

Local Law Filing

VILLAGE OF GREENWICH

Local Law No. 4 of the year 2024, entitled

VILLAGE OF GREENWICH LOCAL LAW NO.4 OF THE YEAR 2024, A LOCAL LAW ENTITLED “TREE LAW OF THE VILLAGE OF GREENWICH”

§1 Title.

This local law shall be known and may be cited as the “Tree Law of the Village of Greenwich, County of Washington.”

§2 Purpose.

The proper planting of new trees and the health and maintenance of existing trees within the public right-of-way, aid in maintaining property values in the Village of Greenwich; implement the design, environmental, and economic goals of the comprehensive plan, and revitalization plan; and promote the general welfare of the Village of Greenwich residents.

This local law will:

Create a Tree Committee to establish regulations governing the planting, maintenance, and removal of trees and shrubs in the public streets, rights-of-way, parks and other municipally owned property in the Village of Greenwich;

B. Preserve green foliage on village streets and public property; and

C. Replace trees that must be removed from public property because of disease or lack of development.

§3 Definitions.

As used in this local law, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNER – The natural person(s) or legal entity owning property bordering a village street. The adjacent property owner to a public tree shall be the owner of

property located on a perpendicular with the street line through the center of the tree four feet above the edge of pavement of a roadway.

DIAMETER BREAST HEIGHT (DBH) – Tree trunk diameter measured in inches with a calipers at six inches from grade in the case of trees measuring four inches or less in diameter, and at a height 4 ½ feet above grade when the tree trunk is larger than four inches.

DRIPLINE – A vertical line extending from the outermost edge of the tree canopy or shrub branch to the ground.

NUISANCE – Anything or act that unreasonably annoys, disturbs, hurts or otherwise interferes with a person's use or enjoyment of his or her property, or violates the public health, safety and welfare.

PARK – Includes land designated as a park pursuant to New York State statutes as well as areas such as playgrounds, pools or other recreational facilities or areas within or outside of the village and under the jurisdiction of the Village Board of Trustees.

PUBLIC PLACES – Includes all grounds owned, leased or controlled by the Village of Greenwich, County of Washington, for public use.

PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY – The street (as defined herein) and where there is no sidewalk, any area abutting the road that has been maintained by the Village workers for 10 years or more.

PUBLIC TREE – Any woody plant, located on municipal property or within the public right-of-way, having at least one well-defined trunk and at least 2 ½ inches in diameter measured at a height of six inches above the natural grade and having a clearly defined crown.

ORNAMENTAL TREES – Small to medium trees that grow 15 feet to 40 feet in height at maturity, and that are planted for aesthetic purposes such as colorful flowers, interesting bark, or fall foliage.

SHADE TREES – A large tree growing to over 40 feet in height at maturity, usually deciduous, that is planted to provide canopy cover shade.

SEVERE ROOT PRUNING – Cutting back the underground tree roots inside 1.5 times the dripline of the tree that will be detrimental to the life of the tree.

STREET – A highway, road, avenue, lane, alley, culvert, embankment, sidewalk, or area between the sidewalk and the paved road or curb, which is within the public right-of-way.

STREET TREE – Any tree, shrub, bush, or other woody vegetation on land lying between property lines on either side of all streets, avenues or roads, or within the public right-of-way.

TOPPING – Severe cutting back of limbs to stubs larger than three inches in diameter within the tree crown to such degree so as to remove the normal canopy and disfigure the tree.

TREELAWN – The green space adjacent to a street or highway, not covered by sidewalks or other paving, lying between the property line and that portion of the street or highway usually used for vehicular traffic or within the public right-of-way.

TREE MEASUREMENT – Also known as “diameter breast height.”

TREE WORK – Includes but is not limited to, pruning, shaping, thinning, cabling, stump removal, root pruning, topping, fertilizing, removing, planning, and spraying for insect and disease control, of a tree.

UTILITIES – Those entities that provide electricity, gas, sewer, water, telephone and cable television to properties within the village.

§4 Tree Committee established.

Establishment; membership; terms.

(1) The Village Board of Trustees shall create an advisory committee known as the “Village of Greenwich Tree Committee” (hereinafter, the “Committee”). The Committee shall consist of a minimum of five members, all of whom shall be residents of the village. In addition, the Village Code Enforcement Officer DPW Superintendent shall serve as ex officio members of the Committee. Each member shall be appointed by the Mayor, subject to approval by the Board of Trustees. The Mayor shall make reasonable efforts to appoint a certified arborist to the Committee. The Village Board shall establish a budget for consultation services of a certified arborist when the Committee deems it advisable.

(2) The members shall be appointed initially as follows: two members shall be appointed for a term of one year; two members shall be appointed for a term of two years; and one member shall be appointed for a term of three years. Thereafter, all appointments shall be for three years.

(3) If a Committee member does not serve the full term for reasons other than the expiration of the term, the Mayor shall appoint a successor, to serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.

B. Tree Committee duties. The Tree Committee shall have the following duties that include, but are not limited to:

(1) Studying, investigating, developing and/or updating the Village’s written plan for caring, preserving, pruning, topping, replanting, removing or disposing of trees and shrubs in parks, along Village streets, and in other public areas.

(2) Maintaining reference materials relating to trees and shrubs.

(3) Providing an inventory of the location of street trees and determining areas where such trees could exist but are absent.

- (4) Establishing a suggested species list for the village and recommending to the village the type and kind of trees to be planted upon village property.
- (5) Identifying trees for immediate removal.
- (6) providing a long-range plan every five years for the Village relating to street trees and shrubs.
- (7) Providing the Village Board of Trustees with a yearly estimate of personnel and professional services costs and the cost of nursery stock to be used. Such a budget estimate shall be presented annually to the Board.

C. Meetings.

- (1) The Committee shall meet a minimum of four (4) times each year. The Committee may call additional meetings as needed.
- (2) If a Committee member misses four (4) consecutive meetings, the position will be deemed vacant and the Mayor shall appoint a successor to serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.

§5 Village responsibility.

- A. The village or its agent shall perform all necessary maintenance to preserve and protect street trees in a safe and healthy condition, including trimming, spraying, fertilizing, watering, staking, topping, root pruning, mulching, treating for disease or injury, and removal if necessary.
- B. The village shall have the right to plant, prune, maintain and remove trees, plants and shrubs within the public right-of-way, treelawn and public places as may be necessary to ensure public safety or to preserve or enhance the symmetry and beauty of such public places.
- C. The Committee may recommend a tree or part of a tree be removed if the tree or tree part:
 - (1) Poses a potential public safety risk or hazard; or
 - (2) Causes an unsafe condition; or
 - (3) By its nature, is injurious to sewers, electric power lines, gas lines, waterlines or other public improvements; or
 - (4) Is affected with any injurious fungus, insect or pest.
- D. No property owner shall be permitted to allow a tree, shrub, or other plant growing on his or her property and outside of the public right of way, to obstruct or interfere with the view of drivers of vehicles or pedestrians on the sidewalk to create a traffic hazard. If such tree, shrub or other plant does overhang or does otherwise adversely affect any street, sidewalk, or right-of-way within the village, the property owner shall, at the owner's expense, trim the tree, shrub or plant so that it shall not obstruct the view of any street intersection or obstruct or hinder passage

on any street or sidewalk. If an owner must trim a tree, shrub, or other plant, the owner must provide for a clear space of at least eight feet above the surface of the sidewalk and at least 14 feet above the surface of the street; after consultation with the Committee.

E. If an obstruction persists, the Code Enforcement Officer shall mail a notice, in writing, to the property owner to prune or remove the tree, shrub or plant within 10 days. If the owner fails to comply with the notice, the Village may undertake the necessary work and charge the cost for such work to the property owner. If the property owner refuses to pay all or any portion of said costs, said unpaid costs will be assessed against the owner of the property, a lien will be imposed on the property and the Village will levy such costs as a special assessment against the property.

F. Emergencies: If any tree or shrub exists in such a condition so menacing to the public health, peace or safety that it is necessary that it be summarily removed, the Village of Greenwich, acting upon the written determination and of the Code Enforcement Officer, Superintendent of the Department of Public Works or Mayor of the Village, may proceed to remove the tree or shrub or any part thereof without a Court Order. The costs of such removal incurred by the Village shall be the responsibility of the property owner. If the property owner refuses to pay all or any portion of said costs, said unpaid costs will be assessed against the owner of the property, a lien will be imposed on the property and the Village will levy such costs as a special assessment against the property.

§6 Prohibited actions.

A. No person or utility shall plant, spray, fertilize, treat, prune, remove, cut above ground, disturb the root system or otherwise disturb any public tree or shrub on any village street, park or public place without a permit or the legal right to do so.

B. Further, no person shall fasten or attach to any tree any sign, poster, bill, notice of advertisement of any kind in any matter that penetrates the surface of the tree.

C. No person or utility shall cause or permit any brine, oil, gasoline, liquid dye or other substance deleterious to tree life to lie, leak, pour, flow or drip on or into the soil about the base of a tree which could injure such tree.

D. No person shall fasten or cause to be fastened any animal to a tree in any street or public place or permit any animal owned by him or in his charge to stand so near any such tree that the tree may be gnawed or otherwise injured by the animal.

E. No trees shall be planted or allowed to grow on private or public lands within the limits of, or which will interfere with, any drainage, sewer, water, or utility easement.

§7 Planting and maintenance.

A. Application to plant. No one, except the Village of Greenwich or its agents acting in the Village's behalf, shall plant a tree or shrub upon Village property or upon a Village treelawn without first submitting an application to the Committee on forms provided by the Committee.

B. Information required. Anyone submitting an application shall state the number of trees to be set out; the location, species or variety of each tree to be planted; the method of planting, and any other information as the Committee shall find reasonably necessary for its recommendation to the Codes Enforcement Officer to issue an appropriate permit.

C. Removal, replanting and replacement. No one except the Village of Greenwich or its agents acting on the Village's behalf, shall remove, replant or replace a tree from Village property or the treelawn for any reason without first applying to the Tree Committee on forms provided by it and receiving a permit from the Codes Enforcement Officer. Such replacement shall meet the standards of size, species and placement as set by the Tree Committee according to specifications set forth by this chapter.

D. Notice of completion. Notice of completion shall be given to the Codes Enforcement Officer so a final inspection may be made.

E. Costs.

(1) When an adjacent property owner initiates a request for tree planting, tree removals, or tree replacements within the public right-of-way or treelawn, or in a public place, all costs associated with such tree work shall be borne by such adjacent property owner.

(2) The costs for work performed by or for utilities shall be borne by the respective utility.

F. Removal of dead and diseased trees from private property.

Private property owners have the duty, at their own expense, to cut down and remove any trees or parts of trees located upon their property which are dead, harbor insects or disease, or which are so damaged as to be a public nuisance and in danger of falling, thereby causing damage to person or property of others. Upon the recommendation of Committee, or if the Code Enforcement deems it to be an imminent threat to person or property, the Code Enforcement Officer shall provide the property owner with written notification that a tree or shrub or part thereof shall be removed or trimmed for the reasons stated above. Owners shall, at their own expense, remove or trim such trees. Owners shall have 15 days after the date of service of the notice to inform the Code Enforcement Officer as to when the tree shall be removed. Owners shall have no more than 30 days after informing the Code Enforcement Officer to remove such trees unless the Code Officer indicates otherwise in writing. If an owner fails to comply with such provisions, the Village shall remove such trees and charge the cost of removal to the property owner. If the cost of such removal remains unpaid for 60 days, the cost of removal shall become a lien on the property be added to the next real estate tax bill of the property owner.

§8 Topping and root pruning trees.

It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, entity, corporation, or utility to top any street tree or shrub, or to engage in severe root pruning. Trees severely damaged by storms or certain trees under utility wires or other obstructions, where other pruning practices are impractical, may be exempted from this chapter upon the recommendations of the Tree Committee.

§9 Trees near excavation or construction.

A. No person or utility shall excavate any ditches, tunnels or trenches, or lay any drive within the dripline of a public tree without first obtaining a permit from the Codes Enforcement Officer.

B. No person or utility shall remove a tree or shrub from the tree lawn for the purpose of construction or for any other reason without first filing an application and receiving a permit from the Codes Enforcement Officer.

C. When construction, excavation, and/or material deposits result in the destruction and/or removal of a street tree, the person or utility responsible for that damage shall replace the street tree with either a tree or trees of equivalent dollar value in the vicinity of the removed street tree where such replacement is recommended by the Committee.

§10 Interference with tree work.

No one shall hinder, prevent, delay, or interfere with the Village of Greenwich or its agents, including the Tree Committee, or any of its assistants, or any contractors while engaged in carrying out the enforcement of this chapter or duly adopted regulations.

§11 Specifications and standards of practice.

A. The Village of Greenwich hereby adopts the Arboricultural Specifications and Standards of Practice of the International Society of Arboricultural as published under American National Standard for Tree Care Operations (ANSI A300-1995) or the most recent edition (a copy of which is available for review). (We need to obtain this and keep updated copy in clerk's office for reference)

B. All tree work done by the Village on trees or shrubs on Village property, within the public right-of-way or treelawn, shall conform to these specifications and standards.

§12 Penalties for offenses.

A violation of any of the provisions of this Local Law shall be prosecuted as a civil proceeding. The following penalties shall be applicable in such proceedings:

- A. Civil Proceeding.** Any Person violating any provision of this Local Law shall, upon a finding of liability therefore in a civil proceeding in the local Justice Court, be liable for the payment of a civil penalty not exceeding \$250.00 for the first offense; for a finding of liability for a second offense, both of which were committed within a period of five (5) years, for a civil penalty of not less than \$250.00 nor more than \$1,000.00; and for a finding of liability for a third or subsequent offense all of which were committed within a period of five (5) years, for a civil penalty of not less than \$500.00 nor more than \$1,500.00.
- B. Continuing Violations.** Each week's continued violation shall constitute a separate additional violation, for which separate and additional fines and punishment or civil penalties may be imposed and recovered.
- C. Injunctive Relief.** Any Person violating any provision of this Local Law shall, in addition to being liable for civil prosecution in the local Justice Court under Section 1.10.1 of this Tree Law, also be subject, at the election of the Village, to the commencement, in New York State Supreme Court of a civil proceeding for civil penalties and/or injunctive relief requiring abatement of the violation.

D. Appeals. Appeals from an order or judgment of the local Justice Court are governed by the Uniform Justice Court Act. Appeals from an order or judgment of Supreme Court are governed by the Civil Practice Law and Rules.

§Severability.

If any section, paragraph, sentence, clause, or phrase of this chapter is found to be invalid by a Court of competent jurisdiction, such judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remaining portions of this chapter.

§13 When effective.

This local law shall become effective immediately upon filing with the New York State Secretary of State.