

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, November 9, 2011
City Hall, 4th Floor, City Manager's Conference Room**

Members Present: Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice Chairman; A. J. Dupere, Community Forester; Everett Kern, Public Works General Foreman; Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director; June Rogers; Leslie Stevens

Members Excused: John Bohenko, City Manager;

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

1. **Acceptance of Minutes of October 12, 2011 meeting** – Unanimously approved.
2. **Tree Removal Requests:**

96 Woodlawn Circle – Dovev Levine, property owner, was present, requesting that this City Red Pine tree be removed as it very close to dying and many branches have fallen on their property. They are concerned that branches will continue to fall on their cars and their toddler son. Ms. Rogers looked at the tree and felt it looked good but understood what Mr. Levine was saying. The City removed two trees next to this one and the dead branches were removed from this tree but he's concerned there will be more dead branches in the future. Mr. Kern confirmed that the City removed two trees that were totally dead but left this one. Mr. Dupere confirmed that the lower branches dying off is a natural feature of all pines. They don't know what killed the other two but it may have been some type of beetle. Mr. Levine has lived there for five years and they have all been steadily dying.

Ms. Rogers made a motion to remove the tree. Mr. Parkinson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Adams abstained as he did not see it.

85 Lawrence Street – This was a request from DPW. Mr. Kern confirmed the tree is on Kensington, around the corner. There is quite a bit of rot in the tree.

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

213 Aldrich Road – This is in front of the home of Cynthia and Michael Hart who wrote a letter in support of removing this tree, along a request to remove the tree on the west side of their driveway as well. Attorney Loughlin confirmed they would have to post the other tree and hear that at a future meeting. He felt that the tree that was posted looked pretty sad. Mr. Kern confirmed a large branch broke off, showing a lot of moss on the back side, which is not a good sign.

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

214 Aldrich Road – This tree is across the street. Attorney Loughlin felt it looked dead. Mr. Kern agreed.

Ms. Stevens made a motion to remove. Mr. Parkinson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

605 Lincoln Avenue – The Committee has talked about this tree in the past. Ms. Stevens indicated that this neighborhood has had a lot of trees removed. Mr. Dupere looked at it recently and confirmed there is a lot of rot inside the tree.

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

648 Lincoln Avenue – Mr. Kern stated that this was requested by the resident. He thought it would be a good time to take it down while the construction was going on. He did not think it would survive. Attorney Loughlin felt it should be removed. Mr. Dupere felt it could continue to live but it will never free form into a nice tree again as it has too much structure missing.

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

Veterans Park – Mr. Kern stated this is behind the monument and there is quite a bit of decay in the tree. This is being requested by DPW. It is a big White Ash.

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

Attorney Loughlin took a moment to welcome Everett Kern back to the Committee after his long absence. He also welcomed June Rogers back, although she wasn't out quite as long.

- 3. Plains Ball Field and Playground Improvement Project – David Moore, Community Development Director** – David Moore made a presentation on proposed improvements to this park. He displayed a plan and pointed out the new configuration of the area, where they have terminated Plains Avenue, creating a dead end and adding park space to the playground. This area is a playground, a park, a neighborhood and a gateway project.

They are relocating the playground to within the program of the ball field so they are away from the island feature surrounded by traffic. There is currently haphazard parking which has not served the playground use very well so they redefined the circulation and added defined parking. They are maintaining the overflow parking area. This is a very popular ball field for the Little League and it will continue to be heavily used. This is also a safety project and they are building a better backstop, doing strategic tree plantings and making sure there is adequate distance for foul balls. A lot is going into a small space.

They are proposing to take out 15 trees, most of which are Black Locust trees which are in bad shape. Those trees are located along Route 33 and the rear of the park. There are new plantings from the Route 33 project along the roadway as well as a gorgeous string of Maples existing in the park which will remain. There are two Locust trees that will remain. They are planting 38 new trees in a variety of species. He handed out photos of the existing and proposed trees.

With all projects, while working with the Landscape Architect, he gave them the street tree and preferred species list of this Committee to use in their consideration. The trees which they are proposing are Ginkgo, Callery Pear, American Beech, Common Honeylocust, Red Oak, Tuliptree, Sugar Maple, Colorado Spruce and Pin Oak.

Mr. Moore added that another important highlight is to screen the parking area that is being developed and paved for this area. He felt they have achieved an aesthetic planting plan which also works at a heavily used recreational facility.

Mr. Moore assured the Committee that he will come back before them when it is time to post the trees for removal. He asked for questions from the Committee.

Ms. Stevens asked what the time frame was. Mr. Moore stated they are planning to build after next season, or late summer/early fall 2012.

Mr. Adams asked where the location of the various species will be. He was curious about the Red Oaks and noted they will be near the parking areas and felt that might not be a good idea. Mr. Dupere agreed. It is a good tree for a park setting but they will have to deal with acorns dropping down on the road. Mr. Moore indicated they will look at that.

Ms. Stevens felt that the Pin Tree does really well. Mr. Dupere agreed it handles urban problems really well. The acorns are much smaller and stay on the tree much longer. Mr. Parkinson confirmed the park is used into the fall. Mr. Dupere felt that the acorns will stay on that long.

Mr. Dupere noted that the Honeylocust triacanthos on their list is a thorn variety so he assumes they are putting in a non-thorn variety. Some Honeylocust will have moderate thorns but some have vicious thorns. Therefore, a park setting would not work for that tree.

Ms. Stevens asked about the pitching cage. Mr. Moore showed on the plan where it had been relocated. Mr. Parkinson added that they have been talking with the League right along and they are moving their major leagues from this field to the Heights, where they have extended the field to meet some new mandates. Ms. Stevens thought it was a beautiful park.

Mr. Parkinson indicated that this playground was created with parts and pieces from other playgrounds around 20 years ago.

Mr. Adams asked whether the trees in the triangle by Route 33 are there now. Mr. Moore confirmed that the trees were planted during the Route 33 project. That area will be used for parking overflow. Mr. Adams was concerned about the effect on the trees. He asked about the lone tree on the apex. Mr. Moore indicated that tree is there now. He went on to explain that it is not usually haphazard in this area and they are working with DPW to find a turf stabilizer to keep the space greener so that it does not have the "burn out" look. He understands their concerns about the trees and the parking. Attorney Loughlin asked about using a granite curb or bollard to keep cars away from the trees. Mr. Parkinson stated that most of the trees are planted in back slope around the sidewalk and then it levels out to the parking area. Most are already higher on the bank edge with quite a slope. With the changing of the leagues, they will not be having the tournaments or the intense play that they used to have.

Mr. Adams asked about having a Dawn Redwood. They grow fast and they are pretty. Mr. Dupere felt it needed to be well watered and needed a wet area. Attorney Loughlin asked about a Concolor Fur. Mr. Dupere felt that would work. He asked if there would be water on site or would it be part of the City's plan to bring water in? Mr. Moore confirmed there will be irrigation for the field only.

Mr. Moore stated he would bring their suggestions back to the Park Committee and he would be back before them with final plans.

Attorney Loughlin felt it was a very creative and well planned project. He felt that all of the little improvement projects throughout the City made a huge difference in the City and the quality of life.

4. State Street Tree Planting Plans

Attorney Loughlin sent out the plans to the Committee and believes they are being implemented this week. Mr. Parkinson added that the two on the side of the Rockingham were getting complaints from the Library Restaurant owner as he felt they were blocking his sign.

Ms. Stevens asked if Dan Rawlings had been back in touch with the Committee. Mr. Parkinson thought they had shot down most of what he wanted to do in that area. The City does have a note about a possible location for a tree by the signal box. Also, as you come

from the Salvation Army to the intersection, people cut across the grass section so they are looking to fill it with brick as that appears to be what people want.

Mr. Adams remembered that Mr. Rawlings had suggested either a London Plane Tree or a Valley Forge Elm. Ms. Stevens thought a London Plane was a big tree. Mr. Adams felt they tend to heave sidewalks also. Attorney Loughlin mentioned the tree in front of Alies, and the London Plane in front of 55 Congress, and assumed they will never get to be out of hand because of their restrictions. Mr. Dupere added that they are recycling the trees out of the downtown every 10-15 years. Attorney Loughlin stated that 15-20% of all of the shade trees in NYC are London Plane trees. He felt they were great for the downtown.

5. Sewer Separation Project

Attorney Loughlin didn't know if there was anything new coming back on this project in the Richards Avenue area. Mr. Dupere reported that he and Ms. Stevens met with Rick Dolce and Dan from Underwood Engineers and they looked at most of the trees. Some trees should be removed promptly. They put them in a 1-4 rating system and DPW needs to decide on whether the curb line will be a problem for some of them. Cass Street looks pretty rough and every tree was given a 1 or a 2 to remove soon as they are not going to make it through the project. Ms. Stevens agreed it was helpful to hear Rick and Dan explain why they wanted to take a tree down and get a sense of what was going on.

Mr. Parkinson indicated that when a tree is on private property and needs to be removed they typically turn it over to the Legal Department and they will send out a letter. They can put them on notice that if it does fall and cause damage to public property or to a private individual they will be responsible.

6. Update on Mechanic Street Pumping Station Landscaping

Mr. Parkinson stated this was referred to DPW and there is nothing to report.

7. Update on Status of Tree Ordinance

Attorney Loughlin did not believe anything has happened on this. He had sent it to Peter Britz for the Conservation Commission and he will follow up on that.

8. Discussion of Plans for Winter Downtown Tree Protection

Attorney Loughlin put this on regarding the slats that they put around all of the downtown trees last year as he felt they were very helpful. Mr. Kern confirmed that they will do it again this year. Attorney Loughlin asked about putting additional tree guards downtown. Mr. Parkinson confirmed they have ordered three more for Popovers.

9. 4th Annual Recognition of Service Ceremony

Attorney Loughlin enclosed this invitation for the Committee Members. It will be held on Wednesday, November 30, 2011 at 6:30 pm in the Portsmouth Room at City Hall.

10. Old Business

Ocean State Job Lots. Mr. Adams did not believe they reached any resolution regarding Ocean State Job Lots and he felt that Mr. Taintor should come before the Committee and explain how he arrived at the \$6,000 and what the City is going to do with the money. Ms. Stevens felt that was a good question. Mr. Parkinson indicated it sometimes goes back into the general fund and sometimes goes for replacement. Mr. Parkinson didn't believe they were City trees but Mr. Adams remembered that City Attorney Sullivan was confident that they were City trees. Mr. Adams felt those people did not have any right to take those trees down and Mr. Taintor took it upon himself to say that \$6,000 would take care of it. He asked what will stop Mr. Taintor from doing this over and over again. Attorney Loughlin agreed that it could have been handled better but they are struggling with what to do when someone violates a Site Plan. They cut other trees in their parking lot as well. He felt if someone violates a Site Plan there should be a penalty as well. Mr. Adams saw those as two separate issues.

The Committee agreed that they were beautiful trees.

Mr. Adams made a motion to invite Mr. Taintor to next month's meeting to discuss the \$6,000 fine and how that money will be used. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Tree at the corner of Newcastle and South Street. Mr. Dupere brought up the trees at the corner of Newcastle and South Street. He worked on site with the contractor. The Committee had voted to clean the tree out and evaluate it's condition. It was a Silver Maple and he displayed photos of what it looked like. It was severely rotted out with many holes. The limb in question going across the house was completely gone with a horizontal crack extending outside the stem of the tree and it was filled with mushrooms. As a result, they decided to continue with the removal and took the tree down.

Spring Planting Schedule. Mr. Adams brought up the spring planting schedule which they always wait too long to put this together. He felt now was the time to do it. In the interest of getting the plantings in early in the spring, he felt they should all be thinking about appropriate sites for trees. Mr. Kern has three on Miller Avenue. This went out in an electronic email asking residents to contact them.

Ms. Stevens stated they still haven't gotten out to do pruning yet either.

11. New Business

None.

12. Next Meeting on Wednesday, December 14, 2011.

A motion to adjourn at 8:35 a.m. was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse
Administrative Assistant
Planning Department