

February 18, 2016

TO: Committee on Environment

RE: Comments on Raised Bill No. 5150

I am a retired research scientist with the US Forest Service and also serve on the Tree Commission of the Town of Hamden.

I urge the Environment Committee to endorse the proposed revision of Sec 2 Subsection (f) of section 23.65 of the general statutes. The current wording that the town tree warding **may** hold a public hearing has resulted in the public not being informed of the proposed removal of trees on public property. In some cases, it seems that the tree warden, the permittee and abutting property owner are the only entities that are aware of the proposed tree removal. There needs to be more transparency regarding tree removals—it should not be a secret process!

The proposed revision of Section 1 of Section 23-59 has defects. The rewording would require the posting only of trees, shrubs or group of shrubs that the tree warden determines may have aesthetic or environmental importance. This would give the tree warden authority to remove, without posting, not only hazardous trees, but also those the tree warden considers to be unaesthetic or of no environmental value. The changes regarding the need to only post a group of shrubs instead of individual shrubs adds confusion are not necessary in my opinion. The the tree warden can simply place flagging around a group of several stems—technically a shrub is multi-stemmed and may arise from a single point or several points.

The proposed new section 3 is ambiguous. Removal of any debris could be interpreted to include stumps, which could do additional damage to the ecology. While I would like to see that the utilities be required to remove stumps in the tree lawns between sidewalks and the street in urban areas, this may not be appropriate for forested, rural areas. What is needed is for utility companies to clarify that their check-off for the removal of brush represents a consent to the removal of all shrubs and trees less than 6 inches in diameter--it not for clean up, but permission to remove all understory vegetation. This new section should also codify that the utilities follow DEEP's recommendation that shrubs and small trees, with a mature height of less than 20', be retained in the utility zone. The general public needs a better understanding what is meant by brush removal and what the utility will do regarding clean-up. Most important is that the general statues be more explicit that shrubs and small trees that will not reach into utility lines be retained.

Sincerely,

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