

RESOLUTION NO. 15-

WHEREAS, in January 2002, the Village of Ridgewood Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Committee (further known as the "Open Space Committee") was established; and

WHEREAS, in January 2003, the Open Space Committee submitted an "Open Space Plan" to the Village Council that identified "the Schedler property (see below for definition) as a first-priority target for acquisition by the Village"; and

WHEREAS, in a September 2008 report to the Village Council, the Open Space Committee recommended further for the Schedler property "that the initial development consist of a parking lot, a baseball diamond and overlay multi-purpose field (without lights or restrooms), with the remainder of the property left as passive recreation space with wooded areas and a disabled-accessible (ADA compliant), senior-friendly paved walking path around the perimeter"; and

WHEREAS, in a November 2008 report to the Village Council, the Open Space Committee urged the Village of Ridgewood to acquire the Schedler property, warning that "if the property is acquired by a private developer, the Village will face the possibility of a "builder's remedy" suit forcing the Village to accept high-density multi-family residential development of the property, including affordable housing units"; and

I hereby certify that this resolution, consisting of 5 page(s), was adopted at a meeting of the Village Council of the Village of Ridgewood, held this _____ day of _____, 2015.

Moved Second Ayes Nays Absent Abstain

Hauck						
Knudsen						
Pucciarelli						
Sedon						
Aronsohn						

Paul S. Aronsohn
Mayor

Heather A. Mailander
Village Clerk

WHEREAS, in December 2008, the Village of Ridgewood decided to try to acquire the property in the Village identified as Block 4704, Lots 9, 10, 11 and 12, commonly known as the Schedler property and addressed as 476 West Saddle River Road in the Village; and

WHEREAS, that December 2008 decision was taken with the understanding that "this is not a situation where the Village will jump into doing improvements to this property right away" and "that this purchase is to maintain the integrity of the neighborhood, for the future of the children in Ridgewood," according to a statement made by the Mayor at the December 3, 2008 Village Council Work Session and supported by all members of the Council; and

WHEREAS, in its February 2009 report to the Village Council, the Open Space Committee concluded that "the Schedler property lends itself to passive and active recreational development because it is level and easily accessible. No final conceptual plans have been developed, but a preliminary plan that includes a baseball diamond, overlay multi-purpose field, an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant walking trail, a wooded area for passive recreation and a parking lot has received community and neighborhood support."; and

WHEREAS, in December 2009, the Village Council adopted an ordinance to authorize the acquisition of the Schedler property; and

WHEREAS, in a December 2010 letter to the Village Council, the Village of Ridgewood's Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board (further known as the PRC Board) noted that, with regard to the Schedler property, "It is our intent to advise [sic] Village Council that the original purpose for acquisition was to resolve a long term need for more passive/active recreation space. The house on the property has become the center of controversy, yet restoration was never a factor for purchase and would significantly change the outcome of the originally envisioned project...At this time the recommendation of the Board would be to develop the property as originally envisioned, which included removal of all structures."; and

WHEREAS, in April and May, 2012, the Open Space Committee conducted three public meetings "to get input from Village residents on a development plan for the Schedler property and to gauge interest in private fundraising to implement the final plan"; and

WHEREAS, in October 2012, the Open Space Committee issued its report from those public meetings to the Village Council and included several recommendations and observations, including the following:

"We believe the property should be developed for both active and passive recreational purposes. Based on our perception of the Village's needs, as articulated by the representatives of the Village sports groups who attended the public meetings, we

recommend development of a 90-foot baseball diamond with an overlay multi-purpose field for lacrosse and soccer in the outfield as is common with other baseball fields in the Village. Recognizing the neighbors' desire for balance, however, we also recommend that the development plan include a significant amount of passive recreational space. In addition to providing space for tranquil enjoyment, passive space is necessary and desirable as a buffer for reasons of safety, noise and esthetics, both for the users of the park and the surrounding neighborhood. It would also be desirable to include a playground area as well as walking trails in the development plan. We believe that the property is large enough to accommodate all of these elements."

"We recommend that interested citizens be given a reasonable period of time (we suggest no more than six to 12 months) to continue to explore the feasibility and desirability of preserving the Schedler house and to present to the Village Council a credible preservation plan, including funding. Identifying an appropriate public use for the house will be a key element of any preservation effort. If a structure on the property is deemed desirable, whether as meeting space or for other uses, consideration should also be given to the possibility of razing the house and building a new structure as a more cost-effective alternative. As noted on our conceptual development plan, the location of the house should not interfere with the development of a playing field, parking lot and other ancillary facilities. Accordingly, we believe it would be possible to begin work on the development of the property prior to reaching a decision on the house. In any event, we believe the garage should be razed."; and

WHEREAS, in an October 2012 letter to the Village Council, the Village of Ridgewood's Parks, Recreation and Conservation Board noted that its members "have discussed and concur with the recommendations of the Ridgewood Open Space Committee with regard to the Schedler property."; and

WHEREAS, in an August 2013 letter to the Village Council, the Village of Ridgewood's Historic Preservation Commission considered the Schedler property and recommended "a multi-purpose development of this seven-acre site: the house as a community center and locale for administrative, educational, cultural and historical activities of the Village or a suitable non-profit organization, and a substantial amount of the property as an athletic field".

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Village Council of the Village of Ridgewood, Bergen County, does hereby welcome and adopt the recommendations set forth by the Open Space Committee in its October 2012 report and makes the following determinations:

1. The Schedler property should be developed for both active and passive recreational purposes, including a 90-foot baseball diamond with an overlay multi-purpose field for lacrosse and soccer in the outfield as is common with other baseball fields in the Village.
2. The Schedler property should also include a significant amount of passive recreational space. In addition to providing space for tranquil enjoyment, passive space is necessary and desirable as a buffer for reasons of safety, noise and esthetics, both for the users of the park and the surrounding neighborhood. It would also be desirable to include a playground area as well as walking trails.
3. The ultimate fate of the Schedler house needs to be assessed and decided by the Village Council. To that end, interested citizens should be given one year from the date of this resolution to present the Village Council with a credible preservation/restoration plan, which includes (1) a rationale that considers alternative structures and the needs of Village residents, particularly Village children, and (2) a sustainable, long-term funding proposal.
4. In the interim, with respect to the Schedler house, interested citizens can raise and expend private funds for the purpose of stabilizing the house until a decision by the Village Council is taken (see 3 above). Any such initiative would be permitted and supported by the Village of Ridgewood as long as it complies with and addresses all legal, safety and Village resource considerations, including the costs associated with any related Village professional services or support. Further, such permission or support by the Village of Ridgewood should not impact - positively or negatively -- the eventual decision by the Village Council regarding the ultimate fate of the Schedler house.

In the event such interested citizens want to expend monies or apply for federal, state or county grants for the stabilization of the Schedler house, the following provisions must apply:

- The interested citizens must be organized as an official 26 U.S.C.501(c)(3) organization;
- The 26 U.S.C.501(c)(3) organization must make public all sources of its funding and all expenses;

- The 26 U.S.C.501(c)(3) organization must serve as the applicant for all grants and be responsible for all aspects of the application;
 - The 26 U.S.C.501(c)(3) organization must make sure that any grant application is accompanied by a comprehensive work plan, is supported by the Village of Ridgewood, and complies with and addresses all relevant legal, safety and resource considerations, including the costs associated with any related Village professional services or support;
 - The 26 U.S.C.501(c)(3) organization must be responsible for all cost overruns; and
 - All work done must be approved and closely coordinated with Village officials.
5. In line with the recommendations and observations of the October 2012 Open Space Committee Report, any and all efforts to develop the Schedler property or stabilize or restore the Schedler house should place a premium on public safety, which is a "paramount concern."
6. In line with the recommendations and observations of the October 2012 Open Space Committee report, the development of the Schedler property can and should begin prior to reaching a decision on the Schedler house.