



# Tree Warden Position Summary

TOWN OF TRUMBULL, CT

September 15, 2015

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**August 31, 2015**

**Mrs. Elaine Hammers, Chairperson**  
Board of Finance  
Town of Trumbull  
5866 Main Street  
Trumbull, CT. 06611

Dear Mrs. Hammers:

I respectfully submit the enclosed report entitled **Tree Warden Position Summary**.

The following represents an overview of the Trumbull Tree Warden role and planning responsibilities, as well as an analysis of a sample of the Q-Alert reporting tool data.

I would like to thank the Trumbull Tree Warden, Warren Jacques for his assistance in providing all requested information.

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Keegan  
Financial/Accounting Controls Analyst

## **Executive Summary**

The internal audit function is an important tool of management for maintaining the integrity, efficiency and the effectiveness of financial and operational systems and other management controls that are in place. The conducting of an effective internal audit is necessary to promote high standards of corporate governance.

Performance audits are defined as engagements that provide assurance or conclusions based on an evaluation of sufficient, appropriate evidence against stated criteria, such as specific requirements, measures, or defined business practice. A performance audit also provides objective analysis so that management and those charged with governance and oversight can use the information in this report to improve program performance and operations, reduce costs, facilitate decisions by those who are responsible to oversee or initiate corrective action and contribute to public accountability.

## **Scope & Methodology**

During the months of July & August 2015 I conducted a review of the Trumbull Tree Warden procedures, role and responsibilities. As part of the review process I interviewed Warren Jacques, Trumbull Tree Warden.

Warren provided a program overview and all documentation requested in a timely manner. Information is compiled below. Additionally, a sample of Q-Alert transactions were tested for timely and appropriate follow through.

## **Tree Warden Role**

The Town of Trumbull Tree Warden is a part-time State mandated position, with appointment by the Director of Public Works subject to approval by the First Selectman. The Tree Warden, under the direction and control of the Director of Public Works, shall have charge of the planting, preservation, care and removal of trees within highways or public places or on town property, and such other duties as are imposed by law. The Tree Warden is a licensed arborist. The Tree Warden cannot have a financial interest in the tree work to be performed on behalf of the Town.

## **Tree Warden Responsibilities**

1. Enforce land use regulations:  
Review and approve landscape plans to ensure compliant installation per Planning & Zoning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Wetlands Commission for industrial, commercial, age-restricted and affordable housing development
2. Advise town officials on tree related matters:  
Provide expertise to town officials as related to resident requests for tree inspection, evaluation and management
3. Inspect tree pruning and removal operations by utility companies and by the State of Connecticut. The Tree Warden oversees the aggressive United Illuminating Enhancement

- Tree-Trimming (ETT) program that was implemented June 2014 and which has been funded for the next 7 years
4. Tree Warden responsibilities include the implementation of a street tree maintenance program to:
    - Provide safety to vehicles and pedestrians
    - Beautify Trumbull roads
    - Improve the health of roadside trees

### **Overview of Operations**

Warden receives much of his information via Q-Alert, a program linked to the Town of Trumbull website that allows town employees and residents the ability to report issues under a variety of categories. Although it is possible to submit an issue anonymously, most submitters provide contact address and telephone number. If “tree” is selected in the program dropdown, Warden will contact submitter or visit location directly and follow through as needed. If issue is reported via phone, Warden personally enters tree issue information to Q-Alert so that it is a reliable tracker of work to be done, in process, or completed.

The first criteria for issue resolution is determining who owns the tree:

- If located on personal property, resident must resolve
- If power lines are an issue, Warden notifies United Illuminating. If UI cuts the tree, Town is to remove
- If tree is Town owned, Warden notifies subcontractor of issue, prioritizing based on level of danger to vehicles or pedestrians

### **Overview of financial/budgetary process**

Annual budget consists of:

- Tree Warden part-time salary – Tree Warden uses personal vehicle and cell phone
- Anticipated subcontractor expenses - based upon history and professional expertise, subcontractor time requirements are estimated and bid
- Emergency servicing funds – often required but difficult to predict  
Should a state of emergency or disaster be declared, i.e. hurricane, flooding, etc. Tree Warden to provide sufficient detail of work for a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) claim to be filed for potential financial assistance.

### **Review of Q-Alert activity**

A Q-Alert report containing 204 line items was obtained for the 7/1/14 – 6/30/15 period. To fully understand the issues submitted to Tree Warden and to ensure the appropriateness of reliance on the Q-Alert reporting system, a random sample of 74 line items were tracked to completion, i.e. resolution or payment to subcontractor.

A summary of the sample follows:

Issue	Resolution
Storm damage	5 trees removed; 4 trees pruned
Dead trees reported	31 trees removed; 9 not dead - required pruning
Dangling or dead limbs	8 trees removed; 16 trees pruned
Trees decayed	12 trees removed
Trees snapped, split, uprooted	8 trees removed
Trees leaning or blocking access or line of site	17 trees removed; 7 trees pruned

Finding: Issues reported in Q-Alert are investigated and closed in an appropriate and timely manner.

### **Planning**

The tree maintenance program has been annually funded for over 40 years. The 1972/73 budget was \$20,000 for contractual services; it has incrementally increased to \$100,000. In 1972, 100 trees were removed and the same number of trees were safety pruned. This same number of trees have been removed and safety pruned annually, and it is estimated that requirements will continue at the same rate for the next five years. These figures do not include the U.I.'s Tree Enhancement Program that was initiated last year and will continue for the next seven years. It is projected that the U.I. will remove approximately 300 trees and electrically prune 600 trees annually for the next seven years. The Tree Warden has, and will continue to administer this program.

Today, the Town's urban forest consists of approximately 20,000 trees. This is 6,000 fewer trees than when the inventory was first calculated in 1972. Over the years, 2,000 trees were removed through weather-related conditions and 4,000 trees were removed through the scheduled tree maintenance program. 2,700 of the 4,000 were 75 year or older sugar maples that are structurally weak and beyond their half-life point. Approximately 500 of these remain today and are scheduled for removal over the next decade. The majority of these trees are located behind high voltage wires and will be removed by U.I. through its Tree Enhancement Program.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, this report outlines the role and responsibilities of the Tree Warden and highlights the importance of maintaining and improving public safety for vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The report also addresses long-term planning, providing the town with a directive for future budgetary consideration.