

PSNH explains policies for tree cutting

Work on Court Street in the city had sparked concern

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In response to concerns about recent tree trimming and cutting on Court Street and elsewhere in the city by Public Service of New Hampshire, officials from the utility company appeared before the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee Wednesday night to address officials' and residents' worries.

Some residents had contacted city officials with concerns that too many trees were being cut down.

Robert Allen, manager of vegetation management for PSNH, said tree trimming and clearing is done to reduce the chance a tree will fall on utility lines and cut power to homes and businesses.

Allen said the power company performs two kinds of tree maintenance. Scheduled maintenance trimming is done when part of a tree is pruned to maintain enough distance between the branches and the wires. Enhanced tree trimming is done when trees and brush within 8 feet of power lines are removed.

This year, PSNH has scheduled tree cutting along 75 miles of power lines. Ten miles of this stretch are in Keene and include trees on Court Street, River Street and Ashuelot Street.

Allen said his company communicates with property owners in every instance before a tree is trimmed or removed.

"We never strong arm and say 'you go take it down,'" Allen said. "We've had very, very good success with talking to customers."

Other business

With the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station in Vernon, Vt., scheduled to close at the end of the year, Keene city officials are taking a look at how local residents will be affected.

Elizabeth A. Fox, the city's human resources director, said a total of 46 Vermont Yankee employees live in Keene. Another 41 live in Chesterfield, 19 in Swanzey, and another six in other surrounding communities.

"This is going to be a significant effect," she said.

Fox said these people losing high-paid, high-skilled jobs will have an impact on the local economy, local housing market and area schools.

She said local leaders are urging state leaders to keep New Hampshire workers in mind, because of concerns they won't have as big a safety net as Vermont workers. In Vermont, Fox said, funding has been established to stimulate economic growth in affected communities.

"We will benefit from that as a neighbor, but we are almost as severely impacted as Vermont," Fox said.

The committee moved to recommend Mayor Kendall W. Lane draft a letter to Vermont Gov. Peter Shumlin and the Vermont Yankee Task Force supporting efforts to get affected families financial assistance.

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