

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, January 9, 2013
Portsmouth City Hall, City Manager's Conference Room**

Members Present: Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice Chairman; Todd Croteau, Public Works General Foreman; A. J. Dupere, Community Forester; Leslie Stevens; Dennis Souto

Members Excused: and Steve Parkinson, Director, Public Works;

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

1. **Acceptance of Minutes of the December 12, 2012 Meeting.** Unanimously approved.
2. **Tree Removal Requests:**

921 Middle Street (tree on Orchard Street). Requested by DPW. It was agreed that the bottom of this tree was completely rotted. Ms. Stevens made a motion to remove the tree. Mr. Souto seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
3. **2012 Attendance Record:** This document was prepared by Jane Shouse and will be submitted to the City Clerk's Office.
4. **Tree Removal Requests (2012 – 2006) by Location.** Attorney Loughlin sent this out to the Committee members in coordination with the tree planting schedule for the spring so they would have a record of past removal requests, some of which were probably denied.
5. **Tree Removal Request (2012 – 2006) by Date.** See 4 above.
6. **Spring Tree Planting Plans.** Included in the Committee packet was the list which was made when they went out last January and looked at the different sites. Mr. Croteau provided a list and there was a separate list from Suzanne Drive, although those appear on the list that Mr. Croteau sent out this week. There was also a list of trees planted last year. What they need to do is identify locations for tree planting in the spring.

Ms. Stevens asked how many trees they have to work with. Mr. Croteau felt they probably had around \$10,000. Mr. Dupere indicated that the cost per tree is around \$500 so they are talking about 20 trees. Attorney Loughlin mentioned that they have been promising people on Lincoln Avenue that trees will be planted. Mr. Dupere agreed that area should be planted heavily although Severino did put in some replacement trees. Mr. Adams was concerned about who will specify where the trees will go. Attorney Loughlin responded that the Committee went out with Rick Dolce to determine locations for the new trees. He believes Severino put in around 12 trees and he also believed that Peter Rice talked about putting more money in the next budget for trees. Mr. Adams suggested that the sewer projects should stand separate from individual tree planting requests. Mr. Croteau explained that the Lincoln

Avenue area was a great learning process for everyone. Mr. Dupere felt they should identify 15 – 20 sites around the City in addition to the Lincoln Avenue area for Steve Parkinson. There are 20 tree requests in the Lincoln Avenue area but some may not be appropriate.

Attorney Loughlin stated that last year they removed 50 -60 trees around the City and they will remove around 20 in the next phase of the sewer contract. He noted they are removing trees at an incredible rate. He sent a letter out to all residents on the February 13th list and got a surprisingly limited response. Ms. Stevens asked if they are suggesting that they start at the Lincoln Avenue corridor. Attorney Loughlin felt they should focus there. Mr. Adams suggested that they first compare the lists and determine which ones have already been planted by Severino.

Ms. Stevens suggested that they prepare two lists, one for the Lincoln Avenue area and one for the rest of the City. Mr. Dupere further suggested that they prioritize the Lincoln Avenue list. They can rank them by how appropriate the location would be. Mr. Croteau confirmed they have until next Wednesday to complete the list.

Attorney Loughlin indicated that there are some places where tree locations were staked with a tree species but they couldn't get the trees at the end of the year. Mr. Croteau will go back through some of their records to determine what was planted and what was not.

Mr. Souto asked if trees can only be planted between the street and the sidewalk. Mr. Croteau indicated that was typically where they would go. Mr. Dupere added that they can't plant on private property but occasionally they have planted on the other side of the sidewalk. Mr. Croteau explained the tree is an asset to the people of Portsmouth so they cannot plant on private property. On the flip side, the road is not always centered in the middle of the right of way.

Mr. Croteau indicated that Richards Avenue will not be complete by this time. They still have to lay utilities and pave and they have a lot of streetscape work to do. However, most of the digging is done. He also stated that they could make replacement trees part of the contracts.

Mr. Souto suggested that they can carry over to the next year if resources are limited. Ms. Stevens cautioned that they would have to be careful with that as a lot of people have made requests and they like to respond to them as well. Mr. Dupere thought they may have to make a case for taking down three times more than they are planting to obtain more funding. Mr. Adams pointed out that this is the first time they have been faced with this problem. Mr. Dupere added that there are two more phases to the sewer project so this will continue to happen.

Mr. Souto asked about their learning process. Ms. Stevens responded that the second time around they walked down the street and identified trees that they did not want taken down. Then DPW knew what trees could be removed and it was set up better from the beginning. Mr. Dupere added that they tried to be more realistic of the construction needs because last time they had to go out during the project to determine if trees could come down *that day* due to undermining roots or other reasons. Attorney Loughlin indicated that their job was advocating the protection of the trees but the contractor hoped to take down as many trees as possible as they slow their job down. Ms. Stevens stated that they did put their foot down about a pin oak on the corner of Lincoln Avenue and Peter Rice agreed to figure out how to save that tree. She agreed they were very mindful about construction. Mr. Adams felt that adding a fine to the contracts for damaged trees worked as an incentive so that the workers would be

more careful with their equipment. Mr. Croteau saw a minimum amount of tree damage on Lincoln Avenue and the contractor hires a tree service to come in and replant the trees they are responsible for.

Mr. Adams was concerned about the limited budget and having to spend so much on sewer project neighborhoods because it would limit tree planting throughout the City. Mr. Croteau was not sure how the money would be determined.

It was agreed they would schedule a time to go out and identify potential planting sites, starting on Lincoln Avenue. They would also identify the species for each site. There are a lot of sites that need trees but they will have to prioritize them. Mr. Souto further requested that Mr. Croteau determine if there will be construction activity in the selected areas in the next few years.

The Committee will meet on Thursday, January 10th, at 1:00 pm in the lower parking lot at City Hall. If they cannot finish on Thursday, they will continue on Friday, January 11th, starting at 1:00 pm.

Mr. Dupere will put a piece in the Newsletter with a planting update so that people know what is going on.

7. Discussion of Tree Committee Tasks. Mr. Adams put a chart together for the Committee to review. He thought this would help the Committee stay on track and assist Attorney Loughlin in putting items on the Agenda.

Ms. Stevens asked if they have always planted in the fall. Mr. Croteau believed they have.

8. Old Business

496 Lincoln Avenue, Jeffrey Francis. It was mentioned that the owner had requested a flowering tree but Severino put in a red oak and there are wires overhead.

Ms. Stevens asked about the status of the Tree Ordinance. Attorney Loughlin stated he was waiting to hear back from City Attorney Sullivan. Mr. Dupere indicated that they need to have an ordinance to apply for TreeCity USA. Attorney Loughlin will re-send the Ordinance to City Attorney Sullivan.

Mr. Adams knows it would never fly in Portsmouth, but there are some towns that control what people can do with their own private trees where they need a tree removal permit from the City for any tree greater than 6" in diameter. Mr. Dupere felt that would go against State Statue and the harvest law. He did add that Portsmouth has the most restrictive regulations in the State.

9. New Business

Mr. Dupere advised the Committee that the State entomologist has contact him about working to develop inventories regarding new insects. This all works with the Committee's goal to make a list of the trees in the City. She would like to come and address the Committee in the future. She would be available for the February agenda. Her focus is the problems being caused by insects coming into the City.

Mr. Croteau noted he has received another letter from Marjorie Fernald about taking the tree down in front of her house on Sheffield Road. He stated they have gone out periodically to look at the tree. It's a sycamore and the leaves fall shortly after coming out and the bark falls off. Attorney Loughlin suggested that Mr. Dupere examine the tree in the spring. Mr. Adams felt that a case could be made that a homeowner could have a justifiable reason to remove a tree. Attorney Loughlin agreed that this weighs heavily on Ms. Fernald and it is causing her distress. Mr. Croteau suggested having an independent tree company look at it but Attorney Loughlin did not think that would have any effect. Ms. Fernald has volunteered to put in another tree. One idea the Committee discussed was putting two trees in the area and then set a time frame to remove the sycamore.

Attorney Loughlin will send Ms. Fernald a letter advising her that they will look at it again in the spring.

10. Next Meeting – Wednesday, February 13, 2013

A motion to adjourn at 8:42 a.m. was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse
Administrative Assistant
Planning Department