

John Long

From: Kate Lila Wheeler <lilawheel@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 15, 2019 12:39 PM
To: City Clerk Contact; City Clerk Contact; City Council; David Guss; Somerville's Friends of the Urban Forest
Subject: Proposed Tree Ordinance

Honorable members of the city council and administration,

We write in deep support of your passing the proposed zoning amendment regulating the cutting of significant trees on private property.

As a densely populated city whose urban canopy is failing, such that our Tree City designation is ironic -- we all need to review our actions and take the necessary steps to support shelter and health for all residents.

The earth can't wait.

The collective good is the main reason for regulations. It's criminal not to keep the bigger situation in mind.

We are already the hottest and most paved-over town inside 495 with significant flooding during storms, a danger that is ever on the increase.

If provisions of the ordinance need refining to alleviate economic hardship on residents then we propose that this be done. Possibilities include a tiered system. Very expensive permits, amounting to a fine, for the removal of mature trees if there are no replacements with a native tree that can grow to equal size. The possible option of replacing a tree elsewhere by funding a city tree or paying for a tree to be planted on other private property, with a system of 'gift trees'; reductions in the permit fees for replacements and/or even extra saplings planted; placing some of the permit revenues into a 'savings account' that will be returned a year or two later if replacement saplings are inspected, found still alive and thriving.

Fees for permits could always be less expensive than the fines for violating the ordinance.

Tree companies should also be notified of the city's regulatory environment to minimize 'fly by night' chainsaws.

Take care of us please by enacting this ordinance,

Kate Wheeler and David Guss

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Kate Lila Wheeler

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she/hers

John Long

From: Hallam, John <John.Hallam@aecom.com>
Sent: Friday, March 15, 2019 1:18 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk Contact
Subject: Tree zoning amendment

I'd like to add my support for regulation pertaining to cutting down of significant trees on private land in Somerville.

We need all the green space and all the treescape possible in this (wonderful) highly urbanized place we all call home.

There may on occasion be good reasons from a public perspective for the cutting down of a significant tree on a private property –

I'm thinking tree disease, or dangerous impact on power lines, that sort of thing.

There may even on occasion be highly specific reasons from a private perspective that might be seen to outweigh more general public concerns:

For example, a few years ago we cut down a large pear tree on our property that was dropping hundreds and hundreds of inedible black-scabbed pears into my neighbor's yard – where they rotted and created a sad mess.

But we had the tree chopped down only after several years of hiring a tree company to spray it with compost tea in an unsuccessful attempt to heal it.

And we then planted a 20-foot Serviceberry (Amelanchier) in its place – which the birds love.

I would hope any regulation would allow property owners the opportunity to explain to the city arborist why they intend to cut down a tree

and what they would be doing to mitigate the loss. Then the City could either provide a permit . . . or not.

Point is that we should be doing all we can to encourage people to "green up."

Sincerely,
Nicholas John Hallam
80 Properzi Way

John Long

From: leh.hartwell@gmail.com
Sent: Saturday, March 16, 2019 9:33 AM
To: City Clerk Contact; City Council
Subject: I Support the zoning amendment to regulate the cutting of significant trees

Dear all,

I support the zoning amendment to regulate the cutting of significant trees on private land.

Thank you,
Lynne Hartwell
155 Summer St. #16r
Somerville, MA
02143

John Long

From: Susann L Wilkinson <swilkins@mit.edu>
Sent: Saturday, March 16, 2019 3:07 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk Contact
Cc: Susann L Wilkinson
Subject: Proposed Tree Preservation Ordinance

Dear Council Members and City Clerk:

Thank you Council members, for taking seriously the need for and benefits of the urban tree canopy as a vital component of the city's environment. I support the effort to preserve and expand the trees of Somerville but have some reservations and questions about the ordinance.

#1. Is there a horticultural basis for the definition of a 'significant tree'? We should not assume that every tree proposed for removal is 'significant', either horticulturally or environmentally.

Many trees, the Norway Maple, being the most egregious and prolific example, are invasive and have multiple negative impacts: they crowd out under growth, change soil conditions, and reproduce at a wildly successful rate, galloping throughout the region. Norway Maples are fast growing but not resilient in high winds and are subject to breaking and splintering.

Over the years, several volunteer Norway Maples on our property needed to be removed. I was sorry to lose the shade but not the constant messiness and pollution put out by the tree. I chose species that are less competitive for water and resources.

Note that the Norway Maple has such a negative impact that the Commonwealth has banned its sale.

Suggestion: That the tree warden, city arborist and Urban Forest Committee, compile a list of undesirable trees, as well as those that are banned, available online. With this information, a working definition of 'significance' can be developed.

#2. Costs to homeowners to replace trees may be a barrier

Replacement of a mature tree with one of the same caliper at breast level [DBH] is difficult and if it is replacing a mature tree, prohibitively expensive. The size of replacement should be up to the homeowner, based on their lot size, budget and knowledge about optional replacements.

In addition, having a plot plan drawn up by a licensed arborist or landscaper can run hundreds of dollars, outweighing the opportunity to purchase good quality material.

Suggestion: I would like the city to make its tree experts and resources available through community groups, e.g., schools, the Growing Center, the Somerville Garden Club, and local media, to sponsor workshops, education programs, and arbor day events to improve awareness of tree choice, care and maintenance. Growing and maintaining the city's tree canopy is a long term communal activity we can all get behind.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this much needed ordinance.

Susann Wilkinson
142 Orchard St

John Long

From: Edgar Dworsky <edgar@consumerworld.org>
Sent: Saturday, March 16, 2019 4:25 PM
To: Katjana Ballantyne; Matthew McLaughlin; Stephanie Hirsch; Wilfred Mbah; Mary Jo. Rossetti; William A. White; City Council; JT Scott; Ben Ewen-Campen; Jesse Clingan; Mark Niedergang; Lance Davis; City Clerk Contact
Cc: Joseph Curtatone
Subject: Tree Ordinance comments

Dear City Councillors,

I would like to offer comments in opposition to the proposed tree ordinance.

While in some senses it is good-intentioned, this ordinance is another example of local government inserting itself into a landowner's private affairs, adding unreasonable expenses for homeowners, and is yet another payday for the city.

Over the past few years in our condo, we have had to remove about four trees from the property because they were either diseased, damaged by weather, or caused a nuisance that neighbors complained about because it encroached on their property and a property separation fence. The latest tree we had to remove had roots impinging on the foundation of our building potentially damaging it and the same roots also raised the bricks on the walkway creating an unsafe condition. Its massive height and close proximity to the house also provided squirrels with a launching pad to enter the chimney and build nests inside. And that meant we then had to hire animal removal expert to fish out the dead bodies.

Each of these trees cost us a small fortune to remove, with the latest being \$1200, not counting repairs or animal removal. Imagine the costs if we had to hire a land surveyor or architect to draw up plans for our property, how many hundreds of dollars extra would that add? And then we would also have to pay to replant another tree on the very small amount of common property that we have. Where are we going to put it considering the old stump and roots occupy the most logical and sometimes only available spot for a tree? Oh, and now we have to hire an excavator to dig out the roots and stump from the land. Okay, how many thousands of dollars more is that? And if we can't replant, our condo owners would have to pay for a tree to be planted somewhere else in Somerville? Voluntary donations are fine, mandatory ones are not.

And on top of all those extra expenses, the city wants a cut of the money via a required permit, and filing for it will probably delay the process to determine IF removal will be allowed.

If your goal is to protect the environment by stopping developers from clearing their land of trees to build multi-million dollar developments, tailor regulations to narrowly to govern them. Most of the rest of us have small plots of land or in the case of condominiums, small individual yards and small common areas, and are not in the habit of removing trees just for the heck of it.

I think your ordinance is grossly over-reaching. It perpetuates a growing sense that Somerville is becoming too big-brother-ish and money-hungry (changing zoning rules to limit a landowner's choices; forcing people to change electricity suppliers; doubling water bills in some cases to finance sewer reconstruction; tacking on surcharges to the property tax bill for environmental causes and for building construction; etc.). Enough.

As suggested above, any proposed ordinance should be narrowly tailored to get at abuse rather than the everyday maintenance and other issues faced by homeowners. Removing trees should NOT require a permit or any type of city approval or intervention if they are:

- hazardous or could potentially cause a safety issue;
- diseased;
- infested;
- dying;

- dead;
- damaged (by natural causes or by man, such as storms or being hit by a car);
- encroaching/impinging on another's property where mere trimming will not resolve the matter;
- encroaching/impinging on one's own property where mere trimming will not resolve the matter;
- causing other damage;
- causing a nuisance (because of their location, or the particular nature or growth of the tree);

There is talk of the city council passing a broad ordinance immediately, and then fine tuning it later. May I suggest just the opposite. Tailor it now appropriately to get at the real abuses while excluding the vast majority of common homeowner situations.

I urge you to vote against the current proposal.

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Edgar Dworsky
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