

Dear Editor,

At its December 19, 2006 meeting, the Wyckoff Township Committee voted 3-2 against enacting a tree ordinance. It's too bad, for many reasons, not the least of which it could have provided another layer of free insurance protection from the State of New Jersey and made us eligible for much-needed grants to use to replant the trees we have lost at an alarming rate on our Township right of ways. We also lost an opportunity to improve the character of our town, and with it, our property values.

In light of some of the comments made at the December 19th public Township Committee meeting (where, as reported, pro-ordinance supporters outnumbered those objecting, 21-11), I would like to provide you with an outline of the ordinance that was rejected. The reason I think it is important to do so is to show how flexible it was:

- Permits are not required nor are there restrictions on removing dead trees, diseased trees, or trees in any emergency situation anywhere on a property.
- The ordinance would have primarily affected a five-foot buffer area around the borders of your property. In that five-foot area it only protects trees that are over 8" in diameter, meaning **you can cut down anything less than 8."**
- In that five-foot area it only protects hedgerows that are over eight feet high. **Anything under eight feet high can be removed.**
- This ordinance only protects trees that are 24" in diameter, **meaning you can take down any tree smaller than 24" anywhere on your property**, except that five-foot area around the parameter.
- There are important exceptions to so that homeowners can remove trees near structures, pools, septic, etc. Here are the exceptions:
 1. If that 24" diameter tree is within 20 feet of a principal structure, you can take it down
 2. If it is within 20 feet of a pool, you can take it down
 3. If it is within 10 feet of a cabana or tennis court, you can take it down
 4. If it is five feet of a driveway, you can take it down
 5. If it is 10 feet of a septic tank/field, you can take it down.

Should a homeowner have a tree that is somewhere within the permit-required area and not near the above-mentioned structures) and IF it were 24" or larger in diameter, then that homeowner would have to apply for a permit. Furthermore, that process allows for the removing the tree for a range of reasons.

I suggest you walk around your property; it's likely this tree ordinance would not have had much impact. The goals of the ordinance are to protect EVERY homeowner in Wyckoff, and that means Wyckoff residents on both sides of the property line. It protects what we can do on our own property and it protects ALL of us from what can happen to us.

Each homeowner lives on more than one side of a property line. We can make alterations and we can have an alteration done to us.

Wyckoff needs to protect rights of all of its citizens, and this ordinance would have done that.

Sincerely,

Andrea Mateo
Wyckoff