

64 Woodlawn Street  
Hamden, CT 06517-1337  
fmc\_b\_warbler@yahoo.com  
March 3, 2014

To: Members of the Energy Committee  
Re: House Bill 5408

Like many Connecticut residents, my husband and I are very concerned about the disastrous impact on our town's quality of life and property values that the felling and extensive trimming of trees by the power company (UI) could have. I believe that your committee can play an important role in preventing that disaster.

I have contacted the commissioners at PURA and many other state and local officials about many of our concerns. This letter expresses some further thoughts about this important matter. I respectfully request that you take them into account when working on House Bill 5408.

Please include the following protections against excessive tree removal and trimming in House Bill 5408:

1. **Criteria** for determining whether a given tree should be removed should include **the importance of the tree to the neighborhood and to the adjacent property owner**, not merely the position of the tree in relation to power lines.

2. **Removal of trees on private property should require written consent from the property owners.** Notification with a right to object is NOT enough! Lack of a dissenting response to a notice should not be construed as agreement to the removal: **"silence" is NOT consent.** Property owners may be away for extended periods of time, or may be ill; notices may be delivered to the wrong address -- once in a while we receive mail for other addresses -- and one cannot assume that misdelivered mail will reach its intended recipient.

3. **Proposed removal of trees in the strip between the sidewalk and the street should require detailed consultation with the property owner** whose yard is adjacent to that strip.

If the beautiful horse chestnut tree in front of our house were removed, it would have a major impact on my life. I need to park under it in hot weather, and it beautifies the neighborhood when it is full of pink blossoms. That tree was a gift from a forester and I consider it a family treasure. Since ours is the power-line side of the street, I'm especially worried about what might happen to that tree during an intensive tree-removal program.

It is important for decision makers to realize that wholesale removal of street trees on the power-line side of a street would disproportionately affect the quality of life and property values of property owners on that side of the street.

4. If a property owner and the power company disagree about removal of a street tree, **the municipal tree warden should have the final say about whether the tree will be removed.**

5. There should be **a clear definition of what a hazardous tree is**, so that non-hazardous trees are not cut down or pruned more drastically than necessary.

We should value non-hazardous street trees that provide **wildlife habitat** and thus **give people a chance to observe wildlife**. I would hope that there are non-hazardous street trees that have some dead wood, or holes that have occurred when limbs fell off, and that such trees will be retained.

Last winter we were delighted to find a Screech Owl using a hole in the street tree in front of our neighbor's house. As far as I can remember, that tree weathered last year's storms without significant damage, and I don't believe that it contributed to the only power outage we experienced in connection with those storms.

6. Power companies engaged in tree removal and trimming should maintain a **customer service line with a real person answering the phone, so that customers can ask questions and register objections.**

7. **Tree-removal/trimming plans should be reviewed periodically, with opportunity for public input**, so that adjustments based on experience can be made.

8. **Power companies should be required to plant a tree for every tree removed**, and for many reasons **species that will provide shade** should be included in lists of acceptable species for replanting.

Thank you for your consideration of these points. I look forward to finding out what House Bill 5408 looks like.

Sincerely,



Florence S. McBride