

**MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE  
TREES AND PUBLIC GREENERY  
7:30 AM – Wednesday, November 18, 2009  
City Hall, City Manager's Conference Room**

**Call to Order:**

**Members Present:** Peter Loughlin, Chairman                      Richard Adams, Vice-Chair  
Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director              June Rogers, Member  
Everett Kern, General Forman                      Carla Marvin, Member

Excused Absences: John Bohenko and A.J. Dupree

Also present were Peter Rice, Water/Sewer Engineer, Dan Rawling, Bill Stroub of Seaman Engineers, Jeff Hyland and Jackie Ellis.

The Chair called the meeting to order at approximately 7:35 a.m.

1. **Acceptance of the Minutes** – Minutes of the October 14, 2009 meeting were accepted as presented.
  
2. **Tree Removal Requests/Proposals**
  - a. **Langdon Park** – On Junkins Avenue opposite Connors Cottage – **MOTION** made by Richard Adams to remove. Seconded by Steve Parkinson. Motion passed.
  - b. **Maplewood at Woodbury** – Apple Tree – Everett tagged the trees, some have been taken down, there are two more to take down. Richard Adams stated that in the absence of a plan for that site, does not see a point in taking the tree down, it has been nicely pruned and looks good and is healthy. Everett stated that was a request by Mr. Mangold. as they were planning on putting a little park there. **MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson to table until we receive more definitive plans from Mr. Mangold. Seconded by Richard Adams. Motion passed.
  
3. **Update on Lower State Street Improvements** – Mr. Rice stated he is responsible for the State St. project which is a utilities upgrade project for sewer separation. We are under a Consent Decree from the EPA to perform certain sewer separations throughout the City, in particular this one involves drainage sewer and water, gas lines recently upgraded and will be boxing out and rebuilding the road. When there are opportunities as this we try to address street scape issues as well. As we are digging up the road this was a good opportunity to take care of sidewalk issues and lighting to bring this section of the City up to similar level as Market Sq. and other areas in the City. Last spring we met with you, did a site walk and from the feedback we understood your desire to better protect the trees by having raised curbing around the trees in certain areas. In going back and looking at this request, as a result of revisiting the layout of the street scape and amenities, determined significant issues with the way the streetscape was set up at the time. Specifically utility poles ending up forcing planters into the street and the goal of this project was to balance pedestrian needs as well as the trees and aesthetics of planters as well as the ability for Public Works to be able to maintain sidewalks and plow the area. The previous streetscape was treacherous with bump outs making it very difficult to maintain and precluded the ability to achieve one of the goals of wider sections of sidewalks for pedestrians to walk side by side. We determined that the utility poles needed to be moved out to the new curb line to get a wider esplanade area. The planters were then able to be pulled back and be more uniform and therefore a straighter shot for plows to go through the area. We don't feel we can accomplish the ability of raising curbing to go around all the trees because we are putting in storm water treatment units which require tree wells by retention systems that require a flush grading and could not raise the curb around it. As they are in line with existing trees along the edge it would cause inconsistency in the visual. The curb would also encroach on the pedestrian way. The goal is to balance the need by expanding the pedestrian area, at the same time doing our best to protect the trees. We

accomplish an improved tree environment by adding silva cells in the area which act as blocking so that soils don't get impacted. They are stacked trays underneath the sidewalk and soils act as expansion for the tree root systems which are shown to be very effective in allowing trees to thrive and grow in urban areas. We are adding raised curbs around trees at bump outs which have areas where plows will be going in and out. We are not pursuing raising curbs along the entire areas.

Bill Straub of Seaman Engineers working with the City and explained the storm water retention bio cells which take street drainage and direct it to the tree wells for purposes of storm water treatment and viability of the trees with regular watering a large enhancement of the tree growing environment. The secondary benefit for storm water treatment which is an innovative thing.

Peter Rice introduced Jeff Hyland, Ironwood Design Group, Inc. part of the design team. Because of the design on the street where catch basin is going into the tree wells, forces the flush mounting of the tree.

Mr. Rice stated that in addition to being the right thing to do the storm water units are part of a settlement agreement with EPA and the conservation law foundation, things we were committed to do and one of the absolutely necessary elements of this project.

Mr. Hyland stated that a lot of time fine tuning to get the right tree selection and maximizing the growing median available of soil volumes. This project is setting the stage in New Hampshire for setting the stage sustainable green urbanism type projects, partially due to the storm water treatment as well as generally how the trees are proposed to be planted using silva cells, which have never been used in the State of New Hampshire before, used in other New England States.

Mr. Hyland brought a set of landscape drawings. Silva cells are basically a shelf unit, they are recycled plastic interlocking modular and support the weight of a surface without compacting the growing.

Steve Parkinson stated it is the same type of technology used under parking lots to the storm water retention.

Mr. Hyland went through the landscape plans explaining the detailed sketches. Mr. Hyland stated a lot of research was done and a biochemist from his office determined the salt issue is really not as much of a problem as it is thought of. The salt flowing off the road would end up in the detention areas and in early spring when the peak salt runoff, the relatively small period of time, normally in spring you get a lot of rain, the salt actually washes through fairly quickly. The real problem is if the salt causes important micro nutrients in the soil basically get washed out with the salt. The real problem is when you look at the soil quality over 5 or 6 years after installation the actual level of nutrients in that soil drops off every year consistently over 5 years. After 5 years the real problem is soil nutrient issues rather than salt.

Peter Rice stated this technology is relatively new, the folks providing the systems indicate we will likely have to replace trees on a regular cycle. The tree is a living part of the treatment systems, not just trees, actually a physical treatment unit and the tree is a living part of that system. We are harnessing a natural system, tree, to help reduce nutrients, nitrogen in particular, and the intent is to pull it back out. This is new and one of the things we are doing is working with storm water center at UNH is to follow up on our installation with proof, let's see how long these trees stay in place. This is a laboratory for an urban setting.

Mostly Red Maples have been selected for bio-retention wells, they seem to be a native that was fairly drought tolerant, tolerant of urban conditions, readily available at a large size. We are trying to put a fairly large caliper trees in these containers, visually so they look good along with the other standard tree plantings. There are five bio-retention wells, with 16 being the rest of the trees. There are three different types of tree planting treatments, the bio-retention tree well, a raised granite planter, primarily at the bump outs, and the standard tree planting. We are proposing to inset a small plaque in the pavement that tells people what this is, there is an educational component to the bio-retention tree wells. The 16 trees have Silva cells. The other tree in the bio-retention well is a car pine, another native shade tolerant, there are two different types of trees in the bio-retention so that we will be able to compare, both in very similar conditions. There will be opportunity to evaluate the different tree species. We would anticipate 50 years on these tree planting just because we are giving so much soil volume to each tree. In the bio-retention well it

is a bit of a research project. Our hope is that the trees last 3-5 years long enough for the roots to get out of the containment structure.

Peter Rice stated there is a warranty associated with these units for the tree to survive at least 3 years.

The Chair's chief concern is protecting the trees from snowplows, despite carefulness, trees do get whacked and feels some protection should be in place.

Steve Parkinson stated that one thing they are doing this winter is to mark the tree areas that the operators can see. Putting something in a walkway creates a tripping hazard and is more inclined to do something on a temporary basis in the wintertime where these tree wells are, does not want the sidewalk tractors even getting on these grating systems. Ones that have been hit in the past are still alive.

The Chair is very concerned with the protection of the trees.

Steve Parkinson stated that he and Everett Kern will come up with a method, so that our employees will know trees are there and also with more mature trees, in all our planting beds throughout the downtown. We need to put up some indicators to stay away from these areas.

Richard Adams feels there's ample evidence to suggest that a small caliber tree at the end of

**MOTION** made by Steve Parkinson to accept the updated report. Seconded by Richard Adams. Motion passed.

4. **Further discussion on Woodbury/Maplewood Avenue Improvement Proposal** – Dan Rawling met with some of the neighborhood representatives telling them he would be glad to work with them in developing a plan.

Steve Parkinson stated this is a piece of City property that we have a proposal coming forth from the neighborhood who would like to improve it and still falls within our Adopt-A-Spot. There has not been a new park in the past 28 years and would consider this is an Adopt-A-Spot not a part creation, an improvement of City owned land. Also, the Capital cost will not be absorbed by the City. This was brought to us as a neighborhood project improving an area, planting some trees and flowers and is now become a major capital investment which is more than was presented to this Committee.

The Chair stated this committee would support the improvement of it. Will wait till we hear back and receive a plan.

5. **Dan Rawling Middle Street Corridor Proposal** – The Chair stated the plantings along Cabot St. are quite impressive and asked Mr. Rawling's for an update. Dan reported has 36 trees that have or will be planted, did some planting 7 trees around Middle and Madison neighborhood, along Lincoln and Union in a few different spots and at Austin and Middle, between Middle and Cass. Trees will be delivered to Public Works on Tuesday and will recommend some locations and check with dig safe. Dan will provide Everett Kern the proposed locations for Everett to look at the sites to see if they are acceptable to what we need. The Chair thanked Dan stating he and the Committee appreciates the work he is done and is doing.

Jackie Ellis would like a replacement for the silver maple taken down in front of her house.

Mr. Rawling would like to proceed with mapping out identifying locations on private and City property and bring back.

6. **Notice Regarding Rockingham County Champion Green Ash** – Dick Adams will find out the location of this Green Ash tree and bring back.

7. **Announcement concerning Festival of Trees** – The Festival is this weekend.

8 **Old Business:**

Dick Adams referred to the Memorial Tree Policy which was tabled until the City Manager could be present. The City Manager suggested a case by case basis.

Dick Adams referred to the South Street/Sagamore Ave. The Chair referred to a plan and suggested starting with a tree furthest from the intersection to see how it would work out as a location.

Dick Adams referred to the pending Tree Ordinance. Steve Parkinson stated that the City Manager has spoken with the Legal Dept.

Dan Rawling referred to the Margeson Building and that he had spoken with Portsmouth Housing Authority (PHA). His main focus was to create some sort of an outdoor gathering space by the front entrance.

Steve Parkinson recommended going to the PHA as it is their property under their jurisdiction, we cannot force them to do anything there.

The Chair would like to take a look at the site and place on the next Agenda.

**9. New Business:**

Everett Kern referred to a Dennett St. resident regarding a tree removed, the tree is on private property, not City property.

**10. Next Meeting** – 7:30 a.m., Wednesday, December 9, 2009

**11. Adjourned.**