

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 OCTOBER 23, 2024 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 taken by Deputy Village Clerk, Atiyyah Hall, the following were present: Councilmembers Perron, Weitz, Winograd, and Mayor Vagianos. Councilmember Reynolds was absent from the meeting. Also present were Keith Kazmark, Village Manager; Heather Mailander, Village Clerk; Atiyyah Hall, Deputy Village Clerk; and Matthew Rogers, Village Attorney.

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

2. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Laurie Weber, a resident of Ridgewood for over 40 years, stated that, last week, Mayor Vagianos reported that there has been an alarming decline in the state of Ridgewood schools. He claimed that the student/teacher ratio was significantly higher than it actually is, and he placed the blame for this on HyunJu Kwak, a current member of the Board of Education (BOE) who is running for election to the Village Council. Ms. Weber said that a series of targeted social media attacks against Ms. Kwak ensued. Mayor Vagianos got this statistic from the home page of the BOE website. However, Ms. Weber said that the BOE does not post the historical data necessary to reach any conclusion. The New Jersey Department of Education does post such data, and had Mayor Vagianos checked this website, he would have found that the student/teacher ratio in Ridgewood schools is much lower than he claimed.

Ms. Weber said that when Mayor Vagianos attacks Ms. Kwak, he is denigrating the Ridgewood School District, the Superintendent of Schools and his administrative team, and five Board members. Ms. Weber said that Mark Schwarz, current Superintendent of Schools, is far more engaged with the community and innovative than his predecessors. Ms. Weber stated that Mayor Vagianos refused to identify the source of his information when she asked him. She said that Mayor Vagianos chose to fabricate a “talking point” in order to disparage a political opponent. Ms. Weber said that this reckless behavior has caused strife in the Village, alarmed parents of school children, created divisiveness, and caused horrible vitriol to be flung at Ms. Kwak. Ms. Weber said that Mayor Vagianos always lectures the community about civility; however, she said he has no business holding others to a standard that he constantly violates.

Anne Loving, a resident of Ridgewood, asked if there is a policy in Ridgewood governing what goes into the Transparency Binders in the Court Room, which contain the agendas and backup materials for the meeting, or what can be placed on the tables in the courtroom during a Village Council meeting. She stated that new restaurants in Ridgewood sometimes place menus on the table during meetings. Ms. Loving stated that she placed some news articles on the table related to a current “hot topic” (an article written about Mayor Vagianos in the *New Jersey Monitor*), and Mr. Kazmark immediately removed the news articles from the table. She asked for clarification regarding any applicable policy and why her material was removed.

Denise Lima, a resident of Ridgewood, said that she cannot understand how the Village Councilmembers did not know that people were being tracked during events in the Village, since the Village Councilmembers regularly attend various committee meetings, particularly meetings held by the Ridgewood Guild. She feels that ethically, residents should have been made aware that they were being tracked through technology, and there should have been some discussion by the Village Councilmembers with residents about this matter.

Regarding leaf collection, Ms. Lima said that the leaf piles on the streets are a mess during the fall season. When it rains, leaves end up clogging the gutters on the street, which contributes to flooding. She asked what happened to all the money spent by the Village on the leaf vacuum trucks, and why leaf collection is still being accomplished with backhoes and dump trucks.

There were no further comments from the public.

Mayor Vagianos stated that Mark Schwarz, Superintendent of Schools in Ridgewood, is terrific and the Village is fortunate to have him. Mayor Vagianos said that he did not denigrate the schools in Ridgewood, did not fabricate or recklessly manipulate information, and did not stir divisiveness in the community. He stated that he simply quoted information gleaned from the Board of Education (BOE) website, which stated that the student/teacher ratio was 16 to 1. He said that he had a lengthy conversation with Ms. Weber and even sent her a screenshot of the information from the BOE website, so the comments made by Ms. Weber were inaccurate. Surprisingly, after Mayor Vagianos got this information from the BOE website, the information was changed from a student/teacher ratio of 16 to 1 to 11 to 1. Mayor Vagianos cautioned Ms. Weber not to make faces at him while he was speaking.

Addressing the comments made by Ms. Loving, Mr. Kazmark indicated that he did not know whether or not there was a policy related to what type of literature can be placed on the tables during Village Council meetings. This evening, he was alerted by Village staff that there were non-government documents placed on the table. He said that he took the documents off the table and gave them to the Village Clerk. He said that the Village Councilmembers could certainly consider enacting a relevant policy, with advice from Matthew Rogers, Village Attorney. Mr. Kazmark said that Village Hall is a government building and the table should be strictly for

government documents, since any other type of materials could cause a very difficult problem for the Village.

Addressing Ms. Lima's concerns about the Placer.ai tracking technology, Mr. Kazmark said that he has broached this subject with the New Jersey League of Municipalities on two separate occasions, since the last Village Council meeting. He said that one of the difficulties with this type of technology is that local municipalities are "handcuffed" from being able to regulate such tracking. Even if the Village Councilmembers adopted an ordinance to regulate such tracking, there would be no way to enforce the ordinance, since the Police Department and I.T. Department do not have the capability to do so. He encouraged Ms. Lima and any other concerned residents to speak directly with members of the Ridgewood Guild about their concerns. Mr. Kazmark said that Village officials were first made aware of this technology during the presentation given before the Village Councilmembers by the Ridgewood Guild. He stated that they are unaware what other businesses, organizations or residents are using similar technology in Ridgewood.

Regarding the comments made by Ms. Lima regarding leaf collection, Mr. Kazmark stated that leaves are collected by vacuum trucks mostly on main roads, and by the use of trucks and backhoes for the remaining streets. This is the procedure used by the Streets Division in the past, but Mr. Kazmark said that he will discuss this matter with Mike Junta of the Streets Division to see if this procedure should be changed in any way.

3. VILLAGE MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Kazmark began his Village Manager's report by thanking the ACCESS Committee and the Ridgewood Public Library for their hard work to make ACCESS Week a success. He also thanked the Shade Tree Commission on their successful Adopt-A-Sapling program, which was held last Saturday. Many volunteers planted 90 saplings throughout the Village.

This week, the Engineering Department submitted the Village's re-certification to the Community Rating System Program. This program, administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), tracks flood mitigation efforts in municipalities. As credits are earned for each action taken in the Village to mitigate flooding, residential flood insurance premiums are reduced. Mr. Kazmark thanked Christopher Rutishauser (Village Engineer), Jovan Mehandzic, and the rest of the staff of the Engineering Department for being proactive in this regard.

Mr. Kazmark said that, this week, the Engineering Department oversaw the paving of Albin Court and Lynn Street. The fuel tanks were installed yesterday at the Public Works facility on Chestnut Street, and this will be followed by the installation of the necessary connections to the fuel tanks. It is anticipated that this project will be completed by mid to late November 2024.

Last week, Mr. Kazmark indicated that he, Mr. Rutishauser, Matt Andreula, and Nancy Bigos, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, walked along Hawes Field in preparation for the field renovations that will take place. The work includes tree removal, tree replacement, and storm drain maintenance in the area. He had visited the field previously with Ms. Noe, a local resident who expressed some concerns about the condition of Hawes Field, at a prior Village Council meeting, and who offered valuable feedback regarding the project.

Regarding the West Glen Avenue sidewalk project, Mr. Kazmark stated that he attended a meeting today with Nancy Dargis, Division Head/Assistant County Engineer at the Bergen County Department of Planning and Engineering. Ms. Dargis confirmed, in writing, that the County will not permit the building of retaining walls in the right-of-way on West Glen Avenue. The letter states that per State statute, the County maintains West Glen Avenue from face of curb to face of curb, and from pavement edge to pavement edge, and does not own, install, or maintain sidewalks within the public right-of-way. Any sidewalk constructed within the public right-of-way is to be compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Any retaining wall constructed to build the sidewalks is required to be outside of the public right-of-way. The County does not own, install, or maintain retaining walls constructed for the installation of sidewalks. The letter also states that any easements required should be given to the Village, and not to the County.

Mr. Kazmark went on to say that after receiving the letter from Ms. Dargis, he consulted with Matthew Rogers, Village Attorney. Mr. Kazmark and Mr. Rogers will meet on November 12th with the impacted residents who live on West Glen Avenue, in the Community Center at Village Hall, to discuss sample easements. Mr. Rogers has contacted the Bergen County Counsel's Office to get their approval of the language contained in the sample easements. Mr. Kazmark indicated that he is still communicating with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) about the sidewalks on the adjacent side of West Glen Avenue.

Mr. Kazmark spoke about the communication mailer that will be mailed out shortly to all Ridgewood households and businesses. There will be a QR code on the mailer, which can be scanned so that residents may access the location online (Village website) where they can sign up for the reverse 911 emergency notification system, weekly E-News messages from the Village, and the newsletter from the Ridgewood Library. The QR code will also enable residents to download the My Ridgewood app, Recycle Coach app, and WaterSmart app.

Mr. Kazmark announced that leaf collection season began on October 14th, and leaf placement schedules have been mailed out to all Ridgewood households. The leaf collection schedule is also posted on the Village website. He reminded everyone that the dates on the schedule are dates during which leaves should be placed curbside in each particular area. Leaf pickup will occur after the placement dates have ended.

There will be a special Trick or Treating event held at Village Hall on October 31st from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Each Village Department will be open to hand out treats. Treats will also be offered at the Ridgewood Library, Ridgewood Water Headquarters, Lester Stable, and the Fire Department.

The Ridgewood Elder Dinner will take place on Sunday, November 10th, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., at the Old Paramus Reformed Church. Doors open at 2:30 p.m. Registration is required through Community Pass. Space is limited to 90 guests. Senior bus transportation to this event can be arranged through the Village Manager's Office.

All Village offices will be closed on Monday, November 11th, in observance of Veterans Day. There will be no garbage or recycling pickup on November 11th.

On November 11th at 11:00 a.m., American Legion Post 53 will host a Veterans Day service in Memorial Park at Van Neste Square. The public is invited to attend to honor those who have served in the Armed Forces to protect our freedom.

The Bergen County Utilities Authority will be holding a Household Hazardous Waste Collection on Saturday, November 16th, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., on Empire Boulevard in Moonachie. Residents should remain in their vehicles and allow staff to retrieve their hazardous waste.

Upcoming Village Council meetings are as follows: Work Session on November 6th and Public Meeting on November 13th.

4. VILLAGE COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilmember Weitz thanked the League of Women Voters for hosting the candidate debate last Wednesday. He reminded everyone to vote on November 5th. He attended a meeting of the Ridgewood Library last night around 7:00 p.m., and was pleasantly surprised to see the recently renovated Teen Room "packed with kids" either doing homework or socializing.

Councilmember Weitz stated that the Ridgewood Arts Council met last week. An "Artist Talk" is scheduled for November 14, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. Shantala Kaikini will speak about her work as a graphic artist and portrait painter with an Indian influence. Further information is available on the Ridgewood Library website.

Councilmember Winograd thanked the ACCESS Committee for their hard work organizing the successful ACCESS Week which occurred recently, over the course of five days. She especially thanked Jamie Davis for hosting the latest sensory-friendly dinner. The next sensory-friendly dinner will take place at the Pancake House. American Sign Language (ASL) was featured for

the first time during ACCESS Week. Councilmember Winograd also thanked the Ridgewood Library for their assistance in holding the “Pull Over Properly” event, the Ridgewood Police in hosting the “Blue Envelope” event, and Joann Van Sant for hosting the Fashion Show. She thanked all of the Village Councilmembers who attended the events held during ACCESS Week. Councilmember Winograd expressed the hope that ACCESS Week can be expanded to seven days next year.

Councilmember Winograd also thanked the Shade Tree Commission, particularly Adam Brown and Nancy Brennan Hill, for their assistance in making the Adopt-A-Sapling program a success, along with the multiple volunteers and Village Councilmembers who showed up to help.

Last night, Councilmember Winograd and Deputy Mayor Perron attended a joint meeting between the Parks, Recreation and Conservancy Board and the “Green Committees.” She thanked Rich Brooks and David Refkin, as well as others, for attending the meeting. The various committees will be working together to research sample meadows on public land, rain gardens, and a specific type of grass seed that requires less watering.

Deputy Mayor Perron said that during ACCESS Week, she learned the ASL sign for “Vote.” The Friends-to-Friends service given by Rev. Dr. Joann Van Sant, which was held during ACCESS Week, was very moving for Deputy Mayor Perron and her family.

The Oktoberfest event held recently was wonderful, and Deputy Mayor Perron thanked the Ridgewood YMCA for sponsoring the event in the Central Business District (CBD). The Harvest Festival, sponsored by the Ridgewood Guild in the CBD, was also “glorious.”

Deputy Mayor Perron reported that the Central Business District Advisory Committee (CBDAC) met recently. She thanked the League of Women Voters for hosting the candidates’ debate, which Deputy Mayor Perron described as “substantive” and intellectually stimulating for all in attendance.

The Adopt-A-Sapling program was a success, and Deputy Mayor Perron reminded everyone to make sure to water these newly planted saplings, especially now since there is currently a drought.

Mayor Vagianos stated that the events held during ACCESS Week, including the Friends-to-Friends service, the Fashion Show, the Talent Show, and the sensory-friendly dinner were wonderful. He thanked Jamie Davis for organizing the sensory-friendly dinner and explained how parents with special needs children often cannot go out to dinner, because their children often avoid excessive noise, stimulation and bright lighting.

Mayor Vagianos thanked Councilmember Winograd for spearheading the Adopt-A-Sapling program. He thanked the League of Women Voters for hosting the candidates' debate, which he described as a substantive and informative debate. Mayor Vagianos spoke about the "Pull Over Properly" program, hosted by the Ridgewood Police during ACCESS Week. This event aimed to help neurodiverse drivers understand how to safely respond when pulled over by law enforcement. Mayor Vagianos said that Police Officers from other municipalities attended the event as well. Mayor Vagianos also talked about the Oktoberfest and Harvest Festival held in the Village recently, which were both well attended.

Ms. Mailander stated that early voting starts Saturday, October 26th, and ends on Sunday, November 3rd. Hours are Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Early voters can do so at any location that has early voting. There are no places in Ridgewood for early voting. Mail-in ballots must be received by Bergen County no later than October 29, 2024. Election Day is November 5th, and polls are open from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Mr. Kazmark thanked Ms. Mailander for working with Carol Bialkowski, Director of Communications and Special Projects, on an email which sets forth voting announcements, early voting locations, and new voting procedures together with an informative video.

5. DISCUSSION

A. RIDGEWOOD WATER

1. AUTHORIZE CANCELLATION OF WATER CAPITAL ORDINANCES

Mr. Kazmark stated that this matter deals with the cancellation of Water Capital Ordinances that are either completed or a change in scope has occurred on the capital project. The cancelled balance may be reappropriated to fund future capital projects or pay down debt. Funds cancelled to Water Capital Surplus amount to \$623,995.61. Mr. Kazmark added that he has asked all Department Directors to take a look at relevant ordinances to see what can be cancelled before the end of the year.

Councilmember Weitz asked whether the money from cancelled ordinances in other departments can be used for other Village expenses. Mr. Kazmark replied that the funds can be reappropriated, through a particular process, for other purposes.

B. BUDGET

1. AWARD CONTRACT – FURNISHING AND DELIVERING SODIUM BISULFITE SOLUTION AND SODIUM HYPOCHLORITE SOLUTION - WATER POLLUTION CONTROL FACILITY

Mr. Kazmark stated that this item pertains to an award of bid for the furnishing and delivery of necessary chemicals for the Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF). Three bids were received on September 11, 2024 to supply the WPCF with sodium bisulfite solution and sodium hypochlorite solution. It is recommended that the contract be awarded to PVS Minibulk, Inc., of Detroit, Michigan, in an amount not to exceed \$142,200.00. This quote is \$14,000.00 less than last year's quote with a different vendor.

2. AWARD CONTRACT UNDER NJ WASTEWATER COOPERATIVE PRICING SYSTEM THROUGH THE LEAD AGENCY, PASSAIC VALLEY SEWERAGE COMMISSION – CLEAN AND INSPECT SEWER LINES – HOPE STREET AND SPRING AVENUE

Mr. Kazmark explained that this matter involves the awarding of a contract through the North Jersey Wastewater Cooperative Pricing System, through the lead agency, the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission (PVSC) Cooperative Purchasing Program, for storm sewer collection system cleaning and CCTV inspection in the Hope Street and Spring Street area. The Village has been investigating the conditions in the storm sewer collection system in that area. It is recommended that this contract be awarded to Rapid Pump and Meter Service Co., of Paterson, New Jersey, in an amount not to exceed \$42,000.00.

3. AWARD PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT – NJ LICENSED SITE REMEDIATION PROFESSIONAL – REMOVAL OF UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS – NORTH WALNUT STREET LOT

Mr. Kazmark indicated that this matter pertains to the awarding of a professional services contract for removal of the abandoned underground fuel storage tanks underneath the North Walnut Street parking lot. The work will require the services of a Licensed Site Remediation Professional (LSRP) in case any contamination is found, as well as closure of the tanks which are removed, in accordance with guidelines of the NJDEP. Bids were received on October 16, 2024. It is recommended that this contract be awarded to VHB, Inc., (formerly Brinkerhoff Environmental) of Newark, New Jersey, in an amount not to exceed \$77,176.05. Brinkerhoff is

the same environmental firm used by the Village for the condemnation proceedings for the Town Garage.

Councilmember Winograd explained to the public that this is property owned by the Village at the corner of North Walnut Street and Franklin Avenue, next to the Town Garage. This property will be environmentally inspected at approximately the same time as the Town Garage property. Mr. Kazmark mentioned that there are a number of tanks under the North Walnut Street parking lot which need to be removed, since the property was formerly a gas station.

Deputy Mayor Perron stated that, to the best of her recollection, there had been nine underground storage tanks beneath the North Walnut Street parking lot. Two tanks were removed, but the surrounding soil was not remediated. Five of the tanks are gasoline storage tanks, one is an oil tank, and another is a waste oil tank. The LSRP will plan and oversee the entire project, and will also recommend an appropriate contractor to remove the storage tanks. The LSRP will also perform soil sampling to determine if any remediation is required. Deputy Mayor Perron asked if the contract amount of \$77,176.05 will include the laboratory fees for analysis of the soil samples. Mr. Kazmark stated that this depends upon what is found in the soil after the tanks are removed. He added that any remediation work that is necessary must be performed by a certified contractor licensed to do such work.

Deputy Mayor Perron asked if the Village would be able to apply for a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) regarding the storage tank removal and any necessary remediation. Mr. Kazmark said that he would contact Millennium Strategies to see what applicable grants may be available, and would also ask the LSRP once they are retained by the Village. Deputy Mayor Perron recalled that there may be available grants for gas station cleanups, but thought that the deadline was sometime in the fall of 2024.

4. AUTHORIZE SHARED SERVICES AGREEMENT – TV INSPECTION OF SEWER MAINS – NORTHWEST BERGEN COUNTY UTILITIES AUTHORITY

Mr. Kazmark indicated that this matter pertains to the authorization of the renewal of a Shared Services Agreement with the Northwest Bergen County Utilities Authority. The services under this agreement include TV inspection equipment and an operator to inspect sanitary sewer systems for the years 2025 and 2026. The current agreement expires on December 31, 2024. The cost for this service is 95 cents a foot, with a minimum of \$500 per day in 2025, and 98 cents a foot, with a minimum of \$500 per day in 2026. These are the same rates as before. Upon questioning by Deputy Mayor Perron, the Village only uses these services when required.

Councilmember Winograd stated that the Facilities Manager for the Board of Education (BOE) indicated at a Fields Committee meeting that they discovered a storm drain behind the

Ridgewood High School scoreboard. Councilmember Winograd asked if someone could reach out to the BOE to see if they need any help with inspecting this drain with a camera, since the drain is in close proximity to Spring Avenue. Mr. Kazmark replied that he would reach out to Dr. Mark Schwarz, Superintendent of Schools, to discuss this matter.

Deputy Mayor Perron recalled that when the stormwater drains near Hope Street and Spring Avenue were inspected previously, a blockage was found near Addison Place. She asked if this drain blockage has been cleared. Mr. Kazmark replied that Peter Affuso in the Engineering Department, has been dealing with this issue, but a report has not yet been received from Mr. Affuso regarding the status of same.

5. **CANCELLATION OF PROPERTY TAXES – 120 FRANKLIN AVENUE**
6. **AUTHORIZE REFUND OF TAXES – RIDGEWOOD, LLC – 120 FRANKLIN AVENUE**

Mr. Kazmark explained that these two matters deal with the cancellation of property taxes for 120 Franklin Avenue, since this property (Town Garage) was purchased by the Village on February 28, 2024, as well as a refund of a portion of property taxes paid by the previous owner of the property, Ridgewood 120 LLC, in the amount of \$2,362.82 for the month of March. The amount of the first quarter taxes paid was \$6,860.00.

C. **POLICY**

1. **REQUEST TO EXTEND DINING CORRALS IN CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT TO NOVEMBER 3, 2024**

Mr. Kazmark indicated that this matter deals with a request from the President of the Chamber of Commerce to extend the time for dining corrals in the Central Business District from October 31, 2024 to November 3, 2024. All Village Councilmembers were in agreement. Mr. Kazmark said that he could have Mr. Junta remove the corral barriers either Sunday night (November 3rd) or Monday night (November 4th). At the November 13, 2024 Village Council meeting, a resolution confirming this extension could be adopted.

D. OPERATIONS

1. APPROVE FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT PLAN ANNUAL REPORT FOR NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM

Mr. Kazmark stated that this item pertains to the approval of a Floodplain Management Plan Annual Report for the National Flood Insurance Community Rating System. Confirmation by the governing body is needed at this time, although the report has already been submitted for recertification by the Engineering Department. This is necessary to maintain the Village's Community Rating System of 6.

Deputy Mayor Perron pointed out that on page 3 of the report, the Ridgewood Environmental Advisory Committee is named as the Green Team; however, the Green Team is a subcommittee of Green Ridgewood. She suggested that the wording "Green Ridgewood" be used in place of "Ridgewood Environmental Advisory Committee (also known as the Green Team)."

2. AUTHORIZE EXECUTION OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH BERGEN COUNTY FOR CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING SERVICES

Mr. Kazmark stated that this matter deals with an authorization to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Bergen County Department of Health Services to provide lead poisoning services to Ridgewood. This is possible through a grant received by the County from the New Jersey Department of Health and offers services to all 70 towns in Bergen County. This agreement is valid for 12 months, from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025. There is no cost to the Village for these services. This MOU has been utilized since 2019 and has been successful.

3. AUTHORIZE EXECUTION OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH BERGEN COUNTY – VARIOUS HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Kazmark stated that this matter deals with an authorization to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Bergen County Department of Health Services (BCDHS). The BCDHS receives grant money to be the lead agency for offering services to local health departments. The MOU contains agreements for services regarding a Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan, New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection Program, Tuberculosis Control, and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program. There is no fee for these services, which are required under the Public Health Practice Standards. The MOU will be effective from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025.

4. DECLARE 436 EAST SADDLE RIVER ROAD AS ABANDONED PROPERTY

Mr. Kazmark explained that this matter pertains to the declaration of property located at 436 East Saddle River Road as abandoned property. He pointed out the third paragraph of the proposed resolution, which states that this property has been vacant for at least six months. The lawn is overgrown and the property has fallen into disrepair, posing a health hazard (rodents) to adjacent neighbors. The property owner is delinquent in paying property taxes for over one year, and efforts to contact the owner have been unsuccessful to date. A contractor needs to be hired to clean up this property, so that an invoice can be generated and a subsequent lien placed on the property. There is a trailer on the property with two flat tires and there have been multiple complaints from neighbors. Members of the Health Department and Police Department, as well as the Code Enforcement Officer, have visited the property. It was noted that there are bait traps on the property.

Councilmember Weitz asked if any of the neighbors know who used to live at this property. He expressed concern that it could be an elderly property owner who has fallen ill or passed away. Mr. Kazmark said that multiple efforts have been made to contact the owner and/or his family to no avail. Matthew Rogers, Village Attorney, stated that ownership of the property has recently changed, and the new owner is a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC). The LLC was contacted, but the Code Enforcement Officer was informed that the LLC has been sold since purchasing the property. Mr. Rogers opined that once the property is designated as an abandoned property, per Village ordinance and State statute, there would be some action taken by the owner. The letter to the owner would be sent out by both certified and regular mail. The Village will not take possession of the property, but it needs to be declared as abandoned, so that the proper maintenance can be performed to abate the health hazards to the neighbors. Mr. Rogers added that if no action is taken by the owner after the property is declared abandoned, there are legal steps to follow with the Superior Court of New Jersey to enable the Village to take possession of the property.

5. DECLARE PROPERTY SURPLUS – PARKS DEPARTMENT

Mr. Kazmark explained that this item deals with the declaration of surplus property in the Parks and Recreation Department. The property consists of a 550 gallon storage tank and trailer that are unequipped, currently not in use, and no longer operative.

6. DECLARE PROPERTY SURPLUS – POLICE DEPARTMENT

Mr. Kazmark explained that this item deals with the declaration of surplus property in the Police Department. The property consists of eight Second Chance, Safariland, and Point Blank bulletproof vests that have been identified as damaged by normal wear and tear and/or are older

than 10 years old. These vests cannot be sold on the open market or donated, so they will be destroyed under the supervision of the Ridgewood Police Department.

6. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Laurie Weber, resident of Ridgewood, said that she was not making faces at Mayor Vagianos while he was speaking earlier in the meeting. She said that she experienced sheer frustration while he was speaking, since she felt that he was saying things that were either not true or which contained “twisted” facts. Ms. Weber said that she had previously asked Mayor Vagianos what historical data he used to compare the statistics he viewed on the BOE website. She said that statistics vary from website to website, and one should diligently compare statistics from the same source in order to make a valid comparison. “Cherry picking” facts is not the proper procedure which should be followed. Ms. Weber insisted that Mayor Vagianos egregiously and disingenuously “threw the school system under the bus.”

Anne Loving, resident of Ridgewood, spoke about what can be placed on tables in the courtroom during Village Council meetings. She said that she went to the Village Hall lobby and saw quite a diverse array of flyers and bulletins on the lobby table, covering a variety of topics. She asked whether a new Ridgewood business would need permission from the Village Clerk’s Office to place business promotional materials on the courtroom table during Village Council meetings. She said that she would hate to think that front-page articles from the *Star Ledger* and *New Jersey Monitor*, which placed Mayor Vagianos in a bad light, were removed from the courtroom table for that reason.

Boyd A. Loving, a resident of Ridgewood, said that there was a lot of discussion this evening about the intersection of North Walnut Street and Franklin Avenue, regarding remediation plans for the corner property, which is currently a parking lot, and the former Town Garage property which is adjacent to the corner property. Mr. Loving asked what is going to happen to the parking facilities in the parking lot, while the tank removal and possible remediation are taking place. He expressed concern that the holiday shopping season is approaching, and stated that the North Walnut Street parking lot is heavily used by employees who work in the Central Business District (CBD). Mr. Loving assumed that the parking lot and nearby parking areas will be inaccessible while the work is being performed. He asked whether or not the Village Manager or Village Engineer has worked out a plan to make other parking areas available to the public and employees.

Cynthia O’Keefe, a resident of Ridgewood, thanked Mr. Kazmark for his reply to her inquiry regarding a possible question-and-answer session between Matrix New World Engineering and Village residents, relative to the soil contamination at the Schedler property. She said that she and others eagerly await the scheduling of a meeting with Matrix once all of the soil testing has been completed and analyzed. Ms. O’Keefe said that the neighbors are concerned about airborne

contaminants while the soil testing is being done, as well as possible leaching of soil contaminants into the groundwater.

Ms. O’Keefe then spoke about the abandoned house at 436 East Saddle River Road, which was a topic of discussion by the Village Councilmembers this evening. She believed that the former owner of the property passed away. She asked what procedure/process is followed by the Village in such a situation, when there are delinquent taxes due on a property.

Denise Lima, a resident of Ridgewood, said that she wanted to confirm that remediation of the North Walnut Street parking lot will be performed at the same time as remediation of the former Town Garage property, although it is her understanding that separate contractors will be used for each property’s remediation and the respective costs for each will be billed separately.

Addressing Mr. Kazmark, Ms. Lima said that it makes sense that the vacuum leaf collection trucks are used mostly on the main roads in the Village. She said that the piles of leaves created by the dump trucks and backhoes should be made smaller, so that pedestrians and vehicular traffic may pass safely around the leaf piles. Sometimes the piles are so high that they block the entire road.

Regarding citizen tracking done by the Ridgewood Guild for an entire year, Ms. Lima said that she is surprised that none of the Village Councilmembers or Village Manager were aware that this was being done, despite the fact that there are monthly CBDAC meetings, chaired by Deputy Mayor Perron, and attended by members of the Ridgewood Guild, Mayor Vagianos, and other business owners. Ms. Lima said that this tracking was being done surreptitiously without the knowledge of visitors to the CBD. She said that this needs to be corrected, since it is her feeling that residents have the right to know that their movements are being tracked.

Suzanne Ruane, a resident of Ridgewood, thanked everyone who organized ACCESS Week, which was held recently. She attended the “Pull Over Properly” event with her son, and she was pleased to see Police Officers from other municipalities in attendance.

Ms. Ruane asked about the status of the work to be performed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers regarding flood mitigation. She also asked about what was going on with the abandoned property at 436 East Saddle River Road, since she and others live in close proximity to that property. Ms. Ruane then spoke about this year’s leaf collection, and stated that gigantic piles of leaves are being created by Village workers, while parents are attempting to drop their children off at school or picking them up, particularly near Hawes School. She asked if the leaf collection could be done at other times of the day rather than during school drop-off and pickup times.

Jacqueline Hone, a resident of Ridgewood, said that at the recent candidate debate hosted by the League of Women Voters, Mayor Vagianos spoke passionately against bullying. She said that this made her very uncomfortable since Mayor Vagianos has, in the past, hidden and censored comments made by her on social media. With evidence to back up her claims, Ms. Hone said that Mayor Vagianos's actions are a form of bullying of taxpayers and citizens. Ms. Hone stated that multiple residents pleaded with the Village Councilmembers to have the soil tested at the Schedler property, but those pleas were ignored, which she said was another form of bullying. She said that residents had to seek assistance from sources outside of Ridgewood to get the soil tested, and then it was discovered that 42 million pounds of contaminated soil were dumped on the Schedler property, exposing adjacent neighbors to the contaminants. The soil testing was only done after the NJDEP required that it be done. She said that Mayor Vagianos has not once apologized to the public for his bullying tactics.

There were no further comments from the public.

Councilmember Weitz said that he has the utmost respect for Ms. Hone and residents who live near the Schedler property. However, he stated that the Village Council moved quickly to halt the development of the Schedler property until the proper testing and remediation could be performed, and the Village Councilmembers were never informed that the soil contamination found on the Schedler property would cause harmful health effects to surrounding neighbors. Councilmember Weitz stated that anything said publicly, in order to gain political support, is inappropriate and unfair to residents. Stating that the Village Councilmembers ignored and bullied the Schedler neighbors is unwarranted. The Village Councilmembers have spent innumerable hours discussing the development of the Schedler property and have heard from multiple residents regarding their concerns. Councilmember Weitz said that having a "good faith disagreement" with someone is not tantamount to bullying. He said that such accusations are reckless and only serve to diminish a real case of bullying.

Deputy Mayor Perron apologized to anyone in the Village who feels that they have been bullied or censored by any of the Village Councilmembers. However, she has attended Village Council meetings for years and has never perceived any acts of bullying or censoring. Deputy Mayor Perron said that the Mayor and Village Councilmembers have listened to objections regarding the Schedler property, have taken decisive action based upon those objections, and have not ignored comments made by the public. She said that she is personally offended by the accusations of bullying by Mayor Vagianos. Regarding the tracking done by Placer.ai, at the request of the Ridgewood Guild, Deputy Mayor Perron said that this topic did come before the Central Business District Advisory Committee (CBDAC), but this committee has no control over the actions of the Ridgewood Guild, and she does not perceive that any ethical violation was committed.

Councilmember Winograd said that she was sorry that the conversation about the Schedler property seemed so antagonistic to the public. She spoke about the various plans that were submitted in the past, regarding the development of the Schedler property, and insisted that there has been full transparency regarding what has transpired on the property. Councilmember Winograd said that she shares the frustration felt by the Schedler neighbors with regard to the soil contamination on the Schedler property, since none of the current Village Councilmembers knew that the soil was imported from six different sites or that the soil was contaminated.

Councilmember Winograd said that each and every Village Councilmember wants to clean up the Schedler property in a responsible manner, in accordance with guidelines from the NJDEP and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Councilmember Winograd said that aside from differing opinions regarding the size of the athletic field and the use of artificial turf, most people agree on the development plans for the Schedler property. She feels that the conversation about the Schedler property is stuck and not progressing.

Councilmember Winograd stated that she fully supports any actions taken by the Ridgewood Guild and the Chamber of Commerce to enhance the vibrancy of the downtown area. She said that members of these organizations spend countless hours to make Ridgewood better. Anyone with a complaint of having been tracked should take the matter up with the Ridgewood Guild. She said that it was not fair to discredit the hard work done by CBDAC.

Mayor Vagianos agreed with Councilmember Weitz and said that the Village Councilmembers have spent an inordinate amount of time discussing the Schedler property, more time than was spent discussing the budget. He said that the Village Council has been fully transparent with the public in stark comparison with prior Village Councils. The contaminated soil was imported to the Schedler property before any of the current Village Councilmembers sat on the Village Council. He said that everyone is “on the same page” in their desire to clean up the Schedler property. Mayor Vagianos said that attempting to characterize the disagreement about the size and type of the proposed athletic field at the Schedler property as bullying is a “stretch that is pretty hard to follow.” He challenged anyone who wishes to, to view the videos of the Village Council meetings and point out any instance of bullying. He said that all of the Village Councilmembers respect residents who disagree with their individual views.

Addressing Ms. O’Keefe’s questions regarding the abandoned property at 436 East Saddle River Road, Mr. Rogers said that the Tax Assessor’s Office has been trying to track down the legal owner of that property. There is a tax sale process that must be followed when taxes fall into delinquency. He said that it was a lengthy process and he would be happy to explain it to Ms. O’Keefe if she wants to contact him privately.

Addressing the comments made by Ms. Hone, Mr. Kazmark stated that he could not talk about what went on regarding the Schedler property before he became Village Manager, on July 10,

2023. However, since becoming Village Manager, he has personally replied to every phone call, email, and text sent to him regarding the Schedler property. In addition, on July 27, 2023, at the request of many residents, he personally met with approximately 30 to 40 Schedler neighbors near the Kingsbridge Lane Bridge to discuss the repairs to the bridge, the repaving of West Saddle River Road, and the Schedler property. When the Village was notified by the NJDEP that there were issues with the soil on the Schedler property which required further investigation, the Village Council took immediate action to rectify the situation. He said that residents were permitted to speak to professionals in the field, such as Matrix representatives, because Mr. Kazmark perceived that there was a lack of trust by the residents toward the Village Councilmembers. Mr. Kazmark said that he has never ignored anybody, on any issue, particularly regarding the Schedler property.

Addressing Ms. Ruane's comments, Mr. Kazmark stated that he had a Zoom meeting with the United States Army Corps of Engineers approximately 10 days ago. They are waiting for the next round of Congressional funding to be approved before a determination can be made as to which solution will be performed regarding flood mitigation. He is anticipating that an answer will be forthcoming before the end of the year.

Addressing the comments made by Ms. Lima, Mr. Kazmark stated that he takes exception to how Ms. Lima misrepresented his remarks concerning the Ridgewood Guild. He stated that he never said that the Ridgewood Guild was performing tracking of residents under the "cover of darkness." He actually said that the first time he learned about the tracking by Placer.ai was when Tony Damiano made a presentation before the Village Council in July, 2024.

In reference to Ms. Lima's comments regarding the former Town Garage property, Mr. Kazmark stated that the projects concerning remediation of the North Walnut Street parking lot and the Town Garage property are completely separate. All of the environmental remediation and the razing of the current building will be conducted by the prior owner of the Town Garage. Work on the North Walnut Street parking lot is exclusively a Village project. He clarified that the consulting LSRP who previously worked on the condemnation proceedings regarding the Town Garage property, is the same LSRP who will be working on the North Walnut Street parking lot project.

Mr. Kazmark suggested to Ms. Hone that she do a Google search on "New Jersey Tax Sale" to find out the process followed during a tax sale.

Addressing the concerns raised by Mr. Loving about the possible lack of available parking while work is performed on the North Walnut Street parking lot, Mr. Kazmark said that he, Ms. Mailander and Robert Rooney, Chief Financial Officer, are in the process of developing an alternate parking plan for all residents and employees who currently possess Village parking permits for the North Walnut Street parking lot. It is anticipated that alternate parking will be

made available in the Hudson Street Parking Garage. Ample notice will be given to all affected residents and employees.

Addressing the comments made by Ms. Loving, Mr. Kazmark stated that he will abide by his opinion that the table in the courtroom during Village Council meetings should only contain governmental documents and relevant documents pertaining to what will be discussed by the Village Councilmembers during a meeting. He said that he would remove any materials having to do with political agendas, positions or opinions.

Deputy Mayor Perron said that when she sees information on an official website of a government entity, such as the Board of Education website, she feels that it is fair to accept that information as being official. She sees nothing nefarious about quoting data seen on an official website, such as the BOE website. Deputy Mayor Perron said that requiring someone to go further with examining historical data is asking too much. Mr. Kazmark added that people depend upon the information published on the Village website and assume that the information is accurate and complete.

Councilmember Winograd said that the items described by Ms. Loving as being on the table in the Village Hall atrium are not the same materials which are placed on the courtroom table during Village Council meetings. Mr. Kazmark said that he will look into the establishment of a policy governing what items may be placed on the table during Village Council meetings.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Village Council, on a motion by Councilmember Winograd, seconded by Deputy Mayor Perron, and carried unanimously by voice vote, the Village Council's Regular Public Work Session was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Paul Vagianos
Mayor

Heather A. Mailander
Village Clerk