

**February 13, 2018**

**Addressing the Lawsuit Against the Village of Scarsdale and Scarsdale Police Department**

*The following remarks were given at the Board of Trustee meeting on February 13, 2018. The comments are my own personal views.*

I would like to talk tonight about the recent lawsuit filed by Robert Berg against the Village of Scarsdale and the Scarsdale Police Department over lawn signs. I'm not going to opine on whether lawn signs are good or bad or the legality of this issue, but rather HOW this issue was addressed. I think it's important to address this situation because how we do things as a community matters.

When I first heard that someone sued our police department over this issue I was shocked and dismayed because the placement of lawn signs is an issue that could have been brought up and resolved in a constructive and open manner. This issue could have been handled without making it political and without litigation.

The issue in question is a section of our Village code. Village code can be changed and certainly can be done without needing a lawsuit to change it. The lawsuit states that the suing party believed there was an issue with lawn signs almost a year ago! This means that anytime over the last year this issue could have been brought up and we could have addressed this as a community. Anytime over the last many months would have been the time to jump into action. This would have given an opportunity for anyone who wanted to be involved to get informed and voice their opinion. Change could have been made in a way that was open, collaborative and constructive.

Why do it this way - in a last minute, aggressive and litigious manner. Everybody should consider for themselves the potential motives for the situation being handled in this way. My personal view, it was simply laziness. Doing it right would have likely taken much more work. It would have been a lot of work to bring this up months ago and work collaboratively with the Village, Board and Community. It would have taken effort and time to discuss the issue and all

the relevant points - legal and otherwise. Time which we would have had, since it wouldn't have been done in the last minute. It would have been worth it! Giving others in the community a chance to voice their views and thoughts and work through this issue. If there is concern that this isn't how things happen in Scarsdale or if there is a concern with the process of how code changes happen, then this could have been a shining example of how to do it better. *How we do things matters.*

If this had been done in a timely and constructive way, our police chief wouldn't be faced with possibly spending his time in a deposition room. Our Village wouldn't need to spend money and resources to respond in court. The community, as a whole, could have been involved in the discussion. Whatever your view on this issue, we should strive to make sure everyone has an opportunity to be involved in such important issues. Instead, the discussion is now centered around a lawsuit.

We work through many issues and proposals here - and one of the great things about our community is how we work through them with an open dialogue and collaboratively. I have personally brought many proposals before the Board and the community feedback we receive always makes them better. Scarsdale is a great place to live. Lawsuits are not what makes Scarsdale great.

Our Village now may end up spending time, money and resources in the legal system because of this lawsuit. So we're here now - what can we do? I would urge members of our community to consider sending a note of support to our Police Department. I personally sent them one this weekend. I think it's important we let our Police Department know the actions of one individual, in suing them in this manner, do not represent who we are as a community. The Police Department is not some faceless organization. We are a small town and our officers are part of this community; suing our police department over an issue that could have been handled otherwise is not an action of appreciation or respect for our police department and the officers that work hard every day for this community. *Actions matter.*

Going forward, we can simply be better than using lawsuits when there are other options available. While we can't control the actions of one person, the rest of us can do the hard work, the detailed work, the unglamorous work, in a manner that continues to make Scarsdale a fantastic place.

Ron Schulhof

*Disclosure Statement: I am a member of the following Village and Civic organizations: Citizens Nominating Committee, Scarsdale Citizens Non-Partisan Party, Conservation Advisory Council (Chair), LED Streetlight Committee (Chair), Food Scrap Recycling Committee, Scarsdale Forum (Board of Directors). The comments are my own personal views.*