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July 8, 2025

Mr. Keith Kazmark, Mayor
Village of Ridgewood
Village Hall
131 North Maple Ave
Ridgewood, NJ 07450

Re: Zabriskie-Schedler Property

Dear Keith,

As requested, I have reviewed and evaluated the 'Independent Assessment of Zabriskie-Schedler Property Park Development Project', the conceptual plans prepared by Suburban Consulting Engineers, Inc. dated May 2024, plus the Zabriskie-Schedler SHPO Applications documents.

The assessment noted studies completed in 2003 and 2007 indicated the Village of Ridgewood had a significant shortage of parkland acreage (approximately 50 acres) when compared to the existing population and field usage demands.

The Recreation and Open Space Plan, updated in 2010 outlined the purchase of the two largest parcels of open space remaining in the Village, Habernickel Family Park and Zabriskie-Schedler property, plus the expansion of Citizen's Park. With the possible additions of the two parcels and expansion of Citizen's Park, the village still had a shortfall of approximately 14.5 acres based on the population at that time. After reviewing other possible sites, it was determined that there were no available options for additional active recreational space.

The adopted 2022 Master Plan identified current and future environmental threats including temperature extremes, storm events and the frequency of flooding due to the proximity of several waterways that border the existing parks and sports fields.

The risk of flooding and damage to several parks and sports fields was realized in 2021, 2023 and 2024. In 2021, the village incurred over \$85,000.00 in expenses to repair damage from flooding at Veteran's Park and over \$135,000.00 to repair damage from flooding at Maple Park. In 2023, the expenses incurred for field repair due to damage from flooding was over \$80,000.00 and in 2024 the expense incurred was over \$140,000.00.



In addition to the expenses incurred, the fields were out of service for weeks and months. This put an additional strain on the fields that were not damaged due to flooding.

It has been determined that the only site available to the Village of Ridgewood for possible development as a park and active recreational use is the Zabriske-Schedler property. This land is approximately 7 acres and is bound by NJ State Route 17 to the west, West Saddle Road to the east and residential properties to the north. The property was acquired in 2009 and is owned by the Village of Ridgewood. The property contains the Zabriske-Schedler house which is on the state and national registers of historic places. The remainder of the property is undeveloped.

A general review of the property by Suburban Consulting Engineers, Inc. determined that the site was not within any flood hazard, contains no freshwater wetlands, critical wildlife habitats, does not have any steep slopes and contains well-drained sandy loam soils. Suburban Consulting concluded the property could support and is physically suitable for a proposed park and active recreational field project.

The construction of an additional park is needed to serve both village and school sports programs, including youth and adult soccer, lacrosse, baseball, softball and a flag football program that currently does not have a home field.

I highly recommend the village consider the option of synthetic turf for this multi-purpose field as it will provide the most hours of use (approximately 1,500) and greatly reduce the overuse (abuse) of the existing natural grass fields.

When considering synthetic turf, compared to natural grass fields, strictly related to field usage, it is important to understand the return on the investment. Although the initial cost or investment would be greater than a topsoil natural grass field, the total hours of available use could be double that of a natural grass field. The additional hours are available because the field can be used almost immediately after rainfall, snow melt and at times of the year when natural grass fields are closed.

Additionally, since the village currently does not have the option to rest, recuperate or renovate the existing natural grass fields, the availability of a synthetic turf field would give the village the required time to improve the existing fields. This option is important to ensure the existing fields are safe and playable.

Since this site is not in a flood zone, unlike five other fields, including the most used village-owned sports facility, this site will not be subject to closure from flooding. As a result, this field will be always be available for the perceived life of the field.

In towns or schools districts that are land-locked and simply have no additional space to expand or construct new fields, the installation of a synthetic turf field provides the required additional hours of use. As the Village of Ridgewood already has a significant deficit in fields that are available for active recreation, increasing the available hours of use and reducing the stress on the existing natural grass fields will not only benefit the citizens of the Village of Ridgewood by adding approximately 1,500 hours of additional use, but also improve the safety and playability of the existing fields.

Sincerely,

Scott Bills, CSFM
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