

Walpole Planning Board Minutes
December 14, 2021
Town Hall
7 pm

Roll Call: Present: Chair Jeff Miller, Vice-Chair Dennis Miller, Clerk Jason Perron, Jeff Harrington, Joanna Andros, Bill Carmody and Select Board Representative Steve Dalessio. Absent: Alternate Trevor MacLachlan. Also present was Travis Adams, a candidate to be an alternate.

Recording: Secretary Marilou Blaine. **These minutes are being recorded. They are unapproved and will be reviewed at the January 2022 meeting for corrections, additions and/or omissions.**

Meeting coming to order: Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at at 7 pm. A full board was present.

Minutes: Mr. Perron made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Harrington seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Old Business:

Public Hearing: Liberty Utilities: Routine Maintenance on Scenic Roads:

Presenting was Heather Green, Program Manager, Vegetation and Inspection. With Ms. Green was Kelly Hoffman, Liberty Utilities Representative, Consulting Utility Arborist for ECI, Environmental Consultants, Inc. Walpole has two designated scenic roads – Farnum Road and Old Drewsville Road. RSA 231:172

Ms. Green was present to discuss the maintenance work on the two scenic roads in Walpole. It will begin in January 2022 and, depending on the pandemic, should last for about six months. The planned work includes tree pruning, trimming, flat cutting and tree removal. The biggest concern is usually tree removal, Green said. Planned tree removal on Farnum Road includes three trees, a maple, a black cherry and a basswood. Tree removal on Old Drewsville road includes 11 trees: five maple trees, two white pine, one black cherry, one basswood, one popular and one ash.

In addition to the trees that were mentioned in the report, Ms. Hoffman added 4 additional trees that are a threat to conductors. The one on Farnum Road is a 22” in diameter black cherry between poles 16 and 17. On Old Drewsville Road, there are a 35-inch white pine between poles 7 and 8, an 8-inch black birch between poles 56 and 57 and a 23-inch hemlock between poles 70 and 71. On scenic roads there is a little more sensitivity to cutting, Ms. Green said. The marks for removal of trees Liberty uses are blue and white markers or red markers. Currently the routine maintenance has been every four years. Liberty Utilities will now be on a five-year cycle due to the pandemic, work-force issues and budget.

The planned work can be categorized as follows: any and all trees over the 15-inch circumference limit will be pruned to remove dead/dying, weak and structurally poor limbs to

conform to the clearances specified by the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission. In the handout that Ms. Green gave to the Board, it says:

“PUC 307:10 Tree-Pruning Standards

“a) With the land-owner’s consent, utilities shall prune trees adjacent to all distribution circuits to the following minimum clearances on no more than a 5-year cycle:

- 1) 10 feet below the conductors;
- 2) 8 feet to the side of the nearest conductor; and
- 3) 15 feet above the conductors, at time of pruning.”

Ms. Green continued that newer PUC 307.10 standards requires our clearance corridor to be wider than in the past. PUC makes a corridor of 8 feet. Liberty Utilities was doing a 6-foot corridor. This has required more vegetation work and tree removals and as a result, trees planned for removal are sometimes at an inventory state. Currently removals located along single-phase construction are being deferred. The removals will be performed as resources are available and will be prioritized by relative risk to other trees found in the inventory process. That is, we expect most of these planned and inventoried removal on the scenic roads to be deferred until a future date.

Ms. Green said they will follow the PUC guideline if it’s a good idea to follow it. Sometimes, she said, professionally, it’s not a good idea. If it’s an 8-foot shrub like a viburnum that won’t grow much higher, a better cut might be at 9 or 10 feet. It’s not a rigid 8-foot rule. Additionally you have to consider the electric conductors. You may have to be a little more aggressive so the electric conductor doesn’t fail. This will minimize outages. So following the states 231 RSA rule and because of budget we strive to do what is best. However, at this time Ms. Green said she expects to have the budget to remove the above list of trees.

Mr. Dalessio said that at a Select Board meeting the members were concerned about the “heavy-handedness” that has been going on. Some of trees looked like they had been carved away without any caring about the aesthetic of the tree. So the Board asked Liberty Utilities that trees be “lightly pruned.” This includes any trees on town property. They too should be “gently pruned”. By Mr. Dalessio’s house in Drewsville, the cutting along the Drewsville Common was terrible and the Board is very concerned about that. This also pertains to the scenic roads, Mr. Dalessio said. The Select Board wants it to look decent when they are done. Ms. Green said they would do their best but what Mr. Dalessio was asking is subjective.

Mr. Dalessio then asked what do you do if a landowner refuses. Ms. Green said if it is definitely considered a fire hazard, there is a follow up with the landowner.

Ms. Andros asked if a tree were pruned so that it is “super ugly,” is there a situation where the tree can be removed and another replanted in its place. Mr. Dalessio said the town is trying to hire an arborist to advise the Select Board on what trees to plant on the Walpole Common. Sometimes it’s more costly to try and keep a tree alive than it is to replace them, he said.

Ms. Green said there are other trees that are marked so that they can be watched. The tree may not be growing upright and may go down in a windstorm. Or there might be a limb that

might cause potential problems. Poplars are checked because they are prone to fail. A lot of trees are marked and kept as an inventory so that when funding becomes available, there is an opportunity to go back and check those first and then move out from there.

Ms. Green said Liberty Utilities wants to be a partners with its customers and offers other resources that may be found online. For example, there are several energy-saving suggestions. She demonstrated a typical cutting, which is on both sides of a pole. She also referenced a program where customers can get up to 100 trees for free in a town.

Mr. Miller closed the Public Hearing and said that Liberty Utilities had fulfilled its obligation of the RSA and was all set for the maintenance cutting on Walpole's two scenic roads.

Here are the remaining PUC guidelines.

"b.) Utilities shall implement measures such as mid-cycle reviews to identifying and mitigating elevated risk from tree exposure on circuits or sections or circuits that are significantly and/or continually experiencing tree-related interruptions, where it is practical to do so.

"c.) Utilities shall not be requires to prune to the clearance standards specified in (a) of this section where:

- 1.) The land-owner has refused or restricted permission to prune.
- 2.) A municipality or other local body, by ordinance or other official means, has refused or restricted permission to prune, or
- 3.) Pruning to the standards specified in subpart (a) would be detrimental to the health of the tree, in which the utility shall adhere to the guideline provided in ANSI A300 Part1- 2008 Edition, available as noted in Appendix B.

"Trees under the 12-inch circumference limit and brush capable of growing into the energized conductors will be cut with landowner's consent.

"Trees to be removed, based on clearance needs and risk assessment performed by Liberty Utilities and qualified foresters from Environmental Consultants, Inc (ECI) have been marked with red or pink flagging stapled to the trees. Removals are noted in the enclosed details as an activity = "Rmc," a size = diameter class (ie 05-08") and by land type distinction (Unmaintained (UM). Rural (R) and Maintained (M))."

Goals and Objectives: No discussion. There will be a Planning Board workshop on Tuesday, January 25, 2022, with Lisa Murphy, a senior planner at Southwest Community Planning Commission.

Fees for voluntary mergers:

After a short discussion it was decided to raise the \$25 fee for voluntary mergers to \$50 to cover all the costs.

New alternate:

Travis Adams was at the meeting to observe an actual Planning Board meeting. At the end of the meeting Ms. Andros asked him to tell the Board more about himself and why he wanted to be on the Planning Board. Mr Adams said he and his wife live on Pleasant Street and have purchased a lot on County Road and plan to start working on a home in the spring. His wife's parents live in Walpole. His parents are from Charlestown. He graduated from Fall Mountain High School in 2001. He has never been involved in any civic group before, but after listening to some of his neighbors and after tonight's meeting, he said he was interested in being a member of the board. Mr. Marcom made a motion to approve the appointment of Mr. Adams as an alternate member of the Planning Board. Mr. Harrington seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Adams now has to go to the Town Clerk and be sworn in.

Re-up reminder. Dennis Marcom and Jeff Harrington's terms are up in 2022. They can announce their candidacy at the Town Clerk's office Jan. 19-28.

Adjournment: Mr. Marcom made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Perron seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilou Blaine
Recording Secretary

cc: WPB, ZBA, Town Officials, The Walpolean.

Posted: Inside the Town Hall, on the bulletin board outside the Post Office, www.walpolenh.us

[Next meeting: Tuesday, January 11, 2022.](#)

[Workshop: Tuesday, January 25, 2022.](#)