

REGULATIONS FOR THE DESIGNATION OF SCENIC ROADS AND ALTERATIONS OF TREES AND STONE WALLS

1. STATUTORY PROVISION

These regulations have been duly adopted by the Sterling Planning Board to implement the provisions of MGL Chapter 40, Section 15C (Scenic Roads Act).

2. PURPOSE

The Scenic Road Act governs the cutting and removal of trees and stone walls during repair, maintenance, reconstruction or paving of roads by any agency, for the purpose of providing protection to the environmental, aesthetic and historical values of the town's roads. The Sterling Planning Board has adopted these regulations with the following objectives:

- A. To maintain the natural beauty that exists along scenic roads in Sterling,
- B. To enhance the rural character of the Town and encourage compatibility with existing roadside features,
- C. To encourage more environmentally sensitive development along the scenic roads in the Town, and
- D. To develop a growth of shade trees along Sterling's scenic roads to reduce the growth of underbrush and reduce the cost of roadside maintenance.

3. DESIGNATION OF SCENIC ROADS

The Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen, the Conservation Commission, the Historical Commission, or by petition by citizens of the Town may propose "scenic road" status for any road in Sterling other than a numbered route or a state or federal highway. The Planning Board shall hold a public hearing on the petition, notifying the Selectmen, the Tree Warden, the DPW Superintendent, the Conservation Commission, and the Historical Commission and advertising twice in a newspaper of general circulation; the first advertisement at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of public hearing.

The Planning Board shall make a recommendation at the Town Meeting on the merits of designation of the proposed road as a scenic road.

A majority vote at Town Meeting is required for designation. Such designations shall be effective as of the date of Town Meeting action. Any work on any portion of the right-of-way of a scenic road, which was not physically commenced at the time the road was designated as a scenic road, shall conform to these regulations.

4. CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION AS SCENIC ROAD (any or all of the following shall be considered)

- A. Overall scenic beauty and vistas,
- B. Small rural integrity,
- C. Contribution of trees to scenic beauty,
- D. Contribution of stone walls to scenic beauty,
- E. Age and historic significance of roads, trees, and stone walls,
- F. Proximity to built features such as historic structures, historic landscapes, cemeteries, and bridges, and
- G. Road features such as historic layout, surface, carriage width, use restrictions and bridges.

5. DEFINITIONS

Cutting and removal of trees shall mean the removal of one or more trees, trimming of major branches or cutting of roots sufficient in the Tree Warden's written opinion to cause eventual destruction of the tree.

Public Shade Trees (As defined, MGL Chapter 87, Section 1) "All trees within a public way or on the boundaries thereof including trees planted in accordance with the provisions of Section 7 shall be public shade trees; and when it appears in any proceeding in which the ownership of or rights in a tree are material to the issue, that, from length of time or otherwise, the boundaries of the highways cannot be made certain by records or monuments, and that for that reason it is doubtful whether the tree is within the highway, it shall be taken to be within the highway and to be public property until the contrary is shown."

Repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work shall mean any work done within the right-of-way by any person or agency, public or private. Construction of new driveways or alteration of existing ones is included, if it takes place within the right-of-way. Construction or alteration of water, sewer, electric, telephone, cable TV, or other activity within the right-of-way is also included.

Road shall mean the entire right-of-way including any necessary appurtenances including bridges structures, drainage systems, retaining walls, traffic control devices, sidewalks, but not intersecting streets or driveways. The right-of-way includes the area on and within boundaries of the public way. If the boundaries are not officially known, any affected tree or stone wall shall be presumed to be within the public right-of-way until shown to be otherwise.

Stone Walls shall be construed to include assemblages of stone involving at least one (1) cubic foot of wall material per linear foot totaling not less than ten (10) feet in length.

Tearing down or destruction of stone walls shall mean the destruction of stone walls along a public way. Temporary removal and replacement of stone walls at the original location with the same materials is permitted with Planning Board approval if the Town DPW is notified before the work begins so that it can confirm that the wall is properly replaced.

Trees shall include a living tree whose trunk has a diameter of two (2) inches, 4 ½ feet from the ground.

6. ACTIONS EXEMPT FROM PUBLIC HEARINGS AND APPROVAL

1. **For Tree Removal** The procedures of this Bylaw shall not apply when the Tree Warden acts in an emergency in accordance with MGL. Chapter 87 to remove dead or damaged trees or limbs, which may cause an obstruction to public travel or a dangerous situation with respect to utility lines.
2. **For Stone Wall Removal** A public hearing and approval by the Planning Board is not required when the removal is no more than 18 feet of a stone wall for a driveway, or six (6) feet for a walkway.

7. DESIGN STANDARDS

1. **Where stone walls exist, the maximum amount of stone wall to be removed is 18 feet for a driveway and six (6) feet for a walkway.**
 - A. Removed stone shall be used to repair other sections of the wall along the road,

- B. Stone wall sections to be removed for a driveway shall not exceed the driveway width by more than three (3) feet on each side for a total not to exceed 18 feet, and
- C. No wall shall be cut without construction of an appropriate terminus. Appropriate end points are required and consist of a stone wall with tapered ends turning back onto the lot along the drive, stone piers, granite post, or wooden post (with or without at gate).

2. Approval by the Tree Warden and Planning Board is required for the removal of all trees.

8. PROCEDURES

1. **Filing** Any person, organization, state or municipal agency seeking the written consent of the Planning Board regarding the cutting or removal of trees or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof on a scenic road shall file a request with the Planning Board together with the following:
 - A. The text of the legal notice identifying the location of the proposed action in terms enabling the readers to locate it with reasonable specificity on the ground without the need for additional plats or references, and describing in reasonable detail the proposed changes to trees and stone walls,
 - B. A statement of the purpose, or purposes, for the proposed action,
 - C. Plans, drawings, or other explanatory reference materials, including photos, showing the specific design or engineering details,
 - D. Except in the case of Town Boards and Commissions or not-for-profit conservation organizations, a filing fee of \$50.00 plus the cost of the legal advertisements shall be paid,
 - E. The trees proposed to be removed shall be marked by the applicant and verified by the Tree Warden, edges of the drives or right-of-way shall be staked, showing edge of paved or traveled way, and if appropriate, edge of road right-of-way intersecting the existing scenic road, and
 - F. Any further material useful to adequately inform the Planning Board.

Notice of submittal shall be filed with the Planning Board, a copy of the submittal transmitted to the Tree Warden, and Town Clerk after it is accepted and signed by the Planning Board.

2. **Notice** The Planning Board and Tree Warden shall, as required by statute, give notice of its public hearing by twice advertising in a newspaper of general circulation in the area, with the first publication of the notice to be at least fourteen (14) days prior to the hearing and the last seven (7) days prior to the hearing. Copies of the notice shall be sent to the Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Tree Warden, and DPW.

The Planning Board and Tree Warden may also require a sign to be posted on the property at least fourteen (14) days prior to the public hearing. This sign shall not exceed three (3) square feet in size and be posted in the location clearly visible to the public with the date, time and location of the public hearing.

In the event that the Planning Board holds a joint hearing with the Tree Warden acting under MGL Chapter 87, the notice shall be made jointly by the Planning Board and the Tree Warden.

3. **Tree Warden** Whenever feasible, Planning Board hearings shall be held in conjunction with those held by the Tree Warden acting under MGL Chapter 87. Consent to an action by the Planning Board shall not be construed as inferring consent by the Tree Warden or the reverse, nor shall execution of these rules and regulations in any way lessen the Tree Warden's duties as allowed under MGL Chapter 87.

The Tree Warden shall mark the trees shown on the plan as proposed to be removed and make recommendations to the Planning Board in this regard.

4. **Timing of the Hearing** The Planning Board shall hold a public hearing within 30 days of receipt of a properly filed request, and shall make a decision within 45 days of that receipt, unless a longer time is agreed to by the applicant.
5. **Reporting of Decision** The Planning Board may require sufficient bond to be posted to cover the costs of required work within the road right-of-way and to protect vegetation and stone walls. Such bonding shall be specified in the Board's decision. The Board may also require restoration of stone walls and replanting of trees.

The decision of the Planning Board shall be filed within fourteen (14) days of the decision with the Town Clerk; copies of which shall be sent to the Applicant, Selectmen, Tree Warden, DPW Superintendent, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, and those persons who have requested a copy of the decision. If a bond is required, copies shall be sent to the Town Treasurer and Building Inspector.

6. **Utilities** The procedures of this Bylaw shall not apply to maintenance and operation of utility lines as may be approved by the Tree Warden.
7. **Considerations** In acting in regard to a Scenic Road, the Planning Board shall consider the following:
 - A. Preservation of natural and cultural resources,
 - B. Environmental and historical values,
 - C. Preservation of scenic and aesthetic characteristics,
 - D. Public safety,
 - E. Traffic volume and congestion,
 - F. Relationship of the road design to the standards of the Planning Board's Subdivision Rules and Regulations,
 - G. Compensatory actions proposed, such as revision to avoid or reduce damage to trees or stone walls,
 - H. Financial and other consequences of design revision to avoid or reduce damage to trees or stone walls,
 - I. Evidence contributed by abutters, Town Boards and Commissions, and other interested parties, and
 - J. Other sound planning principles.

8. **Enforcement**

Filing Requirement Failure to file with the Planning Board and Tree Warden for permission to cut or remove trees or for destruction of any portion of a stone wall within the lay-out of the Scenic Road will require an immediate filing as detailed above and shall be subject to restoration of the features.

Compliance Failure to comply with the duly issued decision of the Planning Board shall be subject to restoration as detailed above and other remedial measures the Planning Board deems necessary, including, but not limited to the enforcement of the bonding and restoration as detailed above. Any decision not exercised within two (2) years of issue shall be void and require new filing.

Determination of Applicability In historic ways or other ways where the right-of-way width is considered 'variable', the width of the right-of-way shall be determined by the DPW Superintendent, based on the statutory provisions of MGL Chapter 87, Section 1.

Fines Any fines permitted by MGL Chapter 40, Section 15C or other statutes such as Chapter 87 Sections 1 through 13 or Chapter 242, Section 7 may be assessed for violations of these regulations.

Enforcement The Planning Board and the Tree Warden shall have the authority to enforce the provisions of these regulations.

SCENIC ROAD LIST

Adopted at Town Meeting

Albright Road ² Beaman Road ⁴ Bean Road ⁴ Bird Street ⁴ Boutelle Road ⁴ Bridge Street ⁴ Burpee Road ⁴ Campground Road ⁴ Chace Hill Road ² Chamberlain Road ⁴ Charles Patten Drive ⁴ Clemence Avenue ⁴ Crowley Road ⁴ Dana Hill Road ⁴ Elliott Road ⁴ Fairbanks Road ⁴ Flanagan Hill Road ¹ Ford Road ⁴ Gates Road ⁴ Gates Terrace ⁴ Goulding Road ⁴ Greenland Road ⁴ Griffin Road ³ Hardscrabble Road ⁴ Hastings Road ⁴ Hawkins Lane ⁴ Heywood Road ² Holden Road ⁴ Houghton Road ⁴ Jewett Road ⁴ John Dee Road ⁴ Johnson Road ⁴ Justice Hill Road ⁴ Justice Hill Road Cutoff ⁴ Kendall Hill Road ³	Kilburn Road ⁴ Laurelwood Road ⁴ Legate Hill Road ⁴ Lucas Road ¹ Maple Street ⁴ Meetinghouse Hill Road ² Mellon Hollow Road ⁴ Merrill Road ⁴ Mortimer Road ⁴ Muddy Pond Road ⁴ Newell Hill Road ⁴ North Oakdale Cutoff ⁴ Old Princeton Road East ⁴ Old Princeton Road West ⁴ Osgood Road ⁴ Palmer Road ⁴ Pine Street ⁴ Pratts Junction Road ⁴ Redstone Hill Road ⁴ Redstone Place ⁴ Reed Road ⁴ Roper Road ⁴ Rowley Hill Road ² Rugg Road ⁴ School Street ⁴ Sherwood Drive ³ South Nelson Road ⁴ Squareshire Road ⁴ Stuart Road ⁴ Swett Hill Road ² Taft Road ⁴ Tuttle Road ⁴ Twine Road ⁴ Upper North Row Road ¹ Wausacum Avenue ⁴	Westland Farm Road ⁴ Wilder Lane ⁴ Wilder Road ⁴ Wiles Road ⁴ Williams Street ² <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> ¹Adopted December 2, 1996 ²Adopted May 17, 1997 ³Adopted February 23, 1998 ⁴Adopted May 11, 1998 </div>
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