Forty Fort Dangerous Tree Removal Plan – Draft

There is an ongoing challenge of a significant number of trees located in tree lawns that are a danger and need to be removed. The homeowners are responsible for this maintenance, but most do not take a proactive approach due to Shade Tree Commission approval process, permitting and cost of tree removal. Unfortunately, these problems continue to grow in numbers and our DPW team is dealing with tree and limb removal on an emergency basis with storms, etc. The following is a DRAFT of some steps for discussion to begin to develop a proactive plan to encourage property owners to deal with the aging tree issues.

Identification Phase

The code enforcement office will lead the process to identify all aging trees that need attention across the borough, including the name and contact information of the property owner responsible. The DPW Supervisor and team will help with this process report any known trees to the Code Enforcement Office.

The trees will be sorted into three different categories:

1. Immediate attention required – These are trees where there is an imminent risk for the tree to lose large limbs or even the entire tree fail during a storm event.
2. Needs Removal – These are trees with significant dead limbs, sidewalk damage, tree leaning that indicate the tree has aged to a point that it needs to be removed in the next 12 months.
3. Trimming required – These are trees that need to have limbs trimmed for safety reasons including dead branches, blocking drivers view, low branches over sidewalks.

This process will provide a complete inventory of all trees in borough tree lawns that fit into the above-mentioned criteria.

Communication to Property Owners:

A letter will be sent from Code Enforcement to each property owner of trees fitting the above-mentioned criteria for removal or required trimming. The letter will also include an explanation on why the property owner is responsible for the tree maintenance in Pennsylvania Boroughs.

For any trees that removal is required, the letter would direct the property owner to follow an expedited approval process:

- No need for Shade Tree Commission Approval.
- No permit required.
- No deposit required.
- No need to replant at the current time.
- The only notification required is a call to the Code Enforcement Office to inform the borough of the plan and timing for tree removal.

Letters for those trees that require immediate attention and removal would include a 90-day timeline for the property owner to notify Code Enforcement of the plan and timing of removal. For those identified as “Needs Removal”, the letter will provide a 12-month timeline for the same communication from the property owner.

Property owners that have trees where trimming is required would also follow the same expedited approval process. Those letters would include the same 90-day timeline to the property owner to notify Code Enforcement of the plan and timing for trimming.

For any rental properties, failure to meet these deadlines could result in non-renewal of the rental license.

Tree Removal Assistance Program

The Borough would provide an assistance program to cover 50% of the cost for tree removal up to a maximum of $1500. The property owner will request assistance by submitting a request with the paid invoice to the Borough after the tree removal is completed.

Of course, the Borough will need to identify funds for the assistance program which could include an LSA grant or other funding options. We will better understand the program's cost once the identification phase is completed.