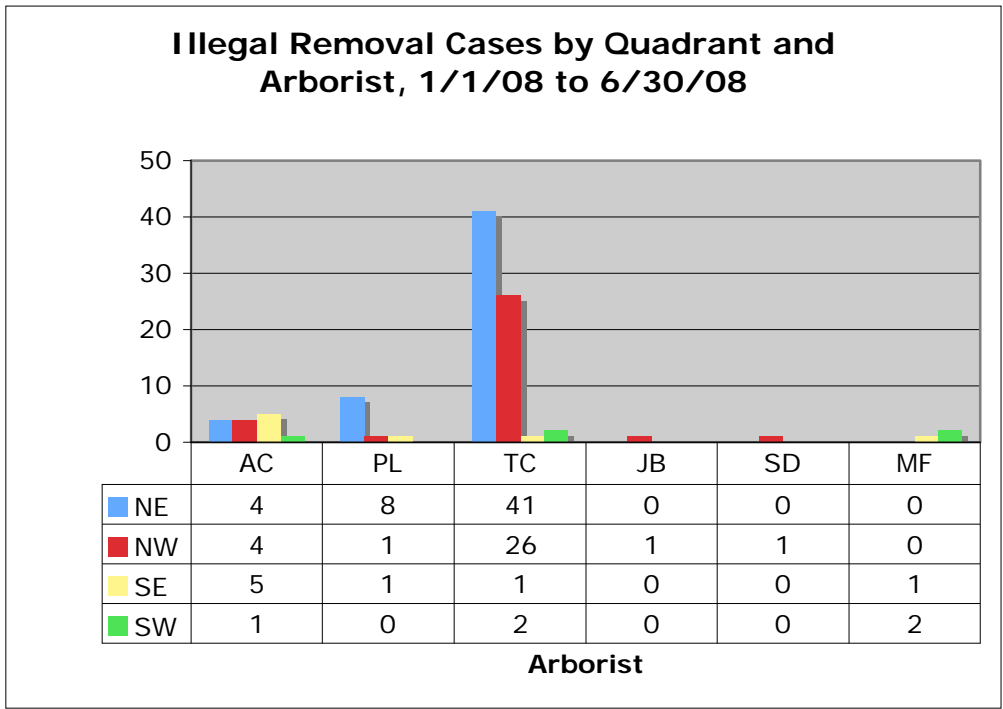


To Mayor Shirley Franklin, City Council members, Tree Conservation Commissioners and concerned citizens:

On July 29 I was summarily fired from my position as Sr. Field Arborist for the City of Atlanta. I have heard no complaints about my work from my supervisor, Ainsley Caldwell. The only meeting I have had with Bureau of Buildings Director Ibrahim Maslamani since I was hired was the one in which I was fired, without cause, without explanation, without a semblance of due process.

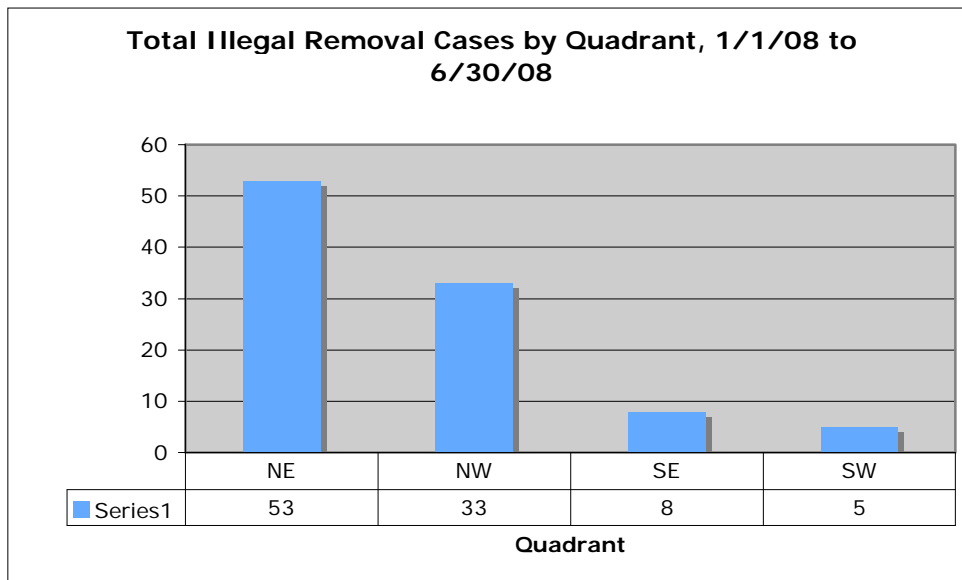
Though I know no specifics of my firing, I do know the context. I have been attempting to address (1) the lack of accountability to the tree protection ordinance expected of my field arborist colleagues in their day-to-day work of hazard tree evaluations and building permit postings, and (2) the near total abdication of enforcement of the tree protection ordinance by my colleagues in the more difficult areas of correction notices on construction sites and the imposition of recompense and penalties for the illegal destruction of trees on either construction sites or private residences.

Let me briefly illustrate this second point with a series of charts that I gave Mr. Caldwell on July 21. The data is official, generated from the bureau’s Kiva database. The charts depict, by arborist and quadrant, the sum total of illegal removal cases brought in the arborist division for the first half of this year.



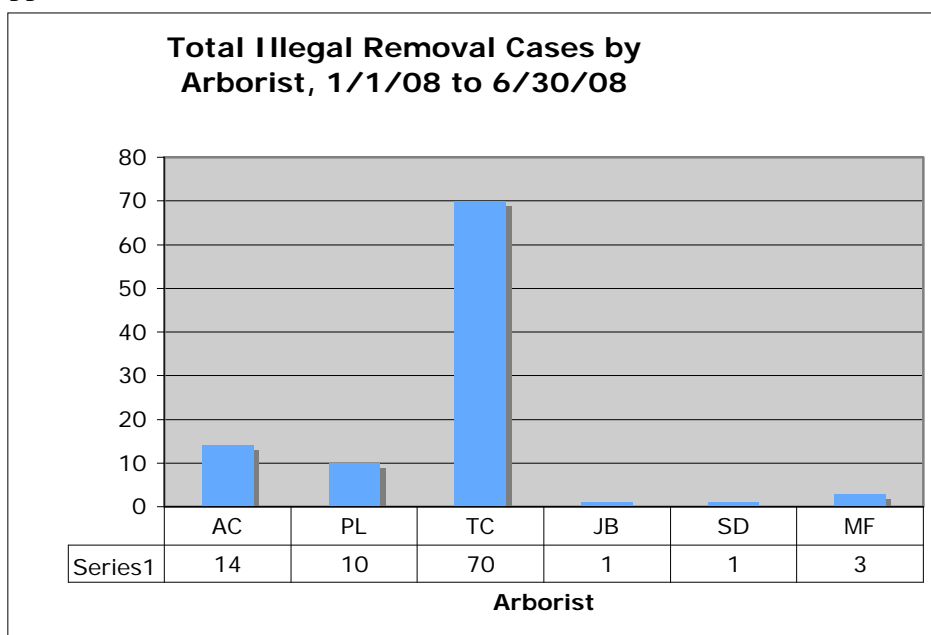
Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this chart, besides the extreme disparity between me (“TC”) and my colleagues (“PL”, “JB” and “MF”) is that Mr. Caldwell (“AC”), who spends just a small portion of his time in the field, registers more cases than the sum total

of the field arborists if my cases are eliminated. The chart also indicates a rather extreme geographical disparity in enforcement actions between the northern and southern halves of the city. This aspect is the focus of the second chart below:

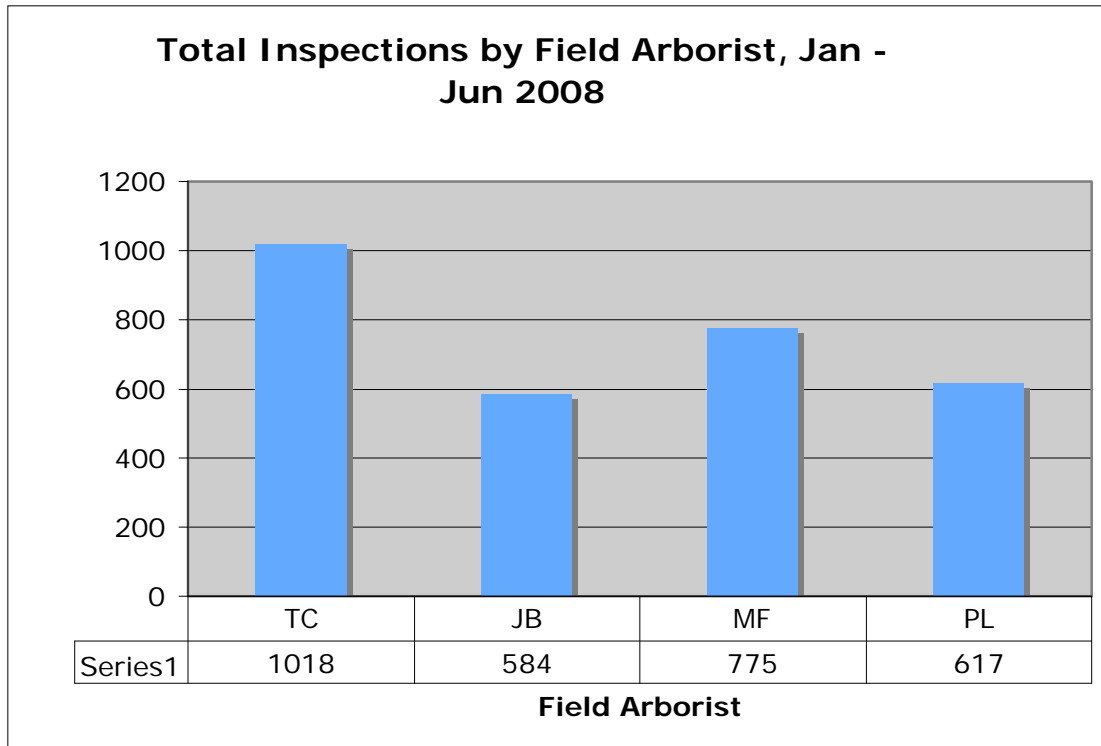


My assigned area of the city encompasses part of the NE quadrant (N and W of I-85) and part of the NW quadrant (N and E of I-75 and E of Northside Dr.). This small slice of the city is the only area in which any semblance of systematic enforcement occurs.

The impact of my firing on the level of enforcement in the city should be even more apparent in this third chart:



And, of course, in addition to enforcement activities I handle one-third of the total field workload in the arborist division. My firing will not increase either the efficiency or the effectiveness of service to the city. Both are likely to plummet.



My job is certainly important, especially to me. The greater question, however, is the impact of my dismissal on the urban forest that defines Atlanta and greatly enhances the quality of our lives. If the Bureau of Buildings succeeds in this attempt to silence the demands I have been making for accountability to and enforcement of the law, the Tree Protection Ordinance becomes a dead letter, suitable for framing.

This letter is a brief introduction to the serious problems in the field operations of the arborist division. I will be glad to discuss them more fully with anyone who is interested. My phone number is 404 874-0523, email address tacoffin@mac.com.

Thank you for your interest and attention.

Tom Coffin
7/31/08