



TOWN OF DURHAM
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Town Planner's Recommendation

Wednesday, July 10, 2019

****Revised July 5, 2019- additions shown like this***

- XII. **Eversource Energy - Cutting of Trees on Durham Point Road.** Deliberation about application to trim and remove trees along Durham Point Road, a designated scenic road, in accordance with RSA 231:158. Approval by the Planning Board is required for cutting any tree within the Town right of way with a diameter of 4-3/4 inches or greater. Ian Farley, Arborist with Eversource. Michael Busby, Eversource Manager – Field Engineering and Design. William Burleigh, Asplundh, contractor. (The public hearing is closed.)

At its meeting on June 26, the Planning Board discussed a number of prospective conditions for this application by Eversource and asked the Town Planner to provide a set of conditions should the board vote to approve the project. Here are a set of conditions for the Planning Board's consideration based upon the issues that have been discussed.

TREE REMOVAL

The application submitted by Eversource Energy for removal of trees along Durham Point Road is approved as submitted with the following terms and clarifications.

48 trees. The application includes the removal of 48 trees.

Additional tree. One additional dead tree shall be removed. This tree was pointed out to Eversource by Town Administrator Todd Selig in his email of June 20. It is located near Map 11, Lot 35-1 about ¼ mile east of Sunnyside Road.

Underbrush. Eversource will leave the existing underbrush in place except in situations where it should be removed for a specific reason.

Invasive species. Does the Planning Board think it appropriate to require Eversource to submit a plan for addressing potential invasive species that may appear in areas where trees have been removed?

TREE TRIMMING

The application submitted by Eversource Energy for trimming trees along Durham Point Road is approved as submitted with the following terms and clarifications.

Planning Board policy. The Planning Board's General Policy for Utility Maintenance Tree Trimming and Tree Removal on Scenic Roads in Durham, NH adopted on October 24, 2018 applies to the trimming of trees with several modifications specified below.

Clearance standard (box). Regarding the clearance standard discussed in the policy, Eversource will use this area to evaluate the need for any trimming. The evaluation includes consideration of the growth rate of each species and the health of each individual tree. Removal of branches will be determined if there are signs of defect or injury or to obtain the minimum clearance for the safety and reliability of the electrical system. The natural canopy of the roadside forest on Durham Point Rd will be considered during Eversource's decision-making process.

Managing wood. The crew(s) will use professional rigging and lowering techniques to manage the wood as it is lowered (for both trimming and tree removal).

Stump height. *The remaining stumps will be cut so that they do not extend more than 3 inches above the adjacent grade.*

REDUCTION OF POLE HEIGHTS

These requirements apply to any new poles that will be used, including any poles that have been set recently to accommodate the lines. The purpose of this subsection is to better preserve the existing tree canopy and reduce the amount of vertical trimming that will be needed. The poles supporting the existing lines are generally 40 feet in height and 34 feet installed above grade.

Maximum height. *The maximum height pole that will be used is 45 foot poles. These poles will extend 38-1/2 +/- feet above the ground when installed.*

Cutting poles. *Any poles that have been installed recently that exceed 45 feet in length will be cut at the top so that they do not extend 38-1/2 feet +/- above the ground. The top of the pole will then be capped appropriately.*

Selective locations. *Taller poles, generally 50 feet in height and 43 feet above grade when installed, may be used in selective locations as demonstrably needed, such as in low spots.*

PROCESS

Oversight by Eversource arborists. New Hampshire Certified Arborists Dave Burleigh, Ian Farley and Bob Allen meet the crew each morning and discuss the daily scope of work. They will also involve the traffic detail officer in their Daily Safety Tailboard discussion. They will explain the expectations to the crew foreman. One of the three arborists will be on the site for at least one or two hours in the morning to make sure everyone understands the daily plan. The three arborists will ensure that the work is done consistent with this approval.

Eversource will start the project with one crew so that the process is methodical and to facilitate providing oversight. If there are no problems, Eversource may add other crews.

Coordinating with the Town during operations. Eversource will provide a weekly update for the Planning Board, through the Town Planner, which will include a review of the prior week's work, a work plan for the coming week, and clarification on any questions or concerns that arise. This forum will also allow for the Planning Board to provide comments back to Eversource through the Town Planner. Ian Farley and other Eversource representatives, as needed, will be available to respond to concerns by email through the Town Planner. At the Planning Board's request, Ian Farley or other representatives of Eversource will respond to board concerns at a board meeting.

Eversource will provide before and after photographs of the work being done to help ensure that the work is being done consistent with the intent of the Planning Board approval.

Procedure if problems arise. If necessary the crew(s) will be shut down following any concerns voiced by the Planning Board. If the issue does not require an immediate halt to trimming operations, then the crew will skip over the area in question until it can be resolved. This type of issue will be discussed with the crews that day and reviewed the following day at the morning tailboard meeting.

Town's arborist. The Town will hire an independent arborist to oversee the project on behalf of the Town. The Town will select the arborist, allowing for input from Eversource on the party selected to ensure Eversource does not have any reasonable objections to the individual. The arborist will be paid by the Town and the Town will be reimbursed by Eversource for the cost of the arborist. The Durham Town Administrator, Tree Warden, and Town Planner and two representatives of the Planning Board shall hire and oversee the work of the arborist and coordinate with Eversource about the exact role of the arborist. The arborist shall provide periodic reports for the Planning Board through the Town Planner and will meet with the Planning Board at the board's request.

The arborist will oversee the trimming of trees primarily but may provide oversight for tree removal if any concerns arise.

Contacting Eversource. Eversource will provide one or more telephone numbers for Town officials to contact Eversource arborists and others directly should concerns arise. For members of the public, Eversource will provide a name with an email and/or phone number for contact.

STANDARD FOR ALL SCENIC ROADS

Regarding all four scenic roads going forward (Bay, Bennett, Durham Point, and Packers Falls), Barbara Dill, Planning Board Vice Chair, recommends modifying the clearance standard in the Planning Board's policy as follows:

Clearance Standard. Eversource generally trims branches within a box surrounding the utility lines as follows: 10 feet below the lines, 15 feet above the lines, and 8 feet to either side of the lines. This is the standard (PUC 307.10) used throughout the state and is endorsed by the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission. ~~However, there is flexibility and judgment involved in trimming depending on the circumstances: locations of branches, species of tree, condition of tree, exact site conditions, etc.~~ In the case of Durham's four designated scenic roads, the standard box may be used as an "evaluation zone" taking into consideration tree health, age, variations among species, special site conditions and other factors that could allow some overhanging branches within the box to remain.

Are there any other provisions in the adopted policy that board members would like to discuss?