

Weak trees a concern: selectmen discuss bridgewater tree work

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BRIDGEWATER — After the most recent storms knocked down power lines, First Selectman Curtis Read proposed a Tree Warden Report during the Board of Selectmen meeting on Tuesday, September 8, which will identify trees that need to be taken down.

Mr. Read explained a briefing could be beneficial to see where there are weaker trees that should be removed. He suggested adding a cost to the new town budget to take care of fallen or at-risk trees.

Mr. Read said there are certain areas in town that are a disaster waiting to happen and the town needs to be more aggressive in identifying at-risk trees to inform Eversource.

“There are hundreds of big trees that are problematic,” Mr. Read told Voices. “We have to think about increasing the tree budget or work with the power company. Trees can fall out of the woods anytime.”

He noted during the meeting that other towns are making the same considerations and the Connecticut Council of Government is pressuring Eversource to do better. During the last storm, Bridgewater did not qualify for FEMA funds despite losing power and internet service for several days, according to Mr. Read, who noted the damages cost the town about \$135,000.

He added having a tree company check and cut trees that are rotting or are hazardous should be on average about \$1,600 a day. Mr. Read said the next steps would be to increase the budget to incorporate the costs, but for now, have the tree warden map out areas that need immediate attention.

“We need a systematic way to track these trees,” said Mr. Read.

In other news, Mr. Read told the board he applied for a Small Town Economic Assistance Program grant of \$100,000 for phase two of the Grange project. The money would be used to take down the structure, dig out the oil from underneath the building and other related mechanicals.

He said the grant money is specifically for the one-level building project and he only had a short window to apply. He added he contacted Gov. Ned Lamont because the project has been stifled by Connecticut’s Historic Commission. The governor’s support will free the town to do what it wants with the Grange.

He explained Gov. Lamont assigned a person to examine the issue and told Mr. Read the Historic Commission has stifled several other towns across the state.

Residents who oppose the one-level structure, Mr. Read said, would need about \$1.8 million to renovate the current building and bring it up to date. He said he is hoping for the green light on the project so the town can start the oil removal process.

Bridgewater hasn’t received a STEAP grant since the senior center project. The application for the grant has been completed and sent to the state.

Selectmen discussed a proposed noise ordinance since there have been several complaints regarding various noisy activities taking place in the early morning hours. Bridgewater will adapt the wording found in the state’s guidelines.

Mr. Read told Voices it wouldn’t be a bad idea to have the ordinance on the books rather than having the police referred to every complaint.

"If there is a civil problem, residents can highlight the ordinance," said Mr. Read. "It might help people who are making a lot of noise. Maybe it'll be enough to deter people from making too much noise."

He also told Voices there are portable saw mills in town that operate in residential zones, but people should be considerate of their neighbors or it leads to ordinances.

Mr. Read also informed the board the town was approved for a Local Capital Improvement Program grant of \$91,191 for projects related to a sidewalk, a parking lot and other small town projects. There will be a special selectmen's meeting later in the month for public input on the project.

Mr. Read clarified the \$91,191 will not cover the whole project. The town will go out to bid again on the capital project. Some of the previous bids received, he noted, were a little too high. He said he hoped they can probably get the price down, calling the project in the best interest of the church.

"We might as well do it right and tie in the sidewalk, and the church wants to have handicapped accessibility," said Mr. Read.

The selectmen discussed a string of robberies in the Blueberry Hill and Bilberry Road areas and urged residents to lock their cars.

Selectman Alan Brown said residents can install motion sensor lights to deter thieves. Mr. Read noted such robberies are happening across the state and suggested possible signage warning of police surveillance.

Source: https://www.primepublishers.com/voicesnews/news/top_stories/weak-trees-a-concern-selectmen-discuss-bridgewater-tree-work/article_db2e5e56-f753-11ea-81d2-37481325e718.html