

**SPECIAL VILLAGE BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2010**

A special Village Board meeting was held at 6:00 p.m. on the above date with the following members present:

PRESENT: Mayor Dagan LaCorte
Trustee Bruce Simon, Trustee John Meehan
Trustee William Schoenleber

ALSO PRESENT: Virginia Menschner, Village Clerk
Terry Rice, Village Attorney

ABSENT: Trustee Patricia Abato

TREE CUTTING POLICY:

The Mayor introduced the members of the Board, Mr. Charles Sawicki, the Superintendent of Public Works and John Wickes, our consulting arborist. The Mayor said that we are excited about the fact that we are going to be paving all of Ramapo Avenue and putting new curbs and the same thing on Riverside with new curbs. And in doing so we had to prepare for the project and we went through and we had to take down trees. It was something that we did not want to do. In terms of notice, the Mayor said we did inform anybody who had trees in front of their house that was going to be cut down. We gave them notice. We did not notify everybody in the neighborhood because if you had logistically notified everybody that we were cutting down trees they are going to think that every tree is going to be cut down. So what we did was that we notified people who in front of their house had trees to be removed. Again, we did not want to cut down trees. We want to keep the neighborhoods beautiful. We realize what trees do for the neighborhood. But in this situation, all the trees were diseased or bad and they had to be cut back and John Wickes has talked about this through the years. They were growing through the power lines and if they are not cut back properly, they are exposed to disease. So we have here grub worms that were in some of the trees that were diseased. In addition, we have pictures of the various trees and you can see for various reasons that they were diseased or dead. The Mayor said we have been working on a tree policy and he will turn the meeting over to Bruce, Charles and Mr. Wickes.

The Mayor said that when we had heard that people were concerned, we sent out letters. He said they will be replanting trees. We will plant significantly more trees than were removed. We cut down twenty and he told Mr. Wickes that we will replant 60 trees. We are going to replant them. We have a road project coming up and the trees will be planted before the winter and they will be mature trees, not little seedlings. Next spring you will have beautiful trees blossoming and beautiful new roads.

Ellen Killelea of Lexington Avenue asked if we will be discussing Lexington Avenue. The Mayor said yes. That was the impetus behind starting this tree policy because of what happened on Lexington.

Trustee Bruce Simon said this has been a long process. He said that they have been meeting since January or February because they knew that this would have to be addressed. Trees will be replanted. They will be blossom trees. They are not going to be 10' or 20' around. We can't have those trees in the right of way. We will put in mature trees that will provide shade and comfort. They have chosen cherry trees. John Wickes has been helping us.

A lady in the audience asked if a tree is cut down, will we have it replaced. The Mayor said we want to plant a lot more trees. Another lady asked if they will be maintained. She asked about the sidewalks on Riverside. Charles Sawicki said we have budgeted some money for this. The lady said the sidewalks are so bad on Riverside. Mrs. Killelea asked who bears the liability if a sidewalk is buckled due to a Village tree. Mr. Sawicki said the Village attorney would have to answer that. Mr. Sawicki said that they will be starting on Ramapo Avenue next week for curb work.

A gentleman from Riverside said it seemed like all the trees on Riverside were dead. He asked if Riverside would be widened. The Mayor said no, we are not widening Riverside. A lady from the audience asked if anything could be done about the cars on Riverside. The Mayor said we have a public hearing scheduled for next month to put up a stop sign at Bridge Street because there is a question of visibility. Stop signs do not go up to control speed.

Mr. Sawicki said there was some discussion about making Riverside Drive one way. There are pros and cons. A lady from Riverside asked if the street is blocked off for the curbs, will they be notified. Mr. Sawicki said they will send out notification and let people know exactly when they will be in front of their house.

Mrs. Killelea asked when Lexington will be done. Mr. Sawicki said that when they put this project together, it identified Ramapo and Riverside as areas where the curbs were in poor shape. He said he knows that on Lexington some of the curbs are not in good shape.

The Mayor said that Chadick, Lexington and Utopian are all being repaved. Mrs. Killelea said the trees? The Mayor said they will look at the trees on that street as well.

Lynn Limbrick asked how did this happen. She said she didn't know anything about this. What can we do to prevent this from happening again. The Mayor said that they did notify - they sent out letters before to anybody who had a tree cut down in front of their house or was planning on being cut down. We said we will be removing the tree in front of your house. A gentleman in the audience said the letter said you would be removing some trees. Ms. Limbrick asked if there was some way to notify the areas before the work is done. She said she is sure there will be other areas. The Mayor said we can

always do a better job.

Mr. Sawicki said that they looked at these trees and there were certain issues that the trees have. If the tree is diseased, in many cases, it is pretty obvious. They have big holes. They have worms. They have ants. So the trees that came down it was pretty obvious that they were all in bad shape.

Trustee Meehan said that one of the things with this type of government this size is that there may be a little inefficiency. But with a mom and pop government it really shouldn't be a bureaucracy. We should be reaching out to you. That is the beauty about having a small village. You give notice to people. A lady from Riverside Drive said she was very happy. Trustee Meehan said he had a question for the arborist. He said he noticed there were five trees down on Ramapo and there were two stumps and they were all rotted. He said maybe on the ones that looked good, we could have done some surgery on them.

John Wickes said there is a difference between a hazard and a tree being healthy. He said we need to make an inventory and see what trees we have. We can then rate the risks and go forward from there.

Trustee Meehan asked if it was an all or nothing situation. Can tree surgery be performed. Mr. Wickes said tree surgery can absolutely be performed to mitigate the risk. He said if it was a trip hazard, it would obviously be a liability and we would want to get rid of that.

Joe Varano said that he has been living here 52 years and it is a disaster on Ramapo Avenue. He said he had one question. Is the road going to be made wider? Mr. Sawicki said no, the curbs will be in the same place. Mr. Varano said that down the road there are two big trees that were not cut. Mr. Sawicki said that on some of the trees that were taken down, the tree roots did damage the sidewalks.

Trustee Simon said the last thing any one wants to do is to cut down trees. The only time we would is if we absolutely have to. The only reason the Village will cut down a tree is if it is a hazard. The reason they have picked cherry trees to replace the trees is that they won't get incredibly big and the roots generally grow pretty much straight down. So then we won't have the problem with the curbs and the sidewalks.

Someone from the audience said she had a concern about the way Orange and Rockland does the trees. They cut out the trees and some of them are one-sided. She said if you drive over to Mahwah, the wires go right through the trees. Trustee Simon said that Orange and Rockland has an absolute right to maintain the wires. They don't have to ask. They don't have to notify. We have asked them to do so. We can work with them. If they decide a tree is a hazard, they don't have to ask.

John Wickes said we can ask them to take care of the trees. The

answer to this is to plant shorter trees that won't interfere with the wires.

Jim Giannettino said that O & R does try to work with us. He asked if cherry trees were the only trees that will be planted. Mr. Wickes said he didn't know the answer to that. Mr. Wickes said there is a whole list that is put out by Cornell Cooperative Extension. Mayor LaCorte said that his thinking is that a row of something looks great when it is the same. If you go to Washington, D.C. The cherry blossoms look beautiful. Mr. Giannettino said maybe you could have one block cherry trees and one block something else. The Mayor said there is a recommended list of trees that have low maintenance and will not grow very big. He said he was just saying as an example cherry trees.

A gentleman from State Street said there was a tree by State Street that was not taken down and he thought it should have been. Charles said he would take a look at it. He asked if it was on Ramapo and State. The man said it was on State. Mr. Sawicki said we haven't been down State Street.

Mrs. Killelea said she was so excited to hear us say that we would never cut down a tree unless it was bad. She is happy to hear that trees are being replaced. Trustee Simon said that we can't replant giant trees but we can beautify the neighborhood. A gentleman from Riverside Drive asked how many trees? Trustee Simon said we will have a planting grid. A gentleman from Ramapo Avenue asked if the stumps will be taken out. He was told they would be. A lady from Riverside asked them to be aware of how close to driveways they would be planting trees.

The Mayor said we can always do better to communicate. He said we are trying to do positive things. In the west ward, we had a meeting with the residents to discuss the sewer smell and to fix the sewer and to pave the road. And we were going to do it in two years and we decided to do it in one year. So now we can do it all in one shot. He said we will do better to communicate and we will always work to improve it. He said for example, putting a stop sign on Bridge Street is a good thing because people fly down Riverside and it is a very narrow road with a lot of kids playing. And the parking is always an issue. Some of the people who are parking on the road where it says no parking have long driveways. So we talked about putting yellow curbs in. We are looking into that. He said he is always available to talk about issues. And he is excited about the new roads and curbs.

A gentleman from W. Maltbie Avenue asked if we would be repaving or resurfacing. Mr. Sawicki said resurfacing. The gentleman said they are two different things. He said the Mayor is using the word repave. The Mayor said if he misused the word, he apologizes. It is resurface.

The gentleman asked if you are going to use, on a major thoroughfare, which is Ramapo Avenue, grade 3 material. He said you

used grade 3 resurfacing material on W. Maltbie and Meadow. Mr. Sawicki said that was a different contractor. We will be using #6 for resurfacing. The gentleman said his second question is if O & R will be replacing the pipes on Ramapo Avenue. Mr. Sawicki said they already have been replaced.

The Mayor said we spoke to O & R. We had a meeting with them. At that meeting, we asked them if they were planning on doing any work. The only work they are going to be doing this year is out on Wayne Avenue. We were also able to receive funding from them specifically for the areas of Lexington and Utopian because they had done a lot of work there and they are supposed to repair the roads after they do work. What we were saying is why spend this money to patch up the road and then we are going to rip up the road and resurface it anyway. So what we were able to do was to get the money instead of just wasting it and now we are going to do more roads because we got extra money from them.

A gentleman asked if we were getting new blacktop or recycled blacktop. Mr. Sawicki said it is going to be new #6 top.

Trustee Simon said that he did want to say something about the commentary about notices and you are right, we can always do better. There are a couple of things that people in the Village can do themselves in terms of notification. One is to sign up for the Village notification service on our website, suffernvillage.com. We can then start targeting neighborhoods. The other would be Rich Gandon from Ramapo Times. He can put it on his website.

Mr. Giannettino said that he hoped that we notified Ramapo Central about the work that is going to be done because it will affect the school buses.

Mrs. Killelea asked if O & R contacts the Village when they are going to cut down trees. Trustee Simon said it is a tough question. Sometimes they do. But not always. Mr. Giannettino said they use private contractors.

Mr. Wickes said that in this project, the Village did remove the trees. O & R goes through cycles. They hire a contractor. And the contractor goes out and does a set amount of trees.

Mrs. Killelea said the trees in the west ward were cut down by the Village. And the ones on Lexington were cut down by O & R? Trustee Simon said it was a combination. O & R took some, the Village has taken some. He said it doesn't matter. We aren't concerned at this point as to who took which tree down and who is responsible and why.

The Mayor said when you see a tree lined street, it looks beautiful but when you get closer some of these trees are in terrible shape. And a woman was killed in Teaneck during a thunder storm and there was a baby that was killed in Central Park. If you look at the winds the other night, this could have happened. If the maintenance is not done correctly, they leave the tree exposed. Mr. Wickes said what

O & R does is that they are concerned with the line. They are more concerned with protecting their wires. He said when you start removing large amounts of foliage, you get a "v" shape in the tree and it is not that safe. Because if you are taking 50% of the foliage, the tree is going to die anyway.

The Mayor thanked everybody for coming. The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.