

Public Hearing for Posted Tree Removals at 132 Chaplin St.

Wednesday, July 23rd 2025

7:00 pm Chaplin Senior Center

Public Hearing Minutes

Tree Warden Dave Stone called Public Hearing to order at 7:03 PM.

2. Introduction and CGS 23-59 Review:

Dave Stone introduced himself as Tree Warden/arborist for the Town (arborist for 26 years). Four trees in front of library inspected and identified for removal - received appeal that requires hearing per statute to hear everyone's opinion to make decision (can be appealed to Superior Court within 10 days).

3. Reading of Appeals and Correspondence:

- Letter received from Kara Aiken opposing removal of trees in front of library (not aware of any public safety issue that requires removal). Chaplin Village designated a Historic District to preserve character of its buildings and settings.
- Letter received from Ann Lewis and David Raczkowski who are not opposed to removal of trees due to poor health. Hoping green space added to parking lot with trees and other landscaping to help maintain rural character of the town.
- Letter received from Juan Sanchez who is not opposed to removal of library trees (Germany requires planting a tree for every tree cut down) - suggests same for Chaplin by replacing library trees with native trees and shrubs for small town country atmosphere.
- Library Director Sandy Horning noted many people have come into the library asking about trees being removed since notices posted including note regarding objections left in drop box.

4. Public Testimony:

- Kitty LeShay expressed concerns with inability to communicate with people in Town (more than 70% don't know about this project), concerned with not receiving Newsletter from former 1st Selectman anymore (defunded), asked why trees being eliminated, and concerned with unilateral decision for this project.
- Ann Chuk of Chaplin Street expressed concerns about big rectangle parking lot (like Walmart) presented at last HDC meeting with more greenery suggested (the existing in and out swerve of the road feels like part of a Historic District), asked to relook at removing 6-8 parking spaces to put trees; noted discussion at HDC meeting about parking spaces close to cemetery, and appreciates all the work done with Arboretum.
- Kara Aiken expressed concerns with not much green space in proposed plan – would like to expand with more trees, shrubs and shade, and didn't know anything about this project until asked what she thought about the plan (minimal communication about this project).
- Sally Zimmerman of Chaplin Street asked about urgency for removing trees ahead of bidding process – suggests intersection and sidewalk as places to modify if bid comes in higher (wait for more information on cost).
- Audience member expressed concerns about need for new parking lot (people can park on the grass).
- Adele Swart would like assurance of a plan that would provide a healthy green environment if the trees need to come down (concerned with current view of Town Hall – back of building with trash cans), and suggests communicating with the Town by posting on the website.
- Johanne Philbrick expressed concerns about removing trees - would take away look of a small town.
- Allen Olsen of Chaplin Street expressed concerns about incomplete plan for parking lot project with quick decisions to meet deadlines (people would enjoy green space built into the project), and suggests delaying execution of trees until possibility of getting green space back.
- Randy Weiss expressed concerns about removal of trees seeming to come out of nowhere, and would like green space to be clarified (wants the Town to look nice).

5. Presentation by Tree Warden:

No urgency. Removal can wait until contractor wins bid with one exception – would need to move forward if problem arises in that timeframe (Tree Warden personally liable). Individual trees: Maple – one-sided and leaning due to Eversource, root rot at base with fungal disease, not bad shape health wise, structurally a bad storm could take it down and hurt the Japanese Maple - safety concern and should be removed. White Pine – leaning towards the library (shouldn't be this close to parking area or structure), branch inclusion with little to no connection to leaders could fail anytime – safety concern and should be removed even without new parking lot. Spruce – big lean, golden hue within the tree from fungal disease (expensive to control), signs of stress – not a major safety concern but not worth saving. Bradford Pear – most invasive, average lifespan 25-30 years (branch in the middle weakens the tree and it starts to fall apart) - not a major safety concern but already damaged.

6. Open Floor Discussion, Questions and Answers

- Audience questions and comments: what is cost to put in a mature tree (about \$10,000 per tree); are any other trees in the plan being removed (one near the door identified to come down before this project, working on preservation plan for Japanese Maples and Dogwood); what are plans for landscaping (12-foot space from edge of road constricted with power lines, lots of options - vision of grasses, shrubs, trees as tall as possible); is 12 ft green space finalized (check with 1st Selectman, working on landscaping plan not included in project); discussion at HDC meeting about reducing 2-4 parking spaces for trees (did not attend this meeting); consider removing parking spaces near the cemetery - deserves the most consideration and protection; plan should have all possibilities if changes needed including trading parking spaces for green space; concerns with 1st Selectman not here to answer questions (attend the next BOS meeting August 7th); communication important – advertise meetings on digital display at Fire Department (email concerns to 1st Selectman); are landscaping costs coming out of Library/Senior Center budgets (working on – landscaping not included in some grants); Town Administrator working on Phase II of the grant that would address some plantings (more to the park for ADA compliance – application in process); consider the Town's character that is teetering on the edge of still being a Historic District; get ready for Phase II that involves more paving up to the entrance of the park; important for everyone to talk to 1st Selectman individually and attend meetings; Newsletter put out previously by 1st Selectman good suggestion for current/future administration.
- Concerns regarding Town Hall area: few trees identified for removal (safety concern with the vault) and one interior tree snapped hanging over RT 198 (Town liability). State came and cut down front row making it worse for remaining trees (they offered to take down remaining trees at big cost savings to the Town). Arboretum Commission Chair Helen Weingart noted the Commission has vision for this area as a welcoming place with native plants and pollinators (looking for professional help and doing fundraising). Leslie Ricklin (Arboretum Commission member) noted people are concerned – they love trees (recruiting volunteers to help with this project and keep people informed with information on Google Groups or electronic sign). Future project coming involves the Old Post Office.

7. Conclusion with Possible Decision from Tree Warden

Have 3 days to make decision per statute – Tree Warden respectfully declines appeal application.

- Helen Weingart asked to post on Google Groups when trees will be removed (need to confirm if cost for removal included in project).
- Ann Chuk suggested a bulletin board at the gas station for posting information.

8. Adjourn: Public Hearing adjourned at 8:40 PM.

*Respectfully submitted by
Recording Clerk Kathleen Scott*