

THE CITY OF NEWPORT

RESOLUTION

OF THE

COUNCIL

No. 2023-56

WHEREAS: The City of Newport has been a designated Tree City for over 32 years and has had a successful comprehensive tree protection and vegetative management program since 1987; AND

WHEREAS: The City of Newport knows that any statewide or local vegetation management plan requires the participation of RI municipalities, tree wardens and municipal tree commissions to ensure the fullest cooperation. The City of Newport has a Tree Ordinance a designated Tree Warden, Tree and Open Space Commission, City Forester, Parks/Grounds and Forestry Division of Public Services and a comprehensive Tree and Open Space Master Plan; AND

WHEREAS: The City of Newport knows that the power grid in Rhode Island is a complex system that provides many comforts and luxuries and working around electricity is something that demands respect; AND

WHEREAS: The City of Newport knows that the impact of Climate Change will bring stronger storms that will require that vegetation be professionally managed to ensure electric service is not interrupted; AND

WHEREAS: The City of Newport has a long history of a cooperative relationships with RI electric utility companies over the years to ensure safety of the city's electric lines while managing the pruning, growth and beauty of Newport trees that contribute to Newport's arboretum. The city and its designated representatives work closely with the Newport Tree Conservancy, state departments, private residences, and all utility providers; AND

WHEREAS: The result of this multi-pronged approach and efforts provide a successful and coordinated approach to safety and delivery of utility services to the city and its residents and businesses; AND

WHEREAS: In 2006 the City of Newport requested through their State Delegation that a change in the state law be made to allow for an off-street tree planting program to be created. The State approved the change and the program that was created allows for the planting on private land within 20 feet of city land for the direct purpose of managing and eliminating conflict of tree canopy with utility lines. This program successfully reduced tree canopy and utility line conflict both on private property and municipal property and reduced tree related utility costs. This program successfully continues to this day; AND

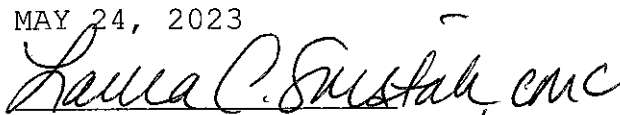
WHEREAS: Senate Bill S 0466 and House Bill H 5656 assign over reaching authority to RI Energy and the RI PUC for designing and implementing the vegetation management plan without any contributing participation from municipalities or arborists; the scope of any future vegetation plan is not clearly defined; the expansion of authority onto private property is not specific; and the potential costs for any plan, which will be passed onto RI Energy Customers is not outlined in the bills; AND

WHEREAS: Additionally, Senate Bill S 0466 and House Bill h 5656 will allow the current public energy provider access to private property for trimming or cutting without owner approval; NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED: That the City of Newport respectfully recommends to the State of Rhode Island Senate and House that they withdraw Bills S 0466 and H 5656 and create a comprehensive stakeholder committee to design a statewide vegetation management plan to include: municipalities, tree wardens, arborist, state government, RI Energy and the RI Environmental community.

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IN COUNCIL  
READ AND PASSED  
MAY 24, 2023

  
LAURA C. SWISTAK, CMC  
CITY CLERK