

Town of Weston
Office of Tree Warden

Public Hearing
July 11, 2024 at 4:00pm via Zoom & Telephone

Regarding the June 25, 2024 Posting of Tree Removal Notices in connection with Town Center and Pedestrian Safety Improvements Project LOTCIP L 157-001

Minutes

Dr. Tom Failla, Tree Warden called the meeting to order at 4:13pm. Present were Nicholas Bamonte, the Town Attorney and Recording Secretary, Felippo Scandizzo.

Dr. Failla serves as the presiding officer over this Public Hearing. This Public Hearing takes place under the provisions of CGS Ch 451 Sect. 23-59 because the Tree Warden received three written objections to the June 25, 2024 posting of tree removal notices in connection the Town Center and Pedestrian Safety Improvements Project LOTCIP L 157-001. The request for removal of trees impacted by the project came June 12, 2024, from the Town Administrator on behalf for the First Selectwomen and was done after careful review with the town's supervising project engineer. The project plans include:

1. Weston and School roads intersection widening and sidewalks requiring the removal of 21 dead or live municipal trees six inches or larger in diameter and many saplings and seedlings less than six inches in diameter.
2. A Sidewalk along the south side Lords Highway from Revson Field to Old Hyde requiring the removal of eight municipal trees larger than seven inches in diameter.
3. A Sidewalk from Weston Road along the north side of Norfield Road requiring the removal of one tree 50 ft west of the west entrance to Town Hall.

Public Hearing:

Tree Warden Dr. Failla opened the floor for public comment. Public comments were made by:

Pat Saunders, resident, asked Dr. Failla how town trees vs resident trees are distinguished. Dr. Failla stated the trees to be removed were established by the surveys on file with the Town Clerk. Ms. Saunders asked Dr. Failla if the trees to be removed would not be taken down if it was not for the sidewalk project. Dr. Failla stated that was correct. Ms. Saunders is concerned that healthy trees are being removed. Dr. Failla shared the list and conditions of the trees being removed.

Tal Weiss, 39 Lords Highway, shared his concerns with the trees being removed and would like to have as many trees saved as possible. Mr. Weiss asked Dr. Failla to consider saving two trees (LD4 & LD5) close to his driveway.

Lauren Traum, 18 Old Hyde Rd, asked Dr. Failla for clarification regarding the resident property line vs town property. Dr. Failla shared surveys and explained the resident property line vs town property line.

Atty. Alan Rubenstein, 64 Old Hyde Rd, shared concerns about the trees being removed and asked Mr. Failla if the trees planned for removal, are live trees. Dr. Failla stated that 8 trees on Lords Highway are planned for removal, all of the trees are living trees and in variant conditions. Mr. Rubenstein stated he is strongly against the sidewalk project and removal of trees. Dr. Failla stated that he is gathering evidence and new information from the public hearing to go into his final decision.

Nicholas Bamonte, Town Attorney, explained to Mr. Rubenstein that the public hearing is expressly limited under state law. The members of the public who have comments or opposition to the proposed notice of the trees can offer comments, which Dr. Failla will take into consideration when he makes his final decision on this matter, and discourages the ongoing Q&A. The purpose of this hearing legally is to receive commentary.

Gary Weist, 72 Old Hyde Rd, stated being against the sidewalk project and shared concerns with the change in the neighborhood, the environmental impact and the aesthetics of the road and neighborhood.

Jane Perry, 56 Old Hyde Rd, asked if the stonewalls will be removed along with the trees. Dr. Failla stated that is not indicated in the design. Ms. Perry shared concerns with flooding and icing with the removal of the trees.

Julie Roche, 48 Old Hyde Rd, expressed concerns about the trees being removed for concrete. Ms. Roche stated she is concerned about how this will affect the town's beauty and roads.

Dr. Tom Failla stated that the public hearing is closed. No more information will be accepted. The Tree Warden will render a written decision within three days, which will be posted on the area of the trees and emailed to the Town Administrator, First Selectwoman and interested parties. It will also be posted on the Town Clerk's bulletin board, the town web site under Legal Decisions and the Tree Warden Page. Sect. 23-59 states: "the party aggrieved by such decision may, within ten days, appeal therefrom to the superior court.