

PLANNING BOARD	February 22, 2022, 7:00 PM
TOWN OF HAMPTON FALLS	TOWN HALL

FINAL

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

A. CALL TO ORDER

Todd Santora, Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

B. ROLL CALL – PLANNING BOARD

Present: Todd Santora, Chairman; Edward B. Beattie, Selectmen’s Representative; Shawn Hanson, Lisa Brown-Kucharski, Abigail Tonry, Andrew Brubaker.

Absent: Eric Cimon, Vice-Chairman

Non-voting: Mark Sikorski, Building Inspector; Glenn Coppelman, RPC Circuit Rider Planner; Rachel D. Webb, Town Secretary.

Guests: Christopher Moultroup, Forestry Supervisor, Unitil Forestry Operations; and Benjamin Richard, Forestry Supervisor – Seacoast, Unitil Forestry Operations

C. PUBLIC HEARING

1. **Case #22-02-01:** Application from **Unitil** for Final Public Hearing for a **Scenic Road Alteration Permit** of: 1) Maintenance tree pruning on Brimmer, Brown, Depot, Drinkwater, Parsonage, Curtis, Sanborn, and Nason roads; 2) Forestry Reliability work on King St. and Sanborn Rd.; and 3) Hazard tree removal at 37 Goodwin Rd. Hampton Falls.

C. Moultroup described that Unitil is proposing three separate programs for consideration by the Planning Board.

The proposed Hazard tree removal at 37 Goodwin Rd. Hampton Falls was a request by the customer who called in and requested that Unitil remove the trees. Unitil agrees that the trees are hazards and agrees to take them down, and are seeking the Planning Board’s approval to do so.

The proposed Maintenance tree pruning on Brimmer, Brown, Depot, Drinkwater, Parsonage, Curtis, Sanborn, and Nason roads is the usual and typical cycle of maintenance for which Unitil comes to the Town for approval annually, to trim to six-foot clearance as per the local Hampton Falls ordinance requirements. In addition, Unitil’s application included a list of Hazard Trees along those same roads for which Unitil is seeking approval to remove those trees.

The proposed Forestry Reliability work on King St. and Sanborn Rd. is a new program for Hampton Falls. Unitil’s Forestry Department received a list from their Operations Engineering Department) of roads that have experienced frequent outages that were tree-related. Unitil looked at those roads for ways to mitigate the outage susceptibility problem by removing a few hazard trees, looking for dead branches above the lines. Not trimming, but hazard trees or dead limb removal.

B. Richard explained that on King Street there were a total of nine (9) trees in the same area with similar defects. On Sanborn Road the Ash trees were more susceptible to the insect Emerald Ash Borer beetle, with serious decline in those trees, in addition to overhang over the power lines.

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T. Santora requested clarification about the new proposed Forestry Reliability work asking if that was for removal of trees, or for more than annual maintenance trimming, and the Unitil representatives confirmed that it was for removal of trees. T. Santora continued that he drove by 90% of the trees on the list and saw trees that were dead and needed to be removed, growing into the wires and overhanging the wires. At the end of Drinkwater there are a number of trees growing into the wires, and he stated that there is a safety issue. He also saw some trees that were listed to be removed that were not necessarily dead, so he wondered why those were being proposed to be removed. C. Moultroup clarified that the list of roads are locations where Unitil plans to do routine tree trimming maintenance, and Unitil has also submitted their list of hazard trees that need to be removed along those same roads, while their crews are doing maintenance work in the same location.

C. Moultroup said that the Ash trees being infected with the beetle Emerald Ash Borer is slowly infiltrating the region, from Atkinson moving North toward the seacoast. Sometimes the infected trees are easy to identify because they turn yellow with peeled bark, but some do not look as obvious. T. Santora asked if there were any preventive measures the Town could take, with C. Moultroup's response that trees can be injected by an Arborist on an individual tree basis, but it is not a wide-scale approach/solution.

A. Tonry asked the question of what Unitil is doing with the wood chips from the Ash trees with the beetles and disease, and C. Moultroup responded that there are no quarantines in the state at this point, whereas there used to be quarantines by town and by county, but not anymore.

T. Santora asked if the customer requested tree removals were in writing, or were they just phone call requests, and B. Richard responded that they were phone calls. Specifically, the 37 Goodwin Road request was to remove some Maple trees next to the pole that are multi-stem, triple-dominant, with a co-dominant maple tree next to it, and another single tree with some die-back and defects in the trunk.

Another customer request was Drinkwater Road, right across the street from the Public Safety Building, where it would be a benefit to Unitil in the long-run to remove the trees now, because they are growing right into the power lines, are a tall-growing species, and would otherwise be a problem forever. C. Moultroup said that there are approximately thirty (30) trees in that location, as requested by the customer for removal. A. Tonry said that she was nervous about the number of trees being proposed for removal in that one location. C. Moultroup reiterated that this location was a customer request, which prompted a discussion of whether the trees were located on private property or whether they were located in the public right-of-way, to which the Unitil representatives responded that the trees were mixed, with some on private property and some in the right-of-way.

E. Beattie commented that there is a similar scenario at the Goodwin Road location, with some proposed trees located on private property, and some within the public right-of-way. E. Beattie further questioned the proposed tree removal on Sanborn Road in front of the Cimon property, that may be 50-foot Ash trees. A. Brubaker questioned the King Street intersection location, and

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asked if Unitil contacts the customers before or after they obtain Town approval, and the response was that Unitil obtains their approval with the Town first, then they contact customers. A. Tonry requested that Unitil propose a more selective tree removal at the Drinkwater location, so that a whole clear-cut swath of trees is not removed. E. Beattie stated that he is not in favor of tree removal unnecessarily, and that he is in favor of diseased and dead trees being cut. L. Brown-Kucharski emphasized that people move to Hampton Falls for the certain look of the community, namely all of the trees, and that it is important to keep that look and to keep the trees.

The Unitil representatives stated that their customers do not have to agree to allow Unitil to remove the trees. They further described that Unitil investigates power outages and their causes, in order to try to minimize future outages. They found that live trees with defects cause more outages than dead trees. T. Santora asked when Unitil was proposing to actually do the work for which they were seeking approval, and the response was during mid-Summer or early Fall, and that Asplundh would be doing the work. T. Santora said that he wants to complete a Site Walk with Unitil before voting on this application. A. Brubaker said that a managed forest is in the best interest of the community. A. Tonry said that she was concerned with the deficit that would be created at the Drinkwater location and suggested that perhaps five (5) or ten (10) trees could be selected to be retained and not removed, so that it would not look clear-cut. Overall, looking at the entire list, there were not many large trees proposed for removal. S. Hanson said that it is important to check with the homeowners to give them the prerogative to choose. He agreed with A. Tonry that there were not many large trees being proposed for removal except for one Oak on Drinkwater that he thought was very old, but that only may need to be trimmed instead of removed. C. Moultroup said that he could agree to take that one off the tree removal list because he thought that the tree leaned a bit away from the lines, and may not be as much of a threat, but he stated that the tree does have decay. C. Moultroup said that normally Unitil would be more selective and submit a longer list of trees, but they wanted to stick with the ones that were obvious hazards. S. Hanson restated that if there was one tree he would request to be removed from the list, it would be the Oak (at pole # 25-26) on Drinkwater, and C. Moultroup agreed. A. Brubaker mentioned another large tree on Brimmer Lane; C. Moultroup said that it is diseased with mushrooms growing at its base which indicates a weak structure.

E. Beattie raised a question about a tree that was cut down on Route 84, east of Goodwin, and the issue of why the Town didn't know about that tree being cut, as it was on a Scenic Road.

T. Santora suggested a site visit, and L. Brown-Kucharski agreed, to view the trees on Unitil's proposed tree removal list, with the Unitil staff, prior to the next Planning Board meeting. Specifically, to look at the Goodwin, Drinkwater, Sanborn, and King Street locations. C. Moultroup said that B. Richard would send a revised tree removal list to the Planning Board, prior to the site visit, as they noticed some minor typos on the list that they will amend.

M. Sikorski requested confirmation that the trees, on the proposed list for tree removal, are growing into the Primary Electric Lines, and C. Moultroup responded yes. G. Coppelman reminded the Board that they need to invoke jurisdiction on this Scenic Road Alteration Permit

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Application, and the Board also needs to post the special meeting of the site visit. Additionally, G. Coppelman continued that the Zoning Ordinance in Article IX, Section 3, regarding Scenic Roads, specifically states that ...any removal of trees... along Scenic Roads...is under the purview of the Planning Board. Tree trimming is allowed within six-feet (6') of transmission wires.

MOTION: To invoke jurisdiction on Case #22-02-01: Application from Unitil for Final Public Hearing for a Scenic Road Alteration Permit of: 1) Maintenance tree pruning on Brimmer, Brown, Depot, Drinkwater, Parsonage, Curtis, Sanborn, and Nason roads; 2) Forestry Reliability work on King St. and Sanborn Rd.; and 3) Hazard tree removal at 37 Goodwin Rd. Hampton Falls.

MOTION: E. BEATTIE

SECOND: S. HANSON

UNANIMOUS

MOTION: To schedule a site visit of the Planning Board, together with Unitil representatives, to view the locations of proposed tree removals on Unitil's Scenic Road Alteration Permit application (case # 22-02-01) on Tuesday, March 15th at 1:00 PM, starting at Hampton Falls Town Hall, and to post said special meeting of the Planning Board.

MOTION: S. HANSON

SECOND: L. BROWN-KUCHARSKI

UNANIMOUS

MOTION: To continue case # 22-02-01 to the next Planning Board meeting on March 22, 2022, at 7:00 PM.

MOTION: L. BROWN-KUCHARSKI

SECOND: S. HANSON

UNANIMOUS

D. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS PLANNING BOARD MEETING

MINUTES: January 25, 2022.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Planning Board from January 25, 2022, as written.

MOTION: S. HANSON

SECOND: L. BROWN-KUCHARSKI

UNANIMOUS

E. OTHER PLANNING BOARD BUSINESS

1. Review of Ordinance and Regulations Committee (ORRC) proposals for amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and/or Regulations. S. Hanson said that the work of the ORRC on revisions to some zoning definitions is not quite done yet, but it is close to being done.

F. COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD MEMBERS

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1. A. Brubaker reported a Housing Survey that is currently underway by the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC), and he asked G. Coppelman to further elaborate. G. Coppelman described that the RPCs were required by state RSAs to undertake a Housing Needs Assessment every five-years, but that historically this has not been done routinely due to lack of funding. This past year; however, there was \$900,000 appropriated by the state for the nine (9) RPCs in NH (at \$100,000 each) to conduct a Housing Needs Assessment, all utilizing the same formats, and methodologies so that results could be compared between regions. G. Coppelman suggested that R. Webb share the RPC Link to the Housing Needs Assessment survey with the Planning Board members. Further, he stated that the Rockingham Planning Commission meeting in March (2nd Wednesday) is hybrid on Zoom, and the recently hired Housing Planner coordinating the project will be making a presentation, if Planning Board members wanted to Zoom into the meeting. R. Webb will follow-up with details.

2. A. Brubaker reported a Sea Level Rise Transportation Vulnerability presentation by David Walker of RPC that showed different degrees of inundation of sea level rise in the region. He recommended that RPC's Dave Walker make this presentation to a joint meeting of the Hampton Falls Selectmen and the Planning Board. G. Coppelman said that he had seen the presentation at a recent RPC meeting and that it was very good and was only approximately 20 minutes in duration.

3. L. Brown-Kucharski asked about the ORRC work regarding short-term housing, and A. Tonry reminded the Board that it was Counsel's recommendation that the Board temporarily table that work. G. Coppelman said that there is proposed state legislation addressing the subject, and it would be wise to wait until that is settled before getting too far into the subject on a local level.

4. T. Santora recognized S. Hanson, that it was his last Planning Board meeting because he is not running for re-election. He recognized S. Hanson's professional and positive contributions to the Planning Board over the past nine (9) years that were comprised of six-years as Planning Board member and three-years as the Selectmen's Representative on the Planning Board and thanked him for his service. S. Hanson said that he has concurrently served on the Conservation Commission for a total of seven (7) years, and that he is staying on that Commission. G. Coppelman said that S. Hanson's contribution to the Planning Board will be missed, as it takes a while to learn the subject of the Planning Board. L. Brown-Kucharski tried to convince S. Hanson to stay on as a Planning Board Alternate member, and S. Hanson thanked her and said that he would take her request under advisement.

G. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 8:05 PM.

MOTION: L. BROWN-KUCHARSKI

SECOND: S. HANSON

UNANIMOUS

Special meeting, site visit re: case 22-02-01, scheduled Tuesday March 15, 2022, at 1:00 PM.

NEXT PLANNING BOARD MEETING SCHEDULED TUESDAY, March 22, 2022, at 7:00 PM.

These minutes prepared by Rachel D. Webb, Planning, Zoning and Town Secretary.