

KNOX's Stance on Enhanced Tree Trimming

As a 48 year old green community building nonprofit serving Hartford, KNOX stands alongside Hartford and Greater Hartford residents, Hartford's Advisory Commission on the Environment, Yale's Urban Resources Initiative, the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association, the Connecticut Urban Forest Council, the Connecticut Fund for the Environment, and the New Haven Garden Club in expressing concern for Connecticut PURA's (Public Utilities Regulatory Authority) Draft Decision for Docket # 12-01-10.

First, we would like to thank utility providers for engaging in the public process and their continued interest in coming to a long-term plan that balances the needs of their customers.

While we do not wish to duplicate arguments, we do wish to reinforce the following points.

- PURA should take into equal consideration the State Vegetation Management Task Force's recommendations, which included collaboration from **both utility companies and forestry experts and the community at large**. The State Vegetation Management Task Force report can be found at knoxhartford.org.
- The long term economic, social, and environmental benefits of trees (and especially street trees) should be valued and balanced with the interests of providing low cost power energy to residents. **This manifests in long-term investment in burying wires**, especially in our urban cores which produce the most pollution and provide the most public benefit per resident. This also manifests itself in treating healthy, productive trees differently than dead ones.

There is no "blanket" policy that will solve this issue. Implementing a policy to remove trees and branches within 8 feet of a power line will cost more in environmental damages and lost benefits than it will in solving interruptions in power. To give an idea of the economic value of trees: In the State Vegetation Management Task Force Report, the authors list an example of the value of a specific elm tree in West Hartford. It is detailed here:

A healthy, tall elm tree in West Hartford provides benefits worth approximately \$150 every year. These benefits include:

- \$12.31 in reduced heating costs, due to the tree being a wind break
- \$31.10 in reduced cooling costs, from the shade cast
- \$59.12 in reduced storm water processing costs
- \$41.70 in air pollutants removed
- \$5.93 in removed carbon dioxide

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Of specific interest to KNOX and the community we serve, **we are concerned that renters and any other non-property owners are excluded from the decision making process.** As the majority of Hartford residents are renters and they are the ultimate beneficiaries of street trees and public green spaces, their interests could be represented by more proactive and detailed collaboration with Hartford's Tree Warden. Furthermore (especially given letters of concern already received by PURA), we implore utility providers and their contractors to provide a more detailed and accurate description of the tree trimming that will take place throughout Connecticut.

Of further interest to KNOX is offsetting the negative environmental impact of enhanced tree trimming throughout the state. There is no way around it: street trees provide the most benefit to humankind, especially in urban cores where tree planting locations are limited by concrete and buildings. Furthermore, our community forests are a major tourist attraction and of significant public benefit. We look forward to CL&P's presentation on their planned actions and learning more about their desires to:

- Increase the wind resiliency of trees by pruning 100 feet into forests
- Working more closely with community forestry experts
- Plans for long-term investment to bury wires and offset the negative environmental, economic, and social affects of their proposed tree trimming procedures.

Please note that KNOX follows the "Right Tree, Right Place" policy when planting trees in the City of Hartford. We work hand-in-hand with the city forester and take reasonable care to avoid planting near major power lines. To learn more about our tree planting program, please contact Executive Director Ron Pitz at (860)951-7694, ronp@knoxparks.org.