

Are you wondering why the Town of Ware is considering a Scenic Road By-Law? It is one way to help protect the rural character, historic charm and beautiful vistas that we enjoy in our town. Scenic Road Bylaws are permitted under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40, section 15C., and the Massachusetts Historical Commission is encouraging every small town to pass one. The bylaw requires the Planning Board to hold a public hearing and review all work proposed within and along any designated scenic road that may involve the cutting or removal of trees or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls. Examples include alteration or removal of trees or stone walls, road widening, the addition of a sidewalk, or the construction of a new curb cut or driveway.

What are some of the characteristics of a scenic road? First, the overall scenic beauty (and view from the roadside) , the contributions of trees to scenic beauty, the contributions of stone walls to scenic beauty, the prevalence of historic stone walls along the right-of-way, and finally, the age and historic significance of the road, trees and stone walls . Your Ware Historical Commission had great fun last summer driving around town in search of these stone walls, vistas, and gorgeous shade trees. We mapped it all out, and our Town Planner, Rob Watchilla, put all the information we gathered on an impressive map of town. This map will be available for viewing at the Public Forum on January 23rd at 6:00 p.m. in the Selectboard's Meeting Room in the Town Hall. We then hope to get the article passed at the May Town Meeting.

What happens if your road is designated scenic? First, the town cannot simply remove healthy trees and stonewalls without prior notification to and approval by the Planning Board. Next, a developer putting in a subdivision also cannot simply remove healthy trees and stonewalls without prior notification to and approval by The Planning Board. In addition, any resident of the road who wants to remove a healthy tree or historic stonewall within the right of way, also cannot do so without prior notification to and approval by the Planning Board. Abutters who live on your scenic road will be invited to the public hearing where they can express their opinions about your proposal.

The bylaw does *not* extend beyond the town's right of way along the roadway. Your front yard, back yard, or side yard are not affected. The Scenic By-Law does not increase property taxes or homeowner's insurance, does not interfere with emergency tree removal situations or road crews working on the roadway itself, nor does it interfere with storm-aftermaths. After a storm, a downed or split tree in the right of way that presents a public danger can be removed by the DPW because they are the tree wardens. In short, the Scenic Road By-Law is designed to enhance what remains of the rural and historic character of Ware. Please attend the Public Forum and help us refine the Scenic Road By-Law in a way that makes sense for our town. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Lynn Caulfield Lak, chair, Ware Historical Commission