

Town of East Haddam – Department of Public Works



Public Works Garage
7 Hood Lane
East Haddam, CT 06423

Mailing:
POB 385
Moodus, CT 06469

Office: 860-873-5023
Fax: 860-873-6014
Email: publicworks@easthaddam.org

Tree Warden Public Hearing
June 25, 2024; 2pm – 3pm
Corner of Schulman Veselak/Newberry Road

This public hearing was held pursuant to CT General Statute Sec. 23-59 and was called in response to an objection raised regarding the removal of trees posted by the Town of East Haddam Tree Warden. Such trees are scheduled for removal due to health and public safety concerns. The meeting was video recorded.

Minutes:

(A video recording of these minutes is also attached, and the minutes are not verbatim and are summarized below)

Officials Present: Michele M. Velez, Tree Warden/Director of Public Works; Irene Haines, First Selectman; Erik Dill, Selectman; Tanya Bourgoin, Selectman; Gary Metz, Public Works Road Foreman

Others: Attorney Scott Jesek representing Rob Smith of Boardman Road.

- i. Call To Order: The public hearing was called to order at 2:03pm by the Tree Warden, Michele Velez.
- ii. Tree Warden Comments:
 - a. The Tree Warden, Michele Velez, gave an overview of the project including the scope of work, Tree Warden authority, Criteria used when deciding to remove a tree as well as the Tree Removal Standards. The Tree Warden then completed comments with Facts regarding trees in town including work orders submitted regarding down trees, call outs and Eversource Reliability Scorecard.
 - i. The Town has been removing trees showing decline and dead trees throughout the town well before I took the position with the town. I was appointed by the Board of Selectman as Tree Warden for the Town. I am responsible for the trees alongside public roads and in public spaces. My responsibilities include approving the planting, pruning or removal of trees under my authority.
 - ii. The Town used a tree service prior to my appointment which was found to be very costly to remove trees. Over the past year I have taken the opportunity to network with other surrounding towns similar to our landscape in regard to tree removal and how they were managing the

decline and death of Ash Trees and Beech Trees in town. After speaking to several Tree wardens, it was clear that our current solution was not the most fiscally responsible way to remove trees. After a conversation and meeting with Distinctive Tree service it was clear that we could remove a large majority of trees which are in decline or dying quickly and for far less than what our previous company was doing. Using the Sandboxes on roads which have an abundance of trees that are in need of removal due to liability to public safety or pruning this method is the best way to remove the trees safely, efficiently and at the best price. We will continue to use the Bucket Truck and Crane method throughout town when applicable.

- iii. The Criteria used when making a decision to remove a tree are as follows:
 1. Vertical cracking
 2. Seams
 3. Dead Branch Stubs
 4. Large Branch stubs which will fall from weight
 5. Damage to main trunk
 6. Fungal Disease
 - a. Wilting, falling or discoloration of leaves or needles
 - b. Depressions in wood
 - c. Scabs in the fruit
 - d. Bleeding cankers
 - e. Stunted grown
 7. Dying or Dead
 - a. No leaves or buds during grow season
 - b. Significant lean
 - c. Dead branches
 - d. Evergreens will have thinning canopy, needle drop and browning at needle tip.
 - e. Tree exhibits disease or insect symptoms
 8. Significant lean or new lean
 9. Hazardous location
 - a. Power lines
 - b. Close to structure
 - c. Blocking view of road or oncoming traffic
 10. In way of sight lines
 11. Invasive species
 12. Insect damage
 13. Root rot
 14. Girdling roots
 15. Y or V crotch
 16. Abnormal Bark Peeling
 17. Visible Wounds or open cavities
 18. Broken from lightning strike.
 19. The root system has been compromised.
- iv. The Town of East Haddam Tree Removal and Pruning Standards which can be found on our website are as follows:
 1. There are several signs that a tree is getting weak and may fall including but not limited to dead wood, cracks, decay, cankers, root problems, poor form, and weak branch unions with the trunk. Identifying trees early to correct the problems with Pruning would be

the priority however some trees are not able to be saved by pruning and need to be taken down to reduce liability. The town will make every effort to preserve the natural beauty of its tree-lined roadsides and recreation areas by detecting and correcting situations involving hazardous trees when applicable within the constraints of the department's resources.

- v. Some Facts about East Haddam and Trees
 - 1. Work Order Data – related to Trees Only
 - 2. Eversource Reliability Scorecard
 - 3. Call outs for trees –
 - a. Over the last 5 days we have had several trees come down and block roads in town
 - i. These trees have fallen on nights and weekends requiring call outs for the Public Works Staff. Each time a limb or tree comes down I am required to call in two staff for removal and cleanup of the road, this pulls these hard-working staff out of bed at night away from family functions and costing the town money to clean up.
 - ii. I want to reiterate the “Goal is to ensure public Safety and reduce overall cost of tree removal in town so we can focus on planting and beautification of our roadsides.

Letters were submitted prior to the hearing and were asked to be read by the tree warden at the hearing.

Comments via email/letters:

- b. David and Sandra Rollinson – Wickham Road - Email Dated 6/3
 - c. Lisa Costello – Bone Mill Road – Email Dated 5/3
 - d. Robert Simmons – Cherry Swamp Road – Email Dated 3/21 and 4/4
 - e. Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Margi – 22 North Moodus Road – Emailed and dated
- iii. After reading the letters – Alan Ponanski of 161 Newberry Road asked why those letters were being read and not all letters received as his Wife sent a letter the previous day to be read. Susan Kinsman, Alan's Wife also of 161 Newberry Road corrected Alan and stated she had asked for her specific letter to be read at the Board of Selectman Meeting dated 6/27/24.
 - a. Rocehelle Davis of 55 Maple Ave, asked a question of clarity in regard to how work orders were counted. Were they by tree or by call etc. Bernard Stignone of 112 Schulman Veselak spoke to say one call equals one work order. The Tree Warden spoke to clarify the question, if a single call comes in for one tree or 3 trees it is counted as one. If someone calls about the same tree after that call it is not counted as an additional work order.
 - b. Tanya Burgoin, Selectman, stated she appreciated the letters that were read but wanted to go on record to mention she also received at least as many letters of concern regarding the amount of trees that were being removed.
 - c. Bernard Stignone then cut into the conversation and was asked by tree warden to please wait his turn and respect each other for everyone to have the opportunity to speak.

iv. The tree warden then opened the floor for open comment asking that if anyone originally checked no to speak, please let her know at the end and she will be sure to give everyone the opportunity that would like to speak.

v. Public Comment

a. Scott Jesek, POB 376, Moodus, questioned the Tree Warden, introduced himself as Scott Jesek representing Mr. Robert Smith of Boardman Road in East Haddam. He then went on to say that he has some questions with respect to the follow up, first question did you mark the trees yourself or who put the orange marks on the trees? Tree Warden Velez responded that the marks are put up by the Hired Arborists who mark the trees. Once marked the Tree Warden stated she will then go out to each tree individually and make the ultimate decision as to whether the tree should be removed, pruned or left alone. Mr. Jesek went onto say that the statute doesn't state that and goes onto say that he doesn't see a single tree showing the statute and would like an explanation as to why each tree did not receive a formal paper of posting. Tree Warden Velez answered the question regarding the posting that with a large amount of trees which need to be marked posts were put throughout the road to at ground level so they could be seen stating that each pink/orange tag is marked per the statute. Mr. Jesek then went onto read the statute regarding that every tree must be marked. Mr. Jesek then asked about the Tree Warden's experience and if she could outline that for him. Specifically, if she was a tree warden prior and when she received her credentials. Tree Warden Velez answered that she received her credentials this year and previously she was not a tree warden. Mr. Jesek went on to ask about more experience related to marking the trees. Tree warden Velez responded that her previous employment history does not pertain to this hearing. He then went onto say his question may not have been clear. For example, the trees taken down on Cherry Swamp Road were those trees marked. Tree Warden Velez responded Cherry Swamp Road and North Moodus, yes, they were all marked. Trees were posted in the same way and same fashion as here (Schulman Veselak/Newberry Road). Mr. Jesek then said so you didn't post the statute on each tree. Tree Warden Velez responded, no, anything in a group allotment like this road would have been tagged and signage would have been placed throughout the road. She also stated the notices are posted on the website as well. Mr. Jesek went onto say how do you make the determination of what trees are on private property or town land? Tree warden Velez Responded that if a survey is not on file, they would ask the homeowner to provide a survey. If a tree is dangerous to the road they will get tagged with permission of the homeowner. However, regarding this specific tree group the rock wall has been rehabbed by the home owner and cannot be used as a boundary. Mr. Jesek asked when you get this permission from the homeowner do you get this in writing. Tree Warden answered "not typically" it is usually verbal. Mr. Jesek asked Tree Warden Velez if she knows the statute and she responded yes, but don't ask me to quote it. Mr. Jesek went onto state you listed a list of health issues with trees but do you include public safety? Tree warden Velez then stated, if the tree is marked then it is for public safety. We make the determination to prune or remove based on its decline in health. What instruction did you give to Distinctive regarding marking the trees. We told them to mark the trees as the arborist that they felt were declining, dead or need to be pruned. Mr. Jesek asked who was we? Tree Warden Velez stated We as in me, We as the Town. Mr. Jesek asked with direction to the arborist was it

in writing? Tree Warden Velez said, No, verbal, maybe in an email possibly. Mr. Jesek asked if those emails are preserved. Tree Warden Velez answered, Yes. With what authority do you have to delegate the marking of the trees? Tree warden Velez explained that the arborist only marks the trees in a situation like this as there are many trees to mark. Individual trees I go out and mark them personally. Mr. Jesek said you were not clear, do you inspect every tree that was Tagged? Tree Warden Velez then answered that she inspects every single tree that is tagged before it comes down or its pruned. Mr. Jesek asked what is the criteria that you use to decide if they should come down? Tree Warden Velez answered I use the criteria which was read to you in the beginning of the meeting. Mr. Jesek asked do you do a drive by? Tree warden responded absolutely not, depends on the situation, if I can easily look up and see then I would or I get out and inspect the tree accordingly. Mr. Jesek then asked if we would have the opportunity to walk these streets today to look at these trees and here why they were tagged? Tree Warden Velez responded, Not today. He asked why not? Tree warden stated that opportunity was already given to those who sent in the letters. Mr. Jesek then went on to ask why we couldn't walk and discuss each tree. Tree warden Velez stated the reason for this meeting is to allow for each person to have the opportunity to speak about the removal of trees for Newberry and Schulman Veselak including their concerns for either approval or denial of any tree being removed. Mr. Jesek then asked about criteria regarding scenic Roads? Tree warden Velez explained that yes there are different criteria trees must be dead before removed. Mr. Jesek asked where this came from? Tree Warden Velez explained it is written in the ordinance. Mr. Jesek asked what ordinance? Tree Warden Velez stated its written in the scenic road ordinance by the town of East Haddam. Mr. Jesek then asked if there is any other special notice to remove a tree other than the tagging and the way it was done here for scenic roads? Tree Warden Velez stated that depending on the nature tree I do have the right to go to the Board of Selectman to remove a tree removed immediately if I feel it is a liability or of concern for public safety. Mr. Jesek then asked with respect to the trees that are marked will there be an opportunity to look at the trees that are marked. Tree Warden Velez stated she would be happy to meet with anyone that would like to walk and talk about the trees specifically, however it would not be today. Those conversations should have happened well before today. Mr. Jesek asked if I would walk with his client regarding the trees that are marked. Tree warden Velez stated she would be happy to walk with Mr. Smith to look at trees and discuss at a time that is reasonable for myself, let me remind you that a decision will be made within three days of this hearing regardless of the meeting with Mr. Smith. At this time some members of the audience asked that we move on to the next group of people who want to speak. Mr. Jesek said I have one more question, Why can't we extend this public hearing and the three day decision to allow for people to walk and look at the trees? Tree Warden Velez stated, No, and Mr. Jesek asked again why and Tree warden Velez stated we have tree crews in town and to move equipment costs and exorbitant amount to move equipment out of town and back here again.

- b. Rob Smith of Boardman Road, asked Tree Warden Velez if she could meet on Thursday, Tree warden Velez stated she is not available on Thursday, Mr. Smith stated you have a real interesting situation then, where are the crews parked right now? Tree Warden Velez stated currently parked at this moment they are working on Wickham Road as you know. Mr. Smith then claimed the trees on Wickham

were not tagged. Tree Warden Velez stated yes the trees were marked and the signs were posted. Then Mr. Smith stated since we didn't bring that up is why they are currently being cut. Tree warden Velez answered, Correct. Mr. Smith then asked if there was reimbursement for the work done on Cherry Swamp? Tree warden Velez stated that we didn't have reimbursement, they paid for their portion and we paid for our portion. Mr. Smith asked how was that determined and did they hire an arborist? How was it determined what trees to come down? So they take down ones on the lines and we take down the others? Tree warden Velez answered, incorrect, we also are removing trees near lines if able to protect the residents of East Haddam. If we have the ability to remove them we will remove them. If they are too close to lines and we are unable we then will call Eversource but we have been told they are two – three years out before they can remove a tree. I don't believe that is an appropriate time to be without power or have a tree removed. Mr. smith asks if a limb falls across the road do you have a note that says the road is just closed or are you specific to if it's a tree or a limb? DO you differentiate per your statistics? Tree warden Velez answered absolutely. Mr. Smith asked if those work orders were available? Tree warden Velez stated yes if you would like to read through each work order yes they are available. Mr. Smith then asks why are we using an arborist from the Tree company that is cutting the trees? Tree warden Velez states its very common to use an arborist for tree removal. Mr. Smith states yes that is true but, it seems as if it's a conflict of interest as the more trees that are marked seems as if it's a bigger project for the Town. Tree warden Velez states not if they are removing trees in bulk by the day not by the tree. Mr. Smith states either way if you have 20 or 100 trees. Tree warden velez then states that is why I check every tree to ensure. MR. smith then says, so are there any trees that should be removed that are not tagged? Tree Warden Velez then states No not that I am aware of. Mr. smith says I am looking at a bunch of trees that are not tagged like the spruces, Newberry Road goes that way and that way and you have trees marked why are the ones close to the road here not marked? Tree warden Velez then states there were tags removed by homeowners by other people, there were tags put up on private property to be assumed they were tagged by us, We have calls in from people that watched people remove these tags, there are videos from ring cameras watching these folks remove these tags so we are well aware of what was tagged previously so we will ensure what needs to come down comes down at the appropriate time. Mr. Smith goes on to say that So, I am not available tomorrow with like when I wasn't when you first scheduled this hearing. So that means all the trees in three working days will be removed and distinctive will be here on Monday? Tree Warden Velez clarifies my decision will be made in three days. It was asked if it were 3 business days? Tree Warden Velez then reiterates it will be posted within three business days of my decision. Mr. Jeskek and Mr. Smith had a side conversation regarding statute and 10 days. Tree warden Velez then states that she will clarify that at the end of the meeting so all can understand. Mr. Jeskek Says thank you. Mr. Smith then goes onto ask which trees are tagged to differentiate between Pruning and removal, and Tree Warden stated that it is not tagged differently from your view only her view. Mr. Smith asks about the operator and Tree warden Velez responds that her and the operator have conversations about every tree. Mr. Smith says he doesn't believe that. Tree Warden Velez says I am sorry you do not believe that. Mr. Smith then asks what about birds' nests in these trees? Tree Warden Velez stated they are very aware of birds and other animals in the trees and take proper

precautions and there have been times they've moved on from trees to protect racoons and other animals. Mr. Smith then asks how can you tell 60 feet up from here there is a nest? Tree Warden Velez responded I can't. Mr. Smith asks how will they? Tree warden Velez states that if they see a nest they will take the appropriate precautions to protect the nest. Mr. smith asks about how they will operate and Tree warden Velez states they are not present to answer that at this time. Mr. Smith Says well the people want answers to these questions and Tree Warden Velez states she is aware and will get back to Mr. Smith regarding his question. Mr. smith then states there are species of birds here and almost every tree here must have a nest in the tree. Tree warden Velez states she will take that into consideration when making a decision.

- c. Bud? Hulbert – Newberry Road, Bud says I have a couple of questions regarding trees at my property. There are trees that he feels should be removed. I keep picking up branches. But I would like to see if they can be removed. They are tired Tree Warden Velez states she is happy to take a look at them and states the address as 94 Newberry Road.
- Marty R? - I apologize. I have to leave soon. This going to be a pretty exciting meeting going forward for the next three hours, I support the tree cutting program. I appreciate what you're doing. For selectman's office, maybe next year for the for your budgeting process, you come up with more money for cutting trees down, maybe put it to a referendum very clearly, like we have over the last 10-15, years, put the millions of dollars into the open space concept. We have enough open land. We have plenty of trees, these trees that are dangerous. I confirm what's been said quickly. Everybody can get a rational answer to all of your questions. I think this is a process that needs to be done. Okay, and I appreciate you, I called you, You came out, you responded there was a tree that needed to have attention paid to it, and you took care of it, and I appreciate that. Good luck everybody. Unfortunately, I have to go. It's getting dark earlier.
- d. Bernard Stangone - Bernie, yeah, one second, say goodbye to my buddy. I agree with about the tree cutting. I used to be at my own company, 45 years in the business, landscaping, tree removal. The trees are marked properly, because I've seen those trees being marked. And I spoke to the kid, the gentleman. He's an arborist, but I think he did a good decision on those streets, being there for the corner that tree can come down at any given time life, Storm, little bit of ice, lots of wind, whatever what they're doing, I think they're doing a great job. Anybody wants to walk with me, I'll be happy to walk any day, five days a week after 7pm all the way till after I put my horses away and walk every street, and we'll make sure the trees are the ones that have to come down. And we don't need a paid attorney to represent the client. The client should be up here speaking. You're welcome.
- e. Gary Wilson, yes, I guess my biggest concern was when, when I first heard about the trees being cut down, was I'll have the neighbors been notified, and have they been notified? I think it's fair, fair play, and you're going to be cutting down trees on a road, especially 108 trees going up and down, showing the best that people be made aware of that other than have to go into the town website, find the tree Warden, and then further navigate to find what the schedule might be, particularly when a lot of that's listed says, To be determined, you've got a posting date, so I guess that marks the beginning of your working days. But I think it would

be better if people had more of an opportunity, like with the signs that were posted, perhaps their signs, and as the Mr. Jesek said, according to the statute or Get together. Well, I can, I'm not working. It's just a matter of other practicalities involved. But I just think the people who have skin in the game would have trees properties on the road. They are the ones who need to be reached out to them, whether that's putting something in the mailbox or sending a letter, I mean, certainly everybody here pays taxes, so every address on Schulman Veselak should be known, and who owns the party or whatever could be sent out. Tree Warden Velez responds with, I also have Gary's email with other considerations that I will obviously apply in the future where it deemed that it's appropriate. I just want to make that comment. Anything else, Gary? There was something else I but I can't remember? Tree Warden Velez states if he remembers she will allow him to speak again.

- f. Susan Kinsman, I live at Newberry Road, I think we should have this in a public place but minutes and recordings are not being done and not open on our YouTube channel. Minutes not being taken. It's being opened in the middle of the day, where I'm very glad to see this turnout, but it precludes people who are working from taking time off to come out here. It's an unsafe situation. I mentioned this, you asked the meeting to be here. Okay, I've asked that it be held at the town hall, that it be publicly noticed to town hall or the auditorium, just to provide information about why we're doing this program, why are we targeting these trees? I have no objections to cutting dead and disease trees. I think we've all seen the damage that they can cause. My questions involve healthy trees that happen to be too close to the road, particularly trees that have a very mature canopy that provide to shade, the environmental mitigation that small trees, even if they're going to be planted in the future. And Michele has acknowledged that there's no budget to that will ever, will ever catch up. So my problem with Newberry road is that tree after tree after tree after tree is being targeted. So then instead of a shady cool place to walk and ride your bike you know or live, you have multiple trees being taken down. And so I was curious whether our plan of conservation and development had been consulted, and whether the esthetics of having a mature tree can be was one of the factors that was considered when you were looking at healthy trees, not the dead, not the disease trees, not the ones that are opposed to imminent Danger. How is it now after a tree has been here for 100 years is it a danger and too close to the road? So I wanted to clarify a couple of points with Michele or certified as a three ordinance here, are you a certified artist? No. The other question is, with the tags on the trees, is there any differentiation between trees that are going to be removed and trees that are going to be pruned? Tree Warden Velez responds, I already answered that question, regarding how they are tagged. However, I've heard loud and clear that we'd like to see that, and that's also in Gary's email, and it's something that will be considered in the future. Then Susan goes on to ask and I'm wondering whether or not you can have a public hearing. You're not going to continue this one, and a decision is going to be made on our streets on Shulman Veselak and Newberry while there is no opportunity to have questions the trees within three days. Maybe there's no opportunity for or the people or Mr. Smith to walk the specific to get answers on specific trees. And why the trees have been targeted, I think, and I have written this letter to this election, and I would reiterate, there is a need in our town to provide more information about this program. What's being spent How are trees being targeted. Why are we? Why are we doing this now,

and why are we doing on the roads that we selected East hadn't is 43 square miles, or I could be wrong, someone states 56 and Susan says she stands corrected and the people need to know You know whether other criteria were consulted. There's just a lot of information that has not been shared before the trucks run into your neighborhood, and thank you for posting those nice signs on the road but trees were being cut on Whickham road before even a cutting date had been posted and trees were cut on what the road in the scenic Road area, I did and my husband, I called Michele, and she did come out and walk the trees on our corner, and did explain what she was doing, but that's me. Is she going to do this for every single person who calls? Wouldn't it be more efficient and expedient to have a public hearing that people the town knows about who raised these questions? This hearing was scheduled here with the idea that maybe we could look at all the trees that were targeted. But that's not the case. There is not a site walk, and so there's no reason to have this on a busy, dangerous street corner, noisy street corner, in the middle of the day in summer, when we get out of that town hall and have it publicly noticed beyond thank you for the legal notice. By the way, we're more opposite. Decision affects more than the residents of our streets. It affects everyone who lives in these values, the scenic roadways and our the beauty of our trees. I live here for a reason, and the trees are a big factor in that. Thank you for your time and your patience. I would again reiterate my request to the selectman to schedule a hearing, whether it can be the continuation prior to the July 9 hearing on Old Town and hemlock Valley. But this needs to be addressed, and people need to have an opportunity to be heard. I'd like to know the budget for this. I'd like to know where the money is coming from. I'd like to know how this plan came in place, whether or not the trees amount was divided of all the trees that had been targeted for removal and for tree trimming, whether that had been approved by the Selectmen, whether the Selectmen even took a look at it, whether the Selectmen even Got involved prior to. She's right here. Bernard cuts in if you want to ask her she is right here. You see her? Susan goes onto say I'm raising the point for the public. Tree Warden Velez states again, Let's all be respectful and continues to speak, Susan, I just want to just clarify a couple things. You've used the word target, and I think that's a very strong word. There has been no targeting, and I want to make that very clear, no tree is being targeted for removal. It's all based on the criteria that I read at the beginning of the hearing. I also want to just thank you for your words, and I will make sure to use all those suggestions and all your thoughts and consideration in the future, as well as when make this decision. Susan continues, Now I will just say goodbye to the trees as I know this hearing will not affect your decision and you know the Death Star Truck will be arriving in the neighborhood. Industries that are outlined no effective opportunity or feel, about any specific tree. Tree Warden Velez says well, that's your opinion and Susan says do I did want to contradict that. Tree Warden says Well, you and I met, and you talked about a tree myself, you and your husband, and we actually pulled the tag off the tree that you wish to have saved, and we discussed that tree in person, and that tree is not coming down, so that's not a true statement and Mr. Smith has not yet called me or asked for a meeting. This is the first-time hearing of it, so if Mr. Smith wants to have that conversation with me, I'm happy to do so we can talk afterwards, when other people are not here. Tree warden Velez states that in consideration of time, I just want to make sure everybody understands that the hearing was one hour. It is

now 2:50 I'm going to make sure we get through to everyone to be appropriate, use your time wisely. I'll read your name.

- g. Alan Ponanski? and yeah, I think it's clear to me, people who believe in a process that citizens should be heard, that this is an important issue a lot of people hear when schedule their time with most people work. We need a process of openness and transparency. That is a town meeting, because justice. This is, this is just rushing through space now. This is all window dressing. I think, my opinion, I think all we need is, we need a process to show the good points that you you have raised, and also the bad points that others have raised, and to so that everyone has a part in the decision. Everyone is notified, has the ability to speak. I think the point tenant in our republic is the ability to be heard. Yes, we're being heard here, but this is an issue that affects East Haddam as a whole. I believe that in our planning and development document, so much time they made it clear that that bow tie tree is an important part of this town, and I would submit to you for your consideration that these activities are a violation of that planning and development document. So I would urge caution having this as our only means of public process is faulty, and I will urge what you have established the things on hold and to do it the right way for everybody concerned, whether you're for it or against it, so that we establish a harmony in our town, because we're all neighbors and we want a beautiful Haddam. Tree Warden Velez, Thank you.
- h. Sandra, hi. I just wanted to Thank you and public department for the great job that you're doing, and I know that we can at the same time we're talking about time you're thinking about safety and you're thinking about what happens, my husband passed away. He was a forester, and I learned a lot from him, even though a lot of the trees, and I was sad to see those trees go, a lot of those trees, and they're beautiful, but sometimes it's just necessary. So either you it's like, I appreciate and I know you're doing so much and trying to please everybody. Appreciate all the effort that you put in and everything that public works department has done, it could be like a no-win situation, because if you don't take down the tree that needs to be taken down, then it falls, someone gets hurt, somebody's house catches on fire. Why did you take this tree down? So it's not like I said I looked, I would save every tree, but there gets to a point where they have to be thinned out, you know, and people think that more steps need to be taken to please everybody. I'm sure you're doing your very best, and it's not an easy tasks, but I appreciate that. Like I said the tree company people are amazing. They work phenomenally. They leave the place cleaner that they did. I know that's anybody, but I know that if we don't say now our trees, that has a backlash too, because our trees need sunlight, and when they get too thick, then you start getting a lot more problems, you know, and they're encroaching more and more, and like at some point, you have to take some of them away, as much as we may hate to, but I appreciate and I think that we have to work together, stand together, and we all love East Haddam for what we have these parts for what we are and what we have. But on the other hand, I do need to be pinned out, because I'm sure they went from being 1000 trees to 100,000 trees to a 1000000 trees a point like in the forest, that you have to send them out for a lot of different Some of the trees if you were to Look at the inside of that trunk, they are encroaching more and more. I appreciate what you are doing we all hve to work together and stand together. It wasn't just one or two or tree it was a lot of them. Public comments start to interrupt again and Tree Warden Velez states again for everyone to be respectful, Please.

- i. Dean, I live on Wickham I believe what Sandra says, I lived In east Hampton and when McDonalds' came I moved out so I like the country. Like Susan I also would say you got to thin the herd, so I the guys are great. I talked to the arborist that marked the trees. By chance I was home. I'm hybrid, but the trees have been marked for correct me if I'm wrong since Early May. May? Tree Warden Velez states Yes. Dean goes onto say, So for Over a month and a half those trees have been marked. It stood out to me that once it was marked it was marked for something I contacted Michele, I came down and I discussed it. I didn't need to lead by the nose by a meeting, or to a website, I saw the trees being marked I asked the question of the town. They gave me week give or take. When I talked to the arborists. I am not an arborist. They look for signs of death or hurting they looked beautiful and healthy, but it was rotted. They look at trees in a different way than we do. We look at a tree and say how beautiful. They do this to remove the ones that are dangerous and can come down in a storm. Saturday I was on Ackley Cemetery Road going to the store a tree that had a huge crown snapped in half at the topped and blocked half the road, it looked fine but it was a bad tree. There is one of those trees and I don't know how many people call. The point of the matter is to say there is only a day there has been time there has been a month and a half since the trees have been marked not a day and if you haven't and ask the question about it that's not her fault or the town it's your fault for not being proactive. So, we can go from here they are doing a great job I'm sad to see some of the trees go but the overall health of the road and the safety I am fine with it and I agree with it. Additionally, we are saying town of east Haddam but I am concerned about the trees on my street you should be concerned about the trees at your house. I am not going to come down to your street to ask about why trees are going down at Mr. Smith's house or why on another road 15 mins from my house at Mr. Jones house. I think we are just getting lost in the weeds here trying to say we have to save every single tree. You're here about the trees if they didn't cut the trees on my road, you would be there saying you need to inspect Wickham as well chances are you don't live on this street. That's what I am saying you can be concerned about overall but if I am fine with the trees in front of my house I don't need someone coming over saying don't cut the trees. Susan, where are you there you are you have some trees up at the end that are right within the foot of the road that are marked I didn't check to see the health but you have the right to me to say hey why are you doing that and get an answer yay or nay, its not my business its in front of your house, additionally one more thing you got the road, let's not on the side what the town of the road own. What is the town easement. Tree Warden Velez explains its different at each Road Town. Dean asks if there is a minimum. Tree Velez says some roads in a lake community may be two feet another road may be 15-20 feet or the Rockwall can signify the town line. Dean says the town needs to remember the town has the right to the easement whether it is 2 feet or 10 feet, I don't care but if it's in their easement they have the right to take it down regardless if its full crown or one leaf. That is all I got to say.
- j. Amalia – Okay I would like all of you to come over here, Tree warden Velez says she prefers she doesn't ask others to come out of the coned area for safety, Amalia says but you should, others spoke saying no we don't need to go across the road to the sunny area she was referring to, Amalia goes on to say, You stand here cause its shady you can stand in sun to understand. The thing is if we are talking about public safety and the importance of trees in our town the reason we

need trees it cools the roads and in our climate change we need these trees to keep the town cool so it doesn't matter if it belongs to me or to someone else asphalt without trees is very hot I think that the criteria to take trees down is not being properly being assessed because we are thinking about electricity and blocking roads but we need to think about the environment that these trees create that drop the temp by 10 degrees and if we have so much heat wave it's a problem the other thing you know how old these trees to make that peak at least 30 years old and create more that don't have trees and then we plant new trees we are not taking care of our town for the next 30 years, we are maybe in the future but this has to be part of the criteria for what trees to take down. Here some definitely thinning them out to allowing some trees to say is a good idea, we have to really think why are we taking trees down and what trees are they supporting the environment, we have to think that a tree takes 100s of years to grow we cut down all the trees in this area I PA an and CT and we cut them down and what we have we have weak trees, we haven't even gotten to the beginnings of real tree growth here and yes the tree can be hollow and still live for another 3 or four hundred years so our criteria to cut down thinking of budgets that have nothing to do with the life of a tree or a budget this year or next year budget is not a healthy way of looking at our problems and we are dealing with heat that is becoming unbearable the tree are the main stay of and we should take care of them and not think they are a liability and we also have to think that the way of catching carbon not just the leaves of the tree but by the roots the microorganisms or the Fungai at the root are the best carbon catcher we have we need to think of the asset of the tree not just the liability of the tree when we make these decisions

- k. Graham – Hi, Michele, I'm Graham, a transplant from Manchester to come down here for its beauty. There very few places like this I know, I am taken by the town and what you folks have and I am concerned about the trees and the people but I have to say the most impressive thing is your involvement in Manchester you wouldn't see this, people don't get involved but you are and you are speaking from the heart and what you believe and what you treasure about living here and some of the comments today about ad hoc committees to work with town the government and each other to have a more cohesive approach to anything its wonderful down here don't ever lose site of that you are beautiful people in a beautiful spot and we all want to treasure it and save it and so that's all. Harmony.
- l. Rochelle – Thank you everyone I live here two years I wanted to talk about the environmental an ecological things that happen in this moment with the trees being removed to tie that to the larger process some of the more consultative democratic processes might be put in place when taking down the trees. I certainly understand the dying and dead trees we have ash we have elm we have hemlock we have all sorts of tree that are a danger to human safety, but I also want to think about all lives and Right now is the worse time to take down trees. For humans it's the hottest times, the workers its hot and I watch them work its omg how do they do it. For other species other than humans that are living in these dead and dying trees There are birds that are nesting and nesting insects that feed us and we have .. We have a grant from USDA equipped program to create early successional habitat and we just removed 4 acres species by hand and chain saw the CTDEEP would not allow us to working any of these and April 15 and November 15th because of nesting season but yet in we are going against environmental good practice is doing what we were not allowed on our private

property, I would encourage the tree warden I know its cheaper but I would encourage you to think about the calendar and practices and I know you cant tag in the winter and cant tell if dead alive or dying but tag them early or late fall and remove in winter when they are not being used by living things to house or feed we aren't here alone as humans we have to think about and we all love that about East Haddam and we love living here we can have horses see the bunnies and watch the bobcats if we remove the reason for them we wont be able to see them I also think that having a process that is more environmental and ecological responsible is more responsible to the humans here then we can be part we can have more time see those decision sand we treat our workers better that are not out in the hot trying to manage this.

- m. Ruth Masci – Clapped and said I think treating the workers better is an excellent idea.
- n. Ed Veselak – I lived here all of my life by the name on the road and I will tell you what my dads house is over there number at 44 by my sons house when I was a kid I could watch stella and max down here pull weeds out of the garden and all of these trees here. Some of your relatives Pachs and Cones came over and cut the fields and gotta wet and didn't have 4x4 drive and everything grows trees are great that cool road in summer but in the winter creates ice spots. Just like this spot here the trees cover road, and it freezes about the people cutting trees in summer they got to work somewhere. No one mentions that when trees fall you got the FD, PD, Ambulance the power company cant get to the problem but you gotta realize with burglars and crazy people and driving fast and a tree fell and someone went up the road I told him to stop he plowed right into a tree and he learned his lesson and it is a big town and a lot of tree you could work forever they replenish them self. That side of town that are town trees and this is a cost effective system to get people to come in and get rid of it someplace they take it away they save 6k a day to take over to the thing to have tub grinder for days. Tree warden confirms. Ed goes onto say if someone wants the wood they can take it. I think that the process could have been different today but it's a learning process for anyone I think it's a hard thing to do this job with all the tree problems it's very hard to determine what should come down or not come down but I can tell you one thing all the ash borer dying they come need to come down, as far as the animals and taking down trees, the animals come in my garage I am sure Bernie's got ten over there they come in my house garage you I know they do you can't leave the door open during the day and put bird nest out and that type of that you just need to move forward and do the best you can maybe a little bit more of ... the tree company is very good I have seen them on 16 state highway a lot of tree guys are not going to start til 9am and stop a 3pm people going to work and everyone is in a hurry people are flying you have people working if you didn't have town truck over there people fly through here that's all I gotta say, you're doing the best you can in a big town all over town trees that need to come out, when I bush hog my field you can get trees shrubs that high you know from your farm and I do it for graham to help his fields if you don't do it every year it grows up here living proof anyhow.
- vi. Tree warden asks if anyone has final word.

Closing: Tree Warden Velez states, I would like to call the public hearing to closing, A decision will be made within three days per the statute regarding the removal or pruning of the trees marked on Newberry Road and Schulman Veselak. I will post my decisions on the Tree Warden

Website through the town's website under the department tree warden under the Town's website. **Any party aggrieved by such decision may, within ten days, appeal therefrom to the superior court for the judicial district**". Those who filed an appeal directly with the town will also receive a letter from me directly with my decision. I want to thank everyone for your time, your consideration, and I will take each one of your comments into consideration when making decisions. I just want to reiterate the point of the trees are coming down are for public safety, we are not targeting trees we are not looking to remove trees that should remain because they are healthy we are removing them because they do cause public safety issues. With that the hearing is now over 3:18 PM.

vii. The hearing was closed and adjourned at 3:18pm.

**Town of East Haddam – Department of
Public Works**



Public Works Garage
7 Hood Lane
East Haddam, CT 06423

Mailing:
POB 385
Moodus, CT 06469

Office: 860-873-5023
Fax: 860-873-6014

4/8/24

Town of East Haddam Tree Removal and Pruning Standards

There are several signs that a tree is getting weak and may fall including but not limited to dead wood, cracks, decay, cankers, root problems, poor form, and weak branch unions with the trunk.

Identifying trees early to correct the problems with Pruning would be the priority however some trees are not able to be saved by pruning and need to be taken down to reduce liability.

The town will make every effort to preserve the natural beauty of its tree-lined roadsides and recreation areas by detecting and correcting situations involving hazardous trees when applicable within the constraints of the department's resources.

Any questions regarding the town's standards should be directed to the Town's appointed Tree Warden, Michele Velez.

**Town of East Haddam
Town Easement Tree Removal Criteria**

Criteria for the town to remove trees from Roadside easement or town owned property

1. Vertical cracking
2. Seams
3. Dead Branch Stubs
4. Large Branch stubs which will fall from weight
5. Damage to main trunk
6. Fungal Disease
 - a. Wilting, falling or discoloration of leaves or needles
 - b. Depressions in wood
 - c. Scabs in the fruit
 - d. Bleeding cankers
 - e. Stunted growth
7. Dying or Dead
 - a. No leaves or buds during grow season
 - b. Significant lean
 - c. Dead branches
 - d. Evergreens will have thinning canopy, needle drop and browning at needle tip.
 - e. Tree exhibits disease or insect symptoms
8. Significant lean or new lean
9. Hazardous location
 - a. Power lines
 - b. Close to structure
 - c. Blocking view of road or oncoming traffic
10. In way of sight lines
11. Invasive species
12. Insect damage
13. Root rot
14. Girdling roots
15. Y or V crotch
16. Abnormal Bark Peeling
17. Visible Wounds or open cavities
18. Broken from lightning strike.
19. The root system has been compromised.

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To Whom it May Concern,

I am a Homeowner on Wickham Road in East Haddam and am writing to you today in regards to the work that has been being done on Wickham Road by Distinctive Tree Service in the last two weeks.

I have never heard of this company before but have to tell you what an amazing job they are doing. They methodically work taking down one tagged tree after another along the road near private residents' properties. They are courteous to traffic on the street, pleasant when you speak to them, and most of all, have a meticulous working method and organization like I have never seen before. They quickly cut a tree, take it and lay it in one pile as they clear the road, leaving the area and properties cleaner than when they started, raking and blowing any wood chips or leaves that may have fallen. Their equipment and large dump trucks are impressive as they carefully park them not to damage any property. Within two days came back and picked up the huge piles of approximately 15 feet tall stacked logs and brush that were neatly stacked in vacant wooded areas, chipping every limb, and log that was taken down, again followed by a meticulous clean up as they worked quickly and efficiently.

I wanted to compliment Distinctive Tree Service and the Public Works Department. As we all know any maintenance that is done is expensive, if anyone were to take the time to spend a few minutes watching them, you would see that this is a number one tree contractor and our tax dollars well spent. Thank you.

Respectfully,
David and Sandra Rollinson

You don't often get email from lovethewater23@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hi Michele,

My name is Lisa Costello and I am a resident of 78 Bone Mill Rd, East Haddam. I am soooooo happy to see that there are plans for tree removal on Bone Mil Rd and Old Town St. The current situation is extremely dangerous, especially during windy and stormy days. Even on calm days I can hear limbs/trees falling. As we all know, the situation is only going to get worse, not better.

I am aware that some of my neighbors on Shelter Rock have contacted you with concern. Please know that others like myself appreciate your team's approach. As a retiree of Eversource, I totally understand the objection of residents. I also fully understand that if the budget allows for tree trimming now we should do it now before funding dissipates.

If plans change and some of the trees are taken off of the list(which I hope does not happen) , please keep those near 78 Bone Mill Rd on the list. As mentioned, I am very concerned about safety with driving, walking, working in the yard, and power outages or wires on the road. I am so appreciative of your team's efforts, since I have been fearful that someone (including my family) will soon be hurt.

Please reach out if you need to chat or need more information. And please do not share my comments with my neighbors. Thank you so much!

Lisa Costello
78 Bone Mill Rd
East Haddam, Ct
860-989-5131

Sent from Mail for Windows

You don't often get email from simmors@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello,

After watching various tree crews work along Cherry Swamp over the past few years, never doing a thorough job of it, I am glad that it appears that it is finally to be done properly. Yes, there are a lot of trees marked for removal. Many are healthy but still threaten or soon will threaten power lines and the road. Cutting enough now, avoids the cost of revisiting next year, the year after, etc. Cutting the 'healthy' black birch at the end of our drive will provide a safer sight line when entering the street. I agree the street will not have the same woody appearance. Maybe we'll get lucky and some Mountain Laurel will spring up in the cut zones, these areas will heal up and it won't take too long. We have lost power several times so far this year, this is a school bus route, vision needs improvement for drivers through the curves, all descent reasons to do this. We can put up with the visual change for a while, I think it will be worth it.

Thank you.

Regards, Robert Simmons, 69 Cherry Swamp Rd.

Handwritten notes (mirrored/bleed-through):
- Amalia
- These in front
- Tree next to road
- Cool's Road
- criteria - to - trees trees down
- Block road?
- trees Block road 10'
- do I know how old
- 30 years old
- trees - that were more
- very close
- part of winter
- training - ground
- trees of why
- trees - trees 100 years old

Michele Velez

From: Robert Simmons <simmons@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 4, 2024 3:12 PM
To: Michele Velez
Subject: [External] Cherry Swamp Tree Cutting - Completed

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Michele,

For the size and scope of the job, it could not have been done better! Cleaned up debris, minimized traffic disruption, and safely performed. You made a good choice in getting this job done and I look forward to minimal power outages and won't worry about hazard trees falling on walkers, commuters, or school buses. Thanks for the good work.

Regards,
Robert Simmons
Cherry Swamp Rd.

**Andrew & Susan Magri
223 North Moodus Road
Moodus, CT 06469**

**To: Ms. Michelle Velez, Public Works Director
Town of East Haddam, Public Works Department**

Dear Ms. Velez,

I am reaching out to you to express my gratitude for the clearing and cutting of trees on North Moodus Road. I was very pleased to see that these trees have been cleared and/or cut, this needed to be done for quite some time as I have always thought of the safety concerns with the overgrown trees, and the trees that were so close to the road and large branches hanging over the road, it was a clear safety concern of mine.

Thank you and everyone involved in this project, it is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Andrew & Susan Magri

Town Of East Haddam

Work Orders – Related to Trees

October 25, 2022 – June 30, 2023

125 Calls into Public Works about concerned Trees in town

77 calls were regarding down trees in roads

December 23, 2022

36 Roads not passable due to Down trees in town

Took entire crew to clean up trees (5 Hours OT – Holiday Double Time)

6/19/24

July 1, 2023 – Current Day

163 calls into Public Works about Concerned Trees In town

23 Calls were regarding Down Trees in Road

6/20 - today 9 calls trees 5 in Road

*4 about
Concerns to
Remove*

Eversource 2023 Reliability Scorecard

5,084 Customers served in town

Cause of Power Outages in town

Year 2021 - 63% - Trees

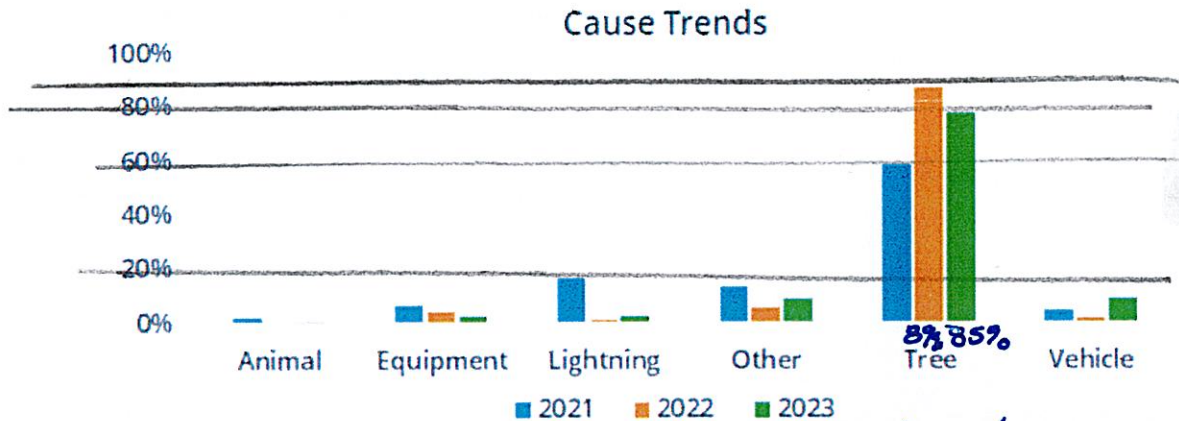
Year 2022 - 89% - Trees

Year 2023 - 85% - Trees

(See Score Card)

2023 East Haddam Reliability Scorecard

5,084 customers served in town



*63% / 87% / 85% } causes
Trees
21, 22, 23*

In East Haddam,

The average customer experienced 1 outage every 4 months.

Outages in your community were more frequent than the state average of 1 outage every 19 months.

The average customer experienced a 275-minute-long outage. This includes all customers in your community even if they did not experience an outage.

Your community's outages were longer than the state average of 72 minutes.

When an outage occurred, it took Eversource an average of 103 minutes to restore power.

2,767 customers experienced 3 or more outages.
360 customers experienced an outage that lasted 7 or more hours.

What does this mean for you?

This information is meant to help you understand how frequently outages occur and how long they last, on average, in your community. It also shows you how your community compares to the state's averages. Those that do lose power may be restored faster or be without power longer than the average.

Public Hearing

Tree Warden

June 25, 2024; 2pm - 3pm

Corner of Newberry Road and Schulman Veselak Road

Please Sign in and note if you would like to speak:

Name	Address	Yes, I would like to make a comment
------	---------	-------------------------------------

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Katherine Miller 4 Newberry Rd, E.H. | <input type="checkbox"/> not sure |
| 2. | Ruth Masci 57 Davison Pl | <input type="checkbox"/> not sure |
| 3. | Scott Jezek PO Box 376 Moodus Ct | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES |
| 4. | Robert R Smith 114 Boardman Rd E.H. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | Bil Helms 94 Newberry E.H. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| 6. | Marty Ryzek 177 Ballahawk EH | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. | Bernard Stingo 112 Schulman Veselak | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. | GARY Wilson 255 CLARK HILL RD | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. | Susan E. Kinnon 161 Newberry Rd | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes |
| 10. | ALAN PONANSKI 161 NEWBERRY RD | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes |
| 11. | Sandra Hollinson | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes |
| 12. | DEAN PELLETI | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. | Amalia Shaltiel | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. | Kathy Daigle | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 15. | Heather Manderall | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. | Rochele Davis 55 Maple Ave | <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 17. | Edward Iruu | <input type="checkbox"/> no |

Xnesting season

Public Hearing

Tree Warden

June 25, 2024; 2pm – 3pm

Corner of Newberry Road and Schulman Veselak Road

Ed Veselak 109 Schulman-Veselak Rd

- 18. _____
- 19. _____
- 20. _____
- 21. _____
- 22. _____
- 23. _____
- 24. _____
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- 39. _____