

**FOI Complaint #1
Against
First Selectman Mrs. Elizabeth Milardo
May 17, 2018**

Per Connecticut Statutes and the Freedom of Information Act, I am hereby filing this complaint against First Selectman Elizabeth Milardo for a failure to provide documents/information requested in a timely manner.

My initial request was made via email on April 27, 2018 to Mrs. Milardo:

Fri 4/27/2018 9:47 AM
To:
Town of Haddam (selectasst@haddam.org);
firstselectman@haddam.org

Good morning,

Please forward me all emails, communications, notes, and maps etc. with regard to the tree cutting scheduled for Haddam by Eversource.

Thank you,
Melissa

REC'D & FILED

MAY 17 2018

Freedom of Information Comm.
BY uma

I have yet to receive any information from Mrs. Milardo other than a press release sent to me by her assistant, Joanne Ricciardelli on April 30.

Although I am a selectman, I have found it incredibly difficult, and in most instances impossible, to get information from the first selectman; therefore, I have no choice but to use the law to help me retrieve the information I need.

Thank you for your time,



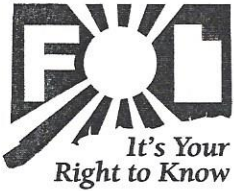
Melissa J. Schlag
PO Box 416
Haddam, CT 06438
860-398-0569
melissaschlag@hotmail.com

DOCKETED

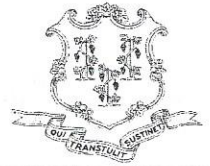
JUN 05 2018

Freedom of Information Comm.
BY AS

Since 1975



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION



Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission • 18-20 Trinity Street, Suite 100 • Hartford, CT 06106
Toll free (CT only): (866) 374-3617 Tel: (860) 566-5682 Fax: (860) 566-6474 • www.ct.gov/foi • email: foi@ct.gov

June 7, 2018

Town of Haddam
30 Field Park Drive
Haddam, CT 06438

RE: Docket #FIC 2018-0253; Melissa Schlag v. First Selectman, Town of Haddam; and Town of Haddam

Dear Respondent:

Please be advised that the Freedom of Information Commission has received a complaint alleging a violation against your agency. A copy of the complaint is enclosed for your reference. The Commission will send you a Notice of Hearing and Order to Show Cause, which will notify you of the date, time and place of the hearing.

In the interim, the Commission has instituted an ombudsman program with respect to complaints brought to it. Pursuant to this program, a staff member is assigned to act as liaison between the parties to each contested case filed. It is the responsibility of the ombudsman to effect settlements of complaints where possible, thereby avoiding the delays and expenses caused by unnecessary hearings. Of course, the ombudsman will not communicate nor participate with any person within the Commission who serves in a decision-making role with respect to this particular case.

Thomas A. Hennick has been assigned to the above-captioned matter. Please contact him at 860-566-5682 to discuss your case. **Please Note: Any written correspondence directed to this commission, except to the ombudsman, by any party to a contested case, must be copied and sent to all other parties.**

Sincerely,

M. Stratton
Acting Clerk of the Commission

①

Lizz Milardo

From: Melissa Schlag <selectmanschlag@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 27, 2018 9:47 AM
To: Joann Ricciardelli; Lizz Milardo
Subject: Tree cutting

Good morning,

Please forward me all emails, communications, notes, and maps etc. with regard to the tree cutting scheduled for Haddam by Eversource.

Thank you,
Melissa

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Lizz Milardo

From: Lizz Milardo
Sent: Monday, April 30, 2018 7:45 AM
To: Joann Ricciardelli
Subject: Fwd: Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut - NEWS RELEASE

You can send this to Melissa per her request

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Bandzes, Patricia C" <patricia.bandzes@eversource.com>
Date: April 25, 2018 at 3:27:15 PM EDT
To: Haddam - Lizz Milardo <firstselectman@haddam.org>
Subject: FW: Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut - NEWS RELEASE

Hi Lizz. Our arborist, Sue Stotts, said she already spoke with Chris about this extensive tree work in Haddam, but I wondered if you or any others in the town would like a briefing as well?

Pat

Patricia C. Bandzes
Community Relations and Economic Development-Connecticut | Eversource Energy
22 East High Street, East Hampton, CT 06424 | ☎ 860-267-3861 (office) | ☎ 860-777-5685(cell)
✉ patricia.bandzes@eversource.com · www.eversource.com

From: Modifica, Tricia T
Sent: Wednesday, April 25, 2018 11:06 AM
To: Eversource Connecticut Electric News Release
<Eversource_Connecticut_Electric_News_Release@eversource.com>
Cc: Pretyman, Caroline <caroline.pretyman@eversource.com>
Subject: Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut - NEWS RELEASE

The following news release will be sent to the media in Connecticut, promoted on social media, and shared with employees via TODAY.



News Release

**Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut
to Enhance Reliability for Customers**
Work scheduled along more than 4,000 miles of electric lines around the state

BERLIN, Conn. (April 25, 2018) – Maintaining a reliable energy system that is resilient to New England weather requires a comprehensive and targeted tree maintenance program. Eversource’s team of licensed arborists works year-round to help prepare the energy system for storms, carefully balancing the need for electric reliability with community aesthetics. To accomplish this, the energy company is investing \$80 million this year in tree trimming and hazardous tree removal to enhance reliability for customers throughout Connecticut.



“The drought plaguing the region over the last several years may have ended, but the effects are long-lasting and took a toll on trees around the state,” said Eversource Vegetation Management Manager Sean Redding. “Consecutive infestations by the gypsy moth and now by the emerald ash borer are adding to the problem, that’s why identifying and removing hazardous trees is vital. We’re always working to serve our customers better, and our comprehensive tree trimming program is part of an overall strategy to ensure year-round reliability.”

In 2018, Eversource will be trimming trees along more than 4,000 miles of overhead lines around the state. Among the 121 communities where tree trimming will be performed this year, some of the most extensive work will be done in Woodstock along 153 miles of electric lines. **Trees will also be trimmed along 114 miles in Haddam**, 110 miles in Danbury and 100 miles in Greenwich. In addition, pruning will be completed in Cheshire, Killingly, Sharon and Stamford. Eversource notifies customers in advance if trimming is necessary on their property.

In addition to all the work Eversource crews do to minimize the effects of trees on electric service reliability, the company reminds customers that homeowners are responsible for tree maintenance on their own property. That includes keeping branches away from the lower-voltage service wires connecting their homes and businesses to the main utility lines on the street. Eversource strongly recommends contacting a professional tree service to perform this work. For details on the company’s comprehensive vegetation management program, please visit Eversource.com.

Eversource (NYSE: ES) transmits and delivers electricity to 1.2 million customers in 149 cities and towns, provides natural gas to 232,000 customers in 73 communities, and supplies water to approximately 197,000 customers in 51 communities across Connecticut. Recognized as the top U.S. utility for its energy efficiency programs by the sustainability advocacy organization Ceres, Eversource harnesses the commitment of about 8,000 employees across three states to build a single, united company around the mission of safely delivering reliable energy and water with superior customer service. For more information, please visit our website (www.eversource.com) and follow us on Twitter ([@EversourceCT](https://twitter.com/EversourceCT)) and Facebook (facebook.com/EversourceCT). For more information on our water services, visit www.aquarionwater.com.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Tricia Taskey Modifica

(860) 665-4605

tricia.modifica@eversource.com

Mitch Gross

(860) 665-5221

mitch.gross@eversource.com

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To: Bandzes, Patricia C <patricia.bandzes@eversource.com>

Cc: Stotts, Susan W <susan.stotts@eversource.com>

Subject: Re: Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut - NEWS RELEASE

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Hi Pat,

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Hope this finds you well.

Unfortunately I had to find out about the tree cutting in Haddam from a Hartford Courant article, Mrs. Milardo did not share any information at all about it.

I asked for more info and this is what her secretary sent below.

I would like to schedule a meeting with you and Sue about this ASAP to see the cutting plan and hear the details.

I can meet you anywhere, pretty much any time.

Thank you,

Melissa J. Schlag

Haddam Selectman

selectmanschlag@hotmail.com

From: Joann Ricciardelli <selectasst@haddam.org>

Sent: Monday, April 30, 2018 8:28 AM

To: Melissa Schlag

Subject: Fw: Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut - NEWS RELEASE

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Good morning Melissa,

Please see e-mail below regarding the tree cutting in Haddam.

JoAnn E. Ricciardelli

First Selectman's Assistant

Town of Haddam

30 Field Park Drive

Haddam CT 06438

(860) 345-8531

From: "Bandzes, Patricia C" <patricia.bandzes@eversource.com>

Date: April 25, 2018 at 3:27:15 PM EDT

To: Haddam - Lizz Milardo <firstselectman@haddam.org>

Subject: FW: Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut - NEWS RELEASE

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Pat

Patricia C. Bandzes

Community Relations and Economic Development-Connecticut | Eversource Energy
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✉ patricia.bandzes@eversource.com : www.eversource.com

From: Modifica, Tricia T

Sent: Wednesday, April 25, 2018 11:06 AM

To: Eversource Connecticut Electric News Release

[<Eversource_Connecticut_Electric_News_Release@eversource.com>](mailto:Eversource_Connecticut_Electric_News_Release@eversource.com)

Cc: Pretzman, Caroline [<caroline.pretzman@eversource.com>](mailto:caroline.pretzman@eversource.com)

Subject: Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut - NEWS RELEASE

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<image001.jpg>

Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut

to Enhance Reliability for Customers

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<image002.jpg>

“The drought plaguing the region over the last several years may have ended, but the effects are long-lasting and took a toll on trees around the state,” said Eversource Vegetation Management Manager Sean Redding. “Consecutive infestations by the gypsy moth and now by the emerald ash borer are adding to the problem, that’s why identifying and removing hazardous trees is vital. We’re

always working to serve our customers better, and our comprehensive tree trimming program is part of an overall strategy to ensure year-round reliability.”

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Tricia Taskey Modifica
(860) 665-4605
tricia.modifica@eversource.com

Mitch Gross
(860) 665-5221
mitch.gross@eversource.com

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As to your question of "what needs to be discussed," Eversource's proposal to cut 114 MILES of roadside trees, the second largest cutting planned in Connecticut, is a major point of discussion in my opinion.

While I don't understand your comment about a "conspiracy," this is a huge tree-cutting project and the selectmen should know about it and have the opportunity to review and comment. The public should also be made aware, at the very least, of where the cutting will take place and a timeline.

Pat,

I look forward to sitting down with you to discuss, it is not necessary for Sue to be there if she is too busy. Please coordinate with me as to a time to meet, I do not have the same schedule as Mrs. Milardo, and kindly send any/all maps/information pertaining to the cutting project to my email address.

Thank you,

Melissa J. Schlag
Haddam Selectman
selectmanschlag@hotmail.com

From: Lizz Milardo <firstselectman@haddam.org>
Sent: Wednesday, May 2, 2018 11:23 AM
To: Bandzes, Patricia C
Cc: Melissa Schlag; Stotts, Susan W; Joann Ricciardelli
Subject: Re: Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut - NEWS RELEASE

(b)

I am not sure why this email was sent or what needs to be discussed. Sue has already met with Chris (tree warden)
Melissa what is the pressing issue that you need to discuss? I received the press release the same day you saw it.. What's the big conspiracy now?

Sent from my iPhone

On May 2, 2018, at 10:51 AM, Bandzes, Patricia C <patricia.bandzes@eversource.com> wrote:

(S)

Melissa, I will work with Lizz's office to set up a time to brief you and any other interested residents. I want to make efficient use of Sue's already stretched time since this is their busy season.

Pat

Patricia C. Bandzes
Community Relations and Economic Development-Connecticut | Eversource Energy
22 East High Street, East Hampton, CT 06424 | ☎ 860-267-3861 (office) | ☎ 860-777-5685(cell)
✉ patricia.bandzes@eversource.com : www.eversource.com

From: Melissa Schlag [<mailto:selectmanschlag@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, May 02, 2018 7:36 AM

Lizz Milardo

8

From: Lizz Milardo
Sent: Wednesday, May 02, 2018 2:05 PM
To: Melissa Schlag; Bandzes, Patricia C; Larry
Cc: Stotts, Susan W; Joann Ricciardelli
Subject: Re: Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut - NEWS RELEASE

Melissa

To your point this should be brought up at a board meeting per FOI , if it is something BOS related. I sent you the information you requested as a resident, you would think that if the board wanted to move forward on behalf of the town you would discuss it at a board meeting not send out emails in your selectman capacity and not send emails without my knowledge or the other Selectman. I am aware of the trimming along with the tree warden, again a day to day issue that does not require a vote or permission from the Board of Selectmen. As far as public information, it is available for all to see, and does not require town approval as indicated in our Charter. If you have an opinion it is yours to have.

You can request whatever info you like as a resident but when you start emailing outside of your capacity to set up meetings via email and not in public it would cause concern to your point and may not look transparent to the public.

From: Melissa Schlag <selectmanschlag@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 2, 2018 1:18:30 PM
To: Lizz Milardo; Bandzes, Patricia C
Cc: Stotts, Susan W; Joann Ricciardelli
Subject: Re: Eversource Invests \$80 Million in Tree Trimming in Connecticut - NEWS RELEASE

1

Lizz,

First of all, we should not even be discussing this per FOI rules. But to answer your questions:

With all due respect, I am troubled by the sentiment, "what is the pressing issue that you need to discuss." Eversource is planning to cut **114 MILES** of trees in Haddam, I find this a very pressing issue.

Furthermore, I had to ask for the information on the tree cutting because I only found out about it from a Hartford Courant article and did NOT receive a press release or any information whatsoever. As a selectman, I find this concerning that I am not receiving important information in a timely manner, or at all in some cases.

Joanne emailed me the message below five days after you received the press release, I did not see it the same day you received it.

I'm not sure when Chris Corsa was briefed on this issue, but I assume the first selectman's office would have been informed of this project WELL in advance of a general press release from Eversource and before they spoke to the public works director?