

Daniel V. Jerram
First Selectman



Town Hall
530 Main Street
Post Office Box 316
New Hartford, CT
06057

Ron Miller, President
The New Hartford Business Council
Post Office Box 618
New Hartford, CT 06057

December 18, 2012

RE: Route 44 Tree Cutting by CONN DOT

Dear Ron:

Thanks for coming to see me to discuss the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation's (DOT) plan to remove trees within the New Hartford village center. As I'm sure you know, since we had our conversation, the DOT has returned to our town, and the four state-owned trees we discussed have been removed by State employees.

As difficult as it is to deal with the State DOT's decision to cut the trees, we must remember that these State employees are in the difficult position of having to balance the safety needs of the traveling public with aesthetic beauty trees can provide. All in all, DOT maintains over 3,700 miles of highway in Connecticut. To complete this job professionally, state officials have implemented strict engineering specifications that they are required to maintain to ensure public safety. By maintaining roads to these specifications, lives are ultimately saved, and legal liability concerns are minimized.

Throughout this difficult process, I have advocated for the Town of New Hartford and its business community. Neither I, nor the Board of Selectman had any desire to have these trees removed and we did not initiate this process. When I was first informed that State forces were coming to evaluate the trees for cutting, I visited nearly every downtown business to inform them of the State's impending action. I requested that the State make any and all attempts to prune the trees first before any tree would be cut down. When the State returned with their decision to completely remove the trees, I asked them again to reconsider their decision. As a result of my request, the State agreed to take one final look at the situation. They did, but unfortunately they didn't change their minds.

In the end, the State ruled that the trees had grown far too big for the location. They explained that the trees were protruding well into the travel portion of the road obscuring site lines and had even been hitting vehicles (mostly trucks) who's owners have been calling the state complaining that these same branches were causing them to have to cross the center line (into oncoming traffic) to avoid damaging their vehicles. By extending so far into the travel portion of the road, the trees were non-conforming to state specifications and they had to be addressed. Pruning was considered, but ultimately the State decided to remove the trees.

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Please note, that while Town officials input was welcome during the process, the decision was ultimately made based on the DOT's engineering specifications to ensure public safety. While it would have been nice to be able to overrule the state, when you consider all the relevant facts, that these are state-owned trees, within a state-owned island along a state-owned highway, we must respect the fact that they are maintained by State Officials who have to adhere to State Regulations so that safe travel can occur.

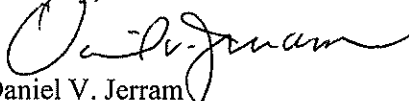
The Board of Selectman is resolved to restore the island to its former glory. Representatives of the DOT have promised that the Town will be granted a permit to replant the island. As you know, since my election, some 60+ new trees have been planted to beautify town properties, and we will continue this process and this island will be replanted in the spring of 2013!

I have reached out to "master gardeners" on both the Conservation Commission and the Garden Club seeking their advice as to what kind of trees the Town could plant to beautify our village center. I have also consulted with many of the businesses within the village center for their suggestions.

In the coming months the Board of Selectman will settle on a design, appropriate the funds, acquire the state and local approvals and come spring we'll have a newly replanted island for all to enjoy for years to come. I would like to ask the members of the New Hartford Business Council to join with the Board of Selectman and become a part of this islands renewal.

I appreciate your care and concern for the well being for the Town of New Hartford, our village center and our entire business community. Let's get together soon and talk more about how to make New Hartford a better place to live, work and play!

Sincerely,


Daniel V. Jerram
First Selectman