

Annual Report

I am writing this report to you on the present state of our trees on our streets, parks and right-of-ways.

The overall assessment is poor, but manageable. It is poor because of two main reasons. The first is we have such a high percentage of old trees. Due in part because of clear cutting in the late 1800's-early 1900's, we have a tremendous amount of trees that have become hazardous. In designing and implementing urban forestry programs, we try to avoid a high percentage of trees the same age. However, because of so many factors that influence these programs, this is not always possible.

The second is that the funding for our tree care program has not changed in many years, and the condition of our trees is declining at an exponentially increasing rate. The funding (\$20,000.00) has not changed in the five years I have been in office. I do not know how long it has been at this rate, but it is woefully inadequate. With the help of a recently completed partial survey of our trees, I will find a figure of what we need to spend in order to start getting ahead of this decline.

I urge all to not get into finger pointing, as this will surely keep us stuck. What we need to move forward, is change. Right now, I am designing a proactive tree care program that will move us forward. The good thing is that it can be designed around a budget. It is not as important on how fast we move forward, just that we do move forward. It will have to be more than we are spending now, but it can be flexible.

The hazardous conditions are out there now, as so many of you having called about. They will not go away. The least expensive and much more productive means of moving forward is in a proactive tree care program. The reactive program we now use is antiquated and more expensive in the long run. I believe we learned this lesson once with the town hall building.

We need experienced, paid, arborists to be working on our trees, not a volunteer we elect every year to manage our trees in his/her spare time. Survey after survey has proved that trees are assets to towns. (U.S. Forest Service web site) Managing these assets adds value to our properties, and therefore increases the return on our investment. A town with poorly managed trees is less desirable than one with a proper urban forestry management program. The longer we remain in this reactive program, the more it costs us not only in just loss of trees, but also in loss in property value.

Pierre Erhard

Wenham Tree Warden

