

### Meeting Story Practice Exercise3

**Edit and assemble these facts into a summary news story of 300-350 words. Assume Harkensville is in your home state and that your story will be published in print the day after these events transpired. Make sure your story contains correct grammar, punctuation and AP style.**

In his work "The Lorax," Dr. Seuss created a character who spoke for the trees and on Tuesday, Councilwoman Valerie McDuff (D-Dist. 5) said the Harkensville County Council was speaking for its canopy and the trees that line county roads by passing two bills regulating the removal of trees. Both bills go into effect in March 2018.

The bills seek to protect the trees with permits and fees imposed on residents and builders who remove them, whether on private land or along county streets.

For nearly every tree that residents remove, Harkensville County now will require three trees planted in its place.

With the first bill passed, the council took steps to preserve trees along county roads.

Known as bill 41-12, Roadside Trees, the bill requires anyone wanting to trim, remove or otherwise work on a tree in the county's right of way obtain a county permit first and pay to replace nearly every tree removed with three more.

It took 19 drafts and multiple last-minute amendments, but the council passed the bill, 7-2.

Councilwoman Nancy Flora (D-At Large) and Councilman George L. Plante (D-At Large) opposed the bill.

State law already regulates roadside trees by requiring those who cut one down get a permit from the state's Department of Natural Resources.

However, in 2009, state lawmakers gave counties leeway to impose stricter regulations, if they saw fit.

Only trees that pose a danger would be exempt from the permit fee and the requirement to replace it, as would existing stumps or stumps left behind by county or utility work.

Flora called the roadside tree bill unnecessary legislation.

Under the new law, the county will require an additional, local permit for roadside tree work, which will cost residents and builders about \$135.

Harkensville Electric Co. and other utility companies would not be subject to the new law.

It costs Harkensville \$250 to plant a shade tree, and \$150 to plant an ornamental, or smaller, tree, according to county staff.

The roadside tree bill would require replacing a removed tree with one tree on site and paying into a special fund to plant two others. The county will use the money in the fund to plant trees in areas where it has very few trees, like its urban districts.

But if a new tree cannot be planted where the old one was removed, the permit holder must pay into the fund for that tree.

While the first bill regulates roadside trees, and supplements existing state law, the second bill, known as bill 35-12, Tree Canopy Conservation, goes where the county has not ventured before, said Councilman Roger Bend (D-Dist. 1). The bill passed unanimously.

“We are making a very significant advance in terms of protecting our tree canopy in our county,” he said of the canopy bill. “We are doing something that we have not ever done before, which is saying the trees on private property have community value that must be reflected and we are going to fight retain canopy throughout our county.”

County forest conservation law protects the canopy on lots larger than 40,000 square feet, but the Tree Canopy Conservation law protects it on smaller lots.

The intent was to offset the effects of infill development where often trees are removed to make way for new or larger buildings.

Like the roadside tree bill, the tree canopy bill would require residents and builders to plant three shade trees for every one they remove. But unlike the roadside bill, which would only apply to county right of way, the canopy bill would affect private property.

Under the new law, residents can choose between planting new shade trees or paying a fee to the county. The county would use that fee to plant new trees in areas that have few trees.

The fees range from \$750 for small areas to as much as \$3,750 for areas between 20,001 and 40,000 square feet and would apply to anyone who is required to obtain a permit to control sediment.

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