

April 11, 2006

Dear Mayor Fiorenzo and the Township Committee,

I would like to express my sentiment on a two issues that impact the future of our town of Wyckoff.

First is the critical importance of a Tree Preservation ordinance. A well constructed and non-burdensome ordinance will preserve the arbor cover of our town and the privacy rights of our neighbors. Our neighboring town of Franklin Lakes has an ordinance Wyckoff can use as a model. Respecting privacy of our neighbors, realizing the impact of cutting old growth trees on the perimeter of properties is the essence of the ordinance. An old growth, large (8"-diamter and greater) native tree on the perimeter of a property provides cover, shade and privacy to surrounding homes – our neighbors. It impacts the landscape of the town and is good for the community. Those who live in Wyckoff choose the town for many reasons, and one is the landscape of the community. Personally, our family could have chosen a farmland subdivision without trees and privacy, but we did not. If we wanted to build an expansive pool, large play set, non-native gardens, and a cabana on our property, we would not have chosen Wyckoff, or we would have carefully selected an existing property that suited our desires. There are lovely subdivisions being built in the state with wide open-air space, flat property and no trees. We chose our property recognizing limitations of development, assuming the respect and enforcement of zoning laws by our Township Committee and Planning Board. It is a matter of respect for the community and respect for the zoning laws. The Township Committee should once again consider a Tree Preservation ordinance.

Second is the institution of an Open Space Land Tax, again, in place in over 200 NJ towns. Such a tax (minimal amount per home per annum) is put in place so as to prevent future higher tax increases for schools, firehouses, police and general town services necessary for increased populations. It is a very small price to pay to prevent the stress on local services. The tax also affords Wyckoff greater access to Green Acres funding from the county and state. Currently we have limited access to funds due to the fact that our town does not have a fund of our own. This is not a ground-breaking initiative. Open Space funds are routinely used to purchase land from private owners at full and fair market value. There is no interest in denying owners full value in an open market purchase. This fund merely gives owners another option – and another bidder – for their property, thus increasing competition for property. That is the essence of the free market.

I ask that the Township Committee consider the benefits of keeping Wyckoff a town with tree lined streets and neighborhoods of arbor cover and privacy. Realizing that the character of neighborhoods, whether The Knolls, Carriage Lane, Hartung, or Sicomac, will only enhance values for all properties in town should be recognized by our township leaders. I am certain that many citizens of Wyckoff would have an interest in enhancing and improving property values for their own private property. Let's not take a myopic view. Land conservation and preservation are hot topics in densely populated communities, and our community leaders should open their minds and listen to the voting public.

Thank you for your consideration on these issues.

Sincerely,

Diane Sobin
Wyckoff