

Perillie, Michelle

From: Linda Durakis <linda.durakis@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 19, 2022 1:20 PM
To: Dobin Danielle; mcammemeyer@westportct.gov; Paul Lebowitz; Kiselak, Michael; Young, Mary; Perillie, Michelle; Tooker, Jennifer
Subject: P & Z Tree proposal

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Town of Westport's email system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi All,
Thank you for your time and effort in your work-most especially the volunteers!

I love trees-doesn't everyone? I grew up in Westport in the 1960s and have seen the town go from a lot of farmland, to much development and also a re foresting of the area. When I was a child many of the trees you are now proposing to regulate were quite small.

I'm an avid outdoors person, doing lots of hiking and gardening and am quite liberal. Here, however, in an effort to "do good" I think this proposal tramples all over the property rights of homeowners and is a clear case of government overreach and too much regulation.

I did some calculations to check and see what percentage of a property is involved in setbacks. It is surprisingly a huge. (I did the math and checked it twice)

One Acre: Setbacks of Front-30', Side-25' and Rear-25'-using a square lot. **The setback area is 44% of the lot.**

Two Acres: Setbacks of Front, Rear and Sides of 50'-using a square lot. **The setback area is 56% of the lot.**

Personally, I have a problem with the government now making me hire an arborist and a surveyor, then getting a permit and paying an unknown fee, to manage the trees on my own lot.

My house is near the beach on Longview Road, and not very wooded. I have, however, at various times during my 60 years in town lived on wooded lots in Old Hill and Coleytown. I must have had more than 100 trees in the setbacks there. What if I wanted more lawn, or a pool or a tennis court? I have a problem with the town telling me how I can use my property.

PROBLEMS WITH THE PROPOSAL

- 1) Property Rights
- 2) Only marginally addresses water run off problems
- 3) Cost and burden to home owners. Those 5 trees that might have cost \$4000 to remove will now cost an additional few thousand dollars-between arborist, surveyor and permit fees.
- 4) Cost to taxpayers: This is such a huge potentially administrative nightmare to regulate, I can see a new town employee being needed to manage this regulation.

5) Backlog to homeowners: There are only a handful of surveyors in the area. The backlog to find out to survey trees on a property is going to be be very loooooonnnnggg.

6) Buffer around wetlands areas of 20'. This is really onerous to homeowners who have a lot of wetlands on their lots. You may be drastically reducing the usability of their properties.

7) Regulating aesthetics: Many of the complaints that I've read about have to do with how people don't like the way it looks since their neighbors took down the trees that used to back up to their property. That person bought their own lot, not their lot and 25 or 50' of the neighbors lot. We need to keep this in perspective. Some people would rather see trees, others want sun and lawn. It isn't up to us to dictate how they landscape it.

BUILDER INCENTIVES

I don't think this is going to prevent builders from clear cutting lots. Why not offer builders incentive instead? I understand that Building Permit fees cover the cost of running the Building Department, so cutting these fees might not be feasible. What about reduced P & Z fees if they keep trees?

OTHER IDEAS

Address other water run off issues with better site management and better water flow engineering.

It seems to me that this proposal doesn't solve water runoff problems and prevent builders from clear cutting lots, its consequence will be penalizing homeowners.

In the nature of full disclosure, I am married to a builder, Bill Green, but he has never clear cut a lot in the nearly 40 years he has been building. I am writing this as a life long Westport resident.

Thank you for reading and considering my comments.

Best,

Linda Durakis
5 Longview Road
Westport, CT