



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

Times Ledger: Avella wants to legislate forced tree planting

TONY AVELLA January 26, 2015

Whitestone resident Joseph Cozeolino spent \$140,000 in repairs to his home from damage caused by foliage.

That's why he opposes forced tree planting by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

In November, state Sen. Tony Avella (D-Bayside) stood in front of his office with some homeowners asking the city to let them decide if they want a new tree planted close to their properties.

They claimed problems with trees include breaking sewer lines, pushing up sidewalks and the non-removal of stumps.

According to Avella, a letter he received from the city agency noted, "Just as residents do not determine the placement of city infrastructure such as traffic lights, bus stops or fire hydrants, they are unable to refuse the planting of a city tree in the public right-of-way."

The lawmaker fired back, saying that "when a city refuses to hear the voices of its residents, something is profoundly wrong."

The Parks Department notified Cozeolino that a tree would be planted in front of his home.

"This tree could cause serious damage to my home," said the 11th Avenue resident. "Falling leaves would clog the drainage system."

Avella pointed out that residents like Cozeolino have "serious concerns" about the financial responsibility and liability that will be "forced" on them by the Parks Department.

The legislator noted that he is drafting legislation "to ensure that we are able to maintain the trees that we have before subjecting homeowners and residents to the liabilities that come with planting new ones."

Avella said he had a meeting with officials at Parks, but they told him that the policy would not be changed.

"We need Parks to immediately change their policy and take homeowners into consideration," he said.

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