



# Town of West Newbury

381 Main Street

West Newbury, Massachusetts 01985

Wayne S. Amaral, Director of Public Works

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## Update from the Tree Warden and the West Newbury Tree Committee Regarding Trees Along Public Roadways in Town

West Newbury is fortunate to have so many outstanding trees lining our roadways and, without doubt, the health of these trees is very important to all of us. This is an update on what is currently being done and what lies ahead with respect to our public roadway trees.

- The health of trees along public roadways can be adversely impacted by many factors, either alone or in combination. These factors include harsh summer drought, insect infestation, fungal disease, road salt, rising water level in low lying areas, lack of room for adequate root growth, and lack of critical nutrients, among others.
- Of particular concern at this time, ash trees are being subjected to attack from the Emerald Ash Borer and many ash trees in West Newbury are unhealthy, dying, or dead. In addition, oak trees have been adversely impacted in the past decade by rising water levels in low lying areas, harsh summer droughts, and Spongy Moth infestation (formerly gypsy moth). Rising water levels can drown tree root systems and can be lethal to upland trees like many oak species.
- This summer, a survey of all ash trees along public roadways was conducted pursuant to the funding approved at our Spring Town Meeting. The survey categorized the health of some 450+ ash trees along our roadways as either good, fair, poor, or dead. The survey results have been completed and a Report was presented at the September 12, 2022 Select Board Meeting. An estimate of the cost for injecting an insecticide into those trees in good or fair health has been prepared and under review. Another estimate has also been prepared for the removal of the dead trees.
- No survey has been conducted on the health of other species of trees along West Newbury's public roadways at this time.
- The Select Board and the Department of Public Works (DPW) are aware of and concerned about the issue of unhealthy or dead trees along public roadways. For the last several years, the DPW has had an annual budget of \$50,000 for tree removal as part of 10-year phased plan to remove dead or dying trees along public roadways. DPW had previously identified approximately 400 trees along public roadways that should be removed, some of which are ash and are included in the recent survey but some of which are other species.



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- The cost to remove a dead or dying tree varies widely depending on individual site factors, such as the type and size of the tree and the ease of access for large equipment. However, as a ballpark figure, one can expect the cost to be \$3,000 per tree on average but, again, that cost can easily double or triple for a given tree depending on the site-specific factors involved.
- In the immediate future, the DPW plans to present options and cost estimates to the Select Board and the Town for addressing the ash trees along public roadways in light of the results of this summer's survey. The goal for this initial step is to save as many ash trees as feasible, particularly since the cost of insecticide injection per tree (even over a five-to-ten-year period) is significantly less than the cost of removal.
- For the longer term, the DPW will revisit the current 10-year phased plan for removal of dead and dying trees to determine the most cost-effective and tax-sensible approach for addressing other trees along public roadways that need to be removed.
- Reminders about other factors related to tree removal along public roadways:
  - The public utility companies, such as National Grid, are legally charged with the responsibility of clearing electric utility lines, and public utility companies have the right to engage in tree trimming and tree removal themselves.
  - Public roadway trees along Main Street (Rt. 113) are located on state property and are generally not within the jurisdiction of the Town.

If you have any questions about our public trees in town, feel free to contact the Tree Warden, Wayne Amaral at [DPWDirector@WNewbury.org](mailto:DPWDirector@WNewbury.org) or by phone at 978-363-1100 extension 135.

The West Newbury Tree Committee is also available to answer questions, especially regarding privately owned trees, they can be reached by email at: [treecommittee@wnewbury.org](mailto:treecommittee@wnewbury.org)