




City of Bowie

2614 Kenhill Drive
Bowie, Maryland 20715

MEMORANDUM

To: City Council

From: David J. Deutsch 
City Manager

Subject: Right Tree Right Place and Right of Way Maintenance on State and County Roads

Date: August 4, 2009

Councilwoman Valentino-Smith has requested that City staff meet with BGE, Prince George's County and the State of Maryland regarding using the Right Tree Right Place Program (RTRP) along County and State Right of Ways (ROW) associated with the Bowie Electric Reliability Action Plan (BERAP). Particularly, Old Chapel Road and Route 197 were raised as possible roads where RTRP could be used. Mayor Robinson has also raised this issue previously regarding portions of Mitchellville Road.

The criteria for being considered for RTRP are as follows:

1. Must be on public property or on a public right of way.
2. Trees being replaced must be incompatible, fast growing trees beneath conductors.
3. Conductors must be three-phase construction of 13 kV voltage or higher.
4. Recipients must be willing to maintain planted trees.

As requested, staff has met with BGE, Lewis Tree Service and the Prince George's County Forester on July 24th to discuss the use of the RTRP program on Old Chapel Road. Staff also met with BGE, Lewis Tree Service and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forester on July 30th to discuss the application of the RTRP program on Rt. 197 near Longridge.

While BGE would be willing to consider the application of RTRP on both roads, neither Prince George's County nor the State of Maryland have the resources to meet criteria #4 as outlined above concerning ongoing maintenance of planted trees. Also, the State would be reluctant to make any investment along Rt. 197 with the uncertainty pertaining to whether the trees will remain in this area once the Rt. 197 road expansion occurs.

The RTRP program has been used effectively at Buckingham Park and at the Bowie Golf Course associated with the BERAP program. However in both instances, maintenance was provided by either the City of Bowie or golf course personnel.

Maryland State ROWs (such as those along Rt. 197 adjacent to Longridge) and Prince George's County ROWs (such as on Old Chapel Rd. and Mitchellville Rd.) are areas that have been (or are yet to

be) extensively managed for their vegetation related to the BGE electrical reliability program. Tree work along these ROWs involves both tree trimming and tree removals. In some cases, as evidenced by the work along Old Chapel and Mitchellville Roads, areas have to be "clear cut" (all trees removed) in order to achieve the reliability goal standards and accomplish the best overall aesthetic and environmental effect. The work along Rt. 197, adjacent to Longridge, will involve more selective cutting in most areas and will not involve the wholesale clear cutting of this area.

The question at hand is how to manage the areas going forward. It should be noted that none of the areas under discussion were previously "landscaped" and/or maintained areas. Most of the trees, vines, and weeds in these areas were or are of little value (with some exceptions) and would be considered wild growth sometimes filled with invasive and/or noxious plants. There is extensive poison ivy along Rt. 197 near Longridge. Following the removal of said material, much of the plant material will begin to regenerate into a wild/natural state.

In order to renovate these areas and create a landscaped, maintainable area, many thousands of dollars and many hundreds of machine and man hours would have to be spent in order to, first, establish these areas as such, and second, to maintain the areas perpetually. As indicated above, both the Prince George's County Forester and the Maryland DNR Forester have communicated that this is not a viable option for them in their respective ROW jurisdictions.

The City of Bowie is not currently involved in maintaining un-landscaped areas along State and County ROWs. The City does have agreements with the State to maintain the landscaped area along Rt. 450 and with the County to maintain the landscaped area along Mitchellville Road. These agreements were entered into in return for enhanced amenities during construction in these areas. The City also has an agreement with the State to maintain portions of Rt. 197 north of Rt. 450 and at the entrance ways to subdivisions on Rt. 197 between Kenhill drive and Rt. 450. These are all landscaped areas.

As we seek solutions to offset the dramatic change and reduction in tree presence along these ROWs, a second alternative might be explored. Asking BGE to utilize its RTRP program with a commitment to minimally maintain the installed trees might be a possibility. "Minimally maintain" would imply that a contractor would be engaged 3-4 times per growing season to "bush hog" (rough mow) these designated areas and spray a selected herbicide to control growth adjacent to planted trees to maintain tree health and form. This too would be a long term commitment encompassing 10-15 years or more and might be best accomplished engaging a contractor annually. All this would follow the initial first year of watering, maintenance, and necessary replacements as is the norm for the BGE RTRP program contractor.

Because the State and County have indicated that they would not be able to devote the resources to this type of maintenance, this responsibility would fall to the City of Bowie. The City does not currently have the resources to perform this type of maintenance and would have to cost out how expensive this would be. Also, it needs to be understood that this would not create the landscaped look that certain State and County ROWs currently have. Also, while this would restore some buffer to these areas, the trees that would be used under the RTRP program are much smaller and therefore would not replicate the buffer that existed prior to the BERAP cutting and trimming.

When staff met with Prince George's County, the Prince George's County Forester offered the City trees via "the application for Gorgeous Prince George's Day for 2009". While this may be a generous offer by Prince George's County, the installation and maintenance of these trees would be solely born by the City of Bowie personnel, and implemented in ROWs that are not currently maintained by the City of Bowie. The installation and maintenance of the trees could be easily calculated to be 2-3 times

the cost of the tree alone. This is not the most advantageous option for the City of Bowie given present manpower and equipment. These additional costs would need to be new budget considerations.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recognizes that Council is not satisfied with the result of extensive tree cutting and trimming along certain State and County ROWs like Old Chapel Road and Mitchellville Road south of Mt. Oak Road. The approach taken so far in these areas has been to have BGE cut and trim these ROWs to the standards established for trimming along corridor areas and then allowing the vegetation to grow up in a natural fashion. While BGE is willing to explore the RTRP program in these areas, both the County and State have indicated that they do not have the staff or resources to maintain these areas to meet the fourth criteria as established by BGE for utilization of the RTRP program. The only other alternative for improving the appearance of these areas is for the City to take a more active role in this maintenance. The City does not currently have the resources to undertake this additional maintenance. It would require City Council approval and commitment of additional City resources for the City to undertake this effort. Staff does not recommend that the City take on these additional responsibilities. Staff recommends continuing to allow these areas to grow naturally, like they always have. As the growth begins to fill in after the initial cutting and trimming takes place, a natural, yet lower and more modest buffer begins to develop.

Finally, staff has requested that BGE cut down the trees along Old Chapel Road that have been left in a deformed state. This would involve the area between Chalford Lane and Chelmont Lane on the south side of Old Chapel Road. A letter has been sent to residents that about this area and copied to City Council informing them that this work will take place sometime after August 5th (see attached). Staff has not received any response to this letter. Staff feels that cutting down these deformed trees will greatly improve the aesthetics along this area.

In addition, BGE has requested the opportunity to do the cutting and trimming on Rt. 197 in the vicinity of Longridge. A letter was previously sent to all residents of Longridge and copied to the City Council describing this work (see attached). Staff has not received any response to this letter. This action was placed on hold until BGE and staff had the opportunity to follow-up on the request made by Councilwoman Valentino-Smith. BGE has requested to resume this work starting either the week of August 17th or the week of August 24th. If no objections are raised by Council, staff will authorize BGE to continue this proposed work.

DJD/JLF/adf

Attachments



City of Bowie

2614 Kenhill Drive
Bowie, Maryland 20715

July 28, 2009

Dear Resident:

As you are aware, BGE has cut and trimmed trees that are located adjacent to Old Chapel Road behind your property in conjunction with the Bowie Electric Reliability Action Plan. The City has further requested that BGE remove the trees in the public right-of-way that have been left in a way that causes the tree to be deformed or misshaped. Since Old Chapel Road is under the jurisdiction of Prince George's County, the County Forester also concurs with this action.

The area where this additional cutting will occur is on the south side of Old Chapel Road between Chalford Lane and Chelmont Lane. The stumps would not be removed, but would be cut close to the ground. Since this is a utility easement, the area will not receive routine tree maintenance, but will be allowed to grow naturally after the clearing occurs.

City staff supports this proposed action because the shapes of the trees that have already been cut have been significantly altered. We feel that cutting the remainder of the trees will improve the aesthetics of this area. BGE will not begin this cutting until after August 5th.

Should you have any questions about this proposed cutting, please contact Rick Kellner, the City of Bowie Forester at 240-216-1134 or myself at 301-805-3075.

Sincerely,

John Fitzwater
Assistant City Manager

cc: Bowie City Council
Rick Kellner, City of Bowie Forester
Chad Devine, BGE Forester
Wayne Lucas, Prince George's County

MAYOR G. Frederick Robinson **MAYOR PRO TEM** Todd M. Turner

COUNCIL Dennis Brady ♦ James L. Marcos ♦ Diane M. Polangin ♦ Isaac C. Trough ♦ Geraldine Valentino-Smith **CITY MANAGER** David J. Deutsch
City Hall (301) 262-6200 FAX (301) 809-2302 TDD (301) 262-5013 WEB www.cityofbowie.org



City of Bowie

2614 Kenhill Drive
Bowie, Maryland 20715

July 2, 2009

Dear Resident:

BGE has contacted the City about removing trees in the area that runs along the western side of Route 197 from just south of the Old Route 450 to south of Lerner Lane adjacent to the Longridge community.

Approximately 40 trees with a diameter greater than 8" will be removed as part of this project. Also, additional trees that are less than 8" that are expected to grow into the power lines within the next four years will also be removed. The trees with a diameter greater than 8" proposed to be removed are marked with a ribbon. Because of the overgrowth in this area which makes it difficult to see these ribbons in some cases, stakes with ribbons have been placed in areas where it is difficult to see a tree marked with a ribbon. The trees to be removed are either hazardous trees (dead or dying) or are trees that are prone to cause problems with power dependability. Also, a considerable amount of bamboo is proposed to be removed just south of the intersection of Route 197 with Longridge Lane. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources who has responsibility for street trees along state right-of-ways has reviewed this proposed action and has issued a permit to BGE for these removals.

The removal of trees will not be uniform along Route 197 in this area. There are many areas where the electric wire is well off of the roadway and therefore no tree removal or trimming will be required along Route 197. The main impact of this tree removal will be in the areas where the electric wires run adjacent to Route 197. Significant cutting and trimming will occur around the entry points into Longridge at Longridge Lane, Lyle Lane and at Lerner Place. The tree removal and trimming in areas adjacent to electric wires and at entrances will significantly open up these areas from what currently exists.

The removal of this vegetation is necessary as part of the Bowie Electric Reliability Action Plan Improvements. For residents whose property backs up to Route 197, these removals are in addition to the removal of trees on your property that BGE representatives have hopefully already spoken with you about.

It is anticipated that work will take place on or around July 21st. City staff supports this proposed action. We would encourage you to view the area along Route 197 and become familiar with the action that is being proposed in this area. We would suggest you view this area from the safety of your vehicle while driving along Rt. 197

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since it is dangerous to walk along this area due to the traffic and because there is a significant amount of poison ivy in this right-of-way.

Should you have any questions about this proposed cutting, please contact Rick Kellner, the City of Bowie Forester at 240-216-1134 or myself at 301-805-3075.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John Fitzwater in black ink, appearing as 'J.F. Fitzwater'.

John Fitzwater
Assistant City Manager

cc: Bowie City Council
David J. Deutsch, City Manager
Rick Kellner, City of Bowie Forester
Chad Devine, BGE Forester