



Press Release

Re: Village Tree Law Introduction

November 24, 2019

The Village Board is currently reviewing, “A Local Law Providing For The Maintenance, Conservation, And Preservation Of Trees In The Village Of Trumansburg,” which will be up for a vote at their regular meeting on December 9th at 7:00 PM. As the title makes clear, the law’s purpose is to enhance the aesthetic, environmental, social, cultural, and economic benefits of Trumansburg’s community forest while also limiting the possible dangers posed by hazardous tree or limbs.

The law does this primarily by reaffirming¹ the Village’s authority to remove (or order the removal of) potentially hazardous trees on Village property or in the right of way, and by introducing guidelines for the planting, removal, and maintenance of trees in the right of way.

These guidelines are intended to encourage the responsible care and maintenance of the Village’s community forest without imposing onerous or complex requirements on homeowners and residents. The ultimate goal is to enhance long-term health and sustainability by encouraging small but important changes in the maintenance and care of our trees.

It is the intent of the STAC (The Village’s Street Tree Advisory Committee) to be a continuing and accessible resource to homeowners and residents who have an interest in trees. While this local law does require approval from the STAC for the removal of trees in the right of way or the planting of some species, residents and homeowners are encouraged to reach out to the STAC for guidance and assistance whenever they are considering tree maintenance, removal or planting in the Village.

While it is the *intent* of the law to be easy to apply, legal documents of any type are often difficult to understand thoroughly, so the you will find several frequently asked questions & answers are below. If you have questions or comments that are not answered here, please address them to the STAC c/o Ben Carver at benjicarv@gmail.com or 592-5599, or bring them to the Board of Trustees on Monday.

¹ This power was established in Local Law 1 of 2010, “Sidewalk and Street Tree Maintenance.”



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Q: I am considering planting a tree in my front yard, does this law affect my plans?

A: Unless you are planning on planting within 25 feet of the center of a Village road or within 15 feet of the edge of the pavement on Main St. or Hector St., then no. If you are planning on planting within those limits then yes, you need to follow the guidelines set in the law. Fortunately, the guidelines set in the law are based on best management practices for trees and will likely result in a better result for your trees in the long run.

Reference: Sections 1.B., 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8.

Q: I am considering pruning a tree (or trees) in my front yard, does this law affect my plans?

A: As with the first question, the regulations for tree maintenance are only applicable for public trees, so if the trees are in your yard but outside the right of way (as defined in the law) then you are free to do as you wish. If the trees you would like to prune are public trees then yes, you need to follow the guidelines laid out in the law. It is worth noting again that these guidelines are based on best management practices and should be standard procedure for any reputable contractor. If you are doing the work yourself, the STAC would be happy to help provide guidance on appropriate procedures that will not only conform to the law but will help prolong the life, vigor, and beauty of your tree.

Reference: Sections 9, 10, 11 & 12.

Q: I am considering removing a tree in my front yard, does this law affect my plans?

As before, the regulations for tree removal are only applicable for public trees, so if the trees are in your yard but outside the right of way (as defined in the law) then you are free to do as you wish. If the tree you are considering is a public tree then yes, you will need the permission of the STAC to remove the tree.

Reference: Sections 10.

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Q: I have trees that are under power lines, are too close together, or are in some other way in violation of the planting requirements in the law, does passage of this law mean I will have to remove those trees so that they conform to the planting requirements?

A: No, absolutely not. The planting requirements are only applicable to new plantings that go in after the law is passed.

Q: I would like to plant or prune in a way that is prohibited by the law, but makes sense on my lot, is there a way to do so without breaking the law?

A: Yes! It was understood as this law was drafted that landscapes and trees are unique and each lot has different site characteristics. To account for this the law provides for the possibility of the STAC review for many of the planting, pruning, and removal requirements so that other options may be considered and allowed on a case by case basis.

Q: What is this law for?

A: In basic terms, this law is designed to protect and preserve the community forest in Trumansburg as much as possible without imposing onerous regulations. It does this by allowing the Village to be proactive in its approach to tree maintenance and by encouraging responsible tree planting, maintenance, and removals that will help increase the long term health and sustainability of the forest ecosystem in the Village.

Additionally, establishing this law helps the Village qualify for grant money that will help pursue those same goals much more effectively.

Q: Who will enforce violations of this law?

A: It is our sincere hope that no “enforcement” will be necessary. As stated above the intent of the law is to provide as gentle a touch as possible and to begin outreach and proactive education that will help the community follow safe and effective tree maintenance practices. However, in the event that enforcement of some kind is required, our police will be tasked with issuing citations.

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Q: There are many other species of tree, why is the list of allowable plantings so small?

A: The list provided is intended to be read as a “pre-approved” list and is not at all inclusive. One of the basic tenets of a healthy forest is biodiversity, including diversity in tree species and genus. The short, “pre-approved” list includes species that are proven to be well adapted to most sites in the Village and are attractive without any nuisance features, however, the STAC will be working to increase the diversity of trees in the Village and hopes that residents who would like to plant a species not on the list will reach out for a review.

Q: Does the tree law apply to commercial locations as well as residential?

A: Yes, the tree law applies throughout the Village.

Q: I use a contractor for tree work – does this law apply to their work?

A: Yes. However, with the exception of tree removals in the right of way, for which permission from the STAC will be required, the law merely codifies best management practices that are common place in the arboricultural industry; contractors that perform this type of work should already be following these guidelines or should be able to easily do so.
