

From: Alyson Crean
Sent: Wednesday, July 3, 2019 9:09 AM
To: Commissioners; Teri Johnston
Cc: James K. Scholl; Greg Veliz; Shawn D. Smith; Ronald Ramsingh
Subject: State Law Affects Local Tree Ordinance



For Immediate Release

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Recent legislation in Tallahassee has changed some procedures, but Key West's tree ordinance is still in effect, protecting the city's urban canopy. Removal or trimming of most types of trees on the island is still subject to review by the urban forester and the Tree Commission.

The statute that went into effect on July 1st provides a provision for residents to trim or remove trees that are a danger to people or property without a City permit, as long as they have documentation from an ISA certified arborist or a Florida landscape architect that the tree is, indeed, a danger.

Commercial and non-residential property owners must still obtain a city permit in accordance with the City's ordinance.

"The Tree Commission will continue reviewing permits for the trimming and removal of trees that are not deemed dangerous by an ISA certified arborist or a Florida licensed landscape architect with supporting documentation," says Urban Forester Karen DeMaria.

"As always, we're working closely with the community's arborists to help the community understand this new process," she said. "Essentially, it will allow a resident to work with an ISA certified arborist or a Florida licensed landscape architect when a tree is deemed dangerous. For example, if a large tree's structure is weakened by severe termite damage and is a threat to safety, dangerous to people or property as determined by an ISA certified arborist or a Florida licensed landscape architect, the resident can obtain the essential documentation and remove the tree without seeking a City permit."

However, she and the Tree Commission strongly encourage residents in this situation to provide the documentation to the City.

“That way we have it in the property file,” said DeMaria. “It ensures that the resident won’t be suspected of a code violation. Trees removed without the required documentation or a permit from the Tree Commission will be subject to enforcement proceedings.”

For all other trimmings and removals, permits will continue to be reviewed by the Tree Commission.

Key West’s tree ordinance is aimed at protecting certain species of trees and ensuring that the canopy continues to shade future generations of residents. Under the ordinance, property owners must obtain permits to trim or remove certain types and sizes of trees, and may be required to replace the tree with a viable alternative. The permits come at no cost to the property owner.

Under the new law, residents must be sure, if faced with a tree that is deemed dangerous, that the arborist is ISA certified or the landscape architect is licensed in Florida and has an occupational license from the City of Key West

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