

Theresa Schretzmann-Myers

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April 3, 2019

Robert Smith, Town Manager
Town of Windermere, Florida
614 Main Street
Windermere, FL 34786

Dear Mr. Smith:

Pursuant to your request, please accept my resignation from the Tree Board, effective April 3, 2019.

I appreciate your recognition of a few things I helped to accomplish while on Tree Board, although the list is much longer than what you included. For example, the Windermere Treebute Florida Arbor Day Festival program has been responsible for replanting approximately 300 Florida Native trees in Windermere every year for 15 years. The four 2005-2006 Tree Board Urban Forestry Hurricane Grants obtained by the Tree Board were responsible for cleaning up and reforesting many parts of the town after 3 devastating back-to-back-to-back hurricanes in 2004. An Urban Forestry Grant obtained by the Tree Board funded an ISA Certified Town Forester in 2006, and developed and implemented an Urban Forest Management Plan and Tree Survey. Under my leadership, Tree Board volunteers planned and planted young trees along rights-of-way on Main Street, Conroy-Windermere Road and Park Avenue, as well as in Central Park, Palmer Park and 1887 Schoolhouse Citrus Grove. I wrote and managed the 2010 Forest Health Improvement Grant for planting small trees under the power lines along Park Avenue. During my tenure, trees were also planted at Windermere Elementary School by Tree Board members. Additionally, for the past 6 years I have lead more than 100 volunteers from Windermere Preparatory School in the annual clean-up of the 1887 Schoolhouse property and grove with our Tree Board volunteers.

I admit I am a passionate advocate for the preservation of the tree canopy of Windermere. What you describe as clashes with Staff, Council Members and other boards, I characterize as attempts to have the Town of Windermere's employees and committee volunteers follow Windermere's own tree ordinance. The ordinance should not only be followed when it is convenient; it should be followed all the time. Even when it requires residents to pay all appropriate mitigation fees, and keep historic and specimen trees on perimeters that are not in the buildable house footprint. Even when it requires replanting of removed trees. And especially when it is inconvenient to developers who put their monetary interests ahead of the legacy of our Town that we want to leave to future generations.

Your email states, "I believe a change in leadership is needed." Accordingly, I am acceding to your request for my resignation. I do so with the hope that the "new leadership" you seek will not simply agree with plans and designs put forth by you, Staff, developers or others, which will result in damage to or removal of our Town's trees, without protecting the trees in accordance with the Town's ordinances and best practices of ISA Certified Arborists and the Tree Care Operations set forth in ANSI-A300. That would not be new leadership; it would be no leadership at all.

Your email also states that my "resignation would not prevent [me] from continuing [my] advocacy or participation in various events or other boards." However, it was my understanding from our meeting that I was being told not to attend Tree Board (or by extension, merged Parks & Recreation / Tree Board) meetings in the future. Did I misunderstand you? Please clarify whether I can continue to attend Tree Board meetings in the future.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Town of Windermere for allowing me to serve on the tree board for approximately 15 years. I hope the Tree Board continues and is not merged with Parks & Recreation. I also hope, for the sake of future generations, that the tree planting, conservation programs and philosophies Tree Board and I have espoused and advocated are not abandoned.

Sincerely,

Theresa Schretzmann-Myers