

From: Daniel Shefter [mailto:daniel.shefter@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 12, 2018 3:25 PM
To: Clerk's Department <clerk@scarsdale.com>
Subject: Tree Law Amendments

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed changes to the rules related to the rights of property owners to remove trees from their properties. In summary, I believe these proposed rules represent a poorly conceived policy that is designed to solve a problem that doesn't exist, and that it will further abridge the rights of Scarsdale property owners. Moreover, it adds yet another burden on homeowners who already face an incredibly inefficient bureaucracy in Town Hall.

The existing rules regarding the removal of trees are already burdensome for residents that need to remove more than two trees from their property. The idea that new rules would be put in place that require homeowners to pay a \$500 fee if they remove, but don't replace, a single tree is patently absurd and egregious.

The purported rationale behind the new tree proposal is that Scarsdale is losing its tree cover. However, the Town has offered no evidence to show the tree cover has diminished over time. Residents don't obtain permits to plant trees so the half dozen trees that I have planted in my year over the past few years don't get counted (or the fact that I will plant more than a dozen new trees in the next few years). It's possible (perhaps likely) that the tree count in the village is actually growing rather than shrinking, but nobody has actually done any analysis other than counting tree removal permits. In other words, the plan seems to be trying to solve a problem that doesn't appear to exist.

The town should actually be moving in the opposite direction and encouraging residents to cut down trees that pose a hazard. The recent storms illustrate the hazard of having large trees near power lines. The fact that a neighbor's tree fell on a power line meant that I had to spend four days without power and \$1,200 on hotel rooms.

Over the past several years, I have had to rebuild the shed and fence at the rear of my property twice because trees from the Bronx River Parkway easement have fallen down onto my property. If people (and governments) were responsible and encouraged to cut down older and dying trees, our lives would actually improve. The idea that residents could avoid the \$500 fine if they go out and hire a botanist to opine that their tree is dying just transfers the source of the expense. We should be encouraging homeowners to cut down trees, not punishing them.

Like many of my fellow residents, the only issue I see with the tree cover in Scarsdale relates to developers. They purchase 2,400 square foot homes on quarter acre lots and remove all the trees so they can build ugly 7,000 square foot homes that somehow make it through BAR and Planning. Unfortunately, the proposed tree policy won't have an effect on curtailing this blight in our Village.

The Village should abandon this tree policy proposal immediately and focus on more pressing issues that can actually relieve the burden of home ownership in Scarsdale. A good place to start would be the building and planning department which is a bureaucratic nightmare that operates based on 1970s principles but charges 2030 fees. Let's work in improving efficiency, modernizing the process and reducing the regulatory burden. Exactly the opposite of where the Village appears to be heading with its proposed tree policy.

Sincerely,
Dan Shefter
Fox Meadow Road