



Ridge Civic



Caring Citizens in a Quiet Country Community

Ridge Civic Association • P.O. Box 354 Ridge, NY 11961 • ridgecivic@gmail.com • ridgecivic.org • facebook.com/ridgecivic

Officers

Scott Wood
President

Debbie Bedell
Vice President

Chris Sosik
Corresponding Secretary

Cynthia Eaton Tvelia
Recording Secretary

Ken Casanova
Treasurer

Board Members

Ken Casanova
David Donofrio
George Fernandez
John Gulino
Susan Kaufold
Holly Wood
Scott Wood

Trustees

Ninette Kayton
Chris Sosik
Cynthia Eaton Tvelia

General Membership Meeting January 18, 2023, 7:30 pm Ridge Fire House

Call to Order and Pledge

- Meeting called to order at 7:29 pm

Reading of the Minutes

- Minutes are accessible online at ridgecivic.org, so please access those on our website: ridgecivic.org.

Financial Report

- President Scott Wood reports on behalf of Treasurer Ken Casanova the following current balances:
 - **\$17,236.13** — Total in all accounts
 - \$6,035.59 — General checking
 - \$3,518.69 — Community park fund
 - \$854.89 — Schoolhouse fund
 - \$2,620.36 — Scholarship fund
 - \$533.75 — Beautification fund
 - \$3,672.85 — Savings

Correspondence

- None at this time

Unfinished Business

- None at this time

New Business

- President Scott Wood reports that renovations are taking place at the Ridge Veterans Memorial Park (northeast corner of Ridge Road and Route 25). It has been there for

decades and is in need of updating. The work has started and, weather permitting, should be done prior to Memorial Day. They are adding pavers and a wall in the back of the park. Two local family-owned businesses are donating their services. The Gulino family (RFC Fence, Laser Industries) is donating supplies and materials, and the D'Onofrio family (Drifters, Contractors Market, All Island Landscaping) is donating the labor to do the work.

- Co-Chair of the Community Park Committee, Chris Sosik, shares further thoughts on the project: They have removed and will reinstall pavers and electricity, there will be five plaques—one for each of the branches of service—they've asked the Town of Brookhaven to donate a flag pole, and the original creator of the Ridge sign will refinish that as well.

This is a generous donation to our community from these two families. In addition, we will be reaching out to the community for donations for the finishing touches. Chris Sosik is personally making a \$500 donation toward the Navy plaque.

Motion for Ridge Civic Association to donate \$1,000 from the general fund toward the renovation of Ridge Veterans Memorial made by Chris Sosik, seconded by Debbie Bedell. Motion is approved.

- We have another county grant for our summer concert, which we had done last year for first time, but this year it is a larger grant, \$8,000. The grant is for a cultural event; last year we chose a concert at Smith Estate, and we will do another concert. Money from Ridge Civic has to be put out first, then the county reimburses us, which is how that grant works for all of the civic associations in Suffolk. The events committee will be managing that, so reach out to chairperson Ninette Kayton if you have questions.
 - Mike Loguercio: Once you have the date and rain date, let me know and we will help advertise that. Scott Wood: Thank you, we appreciate that.
 - How is it advertised? It was in our newsletter, we had road signs placed around town, and it was advertised on our Facebook page as well. We had about 150 people in attendance.
 - Do we have \$8,000 in those accounts? Scott Wood: Yes, we have over \$9,000, and last year the county paid us back in full and actually very quickly.

Motion to accept up to the \$8,000 grant from Suffolk County made by Ninette Kayton, seconded by Holly Wood. Motion is approved.

Guest Speaker: Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine

- Thank you for having me; it is good to be back. I'd like to start by addressing the redistricting among our town council districts, which we do every ten years. This time, I did not want to see Ridge split among three council districts, so I'm happy that it's all in CD #4 now. 90% of Brookhaven Township stayed the way it was, other than some changes due to population changes, but it largely stayed the same. Councilwoman Jane Bonner took more of Coram, north of Route 25, and Mike Loguercio has Coram south of Route 25. The goal was to create eight more equal districts and to ensure more equal representation.

- Cybersecurity issues have been in *Newsday*. Russian hackers tried to break into BNL and two other national labs targeting the nuclear scientists at those locations. It's a major issue due to hackers not only here in the US but across the globe attacking banks, local governments, and others.

I was an elected official of Suffolk County for 28 years before I became supervisor and I've been in this role for 11 years. All of the town's records are in the cloud, but that is not true for the county. Storing in the cloud makes your records less likely to be hacked. The hackers accessed the county through records that were not being stored in the cloud. Another issue has to do with cybersecurity insurance, so we need to pay careful attention to that.

Town does periodic penetration tests that cost about \$30,000, but we do it to see if they can access our system, and then we repair any weaknesses. Town of Brookhaven has never been hacked but that's not to say it never can happen.

- The town budget was submitted and was largely the same in terms of staying well under the 2% tax cap. It's a challenge to put together a budget when the money you have is worth less than you thought it was because, as we know, inflation is essentially a back door tax. By law I'm the chief fiscal officer for the Town of Brookhaven so I know we have to be very careful.

We also have to work with our three unions on their contracts as well. We want to pay people fairly, of course, but we also know that this is taxpayers' money. None of the three units got over 3% increases, e.g., one unit was 24% but that's over 12 years.

This is complicated by the out-migration across New York State as well. Governor Hochul argues that people are leaving because housing is too expensive, but in addition there's high taxes, transportation problems, and other issues. Take a look at your tax bill: Compare the amount going to the town, which is 6% of your tax bill, with what's going to other places.

- We've been working across the town on "zombie houses." We have taken down over 400 houses in the Town of Brookhaven. We are the biggest town in the state by size and second largest by population. Ridge Motel, which had been just across the street from the firehouse here, is one that we took down. These vacant houses negatively impact the value of all of the other houses in the neighborhood.

I encourage you to report any vacant properties, so we can make a determination of whether this should be done. We have a private engineering firm confirm our assessment and then we hold a public hearing. People are given notice, and if they don't come and take it down, they know that the town will.

- We also just increased our funds to address issues of dumping. Mostly this is committed by contractors, so if you see something say something. Notify Mike Loguercio so we can clean it up. We are planning to put a cap on the landfill and close it, then put solar panels on it. Only two things go in there: construction debris and ash. No garbage has gone into the landfill since 1989. Our garbage is shipped out, but we get the ash back and that goes in the landfill. We need other solutions for how to address this going into the future; solid waste will be a major issue and there

seems to be no regional plan from the state DEC for Long Island.

- The state Department of Transportation is finally doing the renovation of Route 347 over by Smith Haven Mall. That has been a significant battle for the town as well.
- That's a quick update. Any questions for me?

- What about the bridge to Smith Point?

That's a county bridge. That will be a cost of \$24-25 million, but the renovation is definitely overdue. How disruptive it is depends on when they do the bridge. They may build a temporary bridge while renovating the old.

- What's happening at the corner of the LIE and Route 101? All the trees are gone, and the land has been completely cleared.

They decided to clear all of that. Brookhaven Rail was sold so that's gone. There are four parcels there. They mined the property and sold it to North Point, which plans to build 2 ½ million sq ft of warehouses. They have a federal court order allowing them to do this. Back when I was in the county, County Executive Steve Levy was feeling the pinch for money and sold all of that land. Those developers clearcut the land, removed all of the trees, etc. The town had no say in it; it was federal because it was rail. Warehouses there will be connected by rail.

- What is the status of Yaphank Station?

I am a strong advocate of electrifying all three lines—Montauk, Main, and Port Jefferson—which are all driven by diesel. I've asked them to move the Yaphank Station to East Yaphank. At most there are three cars at the current location, so it is underused. They'd have to build a parking lot of about 500 cars, but it'd be electrified, and it'd end the nightmare of parking at Ronkonkoma. It would also have the effect of improving housing values in our area too.

- I appreciate all of our local civic associations because they are deeply involved in the community, and we need to be united to help fight for these changes that will improve the quality of life here. Please always feel free to email me; I read all emails.

COPE Officer Heidi Cummings

- There is not a lot of crime to report. There was a larceny of gas from the Mobil station; the person filled up and fled.
- One person was victim of an Amazon texting scam in the area and sent \$7,000 in gift cards so be careful about such scams.
- There have been a few overdoses in the area, two of which were fatal.
- The Dunkin Donuts in Ridge was robbed by a woman with a knife on January 4.
- There has been a pattern of scams on Facebook Marketplace. Be very careful when posting pictures of merchandise you're selling, so that you don't include identifying information about yourself and your home. Come to our precinct to trade merchandise and be very alert for counterfeit bills.

- A homeless gentleman was going into local businesses in Ridge recently. We reached out to Department of Social Services and that person is now in a home in Bay Shore; he was disruptive and would approach people aggressively. Another person walks from Riverhead to Artist's Lake, but that person is friendly and harmless.
- Some dumping has been happening near the old KMart in Middle Island, which has been addressed.
- No recent issues regarding catalytic converters, not in this area at least; there were three thefts in the Shirley/Mastic area in the last month.

Member Concerns

- Scott Wood: Thanks to everyone who has been bringing in food for Blessings in a Backpack. There are about 90 children every weekend in the Ridge area who need food each weekend, and Blessings in a Backpack provides that.
- Jennifer Satchell from Legislator Sarah Anker's office: We are collecting pet food for seniors who have pets but cannot always afford pet food; we are working with the Office for the Aging on this. Also, we are very excited for Ridge Civic to do the summer concert again this year. It was so good last year, and we believe it's great for the community, so thank you.
- Ridge Fire Department: Two things to share from the Ridge Fire District over past year.
 1. We received a radio grant for \$275,000 from FEMA because they changed the entire radio system in the county, which amounted to an unfunded mandate. All 118 districts in Suffolk County needed to find this money. We put up \$8,000 and they put up \$275,000. This was in *Newsday* last year. We're just getting them now and will be on the 900-megahertz system, which means there will be no place where we cannot be heard now.
 2. EMS Recovery Act: The law says we can recover a certain amount of money on ambulance calls; i.e., we can now bill an insurance company on ambulance calls. We had 3,162 calls and over 2,100 of them were EMS last year. We are not personally billing anybody. We aren't interested in doing that. This has to do with the insurance companies. It can only be used for EMS, such as bandages, equipment, supplies. A resident will never get billed.

How do we get the insurance info? It goes right into the computer system the minute your name is entered. Then, for example, If Blue Cross Blue Shield says they'll give \$100, that's what we will get.

Committees

- A. Community Park (Chris Sosik/John Gulino): The door is broken to the little free library. Chris reports that John spoke to Scott about it to see if it can be fixed with plexiglass rather than glass. The Phil Reany Memorial Sign will be replaced in early spring. The bricks around the gazebo need attention, and the town will repair those to make it safer; they will be replacing bricks and the personalized ones will be re-installed. The large pine tree in the park will be trimmed hopefully this week. We also need to have lights removed.

Debbie Bedell: One light in the gazebo is broken and the outlet next to the gazebo needs to be replaced; it's completely missing. Chris will look into these issues.

- B. Membership (Holly Wood) — Holly reports that we have been taking in quite a few new members; people are inquiring and taking applications.
- C. Downtown Beautification (Debbie Bedell) — Debbie reports that she picked up litter from the William Floyd cloverleaf to the gas station on the north side of Route 25. Hopefully people will litter less. Spoke to Mike Loguercio about the cloverleaves themselves, but those are two municipal entities that each say it's the other entity's problem.

Regarding the lights on Route 25: One is down (hit by car), but the town has no more of them. They've been ordered and hope to get them within 4-6 weeks. The town is working on fixing the others.

We had holiday banners up. Laser Industries had posted them and are taking them down so thank you to them (they are an affiliate of Residential Fencing Co).

- D. School House (Chris Sosik) — No report at this time
- E. Clean Up (Rich Patuspska) — No report at this time
- F. Scholarship Committee (*vacant*) — Scott reports that this position remains vacant if anyone is interested.
- G. Events (Ninette Kayton) — Ninette reports our next event will be Easter in the park, so stay tuned for information on that.
- H. Brookhaven National Lab (Ken Casanova) — Ken is absent but said there's no report at this time.

Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.