

Dear Editor:

I am urging Mayor Firoenzo and the Township Committee to add the two public questions supported by Friends of Wyckoff, and over 1500 Wyckoff citizens, on November's ballot. As Mayor and Township Committee members, they have been elected to represent the constituents of Wyckoff and the best interests of this town.

My reasons for supporting adding the tree ordinance and open space ordinance questions to the ballot are as follows:

1. **Trees mean charm, desirable living areas, and higher property values.** My husband and I house-hunted in several Bergen County towns, and settled on Wyckoff to move to four years ago based upon its excellent schools, lush greenery and charm. After living on Long Island for a decade, Wyckoff, with its tall and abundant trees, was a breath of fresh air. When people came to visit me, they always commented on the trees. Sadly, now they comment on local McMansions and how obvious the clear cutting has been on these properties. As each season passes, I find yet another clearcut lot with an oversized home being built on it. The character of my newfound hometown is changing for the worst.
2. **Trees mean clean air and support life.** Cutting down a mature tree and replacing it with a several-year old sapling equals further denigration of our already polluted air. This is due to a mature tree's excellent ability to absorb CO₂, the gas believed by the vast majority of leading scientists to be contributing to/causing global warming. Further, as we cut down our trees, we remove a natural cooling system for our homes, increasing the need for air conditioning. It's a double whammy, as much of our electricity supply in the NE comes from the burning of coal, which means that even more CO₂ and particulate pollutants are released into the atmosphere. According to the most recent public numbers from the Environmental Protection Agency, in concert with the New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection, Bergen County emits more air toxic emissions than any other county in the state, and on the basis of emissions per acre, we are sadly #4. Do we really need to make our air quality worse when we, individually and as a community, should do our part to make it better?
3. **Property owners can still profit from open space sales, and many prefer to "go green".** To think that many property owners would not want their land maintained as open space is ludicrous. With high oil prices, the national insecurity that results from American's oil consumption, and more arguments supporting global warming's devastating effects coming to light on nearly a daily basis, many Americans are thankfully becoming more environmentally aware. Some people undoubtedly would prefer to sell land at a lower profit to assure that it is maintained in a natural state. How do I know this? Its simple: open space sales occur every day, all over the US. So, why can't they occur in Wyckoff, NJ?
4. **We do not need more new-build homes, and more crowding in the schools.** We need to consider the effect of higher enrollment in our schools in light of their physical limitations and the difficulty experienced in passing the latest school budget. More young families entering Wyckoff via supersized new construction (as opposed to preexisting homes) will present a strain on our schools, create more congestion on our roads, require more energy, and require more town services.

Finally, let me say that there are sometimes reasonable reasons for removing a tree (disease, disturbing a foundation, building an addition), but there is never a good reason for clearcutting. The intent of the ballot initiative is to prevent abuse of cutting.

We all live in Wyckoff and breathe the same air. We also share the same Earth, and thus we have a responsibility to lower our personal carbon emissions while maintaining our carbon absorbers. Right now, with this ballot question, we have a unique opportunity to maintain our lovely trees in Wyckoff. We can choose to keep our town quaint and desirable, while having the crucial added benefit of maximum carbon absorption. Five trees, over a lifetime, will absorb the CO₂ emissions that a typical household generates in a year. That puts the effect of cutting down just five mature trees in perspective.

I urge our elected officials to allow the people of Wyckoff to speak through the aforementioned two public questions on the November ballot.

Sincerely,

Kim M. Nolan, Ph.D.
Wyckoff, NJ