or takeout, to benefit this worthy cause. Private donations may also be made online at www.kasschaumemorialshell.com. This year's entertainment schedule at the bandshell will be announced at the May 1st fundraiser at Steel Wheel.

Councilmember Weitz said that he will be attending the Artist Talk at Ridgewood Library tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Perron said that it was wonderful that Steel Wheel will be donating part of their proceeds for the benefit of the Kasschau Bandshell. She said that Glenn Carlough, owner of Steel

Wheel and President of the Ridgewood Chamber of Commerce, seems to attend every civic meeting in the Village that she attends, and she is grateful for his civic endeavors.

Deputy Mayor Perron thanked the Chamber of Commerce for organizing “Easter in the Park” this year, which she stated was a wonderful event. Deputy Mayor Perron and Margie Downs from the Health Department spent most of their time on the sidewalk helping with the sidewalk chalking activity.

Deputy Mayor Perron attended the 300th anniversary of Old Paramus Church, which was founded in 1725. She stated that she actually got married in this church, and the church does a lot for the Ridgewood community. She stated that the anniversary celebration was a heartwarming event. The Old Paramus Church Spring Flea Market will be held on May 4, 2025.

Deputy Mayor Perron thanked Councilmember Weitz for letting her fill in for him at the Historic Preservation Commission meeting recently. Homeowners of two beautiful historic homes attended the meeting, seeking to modernize their homes while retaining their historic nature. These homeowners gave a thoughtful presentation on their renovation plans. There were also four applications for signage.

Regarding the Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair which will be held on April 27th, Deputy Mayor Perron said that she was really looking forward to attending this event. She reminded everyone that the Daffy Dog Parade will begin at 12:30 p.m. In connection with the fair, Green Ridgewood is running a student art contest. Entries in the contest may be viewed by the public at worldFLATS and Bali Salon on East Ridgewood Avenue, with a couple of other locations to possibly be announced. The winners of the art contest will be announced at the Earth Day Fair. Deputy Mayor Perron indicated that although the fair officially starts at 11:00 a.m., Teddy the Drummer will be in Memorial Park at Van Neste Square beginning at 10:00 a.m. She stated that Teddy teaches children how to play the drums.

The Central Business District Advisory Committee (CBDAC) met recently. The Assistant Director from the New Jersey Business Action Center spoke at the meeting and educated the attendees about various resources that are available for local governments and individual businesses. The next CBDAC meeting will be held on May 8, 2025 at 8:30 a.m. in the Village Hall Courtroom, and the main topic of discussion will be parking.

Councilmember Winograd stated that the Shade Tree Commission will also have a table at the Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair on April 27th, and they will be giving out redbud and dogwood whips to attendees. She said that a donation of daffodil bulbs was given to the Village last year, and interns volunteering for the Shade Tree Commission planted them across the street from Steel Wheel, on North Broad Street. Councilmember Winograd said that the daffodils

bloomed this year and the Train Station looks beautiful. She said that three of these interns will be graduating from Ridgewood High School this year.

Regarding the Stigma-Free Committee, Councilmember Winograd reminded everyone that May is “Mental Health Month.” She encouraged everyone to get outside and do activities that improve one’s mental health. Councilmember Winograd thanked Carol Bialkowski for helping the Stigma-Free Committee with their outreach efforts.

There was a meeting of the Ridgewood Beautification Team (RBT) yesterday. The new planters have been placed in the Central Business District (CBD). These new planters are stronger than the former ones and can withstand not getting damaged if inadvertently hit by a car door. In addition, the new planters have a larger surface area, which means that the plants/flowers placed inside them will require less watering. There are three professionals on the committee who helped to pick out the new planters. Fifteen of the older pots have been salvaged and placed in satellite locations. The RBT will be partnering with the Ridgewood Guild to seek outside donations for the purchase of more planters in the future, to keep a uniform appearance in the CBD. The new planters will add to the vibrancy and charm of the downtown area, which will hopefully result in creating more foot traffic to local businesses. Councilmember Winograd stated that the resident landscapers on this committee volunteer their time and look forward to beautifying the CBD. Although there has been a decrease in vacant storefronts in the CBD, Councilmember Winograd would like to keep up the beautification of the CBD little by little. Mr. Kazmark said that many residents have told him that they love the new planters in the CBD.

Councilmember Winograd said that she attended the Lunch & Learn event for seniors yesterday, which was held downstairs at Village Hall. She thanked Liz Kloak for inviting the Village Councilmembers to the luncheon. Chris Ramundi, who is a member of the RBT, also attended the luncheon and gave a presentation. Councilmember Winograd informed the other Village Councilmembers that they will be sponsoring a similar luncheon in the future and providing the food.

Councilmember Winograd stated that next Sunday is Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, and she encouraged everyone to thank any first responders that they may encounter in their daily lives. She also thanked Linda Scarpa for always organizing events to honor law enforcement personnel.

Mayor Vagianos stated that he had nothing new to report. He mentioned that the Opening Day Parade for the Ridgewood Baseball and Softball Association will be held this coming Saturday, commencing at 9:00 a.m. He urged everyone to attend this fun event. Mayor Vagianos said that he was also looking forward to attending the Daffodil Festival and Earth Day Fair which will be held on Sunday, April 27th. He stated that he also attended the Lunch & Learn event for seniors which was held yesterday in Village Hall, sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department.

6. **DISCUSSION**

A. **BUDGET**

1. **AWARD CONTRACT – HORTICULTURAL SUPPLIES**

Mr. Kazmark indicated that this matter pertains to the awarding of a contract for horticultural supplies for the Parks Department for 2025, with an option for 2026. There was one registered plan holder eligible to bid, and the Village received one bid on April 9, 2025. It is recommended that this contract be awarded to the sole bidder, SiteOne Landscape Supply, of Mahwah, New Jersey, in an amount not to exceed \$52,200.00. This contract will provide the Parks Department with various landscaping and horticultural supplies for maintenance of Village parks and properties. Funding is contained in the Parks Division Operating Budget. The amount of \$20,000.00 will be allocated to the Ridgewood Beautification Team, and the amount of \$32,200.00 will be allocated to the Parks Department.

Deputy Mayor Perron asked if trees were included in this contract, and Councilmember Winograd replied that trees are not included and the contract will cover only shrubs and flowers.

2. **AWARD PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT – GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING SERVICES**

Mr. Kazmark indicated that this item deals with the awarding of a professional services contract for geotechnical engineering services regarding the Schedler property, located at 460 West Saddle River Road. The firm of Suburban Consulting Engineers, Inc., has identified a need for a geotechnical investigation to be performed on the Schedler property, primarily for the purpose of completing a stormwater management design for the property. Services will include a field investigation, permeability testing, and a summary report of findings. This contract is not to exceed \$28,400.00.

3. **AWARD PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT – ASSISTANCE IN FILING PAPERWORK FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF FUNDS FOR NORTH WALNUT STREET PARKING LOT CLEANUP**

Mr. Kazmark indicated that this matter pertains to the awarding of a professional services contract for assistance in filing paperwork for reimbursement of funds for the North Walnut Street parking lot cleanup. The Village will be preparing an NJDEP Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund (HDSRF) grant application for the North Walnut Street parking lot property, located at 132 Franklin Avenue. The HDSRF, which is administered by the NJDEP in partnership with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), was established to

provide funding to public and qualifying private entities for the remediation of a suspected or known discharge of a hazardous substance or hazardous waste. It is recommended that this contract be awarded to Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc., of Newark, New Jersey, in an amount not to exceed \$5,000.00. This vendor will work alongside the Engineering Department to prepare the appropriate resolutions to be passed by the Village Council for inclusion in the grant application, and to prepare and submit the HDSRF application. This vendor will also coordinate with the NJDEP and NJEDA throughout the grant review process. The contact person at Vanasse Hangen Brustlin is Laura Clifford, a Licensed Site Remediation Professional (LSRP). Mr. Kazmark stated that over ten underground fuel tanks were removed from the North Walnut Street parking lot. The Village is eligible for reimbursement of up to 75% of the Remedial Action (RA) costs regarding this property.

4. AWARD CONTRACT – RESURFACING OF STREETS

Mr. Kazmark indicated that this item pertains to the awarding of a contract for resurfacing, repairs and other work on various streets throughout the Village. There were 14 registered plan holders eligible to bid, and seven bids were received by the Village on April 9, 2025, ranging from a low of \$4,169,988.05 to a high of \$5,190,660.00. It is recommended that this contract be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder, J. A. Alexander, Inc., of Bloomfield, New Jersey, in an amount not to exceed \$4,169,988.05. Christopher Rutishauser, Village Engineer, is recommending an initial partial award to this vendor in the amount of \$1,800,000.00 to start the paving work as soon as possible. Funding will be contained in the 2025 Capital Budget.

Deputy Mayor Perron made a motion to suspend the Work Session and convene a Special Public Meeting, seconded by Councilmember Mortimer.

Roll Call Vote

AYES: Councilmembers Mortimer, Winograd, Perron, Weitz and Vagianos

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

The Regular Public Work Session was reconvened and the discussion items were continued.

7. **DISCUSSION:**

A. **RIDGEWOOD WATER**

1. **REFUND WATER OVERPAYMENT – 552 CLIFF STREET**

Mr. Kazmark explained that this item pertains to a refund of a water overpayment concerning property at 552 Cliff Street. Both the tenant and the owner made payments on the water bill, resulting in an overpayment, so the overpayment in the amount of \$1,335.55 will be refunded to the owner.

B. **BUDGET**

1. **AWARD CONTRACT – DISPOSAL OF STREET SWEEPINGS**

Mr. Kazmark explained that this matter pertains to the award of a contract for the disposal of street sweepings collected from Village streets in 2025. One bid was received by the Village, from Organic Recycling, Inc., and they said that they will use the street sweepings for roadway construction. This company is located in New York State, and the Engineering Department has not been able to find a disposal facility in New Jersey. Their quote was for \$47.00 per cubic yard, the same as last year, and this vendor requires that the Village truck the material to their receiving facility. It is recommended that this contract be awarded to Organic Recycling, Inc., of Orangeburg, New York, in an amount not to exceed \$20,000.00.

2. **AWARD CONTRACT – REPLACEMENT OF BACKSTOP –
PLEASANT PARK/HAWES BASEBALL DIAMOND**

Mr. Kazmark indicated that this matter pertains to the award of a contract for replacement of the backstop at the Pleasant Park/Hawes baseball diamond. It is proposed that a galvanized (15 feet high by 40 feet wide) backstop serve as the replacement for the existing backstop, which is deteriorated beyond repair. It is recommended that this contract be awarded to Anchor Fence Contractors, Inc., of Hillsdale, New Jersey, in an amount not to exceed \$34,450.00. Funding is contained in an old Capital Budget account.

Deputy Mayor Perron pointed out that the third “Whereas” paragraph of the proposed resolution mentions that three quotations were received for the purchase and installation of the backstop. Mr. Kazmark said that he believed three quotations were solicited by the Village, but only two vendors responded. She said that the third “Whereas” paragraph should state that two quotations were received, rather than three. Mr. Kazmark asked Ms. Mailander to check with Matthew Andreula, Parks/Shade Tree Supervisor, to clarify how many bids were actually received and then adjust the resolution accordingly.

3. AWARD CONTRACT UNDER STATE CONTRACT – GASOLINE AND DIESEL FUEL

Mr. Kazmark indicated that this matter pertains to the award of a contract, under the New Jersey State Cooperative Purchasing Program, for the purchase of fuel for the Village's Fleet Services Division, in order to keep the Village's equipment and vehicles operational. It is recommended that this contract be awarded to Rachles/Michele's Oil Company, Inc., of Clifton, New Jersey, in an initial amount not to exceed \$400,000.00.

4. AWARD CONTRACT – IRRIGATION SYSTEM SERVICES – PARKS AND RECREATION

Mr. Kazmark indicated that this matter pertains to the award of a contract for irrigation system services for 2025 for the Parks and Recreation Department. One registered plan holder submitted a proposal. The proposal was structured to obtain unit prices for various components of the irrigation system that the Village uses on a day-to-day basis. It is recommended that this contract be awarded to Sprinkler Guy Irrigation, of Ridgewood, New Jersey, in an initial amount not to exceed \$20,000.00. Funding is contained in the Parks Division Operating Budget.

5. AUTHORIZE CHANGE ORDER NO. 2 – REMOVAL OF ABANDONED UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS – NORTH WALNUT STREET PARKING LOT

Mr. Kazmark explained that this matter involves a request for authorization of Change Order No. 2, regarding the removal of abandoned underground storage tanks at the North Walnut Street parking lot. During the performance of site work, two additional underground storage tanks, concrete foundations, and more contaminated soil/groundwater were discovered. The concrete foundations will need to be removed, so that the contaminated soil underneath the foundations can be removed. The contractor selected by the Village to perform the excavation work, T. R. Weniger, Inc., has encountered additional soil and water contaminated by hydrocarbons in excess of bid quantities. During removal of the tanks to date, extensive soil contamination was found to depths of up to ten feet below grade. Groundwater contamination has also been observed, requiring the use of a frac tank to collect the liquid for subsequent offsite disposal.

The original bid amount was for 400 tons of contaminated soil, and it is estimated that the additional contaminated soil to be excavated may total an additional 1,400 tons. Additional waste classification sampling analysis of the contaminated soil is also required by the receiving facility. It is requested that Change Order No. 2, in the amount of \$345,400.00, be approved by the Village Council and reviewed by Nisivoccia, the Village's Auditors. In addition, it is requested that the contract duration be extended by an additional 80 calendar days. Mr. Kazmark reminded the Village Councilmembers and the public that the Village approved an application for up to

75% reimbursement from the NJDEP, which will include the cost of Change Order No. 2 as well.

D. POLICY

1. RIDGEWOOD FOURTH OF JULY COMMITTEE – MILITARY FLYOVER REQUEST

Mr. Kazmark said that this matter deals with a request made by Tara Masterson, Co-Chair of the Ridgewood Fourth of July Committee, to make application for a military flyover over Veterans Field prior to the fireworks, during the evening entertainment. It is not certain whether or not this request will be approved by the Department of Defense, but the committee would like to make this request to see if the flyover can occur this year. With the Village Council's permission, they will make the same request next year, if the flyover cannot take place in 2025. Mr. Kazmark reminded everyone that 2026 will be the 250th Independence Day Celebration for the United States.

Councilmember Weitz, who is Council Liaison to the Fourth of July Committee, stated that this is a very complicated process, with approvals needed by the Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Defense, and the military. He was unsure how likely the chance will be that a military flyover will actually take place in 2025. Mr. Kazmark said that by making the request in 2025, the request is "in the queue" to make future requests. Councilmember Mortimer asked if the Village could send an application to the Department of Defense at the current time to request a military flyover in 2026. Councilmember Weitz said that he was not sure if the Village could make such a request so far in advance, but he said that he would discuss this with Ms. Masterson. The Fourth of July Committee is seeking approval from the Village Council to submit this application. There was a consensus among the Village Councilmembers that they were in favor of this request.

Deputy Mayor Perron remarked that she used to love the parachuters who would jump and land in Veterans Field during the Fourth of July celebration. However, she was told by Ms. Masterson that it was hard to get the parachuters to land at Veterans Field.

8. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Anne Loving, a resident of Ridgewood, said that she is 100% opposed to a military flyover during the Fourth of July celebration. She does not feel that now is the correct time to put on a dramatic show of military strength, since there are actual wars occurring around the world. Ms. Loving said that there are risks involved, including crashes and deaths. She applauds the veterans and soldiers who march in the Fourth of July Parade, and she has no objection to parachuting during the Fourth of July, but she is vehemently opposed to a military flyover.

Ms. Loving said that it is so insulting to hear from the dais that no one attended the recent budget meetings. She said that she and her husband attended each budget meeting remotely. Even though residents were not physically present in the courtroom during the budget meetings, Ms. Loving said that there were plenty of people viewing the meetings remotely. She said that no resident asked questions about Valley Hospital paying property taxes, because they had no idea that Valley Hospital would be filing a tax appeal.

Ms. Loving personally thanked Saurabh Dani and Steve Kim for posting tax information on social media. She said that she has known Mr. Dani for a very long time and described him as an unbelievably honest man, respectful and kind. She said that Mr. Dani is not lying or posting any misinformation on social media. Ms. Loving said that looking up Mr. Dani's personal home address and publicly talking about his property tax bill is a personal attack on Mr. Dani and very inappropriate.

Saurabh Dani, a resident of Ridgewood, said that there is a line item in the 2025 budget named "PILOT Senior Citizen Housing" in the amount of \$244,764.00. He asked what this line item represents, since there is no similar item in the 2024 budget. Mr. Dani understood that "PILOT" is an acronym for "Payment in Lieu of Taxes." He did some research and noted that Ridgecrest Senior Housing has existed for a long time, but there is no mention of Ridgecrest in the 2024 budget.

Mr. Dani said that there was a line item called "Amount to Be Raised by Taxes" discussed during the 2025 budget presentation. In 2024, this line item was in the amount of \$39,658,266.00, and in 2025, this line item was in the amount of \$42,256,311.00. He asked if someone could explain to him what this line item represents and how the number is calculated.

Amy McCambridge, a resident of Ridgewood, said that she wanted to talk about the recent Wildlife Feeding Ordinance and the reasoning being used to justify it, under the banner of public safety and safeguarding the community. She said that this is just another fear-driven distraction. She stated that instead of worrying about the dangers of wildlife, parents and the Village Councilmembers should be concerned about the poisons being poured onto athletic fields, the PFAS contamination in the drinking water, 24 million pounds of contaminated soil sitting across from a residential neighborhood, poisons in food, pesticides, microplastics and chemicals, and pollution. She stated that the Passaic River is the fourth most endangered river in the United States.

Ms. McCambridge said that people should be worried about government-approved toxins, the normalization of synthetic turf, and processed foods, which endanger children far more than a tick bite ever could. She said that wildlife does not pose a threat, but it is humans who have disrupted the natural order of the environment. She said that nature maintains itself through balance, with predator and prey, growth and decay, birth and death. When humans disrupt this

natural balance by removing wildlife populations, removing plant species, and poisoning what they cannot dominate, eventual collapse of the environment is imminent. Ms. McCambridge said that the Village Councilmembers are condoning the installation of synthetic turf on which children will be playing, which creates heat islands of up to 180 degrees and releases endocrine-disrupting chemicals into the ground. She said that they can remove every animal in the area, but this is not going to “undo” the carcinogens that are flowing downstream.

Jacqueline Hone, a resident of Ridgewood, said that she cannot believe that the Village Councilmembers are unanimously entertaining the thought of having a military flyover during the Fourth of July celebration. She said that she is strongly opposed to this flyover, and stated that this is another example of “greenwashing” shown by the Village Councilmembers. Ms. Hone stated that a single jet, such as an F-16, can burn over 800 gallons of fuel per hour, releasing thousands of pounds of CO₂ into the atmosphere. She said that such a flyover would cause wildlife disturbance and will cost a lot of money. Ms. Hone said that there are alternatives to flyovers. The Village’s Master Plan states that Ridgewood is located in a major “fly path” and the Village Council should be trying to clean the air, rather than pollute it. Ms. Hone said that she was especially surprised to hear that Deputy Mayor Perron is in favor of the military flyover. Ms. Hone said that enough damage has been done by the Village of Ridgewood by contaminating the public. She implored the Village Councilmembers not to consider a military flyover during the Fourth of July celebration.

There were no further comments from the public.

Councilmember Winograd said that during Village Council Work Sessions, ideas are brought up to be considered. She acknowledged that there are risks with a flyover, especially during drought-like conditions. She said her father was a Marine and her brother was in the Navy. Councilmember Winograd said that sometimes discussions involving new ideas become polarized, and she does not want to see that happen. She said that everyone respects those in the military, and understands the risks and financial aspects involved with executing a specialized event, such as a military flyover. Councilmember Winograd said that discussions of new ideas during a Work Session are made public, so that feedback can be obtained from the public.

Deputy Mayor Perron thanked the residents who spoke this evening, since they brought up concerns which she had not thought about, regarding the military flyover. She expressed the hope that Councilmember Weitz will bring up these concerns at the next meeting of the Fourth of July Committee, and Councilmember Weitz said that he would do so.

Councilmember Weitz agreed with the comments made by Councilmember Winograd, and stated that sometimes it is hard to have a discussion about new ideas, such as the military flyover, since residents immediately criticize the Village Councilmembers and accuse them of greenwashing.

He said that throwing barbs at someone and attacking them is not a way to persuade someone to see another person's viewpoint.

Mr. Kazmark apologized to Mr. Dani and said that he could not bring up the budget presentation on his laptop to find answers to the questions posed by Mr. Dani. However, he said that he would find out the answers to his questions and get back to Mr. Dani as soon as possible. With regard to the amount to be raised by taxation, Mr. Kazmark stated that when the Municipal Budget is prepared, the Village Councilmembers come up with all of the appropriations, what the spending plan is going to be, and what the Village needs to expend those funds on, during the calendar year. At the same time, all sources of revenue are put together, including court fines, fees and permits by different Village departments, and registration fees. A calculation is then done taking into account both the appropriations and revenues, and the gap or bridge between the two is what needs to be raised through taxation. Mr. Kazmark said that the Municipal Budget differs from the Board of Education (BOE) Budget, since the BOE revenue stream is not as strong as that of the Village. The amount to be raised by taxation in 2025 is spread out over a larger tax base, due to the addition of Valley Hospital and other ratables to the tax rolls. Mr. Kazmark said that the tax rate increase for 2025 will be 3.14%.

Addressing Ms. Loving, Mr. Kazmark said that there has been a lot of conjecture on social media in the past few days, with certain individuals trying to convince Ridgewood residents that their taxes are increasing by more than 6%, when in fact their taxes are only increasing by 3.14%. He said that many people have written to him and have been "critical of the critics" who are pontificating on social media outlets. Mr. Kazmark said that many individuals asked how this year's tax increase would affect them personally, and Mr. Kazmark tried his best to answer all of the questions asked of him. He said that this is what he has tried to do with Mr. Dani, since Mr. Dani has been one of the most vocal people regarding the 2025 tax increase over the last few days.

Mr. Kazmark said that he cannot handle hypocrisy. Referring to Ms. Loving, he said that she perpetuated sharing information about a particular resident in Ridgewood who was delinquent on their taxes and even proposed that they should not be able to volunteer on a Village board or committee, yet she had the gall to tell Mr. Kazmark that what he said about Mr. Dani this evening was inappropriate. Mr. Kazmark defended his statements regarding Mr. Dani, stating that he was pointing out public information as to how the tax rate increase would affect Mr. Dani's taxes, so that Mr. Dani could better understand the budget process. Mr. Kazmark said that when he brought this contradiction to Ms. Loving's attention, she laughed at him.

Mayor Vagianos thanked Ms. Hone for her comments, since she raised a concern that he had not considered when it came to the military flyover. He said that he will take her comments into consideration when the matter is discussed in the future. Mayor Vagianos also said that in all the years that he has served on the Village Council, no one has ever laughed at anything that any

member of the public has said. He said that the Village Councilmembers listen attentively to everything that is said by residents, whether or not they agree with the comments being made.

9. **RESOLUTION TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION**

Ms. Mailander read Resolution #25-225 to go into Closed Session:

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Village Council, on a motion by Councilmember Weitz, seconded by Councilmember Mortimer, and carried unanimously by voice vote, the Village Council's Regular Public Work Session was adjourned at 10:03 p.m.

Paul Vagianos
Mayor

Heather A. Mailander
Village Clerk