

## BOROUGH OF STONINGTON

### POLICY ON MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC TREES

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: JUNE 2006

REVISED: NOVEMBER 2006, DECEMBER 2011, SEPTEMBER 2015, MARCH 2017

**PURPOSE:** To establish criteria and procedures for performing near term and long term maintenance on public trees in the Borough of Stonington.

**BACKGROUND:** Trees contribute to the beauty and atmosphere of the Borough. Those located on public land, such as along streets and in parks, belong to all the citizens of the Borough. Therefore, there is a need for a defined process by which public trees are maintained, removed, and planted. The Commissioner of Borough Parks, Trees, and Rights-of-Way, who acts as the Borough Tree Warden, is responsible for implementation of this policy. Except in emergency situations, for example following a major storm, no public tree is to be removed or heavily pruned without following the steps below:

- PROCEDURES:**
- a. A Borough resident or elected official who believes a tree on public land needs pruning or removal should, in writing, bring the tree in question to the attention of the Borough Tree Commissioner.
  - b. The Tree Commissioner will inspect the tree and if necessary consult with an independent licensed arborist.
  - c. If the tree requires pruning, the Tree Commissioner will arrange to have the work performed.
  - d. If the Tree Commissioner concludes that the tree should be considered for removal for reasons of public safety or because of the type/condition of the tree, she/he will place at least two signs on the trunk of the tree advising that the tree will be considered for removal at the next regular meeting of the Board of Warden & Burgesses. The signs must be posted at least 14 days prior to the Board meeting at which removal is on the agenda.
  - e. If the Tree Commissioner does not agree that the tree should be considered for removal, he/she will notify the party who requested the removal and state his/her reasons for the decision. The individual (resident or official) who requested removal has the right to appeal the Tree Commissioner's decision to the Board. If the resident/official decides to exercise that right, he/she must notify the Tree Commissioner and the Warden in writing. The tree will then be posted.
  - f. The potential removal will be placed on the agenda of the next Warden & Burgesses meeting that satisfies the 14-day posting requirement. After public comment is taken on the subject, the Board will vote on it.

g. If the Board of Warden & Burgesses vote to remove the tree, the Tree Commissioner will make the necessary arrangements. However, in cases where the tree is being removed at the request of and for the convenience of a nearby property owner or owners, that property owner or owners must agree in advance to fully underwrite the cost of removal (including stump grinding) and of planting a suitable replacement tree, either near the same location or at another location chosen by the Tree Commissioner. A "suitable" tree is one whose type is deemed appropriate to the location by the Tree Commissioner and whose diameter is at least 2 inches at chest height. The property owner or owners who requested the tree's removal may either reimburse the Borough for the costs of removing and replacing the tree or they may arrange and pay for the work to be done by a CT-licensed or certified arborist.

h. Within six months of removing a public tree the Board of Warden & Burgesses will publish in regular meeting minutes either a plan for replacing the tree or the reason(s) for not replacing it.

**EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:** Following a severe storm or other emergency, the Tree Commissioner and Borough Warden may take necessary actions regarding tree removal or heavy pruning without following the procedures listed above. If one or more public trees are removed during or immediately following an emergency, the Tree Commissioner will report on the losses at the next regular meeting of the Board of Warden & Burgesses, and those losses will be recorded in the meeting minutes.

**LONG TERM MAINTENANCE:** An inventory of all public trees will be performed approximately every ten years, beginning in 2008. The inventory will record the location, species, approximate height, and condition of all public trees six feet or greater in height. It will be used as the basis for developing, with the assistance of professional landscape designers, a comprehensive plan for improving and sustaining the Borough's public trees. The inventory is to be updated by the Tree Commissioner on an interim basis when trees are removed or planted.