

From: RobinM [<mailto:melodyofharpists@gmail.com>]

Sent: Monday, June 24, 2019 12:21 PM

To: Michael Behrendt

Subject: PB | Eversource tree trimming and scenic roads | public hearing comment

Greetings, Michael --

Please forward this email to the Planning Board. Thank you.

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Dear members of the Planning Board:

I support measures that enhance public safety, and as we know from experience, downed trees or branches can block access to first responders. Our rural areas are often more challenging for that access -- a point that, presumably, residents take into account when choosing their homes. In addition, I have empathy for those whose very lives depend on continuous electricity, such as those dependent on medical equipment or access to emergency care.

So of course I support appropriate tree removal and trimming. But as we know from experience, the Town does need to argue its definition of *appropriate* -- which can run counter to the goals of the Eversource corporation or its subcontractors.

So I was pleased to hear that Eversource listened and responded to the community subsequent to its presentation to the Town Council on June 3. I remain dismayed that it took such effort on the part of the community to get to this point. Knowing that Durham Point Road is a designated scenic road of value to all residents and visitors, why couldn't Eversource have come to the same position on its own? That is not merely a rhetorical question. It is, rather, a challenge to Eversource for future petitions to the Town of Durham.

That said, I have the following observations and requests:

- 1) If indeed the best practice for tree trimming around the Hendrix spacer cables is to cut significantly smaller *holes* in the tree canopy than is standard for regular cable wire, then Eversource should adhere to those best practices unless the Board determines otherwise.
- 2) The Planning Board has the authority to specifically require that best practice—or, indeed, other measures, under 231:158 Effect of Designation as Scenic Roads, as I read it. The relevant section states:

V. A town may, as part of a scenic road designation under RSA 231:157 or as an amendment to such designation adopted in the same manner, impose provisions with respect to such road which are different from or in addition to those set forth in this section. Such provisions may include, but are not limited to, decisional criteria for the granting of consent by the planning board or other designated municipal body under paragraph II, or protections for trees smaller than those described in paragraph I, designated for the purpose of establishing

regenerative growth along the scenic road.

3) Regarding accountability: I would ask the Planning Board to require monitoring -- by an independent trained arborist -- of any tree trimming work by Eversource or its subcontractors, the cost of which to be reimbursed by Eversource, and (as Eversource arborist Ian Farley suggested) weekly meetings to review the work to date, said meetings to be attended by members of the Town staff and open to the public, with appropriate notes to be posted in FRIDAY UPDATES.

4) I also ask the Planning Board to draft language for future approvals with Eversource that holds it -- and its subcontractors -- to the terms that the Board agrees upon for this specific round of cutting and trimming on Durham Point Road. At the least many of those terms those should hold for other scenic roads in Durham. Future Planning Boards may revise those terms, but members would at least be informed by discussions around this current application.

Finally, to return to where I started, I would ask the Board to strongly encourage Eversource to consider amending its application procedures to inquire of each client town that has scenic roads what features should be considered when developing a tree trimming plan for each such road.

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We as a society have become increasingly dependent on reliable electricity, but New Hampshire residents -- and their visitors -- still value the state's natural beauty. Finding the balance or point of compromise is worth some effort. I appreciate the Board's work toward that end.

Regards,

Robin Mower
Britton Lane, Durham

*Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better. It's not.*

-- Theodor Seuss Geisel, author and illustrator

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