



Town of East Haddam – Department of Public Works

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June 28, 2024

PUBLIC HEARING DECISION Trees Marked/Tagged on Newberry Road and Schulman Veselak Road

A public hearing was held on Tuesday, June 25, 2024; at 2pm at the intersection of Schulman Veselak Road and Newberry Road.

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: See attached Sign in Sheet

Overview:

The Trees were posted on May 2, 2024, in anticipation of road work in the vicinity which would take place in the summer of 2024. The trees on these roads were reviewed due to the number of trees that are in decline and or dying trees which pose a concern to the community. The trees were identified by a certified hired arborist who determined the trees were a concern to public safety. Trees were tagged and marked based on their current health conditions, serious decline in health, dead trees, and trees which may be too close to the road that are of concern to the public safety. I, as the appointed Town Tree Warden, inspect all trees prior to removal. Any trees that are of concern I speak with the operator and arborists directly to discuss pruning options. I also mark other trees that I deem unsafe during this process the arborist may not have taken into consideration. I read these criteria to the attendees about what is used when deciding to prune or remove a tree as well as the number of calls received each year regarding unsafe trees and included the Eversource scorecard which shows that in 2023 89% of the power outages in town were related to trees falling.

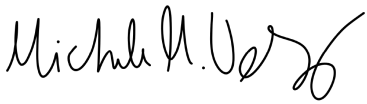
Discussion and General Comments:

Attendees of the hearing noted concerns regarding the number of trees planning to be removed and the environmental factors that are of concern when removing trees concerning climate change, habitat and other environmental and ecological importance of trees. Others also spoke about the safety of these unhealthy dying trees, that continue to fall in roads and take out power. Each attendee had an opportunity to speak about their concern regarding removal of the trees or not removing and keeping trees. A reflection of this can be found in the minutes of the hearing. A concern of not being able to walk the roads during the hearing and discuss each tree was brought up by a few attendees. As stated during the hearing an opportunity to meet with the Tree Warden and or arborist had been available prior to the hearing and there were several attendees who reached out to discuss trees of concern in their neighborhood. Let it be noted that the Tree Warden makes every effort to meet and discuss all trees regarding removal or health decline upon receiving notice. It is the responsibility of the resident to reach out to the Tree Warden to set times and dates regarding the trees in question. The Town also recognizes the methods of communication could be made easier for residents living on the roads to ensure they are aware of the process and what is happening in their neighborhoods. The Town will make every effort to consider these recommendations for large tree removal projects in the future.

Conclusion:

A public hearing was held to provide transparency around the project and to give residents the opportunity to learn more about the specifics and voice their concerns. The approximately 150 trees along Newberry and Schulman Veselak that were tagged for removal or pruning are located on the Towns Easement. The Town is responsible for the Trees which are of concern and pose a liability to the community. It is not the town's policy to remove trees in good condition, however, if a tree poses a public safety concern because of its proximity to the road a decision of removal may be warranted. The town understands and appreciates all the benefits trees provide, but public safety and the ability to safely travel on Newberry and Schulman Veselak Road will take precedence over the trees in this case. Following the public hearing I did reach out to the Arborist and operator to discuss wildlife and concerns in the relationship to nesting birds. The town and hired tree service will make every attempt to identify any tree that may be used for nesting and schedule removal and or pruning at a later date when the nest has been vacated. The trees must be removed to ensure the safety of the community and provide new tree growth with the opportunity to thrive.

According to the sec. 23-59, "Any party aggrieved by this decision may, within ten days, appeal therefrom to the superior court for the judicial district".



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