



## Greenery dispute highlights a broader issue

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Staff Reporter

The American Legion Highway has become the subject of environmental protection debates in recent months, and members of the Mount Hope/Mount Canterbury Neighborhood Association (MHMC) say the problem stems from ignorance of the current regulations.

"There are very explicit Greenbelt protections for parkways, and it lists American Legion," said MHMC member Lisa Beatman. "On the documents, (Greenbelt Protections) state 500 feet on either side needs to be treated in certain ways, which include a barrier of greenery... That has been ignored by a lot of

*Residents at the Mount Hope Mount Canterbury Neighborhood Association said cutting of trees and bushes along the American Legion Highway is unsightly and technically illegal.*

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organizations."

Beatman said a recent meeting on the American Legion Highway included some members of the Boston City Council saying Greenbelt protections should be extended to the street, (along with Urban Wilds Protections) when in fact, they were already in effect to that point.

The discussion stemmed from the recent cutting of trees and bushes along the stretch of highway on the side of Landscape Express. The owner of the company, Gregory Kaknes, cut down the screen of greenery to, make his business more visible, MHMC membership said.

"Across the street is City Soil, and they're the ones who collect all the leaves and have that experimental greenhouse," said Sixth Suffolk State Rep. Russell Holmes. "They cut down a lot of the things on their side of this big farm. They do have a plan to replant it... The owner told me today that they just

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took delivery on a whole bunch of bulbs, trees and bushes that they are going to be planting there."

Holmes said City Soil originally cut down the plants because they had found them to be invasive species. City Soil is a publicly-owned composting and gardening education center. Holmes said Kaknes was just trying to make his business more visible to the public going down American Legion.

"Greg (Kaknes) is trying to have people come to his business," Holmes said. "He's trying to let people know he's there."

Holmes said Kaknes has agreed to replace the greenery, but MHMC Member Rick Yoder said that was not the original conversation he had with Kaknes.

"At first he said absolutely not, he needs people to see (his business)," Yoder said. "I think he's changing his mind a little now, but at that point he said he did not want to plant anything that would grow any higher than a few feet."

Yoder added though he and much of the neighborhood was concerned with this one incident, he thinks Kaknes' business itself is a great fit for the area and buys much of his mulch there.

Beatman said this is only a recent iteration of a much older and bigger problem on the American Legion Highway. She said the Legion Shopping Center at 700 American Legion Highway was always a big offender in ignoring the Greenbelt protections and regulations, but after the work the MHMC has been doing in recent years to reverse the trend, the Landscape Express situation was that much more disturbing.

"That's why we get so concerned in this recent event," she said. "There's a lot of kind of scars that have been here a long time, but when we see a new one, that's a big concern."

Beatman added that the greenery in front of the Landscape Express shouldn't have been touched in the first place, as Kaknes is not the owner.

"This is public land, it isn't private property it is state-owned land," she said.