

Katie Miller, Co-Founder, CSM
40 South Drive, Plandome, NY 11030

To: Manhasset Chamber of Commerce Board & Council of Greater Civics Presidents
From: Katie Miller, Co-Founder, CSM; Eileen Russo, Co-Chair, CSM
Re: Sweet Gum Trees, Plandome Road
Date: August 28, 2015

Invitation to join effort by CSM to remove/replace Sweet Gum trees: In the interest of promoting pedestrian safety along Plandome Road, the Coalition for a Safer Manhasset wishes to invite the Chamber of Commerce and Council of Greater Civics to join CSM in presenting a joint request to Judi Bosworth, Town of North Hempstead Supervisor, asking the Town to remove the existing Sweet Gum trees, roots and stumps, along Plandome Road from Northern Boulevard to Webster Avenue as soon as possible and replace them with appropriate flowering trees, also as soon as possible. At the same time, we will request the Town to repair/replace broken sidewalks and curbs to prevent pedestrian accidents. A bonus outcome of changing the trees for safety reasons is of course the increased beautification of Plandome Road. CSM will submit this request to all members of the TONH Board, as well as Senator Jack Martins, Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel and Legislator Richard Nicoletto. CSM will also submit this information to the Manhasset Press. In due course, CSM plans to circulate a petition for community support and the results will be submitted to TONH. CSM believes that by making this a joint request from our three groups, the TONH will be more likely to agree to support it. CSM would appreciate hearing back from you by Wednesday, September 2, to let us know whether we may count on your support. CSM wants to get this out on the radar quickly and into the Town's plan of action.

Informal polling of merchants: Katie has done an informal polling of most of the merchants on Plandome Road and their response is overwhelmingly clear: they want the Sweet Gum trees replaced with appropriate flowering trees; they add that they cannot keep up with cleaning their sidewalks and gutters several times a day to remove the spiky gum balls which fall approximately eight months a year.

Plandome Road over past ten years: As you know, in 2005, and again several years later, the residents of Manhasset were shown plans of streetscapes with new sidewalks and plantings at Visioning Meetings held at Manhasset High School and presided over by Jon Kaiman, then the Town Supervisor, and consultants. Since then, surrounding communities in the Town of North Hempstead have been reaping improvement benefits from the TONH and receiving grants they have secured for that purpose. However, after ten years, and two visioning meetings, Manhasset has seen no improvements except a resurfacing of Plandome Road and an additional changing of lane structure and widening of Manhasset Avenue to permit an additional lane.

Slide show illustrates impact of Sweet Gum trees along Plandome Road: [Link to slide show of photos](#) of the Sweet Gum trees along both east and west sides of Plandome Road from Northern Boulevard to Webster Avenue. In the pictures please notice how plentiful the gum balls are, scores of them scattered around the sidewalks and gutters, posing a danger to pedestrians. Notice too how segments of the sidewalk and curb are broken or uneven because the roots of the trees are pushing up through them. Notice also that tree branches are often dangerously pushing into and growing around the electric wires.

Two important resulting hazards are not illustrated in the slide show: (1) Some pedestrian accidents have occurred by tripping over the raised/broken sidewalk or protruding tree roots while some pedestrians have twisted a foot or ankle by stepping on the spiky gum balls scattered around the sidewalk and gutters; and, (2) gum balls ultimately get washed into, and clog, the storm drains.

The future of Sweet Gum trees on Plandome Road, if not removed: As these trees continue to age, their roots will continue to grow closer to the surface of the sidewalk and they will crack and break additional segments of the sidewalks/curbs along Plandome Road and create additional hazardous areas for pedestrians. In addition, the tree heights will continue to increase and will become even more of a dangerous nuisance around the electric wires. The numbers of gum balls falling from the trees will continue to increase greatly, possibly causing more pedestrian accidents and certainly increasing the number of gum balls clogging storm drains.

Summary: According to the Manhasset Press, May 11, 1967 issue, the Tree Planting Beautification Committee held a fund drive seeking donors for the purchase and planting of 40 Sweet Gum Trees. Today, 48 years later, there are 25 Sweet Gum trees along Plandome Road from Northern Boulevard to Webster Avenue and they have grown well past their initial beauty and manageable size. They can live for 150 years and grow to a height range of 60-100 feet. At present they are already too high for the adjacent electric wires - and even too high in general for a shopping area on a main street. The trees are unsightly and the roots are growing bigger and breaking or raising the sidewalks and may cause pedestrians to trip. The gum balls that fall eight months a year may also cause injury to pedestrians and since the gum balls are so prolific, they eventually end up in the storm drains - thousands of them.

Therefore, CSM believes it is time for the Sweet Gum trees along Plandome Road to be removed and replaced with more appropriate flowering trees as soon as possible, and for the broken, cracked and uneven sidewalks and curbs to be repaired. The CSM plans to respectfully submit a joint request to the TONH to carry out this

work that will serve to make Plandome Road safer for pedestrians as well as making it more visually pleasing and attractive. CSM hopes that it will be joined and supported in this initiative by the Manhasset Chamber of Commerce and the Council of Greater Civic Associations. Once we have your reply by September 2, we plan to submit our formal request to the TONH and other politicians by Tuesday, September 8. CSM. Think Safety! We do!

The following information was found on the internet. It has been consolidated for space consideration:

<http://homeguides.sfgate.com/sweet-gum-tree-27329.html>

- Sweet Gum Tree ranges in height from 60-100 feet and can live more than 150 years.
- Produces spiky seed pods that can cause slipping hazards.
- These trees need plenty of room to grow, both above and below ground. Situate where tree mature height cannot interfere with overhead wires or other obstruction.
- Situate at least 8-10 feet away from sidewalks and curbs, as the tree has an aggressive root system that can cause pavement to heave and as the tree ages, the roots become more shallow and can surface ruining sidewalks.

<https://americanorchard.wordpress.com/2014/04/25/the-most-dangerous-tree-in-the-suburbs/> (Posted on April 25, 2014)

- Today the *Sweet Gum Tree* has disappeared from most of the tree nursery catalogs and now appears on many top ten lists of the worst trees to plant in your yard. It made the list of the "Five Worst Trees for the Lazy Landscaper,"
- The hard brown spiky balls can create some serious hazards. Not only can they wound you if you slip and fall into them, they can also roll unexpectedly, causing sprained ankles. Because of their spiky nature, they are difficult to rake up.

[Now view the slide show \(link\)](#)