

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

MINUTES

7:30 AM – Wednesday, August 8, City Hall

Members Present: Richard Adams, Vice Chairman; A. J. Dupere, Community Forester; Steve Parkinson, Director, Public Works;

Members Excused: Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Everett Kern; Leslie Stevens

The Vice-Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

1. **Acceptance of Minutes of June 13th Meeting** – Unanimously approved.
Acceptance of Minutes of July 11th Meeting – Unanimously approved.

2. **Tree Removal Requests:**

Corner of Suzanne Drive & Ocean Road (Requested by DPW) -
81 Decatur Road (Requested by Homeowner)
23 Willard Avenue (Requested by DPW)
93 Thaxter Road (Requested by DPW)

Mr. Dupere made a blanket motion to remove all four of the above trees. Mr. Parkinson seconded the motion. Mr. Adams stated that if Chairman Loughlin was present he would always emphasize that their strong disposition is to keep trees at all costs but the trees in question are thoroughly dead. The motion to remove all of the four trees passed unanimously.

3. **Discussion of Tree Planting Policies, Generally and Specifically in front of Rockingham House Condo & Restaurant**

Mr. Adams indicated it was his understanding that one party does not favor trees being planted in the designated areas that were created. Some of the Committee members felt that trees would be desirable there. Mr. Parkinson stated that they had representatives of the Rockingham Condominium Association and Bruce Belanger of the Library Restaurant present at the hearing. Mr. Belanger stated he was the one who asked to plant smaller trees or shrubs in the tree planters outside of the restaurant. It took him a long time to build his restaurant up to what it is and he needs the visibility. He doesn't think the Condo Association feels any differently and they all want to work together but he

wanted to be perfectly clear that he was speaking for himself as a business owner and not on behalf of the Condo Association.

Karen Andersen, President of the Condo Association, explained that the Board talked about this with its members and there is strong feeling with the membership that there be trees but they understand Mr. Belanger's desire not to obscure his signage. They wondered if there could be some sort of compromise with where the foliage starts or the circumference of the tree. The Condo Association still wants something befitting of the building.

Mr. Adams found some 1800's photos showing trees which he passed around. Even as recently as his childhood he recalls large trees all along State Street. He felt a lot depends on the species that is selected. If they had a blue spruce with branches all the way to the ground it would adversely affect the sign but a tree that grows tall like an elm or a tulip tree which are mostly trunk will provide a lot of beauty. Mr. Belanger agreed a deciduous tree would make the most sense in the fall/winter/spring months when it is less obscured but he was thinking more of a columnar tree, like a Norway maple. Mr. Adams thought the branching in a relatively mature tree would be well above his sign. Mr. Belanger was thinking about the painfully slow growth of a 2 ½" – 3" caliper and waiting for it to grow up so that the leaf ball was above sight distance. Mr. Adams felt a trident maple is lovely (the Norway maple are illegal) and would work well.

Mr. Dupere felt Mr. Belanger had an elevation advantage but also a disadvantage as his restaurant is well above the streetscape. Any tree, 2-3" diameter caliper, will be 12' – 15' tall. Those lower branches can be trimmed and removed, which they are doing on State Street, so the tree can be worked to fit into the site. He asked how wide the area is that the tree would go in and not obstruct the view. There are trees that may be 5-6' wide but they can get 50- 60' tall. For an instant there will be a wide green structure and 3-4 months out of the year it will be a deciduous tree. There are a couple columnar maples around town.

One of the residents asked about the name of the trees they planted on the other side in front of TD Bank. Mr. Dupere indicated that they put in Japanese lilacs further down by the Temple and 3 red maples starting at the State Street Saloon which are planted 3-4' underground as part of a water research project they are doing. They are not a columnar variety. The columnar variety is basically an abnormality in nature that has been developed by landscapers and nurseries because of something unique.

Mr. Belanger mentioned the Champs-Elysees by the Arc de Triomphe in Paris where they line the street with trees a little broader than a telephone pole. Mr. Dupere mentioned that it is very common for European countries to prune the daylight out of their trees which come at a cost to the health of the trees. Mr. Dupere indicated he would scope out some tree species. Mr. Parkinson felt they would be able to plant them this fall.

Mr. Parkinson would like to see a tree that would meet everybody's needs. He would like to see a tree with some height as the lower trees always cause problems for the City. A higher trunk and branches would be good.

Mr. Adams felt they could give them examples of trees they have planted in the past 5 years to show them how fast they grow. Mr. Belanger does not want his sign or entrance obscured. He has customers who have lived in Portsmouth for 50 years and they come in and say they didn't even know the restaurant was there. Ms. Andersen felt the Association was looking at the proportion of the tree with the building. The building has a history and part of that history is the trees.

Shawn Tracey stated he is the other first floor commercial unit facing State Street in the Rockingham. They moved in over one year ago and were very excited when they put the planters out and redid all of the brick. They were excited about getting some trees. The area has such width in the street that it is quite barren and not as pleasing. They had seen some old postcards of the trees that used to be there and they feel a good sized tree would fit out there. They are in favor of the appropriate sized tree with a good round canopy. He remembers the Champs Elysees area to have a long stretch of repeating trees which creates a pattern. In this case they just have two trees. Mr. Adams stated those are London plane trees in Paris and they take an enormous amount of work.

There was a discussion about different species of trees and whether they would be appropriate for this location. Some trees in downtown Portsmouth were also mentioned which Mr. Dupere will take a look at.

Mr. Tracey asked what the City would have normally planted at this location. Mr. Dupere was not sure. They usually go on a site walk and power lines are sometimes a restricting feature. Everett Kern tries to contact the neighbors to see what they would like. Mr. Dupere assumed that a species that would grow to large size when mature would normally be the committee's choice.

Now that the Committee knows what their concerns area, Ms. Andersen asked if they could come back and tell the residents what would be appropriate. Mr. Belanger has also described his needs. If they send a list, the Condo Association can look them up. Mr. Adams was confident they could come up with a tree to satisfy everyone.

Mr. Dupere felt it would be best to identify the trees in downtown that they discussed and then schedule a site walk. He should be able to do something before the end of the month. Mr. Parkinson confirmed they would probably plant in October so that would give them time.

Mr. Tracey mentioned a beautiful tree in front of the old City Hall building on Daniel Street. Mr. Adams believed it was a honey locust. Mr. Belanger asked about the lindens that he believed were going to take over the elms. Mr. Dupere felt it would depend on the variety. The little leaf lindens stay smaller and shorter. The honey locust is a thornless, very tight upright tree. Over time they tend to self-prune, shedding their lower

branches. You will find them in every Market Basket parking lot. Norway maples are banned in the State of NH because they are so invasive.

Mr. Adams summarized that the Committee will identify species, provide site locations to look at them and then they can get together and come to an agreement. He stated that Sam Jarvis took care of a linden right outside his restaurant which was planted in 1976 and it has done extremely well, in part, because he watered it so faithfully. He will identify that species next to TD North. The Sargent cherries and lindens are there also. There are Dutch elms in front of the North Church doing very well, Honey locust next to the Post Office, and Chinese Elms along Middle Street across from Haymarket Square which were planted a few years go and are not fully grown. There are golden rain trees in the area that he wants to find and show them.

Mr. Parkinson felt that it is important to continue the line of trees on State Street as they affect everything, including lighting, brick sidewalks, the trees and the plantings. Mr. Dupere agreed they are going for a "package deal" on State Street and it has cleaned up the whole area. This is a huge building so there is no way they can't find an appropriate tree. Mr. Adams felt that a columnar tree would be a mistake. Mr. Dupere felt they could put in a variety of honey locust, the beechtree, or any maple. Mr. Adams suggested a tulip tree. Mr. Dupere reminded them of the years it takes to deal with that and the City has to decide if they are in the business of pruning trees for personal wishes. Mr. Dupere could see a very large tree because the building is so massive. Something too small will look out of place and they want it to have a good base. If they prune the bottom limbs off for 2-3 years, it will force the tree to grow up. Mr. Parkinson stated there was not a lot of sidewalk space and the planter is 6' x 8'.

Mr. Adams was concerned about getting into the business of having a vote on trees. Mr. Parkinson explained that they typically will go to homeowners if they have a specific choice on their list. He would offer a choice to them and as long as they limit the types of trees and only offer trees that they would like to see planted at that location. That way, the homeowner has picked the kind they want and if there is a future problem it helps diffuse it.

4. Discussion of Criteria for Tree Removal

Mr. Adams asked if anyone had anything to discuss regarding this item. Mr. Parkinson did not have anything specific. Ms. Stevens had put together the list and as she was not present it was suggested to postpone the matter to next month.

Mr. Dupere noted that a couple of trees they are evaluating this morning are dead. He asked what their responsibility was on leaving the dead tree standing for a few weeks to get it posted. Mr. Parkinson felt it was fine as long as they did not feel it was an immediate hazard. They did have one the other night where a branch came down and they ended up removing it immediately. If it is so rotten and it is a danger, they will take it right down.

Mr. Adams asked Mr. Dupere if he had a chance to look at the trunk of a tree that they had used the resistograph on. Mr. Dupere had not but stated that when they cored it they knew there was some rot inside but it did not show up as a high rot category. He wants to borrow the resistograph again to do some testing to help determine how well the resistograph works.

Mr. Adams asked Mr. Parkinson what he thought about the City getting a resistograph. Mr. Parkinson asked how expensive they are. Mr. Adams indicated that they range from \$600 - \$6,000. Mr. Dupere did not know anything about them but he can do some research on them.

Mr. Parkinson felt if it is a proven tool and reasonable in price, it would make sense for them to have one. It would probably have some value to the big trees over on Lincoln Avenue. Mr. Adams felt that the big oak taken down at the corner of Lincoln Avenue would have been a good candidate for the resistograph. Mr. Dupere was sure they could borrow it and use it on a tree that they are taking down to see if it works as well as they say it does. He does not know any arborist who has one or uses it.

Mr. Adams mentioned that they might want Mark Tanner to prune the tree at the corner of Lincoln and Junkins as a big dead limb hangs over the street.

5 **Old Business** – none.

6. **New Business** – none.

7. **Next Meeting – Wednesday, September 12, 2012**

A motion to adjourn at 8:34 a.m. was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse
Administrative Assistant
Planning Department