



# Town of Trumbull Tree Warden Emergency Procedures

**TOWN OF TRUMBULL, CT**

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## **Executive Summary**

Between March 2, 2018 and May 16, 2018 multiple storms devastated Trumbull's tree population. The worst storm occurred on March 7<sup>th</sup> after which the Tree Warden was inundated with calls from residents, from the Police Department, Engineering, the First Selectman's office, Parks, Highway, Planning & Zoning. Each call represented a potential hazard to public safety. No less than 280 locations were ultimately identified and all issues addressed. Trees were cut down or trimmed day after day, obviously a strain on the Tree Warden's budget.

## **Normal Operations**

A report entitled Tree Warden Position Summary was prepared in September 2015. That report described the role & responsibilities of the Trumbull Tree Warden and detailed his normal operating procedures. For comparative purposes this report starts with that information.

- **Tree Warden Role**

"The Town of Trumbull Tree Warden is a part-time State mandated position, with appointment by the Director of Public Works subject to approval by the First Selectman. The Tree Warden, under the direction and control of the Director of Public Works, shall have charge of the planting, preservation, care and removal of trees within highways or public places or on town property, and such other duties as are imposed by law. The Tree Warden is a licensed arborist. The Tree Warden cannot have a financial interest in the tree work to be performed on behalf of the Town."

- **Tree Warden Responsibilities**

1. Enforce land use regulations:  
Review and approve landscape plans to ensure compliant installation per Planning & Zoning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Wetlands Commission for industrial, commercial, age-restricted and affordable housing development
2. Advise town officials on tree related matters:  
Provide expertise to town officials as related to resident requests for tree inspection, evaluation and management
3. Inspect tree pruning and removal operations by utility companies and by the State of Connecticut. The Tree Warden oversees the aggressive United Illuminating Enhancement Tree-Trimming (ETT) program that was implemented June 2014 and was then funded for the next 7 years
4. Tree Warden responsibilities include the implementation of a street tree maintenance program to:
  - Provide safety to vehicles and pedestrians
  - Beautify Trumbull roads
  - Improve the health of roadside trees

- **Normal Operating Procedures**

Warden receives much of his information via Q-Alert, a program linked to the Town of Trumbull website that allows town employees and residents the ability to report issues under a variety of categories. Although it is possible to submit an issue anonymously, most submitters provide contact address and telephone number. If "tree" is selected in the program dropdown, Warden will contact

submitter or visit location directly and follow through as needed. If issue is reported via phone, Warden personally enters tree issue information to Q-Alert so that it is a reliable tracker of work to be done, in process, or completed. If issue is reported via phone call to Highway or Public Works, those employees enter the information into Q-Alert.

The first criteria for issue resolution is determining who owns the tree:

- If located on personal property, resident must resolve
- If power lines are an issue, Warden notifies United Illuminating. If UI cuts the tree, Town is to remove
- If tree is Town owned, Warden notifies subcontractor of issue, prioritizing based on level of danger to vehicles or pedestrians; Town owned trees are those on Town property, which includes trees along roads, measured from center line of roadway

- **Overview of financial/budgetary process**

Annual budget consists of:

- Tree Warden part-time salary – Tree Warden uses personal vehicle and cell phone
- Anticipated subcontractor expenses - based upon history and professional expertise, subcontractor time requirements are estimated and bid
- Emergency servicing funds – often required but difficult to predict
  - Should a state of emergency or disaster be declared, i.e. hurricane, flooding, etc. Tree Warden to provide sufficient detail of work for a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) claim to be filed for potential financial assistance.
- In general, Tree Warden expenses stay within budget, but per the Tree Warden this is due to prioritization of work, not due to lack of work

### **Current year circumstances**

The culmination of several issues led to current year overages in the Tree Warden budget:

1. Per Town guidelines part-time employees cannot routinely exceed 19.5 hours of work per week. Prior to the implementation of NovaTime time clocks, the Tree Warden was not required to document or submit time; he was routinely paid for 19.5 hours per week, every week of the year. Additionally, a Deputy Tree Warden works 5 hours per week. Since the implementation of time clocks, a more accurate picture of time worked is available. If either work more than time allotted for a given week, it is the understanding of both employees that they are to reduce hours in subsequent weeks, but reductions were not possible immediately following the storm dates in March and in May.
2. 2019 budget and 2018 budget and expenditures were extracted from MUNIS as of 6/30/18:

| Account Description | 2018           |                | 2019           |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                     | To 6/30/18     | Budget         | Budget         |
| Salary              | 34,759         | 28,966         | 29,368         |
| Salaries-Overtime   | 2,942          |                |                |
| Program expenses    | 92,598         | 96,500         | 100,000        |
| Emergency services  | 127,619        | 23,305         | 23,000         |
|                     | <u>257,918</u> | <u>148,771</u> | <u>152,368</u> |

YTD emergency services expenses by vendor can be summarized as follows:

| AMOUNT                | VDR NAME/ITEM DESC                     |
|-----------------------|--|
| 2,376                 | 'A QUICK PICK CRANE SERVICE INC Total  |
| 111,600               | 'EASTON ARBORISTS Total                |
| 475                   | 'FAIRFIELD COUNTY STUMP GRINDING Total |
| 700                   | 'JAY'S FIREWOOD SERVICE Total          |
| 500                   | STUMPERS LLC Total                     |
| <u>11,968</u>         | TOWN OF TRUMBULL -Special Detail       |
| <u><b>127,619</b></u> | <b>Grand Total</b>                     |

The work directed by the Tree Warden and completed by Easton Arborists is performed at a non-emergency rate of \$67/per manhour and an emergency rate of \$100/manhour. For the most part, these costs per hour include all required equipment. Emergency storm work was performed for ~280 locations, which calculates to an average contractor cost of less than \$400 per location.

### Emergency Operating Procedures

Much of the storm's damage was reported by phone rather than by input to Q-Alert. It was not possible for the Tree Warden to keep up with Q-Alert input during the storm or immediately thereafter. Instead, the Tree Warden began a list of damage which included the notifications received via Q-Alert or by phone, and he manually added his observations and inspection notes as he drove 400 miles of Town roads. The 10 page preliminary list of 241 addresses is available for review. The list included addresses; it often detailed specific damage, and it prioritized work requirements, which the Tree Warden immediately began communicating to Easton Arborists. The Tree Warden continuously updated priorities and inspected the contractor's work.

### Emergency Operating Communications

On at least 4 separate occasions between March 20, 2018 and May 7, 2018 the Tree Warden emailed status reports to the Superintendent of Parks, the Director of Public Works, the Purchasing Manager, and the Chief Administrative Officers. These emails included:

- Work Tree Warden had performed to date and number of hours utilized
- Locations and number of trees requiring work
- The number of days and hours worked by the contractor, including rates per hour, the total number of locations serviced to date, and the average number of locations serviced per day

- Based upon the work completed and the number of trees yet to be addressed, the Tree Warden estimated time and cost to complete
- Based on location and work yet to be performed, Tree Warden estimated remaining cost of Special Detail Traffic Control
- In an email dated May 7, the Tree Warden requested additional funds, identifying value of work completed and billed to date, work completed but not yet billed and committed work. This email included requests for Highway property in the amount of \$14,400 and Parks property in the amount of \$21,600.

### **Summary**

The magnitude of the storms required day-by-day cooperation among several departments; the Tree Warden, Highway and Parks worked together to remove storm damage and debris in a timely manner and to ensure public safety. As of this date, neither Auditor nor Tree Warden is aware of any insurance claims filed against the Town for injury to life or damage to property due to the storms.