

Dear Durham Town Councilors,

May 28, 2019

On June 12th the Durham Planning Board will be asked to approve the removal of dozens of trees by Eversource in preparation for the installation of 3-phase power lines to serve their Durham Point Road customers. Eversource representatives, with whom I have personally spoken, told me that this project is being undertaken at the "Town's request". During the Council's "Roundtable" discussion on May 20, Administrator Selig reported that many years ago, following severe ice storms and other events resulting in power outages, he and the DPW became "strong advocates" of Hendrix cable and asked Eversource to make improvements in town to include Hendrix 3-phase "spacer cables". This request was apparently made without specific guidance with respect to neighborhoods, designated scenic roads, residential or commercial zones. On June 12th Planning Board members will be told by Eversource that the "Town" requested the "improvements" on Durham Point Road as they seek permission to remove and trim trees on this Town designated "scenic road". The Town Council has not voted to improve electrical reliability throughout the town without regard to negative impact on the scenic and aesthetic character of our designated scenic roads or other specific areas of town. The Town Council needs to make **that fact very clear** to the Planning Board before June 12th. Also, the Town Council should direct the administrator to amend his apparent blanket request to Eversource. While it may make sense to utilize 3-phase, spacer technology in some parts of town, it is not necessary or appropriate in others.

Notwithstanding the fact that we periodically suffer the consequences of ice storms, strong winds, car crashes, etc., we actually now have very reliable service on Durham Point Road. Eversource's tree trimming program and judicious tree removals have been very effective while still retaining the scenic character of the road. Overzealous expansion of utility infrastructure is not in the Town's best long-term interest! It is within the Planning Board's authority to limit tree removal and trimming on designated scenic roads in the interest of preserving the long-term objectives of the community and its Master Plan. The Town Council should encourage the Planning Board to do so in light of Eversource's apparent, current understanding of the "Town's request".

Eversource representatives told me Durham Point Road customers are now provided single-phase power from either the Sunnyside Road end of Durham Point Road or from the power line crossing near 283 Durham Point Road. The two lines meet at a pole near Mathes Cove Road. During construction of the Seacoast Reliability Project (SRP), Durham Point Road customers will be served by the same, existing routes. Whether the proposed 3-phase upgrade is completed or not, each customer will continue to be served as they are today. One representative stated that the 3-phase upgrade project had been "way down on the list" of projects but that it makes sense to do it now because crews will be in the area for the SRP. Thus, it appears, the 3-phase project is moving ahead at this time as a matter of convenience, is not directly related to the SRP and is not a required upgrade.

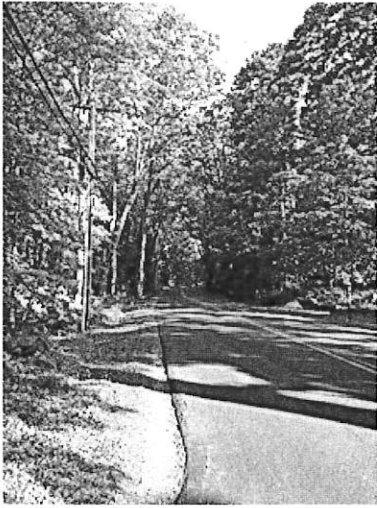
Removing the tree canopy to open views of clustered, large Hendrix cables with two-foot spacers every thirty feet on much taller poles, silhouetted against the sky, will destroy the scenic character of historic Durham Point Road. A reasonable alternative to this major insult is a stronger, well-insulated single cable that can improve reliability and preserve our scenic road.

Councilors, as a group or as individuals, should encourage the Planning Board to exercise its authority to deny the aggressive tree removal and trimming plan for scenic Durham Point Road as proposed and require a more conservative, less consequential plan.

Respectfully,

Malcolm Sandberg

CC: Planning Board



Taller poles (some up to 15 ft. higher than existing poles) will require more trimming aloft. Rather than a view of foliage overhead, there will be silhouetted clusters of heavy cables.