



# VILLAGE OF RIDGEWOOD

131 N. MAPLE AVENUE, RIDGEWOOD, NJ 07450

## **Ridgewood Stigma-Free Committee Meeting Minutes 5.20.25**

### **Present:**

Karen Acker, Lynn Benson, Shelia Brogan, Danielle Caputo, Surbhi Kapadia, Corinne Scarpa, Sophia Shin, Councilwoman Siobhan Winograd

### **1. Welcome**

- Attendees shared informal greetings. As Sophia Shin has not previously attended a meeting, she introduced herself. Sophia is a Tenaflly resident, who has volunteered to be involved and revitalize their Stigma-Free Committee. She had emailed Siobhan to ask about Ridgewood's Committee, and is attending today's meeting to learn more about what Ridgewood's Stigma-Free Committee does. She hopes to gain some insight into how to help revive Tenaflly's committee. She is impressed by Ridgewood's website that had lots of great content and many helpful links to resources. She is planning to table at a Tenaflly event, a town 5K event on June 1. Tenaflly holds 2 large annual events – the one in June and another in September. They are expecting over 1000 people in foot traffic. She is trying to get information, and has reached out to several organizations. She's hoping to get some insight from Ridgewood as they are known to have a strong Stigma-Free Committee. Danielle recommended starting with the Stigma-Free toolkit. Danielle offered to meet/talk with Sophia offline to help her with ideas and information for the tabling event. Siobhan asked if a council person is working with Tenaflly Stigma-Free and Sophia confirmed that there is. Further discussion took place regarding reaching out to the Board of Health, the library, local mental health providers, and hospitals. Karen did not think West Bergen covered Tenaflly, but would find the name of the entity that does for Sophia and share that with her.

### **2. Follow-Up on Previous Events**

Danielle gave an overview of several events the Health Department had attended or coordinated since the last meeting.

- On 4/27, the Health Department/Stigma-Free had a table at the Daffodil Festival. It was a cold and windy day, but a well-attended event and the location of Health/Stigma's table was great and got a lot of foot traffic.
- On 4/28, the Health Department hosted their first Mental Health First Aid Training. 18 registered and 12 people attended. Attendees came from all over, with several being local to Ridgewood. It was a full-day training and Bergen County was able to send 2 veteran trainers for the program. The county is trying to get out into the community to facilitate more of these trainings. The version of the training that was provided was the

version that focused on assisting adults. A youth focused version of the training with the county is tentatively scheduled in Ridgewood for September. As the Health Dept staff may or may not be employed at that time, Danielle is unsure if the training will happen under the direction of Parks and Rec or other Village Department, or if the training may be cancelled all together.

- On 4/29, Health in collaboration with Parks and Rec hosted the Northeast New Jersey Legal Services (NNJLS) to provide a presentation on Elder Justice. The presenter was very well spoken, shared a lot of good information about the different types of abuse elders may face, and her passion and dedication to serve seniors was apparent. This is the 2nd time NNJLS had been invited to speak this year – in January 2025 they gave a presentation on the big four documents all individuals should have. It would be wonderful to continue to work with them in the future.
- On 5/2, Danielle and Surbhi attended the 2025 Mental Health Symposium at Biagio's in Paramus. This year there was a panel that discussed the different phone numbers to call to ensure the residents are getting linked to the appropriate resources. They reviewed when to call 988, 911, and 211 and led the attendees in an exercise on how to handle various scenarios. The sticker contest winners were also announced and provided prizes. The stickers were displayed for all attendees to see. There were also various community providers present tabling. Overall, it was a wonderful event to attend and feel energized about mental health/Stigma-Free.

### **3. Stigma-Free Campaign for Mental Health Awareness Month**

Danielle shared activities that took place in support of Mental Health Awareness Month.

- The Village and Health Department coordinated a digital mental health campaign. Some messaging went out in the Village E-News, and other messages were posted on social media. Siobhan shared how proud she was of the Health Department for launching its first digital campaign. Ridgewood Public Schools picked up on the message and reshared the information. Siobhan shared it was the ultimate compliment to have RPS pick it up and amplify the message. The digital campaign was even more widespread in community and a huge success.
- The Village also participated in the county's lawn sign campaign. Signal Department helped Health put up "Ridgewood Proud to Be Stigma-Free" lawn signs at Village Hall, the Stable, Fire, and Ridgewood Water. The library also agreed to be part of the campaign and put up signs in both the front and back of their building. RPS will also join the initiative, and agreed to put up one sign at each of the 10 schools in the district. The schools have a 2-week policy for lawn signs, and will put them up for the last 2 weeks of May.
- Danielle noted that the Health Department usually likes to host a big event in May in support of Mental Health Awareness Month. It is not lost on the department that with the abrupt federal grant funding cuts, that the Health Department was not able to coordinate or host such an event.

### **4. Upcoming Events**

The committee members took turns speaking regarding upcoming events in the community.

- Siobhan, as the councilperson who also sits on the Access Committee, spoke about

the inclusionary sensory dinners Access has been hosting. The committee now has an intern, whose initial project will be to create a mailing/invitation list for all their events. Over the last few months, the dinners have started to include a few families from neighboring towns. The next Sensory Friendly dinner will be May 28th at Le Pancake Café. The June dinner will be a barbeque at the firehouse where the children will be able to interact with first responders and see/touch/climb the emergency vehicles. There is a local mom on the Access Committee, who has been very active in trying to move forward with having an inclusionary playground installed in Ridgewood. She has led educating the committee on the differences between an ADA compliant vs an inclusionary playground. To this end, the committee will be taking a field trip to an inclusionary playground.

- Siobhan congratulated Sheila for her longevity award that she recently received at a Board of Ed meeting for 30 years of service. Sheila thanked Siobhan for her kind words.
- Sheila spoke about upcoming Age Friendly events. May is also Older American's Month. To honor that, Valley, Age Friendly, and the Community Center of Ridgewood Foundation are hosting a lunch and learn on May 27th. The theme of the event is 'flipping the script' and will focus on transforming how society perceives, talks about and approaches aging. There is a lot of stigma around aging. On May 31st, opening day for Graydon Pool, Graydon will host their annual Senior Breakfast at 11:30am. It will include musical entertainment in addition to the breakfast. The event usually draws in about 70 people. Graydon is a wonderful place for seniors to socialize over the summer. Siobhan commended Sheila for putting in place and continuing the program where free badges are given to residents 60 and older who receive SNAP or Medicaid assistance.
- Sheila also mentioned that the Mayor's Wellness Campaign Committee is putting together a Million Minutes of Wellness Challenge. Individuals in the community will be encouraged to participate in logging their wellness activities in minutes, and the goal as a community is to reach one million minutes of wellness collectively. The library was instrumental in creating a google form, similar to the one used for the reading marathon, for individuals to self-report and log their minutes. There are 8 different areas of wellness. In addition to the more conventional ideas of wellness like physical exercise, some activities that count include socializing, eating with family, seeing a therapist, or attending a religious service. As this challenge is still being developed, more details on it to follow.
- The Stigma-Free Committee discussed Pride Day coming up on 6/7. There will be vendors, bouncy house for children, wrapped goods not food trucks and some nonprofit organizations present. The flag raising is at 1pm and there will also be some singing and speeches. In years past, Dawn has usually attended and represented Stigma-Free. Danielle noted that Health is figuring out if someone can go as Dawn is out of town that weekend and both Surbhi and Danielle have personal commitments that day. Surbhi noted that Health has Stigma-Free promotional items, information and resources that can be given to anyone on the committee that is willing to table the event. Some folks shared they could potentially help out, but not take the lead as they

have other commitments at the event itself. Unfortunately, no one is able to fully staff event.

**Next Meeting**

Date of next meeting to be determined. Danielle to send out an email with information/date of next meeting.