

**MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE
TREES AND PUBLIC GREENERY**

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, August 10, 2011
City Hall, 4th Floor, City Manager's Conference Room**

Members Present: Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice Chairman; Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director; June Rogers; Leslie Stevens

Members Excused: John Bohenko, City Manager; Everett Kern, Public Works General Foreman; A.J Dupere.

The Chair called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 a.m.

1. Acceptance of Minutes of July 13, 2011 Meeting

Mr. Adams noted that the tree in question was on Elwyn Avenue, rather than Elwyn Road. Mr. Parkinson made a motion to approve the minutes with the one correction. Mr. Adams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Tree Removal Requests:

Rock Street at Sudbury (continued from July meeting for info from PSNH)

Attorney Loughlin received an email from Mr. Dupere indicating that he and Mr. Adams visited the site and spoke to PSNH. Mr. Adams stated there are three options. They have installed a new pole and if they re-string the wires, they would go through the healthy existing red oak. One option would be to severely prune the tree and the other option would be to remove it. The third choice would be to put things back the way they were. They could take the new pole down and simply run the new wires on the other side of the street. The problem is that there is a pole at the entrance of the park with a bracing pole up against it. It is unsightly and inconvenient in terms of getting into the park. They felt the best option would be to remove the tree, have the wires run from the new pole to an existing pole on the other side of the street. Mr. Parkinson added that if they put it back there is a lot of vegetation that would have to be put back as well. There would be more impact on the park side than they would like.

Mr. Adams made a motion to remove the tree. Mr. Parkinson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

496 Lincoln Avenue (continued from July meeting for info from DPW)

Mr. Parkinson had Rick Dolce, Project Supervisor, take pictures of the area while they were working and they show that the existing root structure doesn't exist on the street side of the trees. Additionally, another picture showed to the right of that tree that the whole root structure has been compromised due to the water service. The sewer line and the drain line are going in the driveway area. Both trees have been impacted streetwise so they don't have a lot of root structure left. Over the years they have had some large branches come off. Mr. Parkinson recommends taking the trees down so they don't topple over in a wind storm.

Mr. Parkinson made a motion to remove the two trees. Attorney Loughlin seconded the motion for discussion. Attorney Loughlin was worried that taking them down would leave a large gap. Ms. Rogers added that the tree across the street was just taken down so there will be an empty space on both sides. Mr. Parkinson felt that taking them down now gives them a chance to deal with the stumps, get the new sidewalk put in and, at the end of the project, they will look at all of the places within the entire work zone for replacement trees. Mr. Adams concurred with Mr. Parkinson and felt that it won't take very long, even with a new planting, to have something of reasonable size there. Mr. Parkinson stated they would probably be able to plant new trees by next spring. Attorney Loughlin asked if the street project was on schedule. Mr. Parkinson felt it was somewhat behind schedule for legitimate reasons.

The motion to remove the two trees passed unanimously.

Red Oak on Lincoln Avenue near the intersection of Junkins

Attorney Loughlin indicated that this was discussed last month and Mr. Dupere had used the resistograph to determine whether the trees need to come down. Mr. Adams explained it is a question of how much solid wood is in the tree vs. its height. He has had a couple of people come up to him who think it should come down. He doesn't see where they have any choice but to remove it. Attorney Loughlin agreed. Mr. Parkinson stated it was a public gathering space and they have scientific evidence that it should be taken down. They would be remiss in their responsibilities if they didn't take it down.

Mr. Parkinson reluctantly made a motion to remove the tree. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. Mr. Adams felt they should have a plan for relocation of the large family of squirrels as they will be very disappointed. The motion to remove the tree passed unanimously.

3. Recertification of Portsmouth as a Tree City USA

Attorney Loughlin advised that the City has been recertified as a Tree City, thanks to the hard work of the Public Works Department and Nancy Carmer. Mr. Adams commented on a letter to the editor in the Portsmouth Herald from Sue Ford who stated we did not have a tree ordinance so we were not in compliance with the standards of Tree City.

4. Update on Spring Tree Planting

Attorney Loughlin believed there were two trees that hadn't been planted and at 27 Park Street they are trying to get a species that they don't have. He asked about the survival rate on the trees. Mr. Adams checked all trees for the past 3 years and the rate is very good. This years plantings are all surviving. A couple from last year are not doing well. There is a tree on Aldrich Road which is totally dead and there is a Chinese elm on Langdon that is not going to make it. Mr. Parkinson will take a look at it and agreed they should put something back in its place.

Ms. Stevens asked about planting new trees and whether they ask homeowners to help water and take care of them. Mr. Parkinson confirmed that they do but it is also the responsibility of the vendor to provide maintenance for two years. They usually use the same vendor, Stratham Circle, because they are usually the lowest bidder. Stratham Circle has been very good about removing dead trees and replacing them.

5. Planted Trees – Dead or Dying; Dead/Dying Trees Not on Recent Planting Lists; Different Species from Specs or Not Planted at All (list prepared by Dick Adams)

Attorney Loughlin stated that this list was provided to the Committee members. Mr. Adams felt they should notify the vendors. The rest will have to be replaced at the City's expense. They should evaluate the species at the site and speak to the near-by homeowner and try to get more support. It's getting harder to do that with the water/sewer rates going up. Attorney Loughlin asked if this was something that DPW does automatically. Mr. Parkinson indicated they will go around, confirm all of the locations, check the dates for warranties and contact the vendors. The bottom half of the list are dying but are not part of the planting list. Some trees have not been planted. Mr. Parkinson confirmed that if they were not planted then the vendor was not paid for them. Sometimes things don't get planted for various issues. Attorney Loughlin mentioned that this was in addition to the Rotary project. He mentioned that the tree on Thaxter is across from his street and it has been slowly dying for some time.

Mr. Loughlin stated they should tag 78 Hillside, Thaxter, Lincoln, and the Peirce Island Bridge trees. Mr. Adams felt the Peirce Island Bridge trees are almost saplings.

Mr. Parkinson confirmed they will tag the trees for the next meeting.

6. Update on Tree Guards at 8 Congress Street

Attorney Loughlin felt the tree guards that have been installed look fantastic. Mr. Parkinson stated he has two more in stock as RiRa has tables outside now. He will also put tree guards on the trees further down from Popovers. Mr. Adams suggested adding them by the bus stop across the street. Mr. Parkinson will look at that but he has to limit his costs. They are approximately \$400 each and he feels they look pretty good. They are made to adapt to the grate. He plans to buy them slowly and have them installed. Mr. Adams asked if the trash and recycling buckets are part of the downtown State Street project because he felt they look very nice. He wondered if we could get more of them. Mr. Parkinson responded that they are very expensive.

Ms. Rogers noticed that cigarette butts go down into the grates at Popovers and there is no receptacle for them. Ms. Stevens did not believe they can smoke inside the fenced in area at Popovers. Attorney Loughlin agreed with Ms. Rogers that they are unattractive but wondered if receptacles would encourage smoking.

7. Article on London Plane Trees

Attorney Loughlin included an article from the Wall Street Journal in their packets regarding the London plane tree that he thought was interesting.

8. Report on Tree at 361 Hanover Street

Jim Sommes was here last month, from JSA Architects, and they were going to put a water line in. It turned out that there was not sufficient width in the water line on Rock Street so it is coming in from the Maplewood Avenue side instead and that tree doesn't have to come down. Attorney Loughlin wanted to make sure that was communicated to DPW.

9. Old Business

Ms. Stevens asked about Tree City, USA. She asked if we consciously use native species. Attorney Loughlin felt that native species means they don't plant Norway maples anymore. A lot of the trees they do plant aren't really things that were found here 200 years ago. Ms. Stevens was interested in having a conversation about it. She has read several books that recommend that you always plant native species native to where you live as it attracts wildlife and the tree will do much better. Attorney Loughlin felt it would depend on the urban conditions. For instance, the sugar maple can't stand the salt. They are using a flame maple which comes from a red maple which is native. Mr. Parkinson added that it often depends on the location and what existing trees are there. They like to mix up the type of trees. They try to stay away from fruit bearing trees which attract bugs and bees.

Attorney Loughlin stated that Mr. Adams is the lead selection man for tree species. He suggested that Ms. Stevens draw up a list of trees that are native to this area. He didn't believe there were very many.

Ms. Stevens asked how Portsmouth gets certified. Mr. Parkinson indicated there is a check list and they consider how much money is spent. The National Arborday Foundation sponsors it and Portsmouth is a member.

Ms. Stevens asked what the advantage was for Portsmouth. Mr. Parkinson felt it was recognition that they value their forest and street trees. Ms. Stevens asked if they are supposed to have a tree ordinance. Mr. Parkinson confirmed that they do have a tree ordinance but they don't have a City Arborist. This Committee took the place of a City Arborist. Attorney Loughlin advised her that this Committee prepared a draft ordinance, they sent it to City Attorney Robert Sullivan who made suggestions and the ball is currently in Attorney Loughlin's court. There are internal issues on how the arborist would work.

10. New Business

n/a

11. Next meeting on Wednesday, September 14, 2011.

A motion to adjourn at 8:05 a.m. was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse
Administrative Assistant
Planning Department