

Written testimony in support of HB 5150 before the Environmental Committee. Submitted by Christy Hass Dlugolenski, Tree Warden City of New Haven, retired.

Honorable Senator Ted Kennedy and Honorable State Representative James Albis.

I am writing in support of the proposed clarifications to the State Statute 23-59 referring to the Tree Warden responsibilities. It has become imperative that the local tree wardens have the authority and responsibility to protect the urban canopy for the communities they serve. In the past 40 years as tree warden in both Rocky Hill and New Haven, I have found the requirement to post trees for which there has been a request for removal or pruning by a the utility, residents or other interested party essential for the clear decision-making by the Tree Warden. With the more recent enhanced tree-trimming program by the utility companies, the Tree Warden the utility company and the community have open communication that begins with the posting of the tree in question. That communication leads to decisions on each tree that takes into consideration tree health, the necessity for the action requested, and the value of the tree environmentally and aesthetically to the community. The requirement to post every tree including those being requested by utilities or other third parties will protect those trees that should not be removed or pruned and promote the removal of those that are dead, dying, diseased or structurally unsound. The open public hearing process allows for full disclosure of the tree health, consideration for any construction or utility work required, as well as a clear understanding of the value of the tree to the community. During the public hearing, the tree warden has an opportunity to negotiate, educate and ultimately make a clear

best-case decision. The public input allows the community to raise issues that may not be clear from a utility or construction standpoint. All this improved communication and problem solving for the urban canopy begins with the posting requirement as stated in HB 5150.

In the days prior to posting all trees, there were many cases of misunderstandings, false information and poor decisions that led to much animosity between and among the residents, the utilities, the tree warden and the community at large. I heartily support the changes being made to the Tree Warden statute as the language will clarify the posting requirement and add strength to the statute.

As Tree Warden in New Haven for the past 17 years, I have held many public hearings. The outcomes of those hearings have always been well received and unchallenged. The relationships built in the community with the utility company, construction project managers, individuals, and the general public begin with the posting of the trees to alert all those parties of the action being sought. The Tree Warden relies on that process to make the decision based upon all the input.

I encourage the passage of HB 5150 in its entirety including the provisions for clearer language on shrubs, debris removal, and the requirement to report tree removals on state highways.

Respectfully submitted:

Christy Hass Dlugolenski
Tree Warden, City of New Haven, 1999-2016
Tree Warden, Town of Rocky Hill, 1977-1999