ORDINANCE NO. 2020-05 BOROUGH OF LEONIA COUNTY OF BERGEN

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 275 "TREES" OF THE CODE OF THE BOROUGH OF LEONIA

BE IT ORDAINED that Chapter 275 "Trees" of the Code of the Borough of Leonia is hereby amended in its entirety, as follows:

Section 1.

§ 275-1. Shade Tree Commission; personnel; appointment.

The regulation, planting and care and control of shade and ornamental trees and shrubbery upon and in the streets (as defined in § 275-7 below) of the Borough of Leonia shall be exercised by and under the authority of the Leonia Shade Tree Commission ("Commission"), which is hereby created. The Commission members shall be appointed by the Mayor. The membership of the Shade Tree Commission shall consist of:

- A. Seven (7) residents of the Borough of Leonia, one of whom shall be also a member of the Environmental Commission of the Borough of Leonia. Each of these members shall have the right to vote on matters properly before the Shade Tree Commission; and
- **B.** One member of the Borough Council who shall serve as a nonvoting liaison between the Shade Tree Commission and the Borough Council and the residents of Leonia. (N.J.S.A. 40:64-1)

§ 275-2. Term of office; compensation.

The term of each Commissioner shall be designated in his or her appointment. All subsequent appointments, except to fill vacancies, shall be for terms of five (5) years to take effect on January 1. Any vacancy occurring during the term of any Commissioner shall be filled in the manner provided herein for the unexpired term only. The Commissioners shall serve without compensation.

§ 275-3. Alternate members.

Alternate members to the Shade Tree Commission shall be appointed as follows: two (2) alternate members shall be appointed by the Mayor and shall be designated at the time of appointment as "Alternate No. 1" and "Alternate No. 2" and shall serve during the absence or disqualification of any regular member or members. The term of each alternate member shall be five (5) years commencing on January 1 of the year of appointment; provided, however, that in the event two (2) alternate members are appointed, the initial term of Alternate No. 2 shall be four (4) years and the initial term of Alternate No. 1 shall be five (5) years. The respective term

of the alternate members pursuant to this section shall commence on the day of their appointment and shall expire on the fourth or fifth December 31 after the date of the respective appointment. An alternate member may participate in discussions of the proceedings but may not vote except in the absence or disqualification of a regular member. A vote shall not be delayed in order that a regular member may vote instead of an alternate member.

§ 275-4. Meetings.

The Shade Tree Commission shall meet monthly no less than ten (10) times per year at such time(s) as may be determined by the Commission. The presence of a majority of the voting members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum. The Commission shall act only upon the majority vote of a quorum of members present at a duly convened meeting. Each member, voting or nonvoting, must receive notice of any meeting at least three (3) days prior to such meeting.

§ 275-5. Expenses to be authorized.

No expenses shall be incurred by the Shade Tree Commission without the previous authorization of the Mayor and Council.

§ 275-6. Powers of Commission.

The Shade Tree Commission organized under this Chapter shall have power to:

- **A.** Exercise control over the regulation, planting and care of shade and ornamental trees and shrubbery now located, or which may hereafter be planted in any public highway and park or parkway of the municipality, including the planting, trimming, spraying, care and protection thereof;
- **B.** Regulate and control the use of the ground surrounding the same, so far as may be necessary for their proper growth, care and protection;
- C. Move or require the removal of any tree or shrub or part thereof, dangerous to public safety;
- **D.** Recommend to the Mayor and Council the passage, alteration, amendment and repeal of ordinances necessary or proper for carrying out the provisions hereof;
- **E.** Administer treatment to, or remove, any tree or shrub situated upon private property which is believed to harbor a disease or insects readily communicable to neighboring healthy trees or shrubs in the care of this Borough and enter upon private property for that purpose, with the consent of the owner thereof;
- **F.** Administer the Leonia Shade Tree Trust Fund. (See Resolution No. 219-86, dated August 4, 1986.);
- G. Designate landmark trees as further specified in § 275-16. Landmark trees.

§ 275-7. Definitions.

As used in this Chapter, unless otherwise defined in this Chapter, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

CHAPTER

Chapter 275 "Trees" of the Code of the Borough of Leonia.

COMMISSION or SHADE TREE COMMISSION

The Shade Tree Commission of the Borough of Leonia.

DESIGNEE

The person or persons employed by the Borough and designated by the Borough Council to issue permits and enforce the provisions of this Chapter.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

The Mayor and Council as the governing body of the Borough of Leonia.

PERSON

Every person, firm, association, partnership, corporation, individual, agency, or other entity.

STREET

- A. Land owned by the Borough of Leonia, its Recreation Commission or any other Borough of Leonia municipal body.
- **B.** Any public street within the jurisdiction of the Borough of Leonia.
- C. Parks, parkways, county roads, state highways within the Borough of Leonia, subject to assent of the appropriate agency.
- **D.** Rights-of-way of the Borough of Leonia.
- E. Alleys, avenues, lanes, squares, and public grounds of the Borough of Leonia.

TREE

Trees and shrubs.

§ 275-8. Prohibited acts.

No person shall do any of the following acts to any tree on a Street without the prior permit of the Commission:

- **A.** Break, damage, remove, alter, kill, destroy, mutilate, injure, climb with spikes or by the use of spurs or other instruments which perforate or injure the bark;
- **B.** Cut, disturb or interfere in any way with the roots, or the root system, or excavate or remove soil within (4) feet of any tree.
- C. Spray with any chemical that causes harm or damages a tree;

- **D.** Fasten any electrical wire, cables, rope, sign or any other device to or upon any tree;
- E. Remove or damage any guard or device placed to protect any tree;
- **F.** Place or distribute chemicals, including, but not limited to, salt that can cause harm or damages a tree;
- G. Cut or prune, except as provided for hereinafter in this Chapter;
- H. Remove soil, either for trenching or otherwise;
- I. Construct new sidewalks and/or driveways within five feet of a tree unless approved by the Planning Board of the Borough of Leonia or Construction Official;
- J. Close or obstruct any open space provided about the base of a tree to permit access of air, water, and fertilizer to the roots of the same;
- **K.** Plant or permit the planting of any bush, vine, hedge, shrub, or other plant life except grass, in the area between the sidewalk and the curb; or
- L. Plant any shade or ornamental tree in the area between the sidewalk and the curb without first having obtained the written approval of the Shade Tree Commission, as to the type and location. Unapproved plantings will be removed at the property owner's expense.

§ 275-9. Planting of certain trees restricted.

No person shall plant or permit to be planted any poplar or willow tree or such other tree as determined by the Commission in any street in which sewer or water mains have been or hereafter may be constructed or within 40 feet of any such sewer or water main.

§ 275-10. Tree topping.

It shall be unlawful for any person to top any street tree. Topping is defined as the severe cutting back of limbs to stubs larger than three inches in diameter within the tree's crown to such a degree so as to remove the normal canopy and disfigure the tree. Trees severely damaged by storms or other causes, or certain trees under utility wires or other obstructions where other pruning practices are impractical, may be exempt from this Chapter at the determination of the Commission.

§ 275-11. Pruning; corner clearance.

Every owner of any tree overhanging any street or right-of-way within the Borough shall prune the branches so that such branches shall not obstruct the light from any street lamp or obstruct the view of any street intersection and so that there shall be a clear space of eight feet (2.74m.) above the surface of the street or sidewalk. Said owners shall remove all dead, diseased, or

dangerous trees, or broken or decayed limbs that constitute a menace to the safety of the public. The Borough shall have the right to prune any tree on private property when it interferes with the proper spread of light along the street from a streetlight or interferes with the visibility of any traffic control device or sign.

§ 275-12. Required permits; utility operations.

- A. The Commission may grant to public utility companies a blanket permit for:
 - (1) Tree pruning for line clearance;
 - (2) For the installation and the maintenance of subsurface and above ground construction.
- B. Public utility companies may, during periods of emergency, without specific prior permit:
 - (1) Install temporary attachments to trees; and
 - (2) Make emergency subsurface repairs.
- C. Any public utility or cable television company that clears, moves, cuts or destroys any trees, shrubs, or plants for the purpose of erecting, installing, moving, removing, altering or maintaining any structures or fixtures, necessary for the supply of electric light, heat or power, communication or cable television services upon any lands in which it has acquired an easement or right-of-way, shall not be subject to any penalty imposed by the Commission. This subsection shall not exempt any public utility or cable television company from any penalty or replacement assessment imposed for negligent actions.

§ 275-13. Public improvements affecting trees; consent of Commission.

No statute giving any person or state, county, Borough or municipal board, body or official, power or authority to lay any sidewalks along, or to open, construct, curb or pave any street, or to do any similar act, shall be construed to permit or authorize any interference with or injury to any tree on a street without the consent of the Commission. The provisions of this Chapter are not to be construed as requiring the Borough to maintain, replace or move any sidewalk. (N.J.S.A. 40:64-10)

§ 275-14. Tree maintenance.

Property owners of trees extending over the Borough right-of-way are required to maintain, trim, or remove the same to the extent necessary to preserve the same in a healthy condition or to prevent the same from endangering the public welfare, interfering with public travel or traffic on sidewalks, streets, highways or the right-of-way or interfering with the lighting of sidewalks, streets, highways or the right-of-way.

A. Whenever it shall become the duty of any such owner of such tree to trim or remove such tree under the requirements of this Chapter and the work as directed by the Commission or its

designee shall not have been done at the expiration of thirty (30) days prior notice to such owner or thirty-five (35) days after mailing of a notice, postage prepaid, to the post office address of such owner, or satisfactory explanation shall not have been presented for such failure, then the Commission or its designee may authorize such work to be performed under the direction of the Commission and paid for out of the monies of the Borough to the credit of the Commission. The cost of said work shall be certified by the Commission or its designee to the Collector of Taxes in the Borough. Upon filing the said certificate, the amount of the cost of such work shall be paid to the Borough by the property owner and shall thereupon become a lien upon the property.

B. If the Commission or its designee shall require the removal of any such tree as is referred to in this Chapter, the Borough, with the consent of the owner, may provide and install a replacement tree of such size and type as the Commission shall direct without cost to said owner.

§ 275-15. Tree care.

The Commission shall have the right to plant, prune, maintain, and remove trees and plants within the right-of-way lines of all Streets, as may be necessary to protect public safety or to preserve or enhance the symmetry and beauty of such public grounds. The Commission may remove or cause or order to be removed, any tree or part thereof which is in an unsafe condition or which by reason of its nature is injurious to sewers, electric power lines, gas lines, water lines, or other public improvements, or is affected with any injurious fungus, insect, or other pest. This Chapter does not prohibit the planting of Street trees by adjacent property owners. A list of suitable tree species, for this purpose, is available upon request from the Commission.

§ 275-16. Landmark trees.

- **A.** The Commission upon request shall determine whether any tree is qualified as a landmark tree. A tree may qualify as a landmark tree if it meets one or more of the following criteria:
 - (1) The tree species is rare;
 - (2) The tree is more than 100 years of age;
 - (3) The tree is of a mature height or has an unusual trunk diameter or dripline diameter for a tree of its species;
 - (4) The quality of the tree foliage is exceptional for a tree of its species; or
 - (5) The location, shade value, fragrance, erosion control, aesthetic features, or scenic enhancement of such tree is of special importance to the Borough.
- **B.** All trees designated as landmark trees by the Commission shall be shown on an official Borough map with appropriate code marks signifying each tree's designation, number, species, age, size and other distinguishing characteristics for ready reference and periodic

monitoring.

- C. If the owner or owners of the property on which a landmark tree is located consents thereto, the Borough may identify such tree as a landmark tree by the placement of a suitable marker thereon.
- **D.** If the property on which a landmark tree is located changes ownership, the Borough shall notify in writing the new owner of the property that a landmark tree exists on said property and shall inform said owner of the chapter for the protection and preservation of such designated trees.
- E. A landmark tree shall have all the protection of a street tree as described in §§ 275-8, 275-9, 275-10, 275-13, 275-14 and 275-25 of this Chapter.
- **F.** If, and when, any landmark tree is removed, the Commission shall arrange for the necessary changes to be made to the official landmark tree inventory records and Borough map.

§ 275-17. Borough's right to cause tree removal on private property.

The Borough shall have the right to cause the removal of any tree dead or diseased on private property within the Borough when such trees are unlawful or constitute a hazard to life or property, or harbor insects or disease that constitute a potential threat to other trees or property within the Borough. The Commission will notify in writing the owners of such trees. Removal shall be done by said owners at their own expense within thirty (30) days after the date of service of notice. In the event of failure of owners to comply with such provision, the Borough shall have the authority to remove such tree(s) and charge the cost of removal to the property owner. The cost of said work shall be certified by the Commission or its designee to the Collector of Taxes in the Borough. Upon filing the said certificate, the amount of the cost of work shall be paid to the Borough by the property owner and shall thereupon become a lien upon the property.

§ 275-18. Work done by contractor or by Borough.

When the Borough exercises its authority to charge the cost of tree trimming and/or removal under § 275-14A and/or 275-17 hereof, if hiring an independent contractor, the Borough will obtain three (3) estimates and choose that contractor who will perform the work in the most timely and efficient manner as determined by the Borough. If the trimming and/or removal is done by the Leonia Department of Public Works, it shall be charged at current rates determined by the Borough.

§ 275-19. Removal of stumps.

All stumps of trees shall be removed below the surface of the ground so that the tip of the stump shall not project above the surface of the ground. All stumps shall be removed no later than ten (10) days after a tree is removed.

§ 275-20. Requirements for Development Plans and Home Improvement.

- A. <u>Definitions</u>. As used in this Section §275-20 and § 275-24 (Issuance of tree removal permits), the following term shall have the meanings set forth below:
 - "Tree" shall mean any deciduous or coniferous species which has a Diameter at Breast Height ("DBH") of at least eight (8) inches or greater. DBH is considered the diameter of a tree measured at $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet above the ground on the downhill side of the tree.
- **B.** Whenever an application is filed with the Planning Board, that includes plans for development that include the removal of any existing tree(s), a copy of said application is to be forwarded to the Shade Tree Commission. The Shade Tree Commission shall have the opportunity to review all such applications and make recommendation(s) for replacement of the said tree(s) with trees within thirty (30) days of the Shade Tree Commission's receipt of the application.
- C. No person, as defined in this Chapter, shall remove under this Section, any tree from private property unless said removal is permitted by the Planning Board or Shade Tree Commission.

D. Exceptions.

- (1) The Planning Board may waive the replacement of existing trees by a developer as part of a review of a development application.
- (2) In the event that the Planning Board waives the requirement for the developer for replacement of existing trees, the Board shall impose a requirement that the developer contribute a reasonable value of the cost of a replacement tree(s) as determined by the Planning Board in conjunction with the Shade Tree Commission, which replacement cost shall not be less than \$350.00 per existing tree, to the Leonia Shade Tree Trust Fund ("Shade Tree Trust Fund") in order that the Borough may plant trees at other locations within the municipality.
- E. Protection of Trees. In connection with any construction or home improvement project, the following procedures shall apply to preserving the remaining trees: Snow fencing or other protective barriers shall be placed at a distance of ten feet from the trunk of any tree or the tree's drip line, whichever distance is greater, on all trees that are not being removed, and shall remain in place until all construction activity on the property has terminated, as determined by the construction code official.

§ 275-21. Interference with Commission.

It shall be unlawful for any person to prevent, delay or interfere with the Commission or any member thereof or any of its agents, while engaging in and about the inspection, planting, cultivating, mulching, pruning, spraying or removing of any street trees, or trees on private grounds, as authorized in this Chapter.

§ 275-22. Nonliability for death or injury.

Neither this Chapter nor anything contained in this Chapter shall be construed to make the Commission or any member(s) thereof responsible for the death or injury of any person, or for an injury to any property or tree. (N.J.S.A. 40:64-14)

§ 275-23. Enforcement.

- **A.** The requirements of this Chapter shall be enforced by the Commission or any member thereof, or its designee, who shall seek such penalties as are provided in this Chapter or permitted by law.
- **B.** The Borough's Construction Official or Police Department, or its designees, may order to be stopped any tree work or other activity which is carried on in violation of any provision of this Chapter. The order shall be issued in writing and a copy served upon any person engaged in such tree work or such other activity. If no such person is present upon the property, then the order shall be served upon the owner of the property in question. Thereafter, any further work shall comply with the terms and conditions of any permit issued by the Borough with respect to such property and the provisions of this Chapter.

§ 275-24. Issuance of tree removal permits.

A. Tree Removal Permit.

- (i) As used in this section (§275-24), "Tree" shall mean any deciduous or coniferous species which has a Diameter at Breast Height ("DBH") of at least eight (8) inches or greater. DBH is considered the diameter of a tree measured at 4½ feet above the ground on the downhill side of the tree.
- (ii) No tree within the Borough shall be removed without a tree removal permit. Application for a tree removal permit shall be filed with the Building Department. Tree removal permits will be issued by the Building Department. At the time of filing for a tree removal permit, applicants shall be required to pay a filing fee of \$20.00 per tree to be removed in addition to the Tree Replacement Fee (See § 275-24(B)(i)).
- (iii) Tree removal permits must be applied for and approved before the work is performed. Prior to the issuance of a tree removal permit, the owner of the property shall be required to meet with a member of the Shade Tree Commission or the Commission's designee. Such meeting shall occur within 30 days of the date on which the application for a tree removal permit is applied for.
- (iv) All fees paid by the property owner hereunder shall be held in the Leonia Shade

Tree Trust Fund and used by the Shade Tree Commission toward the cost of purchasing, planting, maintaining and otherwise protecting trees within the Borough, except for the \$20.00 filing fee for the tree removal permit which the Borough shall receive. Notwithstanding that fees are paid into the Leonia Shade Tree Trust Fund, the Mayor and Council has the discretion to utilize the Leonia Shade Tree Trust Fund as it deems appropriate, provided that a minimum of \$15,000.00 is maintained in the Shade Tree Trust Fund.

- (v) If the trunk of a tree proposed for removal is within five (5) feet of a property line, the property owner shall be required to notify the owner of the adjacent property in writing by personal service or certified mail not less than five (5) days prior to the scheduled removal of the tree.
- (vi) If a tree proposed for removal is on the property line, the applicant must provide written consent of the adjacent property owner at the time of filing the application for a tree removal permit.

Replacement Tree; Tree Replacement Fee.

- (i) In order to maintain the tree canopy coverage within the Borough, a property owner that removes, or causes the removal of, any tree(s) on such property owner's property must pay the Tree Replacement Fee (as defined below) for each such tree, which funds will be placed in the Leonia Shade Tree Trust Fund and used for the purposes described in § 275-24(A)(iv). The Tree Replacement Fee shall be an amount equal to the cost of planting a replacement tree in the Borough but in no case shall it be less than \$350.00.
- (ii) If the subject tree is dead, dying, diseased or fatally damaged by thunderstorm, windstorm, floods or other natural disaster, a property owner may seek a waiver of payment of the Tree Replacement Fee by submitting with the application for a tree removal permit a written determination by a Licensed Tree Expert, as defined in N.J.S.A. 45:15C-12 and 17, retained by the property owner, at the property owner's expense, that the subject tree is dead, dying, diseased, or fatally damaged by a natural disaster, together with a color photograph and such other documentation evidencing the dead, dying, diseased or fatally damaged tree.

C. Tree Removal Contractor.

- (i) The property owner or the tree removal contractor of the property owner shall be responsible for applying for the tree removal permit as specified in this § 275-24 (Issuance of tree removal permits).
- (ii) The tree removal contractor working in the Borough shall show proof of the following when applying for a tree removal permit to the Building Department before performing any tree removal work within the Borough:

- (1) Be licensed in accordance with the NJ Tree Expert and Tree Care Operators Licensing Act (N.J.S.A. 45:15C-11, et seq.).
- (2) Have the following current limits of liability insurance coverage:
 - a. A minimum of \$2,000,000 property damage and bodily injury insurance per incident.
 - b. A minimum of \$300,000 vehicle insurance per incident.
 - c. Worker's compensation insurance in such amounts as required by law.
- (iii) All tree debris shall be removed immediately, and the stump shall be removed within ten (10) days of the tree removal by the tree removal contractor.

D. Exceptions.

The following shall be exempt from the requirement of obtaining a tree removal permit:

- (i) The removal of any tree as ordered by the Shade Tree Commission or other appropriate public agency;
- (ii) Any tree located on publicly-owned land and removed by the appropriate public agency;
- (iii) Any tree that interferes with necessary utility service removed by the appropriate public agency;
- (iv) Any structurally compromised tree that requires the immediate removal because such tree is in imminent danger of causing damage or injury to persons or property; provided that within seven (7) days following such removal the property owner shall notify the Building Department in writing of such emergency removal and provide the Building Department color photographs of such tree prior to its removal showing the part(s) of the tree that is structurally compromised and how it is threatening persons or property. The notice to the Building Department shall include the name and address of the property owner, the species and diameter at breast height of the tree, the location of the tree on the property and detailed description of its condition, including the reasons for its removal; and
- (v) Any tree that conflicts with other municipal ordinances or regulations.
- (vi) Any tree removed pursuant to a development approval granted by the Planning Board.

§ 275-25. Appeal to Commission and Mayor and Council.

Any person with legal standing to file a legal claim based on an action, decision or directive of the Commission, shall have the right within fourteen (14) days to appeal such action, decision or directive by submitting a written request to the Commission and following such appeal process, the right within twenty-one (21) days to appeal to the Mayor and Council. The appeal to the Mayor and Council must be in writing and a copy sent to the Commission as well. The Mayor and Council shall by resolution, within thirty (30) days of the submission date of the appeal, modify, affirm, or deny the Commission's decision with such conditions as may be appropriate. If the Mayor and Council fails to act within the thirty (30)-day period, then the decision of the Commission shall stand.

§ 275-26. Violations and penalties.

- A. Any person found guilty of violating any provision of this Chapter shall be, upon conviction or a plea of guilty, fined a sum not exceeding \$1,500 for each offense. A violation affecting more than one tree shall be considered a separate violation as to each tree. Each day any violation of the Chapter shall continue shall constitute a separate offense as well.
- **B.** In addition to the fine set forth in Subsection A above, any person found guilty of violating any provision of this Chapter shall be required to pay a replacement assessment for any tree removed, destroyed or injured to cause to die. The replacement assessment is a fee, which shall be calculated by the value of the tree as determined by the formula and schedule adopted by the Commission. Such formula and schedule shall be based upon the number of square inches contained in a cross section of the tree's trunk, multiplied by a predetermined value per square inch, not to exceed \$27 per square inch. In determining the predetermined value per square inch, the Commission shall take into consideration the species, variety, location and condition of the tree in question immediately prior to its removal, injury, harm or destruction.
- **C.** All monies paid and collected as replacement assessments as set forth in Subsection B above shall be forthwith paid into the Shade Tree Trust Fund.

§ 275-27. Court jurisdiction.

A. The Municipal Court of the Borough of Leonia shall have jurisdiction over actions for the violation of this Chapter. The officers authorized by law to serve and execute process for the Municipal Court of the Borough shall be the officers to serve and execute any process issued out of the Municipal Court for violations of this Chapter.

§ 275-28. Collection and disposition of charges, costs, expenses and penalties.

All monies to be collected, either as charges, costs, expenses, fines or penalties under this Chapter by the Borough may be collected in any manner provided by law. All monies so collected, either as fine or penalties, for any violation of this Chapter, or as a charge against real estate, under any provision of this Chapter shall be forthwith paid over to the custodian of the

municipal funds, unless a section of this Chapter expressly provides and specifies that monies shall be paid into the Leonia Shade Tree Trust Fund.

§ 275-29. Public notice.

All ordinances, rules or regulations adopted by the Commission shall be filed with the Borough Clerk for inspection by the public during regular business hours.

Section 2. Severability.

If any article, section, sub-section, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Ordinance is for any reason deemed to be unconstitutional or invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the remaining portions of this Ordinance.

Section 3. Repealer.

All ordinances or parts of ordinances inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed.

Section 4. Effect.

This Ordinance will take effect on April 1, 2020.

	Motion	Second	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent
Fusco			✓			
Davis		*	✓			
Flaim			✓			
Grandelis			✓			
Terrell			✓			
Ziegler	✓		V			
Mayor Zeigler	5.5.5					

Judah Zeigler, Mayor

ATTEST:

Anne Dodd, RMC

Borough Clerk

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a true copy of an Ordinance No. 2020-05 adopted by the Governing Body of the Borough of Leonia on February 3, 2020.

nne Dodd, RMC