



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

Senator Avella Tutors Mayor de Blasio on City Tree Issues

TONY AVELLA July 24, 2017

Queens, NY – This afternoon, State Senator Tony Avella tutored Mayor de Blasio on how the City can improve its response to tree related complaints from New Yorkers. Senator Avella's announcement comes less than a week after Mayor Bill de Blasio committed additional funding for the Trees and Sidewalks Repair Program while visiting the Senator's district. That funding, Avella says, does not go far enough.

"If the Mayor is truly interested in addressing City tree related issues, rather than a re-election campaign press conference about the Tree and Sidewalk Repair Program then I offer the following recommendations to address these issues in a much more comprehensive approach," **stated Senator Avella.**

Senator Avella laid out an eight-point proposal of what the City would have to do in order to make its Tree policy work best for residents:

1. Tree & Sidewalk Repair Program needs to be codified into law and expanded in terms of both funding and eligibility.

- **Senate Bill S1510 codifies the program and expands it to include Co-ops and Condos.**

2. The City's tree pruning cycle needs to be changed from the current seven to ten years to comply with national arborist standards of 3-5 years.
 - In addition, the Department of Parks and Recreation needs to mandate a Certified Arborist is present on all contracted private pruning contracts.
3. NYC must accept responsibility for City tree roots that break/damage sewer/water lines of homeowners.
4. NYC must accept responsibility for City tree roots that damage private property, beyond the sidewalk area, such as driveways, front yards, and walkways.
5. The huge backlog of stump removals needs to be eliminated.
6. Homeowners should have the option of opting out of receiving a City tree since the burden of upkeep and liability is on the homeowner.
 - Senate Bill S1456-A would allow homeowners to opt out of a planned City tree planting.
7. Create roving tree pruning crews assigned to Community Board Districts to address tree related issues on a yearly basis.
8. Dismiss DOT sidewalk violations when the damage is only caused by city tree roots.

Senator Avella also highlighted legislation that he has authored in the New York State Senate that, if enacted, would greatly enhance the City's response to tree related issues and improve not only the environment but also homeowner/pedestrian safety.

Senator Avella's Bill **S1571** would establish a task force on tree maintenance and safety within the City of New York. Senate bill **S1419** would give the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation oversight of the Department of Parks and Recreation's tree maintenance and **S1363** would require New York City to preserve evidence of public trees and tree parts that are involved in property damage or personal injury.

Additionally, **S1780** relieves property owners from responsibility for maintaining City sidewalks.

"It is nice that the Mayor has allocated additional money for the Tree and Sidewalk Repair program, but given that he has been in office for three and a half years and is only just addressing this issue now is sad," **said Senator Avella.**

"Mr. Mayor you need to do more."