

August 21, 2015

Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation
830 Fifth Ave
New York, NY, 10065

Re: Damage Caused by Tree Roots at 41 Uxbridge Street and 28 Poland Place, Staten Island
(Selected Partial Documentation Enclosed)

Dear Commissioner Silver:

I hope this letter finds you well.

As you know, we receive many complaints about trees having root systems that damage and/or raise sidewalks; our constituent services line routinely processes them, explains the rating system and reports these complaints to your agency.

Occasionally, however, we receive complaints accompanied by pictures, and wonder how such conditions can be allowed to exist. Additionally, we receive copies of long strings of correspondence with 311 and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) that would make anyone's head spin, especially in the cases cited above - in which octogenarians are trying to navigate the bureaucracy and its rules.

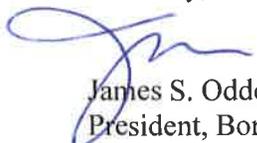
Worse yet, they are forced to endure lectures from DPR personnel who loftily inform them of the homeowner's responsibility, but never what the city can do to help. Can you imagine how perplexed an elderly homeowner - or any homeowner, for that matter - becomes when they are told that the condition of their sidewalk does not merit action on the part of DPR, but DOES merit a violation from Department of Transportation?

Commissioner, I am much in favor of keeping this city as green as possible, but there comes a point when the rules strain credulity. We have turned an ordinary curb tree into a sacred cow - and public safety is suffering for it. Together, let's work to inject some common sense into this problem, and, for at least the two addresses above, alleviate their worry and the threat to their safety.

I do not think DPR personnel should be lecturing the citizens whom they serve about the monetary value of a tree, or opine about the damage to the adjacent building's sewers, which, contrary to what the DPR wishes to claim, I have been told actually were damaged by the tree. I respectfully request that the existing trees be replaced with new trees. I ask that the offending trees be removed without restitution costs and request that DPR plant replacement trees for these seniors. Or, if you prefer, we will get someone to plant the trees.

As always, thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,



James S. Oddo
President, Borough of Staten Island

