



The City of New York

Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

Jerry Iannece Chairperson / **Susan Seinfeld** District Manager

To: All Board Members
From: Environmental Committee
Henry Euler, Co-Chair
Date: October 28, 2013

On Monday, October 28, 2013, the Environmental Committee met to discuss three resolutions to be brought before the entire Board. Since one of the resolutions dealt with street trees, the Parks Committee was invited to attend this meeting as well. Present were Committee Co-Chair Henry Euler, Ocelia Claro, Roy Giusetti, Anthony Koutsouradis, Christina Scherer and Jyothi Sriram. Also present was community member Ravi Sriram as well as District Manager Susan Seinfeld and Community Assistant, Christina Coutinho.

The first draft resolution under consideration addresses the issue of tree pruning by Con Edison. Co-Chair Euler spoke about the complaints that he and other civic leaders were receiving regarding the quality of work being done by contractors hired by Con Edison to trim branches around utility wires. He passed around pictures of trees that had deep "V" cuts, trees that had branches removed on one side of the tree, stubs left on pruned trees and other pictures of questionable tree care. He had consulted a local arborist who stated that trees pruned in this manner had their health and stability put in danger. Because of this, the arborist believed that pedestrians and people's property could be in danger. The arborist also stated that he felt that American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards for tree pruning were not being followed by the contractors for Con Edison, and that those standards must be followed.

Mr. Euler stated that he attended a meeting Senator Avella held on October 15th with civic leaders, Con Edison and Dept. of Parks Forestry representatives to discuss this problem. He reported that Con Edison has a new, more aggressive tree trimming program to reduce the possibility of losing power during storms like Sandy. Con Edison representatives admitted that contractors doing the pruning have a wide range of experience in pruning trees with some having very little experience. When asked how the tree trimmers were supervised, Forestry responded that there was some oversight, however, because of budget constraints not as much supervision was occurring as they would like. They also had no problem, in general, with the work being done. The arborist for Con Edison also stated that ANSI standards were being followed during tree trimming activity.

A suggestion was made at Mr. Avella's meeting that an independent International Society for Arboriculture (ISA) certified arborist consultant should be assigned to supervise and oversee contractors hired to prune trees to ensure that ANSI standards are being followed consistently. These consultants not only have to pass an exam for certification but also upgrade their skills periodically. They must also follow a code of ethics, which obligates them to evaluate work done without prejudice. The suggestion received no comment from Con Edison or Forestry.

A suggestion to put utility wires underground on a staggered basis to improve safety and efficiency was dismissed by the Con Edison representative as being too costly (\$15 million dollars per mile).

At the Committee meeting, Mr. Euler introduced a resolution which recommended that an independent ISA certified consultant be used to oversee contractors pruning trees to ensure that ANSI standards are being followed on a consistent basis. Discussion followed. A motion was made by Ocelia Claro to approve the draft resolution, and Roy Giusetti seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

The second draft resolution deals with the use of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) in building materials and other items used in schools. The resolution had been drafted by the Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ), and was presented to CB 11 during our September meeting. PVC contains toxic chemicals that can produce deleterious effects on human health. One ingredient in PVC, phthalates, has a connection to asthma in children. The resolution calls on the Department of Education and the School Construction Authority to reduce the use of PVC materials in our schools since there are other safer materials available to replace PVC materials. Discussion followed. A motion was made by Roy Giusetti, seconded by Jyothi Sriram, to approve the resolution as written. The motion was passed unanimously.

The third draft resolution deals with the banning of Styrofoam products used in food packaging in the City of New York, as approved by Community Board 6 in Manhattan. Styrofoam contains styrene, which is believed to be a carcinogen and neurotoxin. It is also not biodegradable and causes problems in landfills. Alternate materials are available.

Committee member, Anthony Koutsouradis, works for a company that manufactures and sells Styrofoam products. He showed the committee a brief presentation that touted how Styrofoam could be recycled and used to make other products including some building materials. He felt that before we ban Styrofoam in our City, that we should see if the City could be convinced to collect Styrofoam materials as part of the weekly recycling pick-up. Much discussion followed. Susan Seinfeld suggested that she would contact the Sanitation and Solid Waste Committee of the City Council to determine the status of pending legislation banning Styrofoam food packaging and also to see if Styrofoam may be able to be added to the list of recyclable materials. The motion on this resolution was tabled pending Susan's investigation.