

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

MINUTES

7:30 AM – Wednesday, April 10, 2013

Portsmouth City Hall, 3rd Floor, City Manager's Conference Room

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

Members Excused: Peter Loughlin, Chairman;

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

1. **Acceptance of Minutes of the February 13, 2013 and March 13, 2013 Meeting –**
Unanimously approved.

2. **Presentation by PSNH/City of Portsmouth re: Sagamore Bridge replacement -**
Tom Richter, of DPW, indicated that he will be managing the Sagamore Bridge Project. Also present was Bob Bernier of PSNH. He pointed out the property line and the City trees that need to be removed. He distributed exhibits showing the trees growing up into the power lines. The pole that is just right of center will be moved to the left because the Bridge is expanding 7' – 8' in that direction. PSNH says that all of the trees need to go to achieve pole relocation and overhead wires. Mr. Richter indicated that they would make sure that PSNH gets all of their permits to enable them to start working on the line transfers. He took pictures of the trees to show the approximate size of the trees next to the guardrail and estimated that there are about 25 trees. There are some arborvitaes that PSNH does not have to cut. One has fallen over and is leaning on the Fairpoint wires so that one will have to go. Mr. Dupere clarified that was a spruce tree that has already been topped out. Most of the trees are oak with one multi-stemmed pine near the water. Mr. Richter stated there will be a retaining wall. Mr. Parkinson indicated that as you get closer to the water the triangle is widening out and they have a retaining wall that will hold the approach to the bridge in place. There really is no choice; the trees need to come out. Mr. Adams asked if they have any authority over the removals. Mr. Parkinson confirmed that this is more advisory because they really aren't able to deny any of the removals as they must come out for the bridge work. The trees are all in the big triangle. Mr. Richter added that there are a lot of questions concerning the other side of the bridge. It will depend on how close they get to the shore to determine how many trees will have to be removed.

Ms. Stevens asked if they would be contacting the homeowners. Mr. Richter confirmed he was going to speak to them today.

Mr. Adams referred to the big red oak near Shaw Road. Bob Bernier, of PSNH, confirmed that tree does not have to be removed.

Mr. Adams asked about any opportunity for planting after the completion of the bridge work. Mr. Parkinson stated there isn't a lot of land being impacted and most is going to be suitable for planting

when they are done because either the slope is too much or the retaining wall is in the way. The trees that are there now all grew up from scrub because the area is never cleared.

Mr. Parkinson did not believe a vote was necessary. Mr. Adams thanked them for keeping the committee informed.

3. **Removal requests: 54 Lincoln Avenue (two trees)** Mr. Adams indicated these trees are almost dead or completely dead. They have been posted. Mr. Parkinson made a motion to remove the trees. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Condition of tree at 303 Miller Avenue – request for Committee’s assessment.** - Mr. Donald Trombley is the homeowner and asked them to look at the tree. Mr. Croteau explained that this winter there was some damage done around the base of the tree with a sidewalk tractor and he thought there was root impact. Mr. Croteau further stated he didn’t see any impact. Mr. Dupere didn’t see any damage to the base except some loss of bark. Mr. Adams didn’t feel there was anything to be done except wait and see if it flourishes. The Committee will monitor it.

5. **Status of Spring Planting.** –Mr. Croteau stated that the invitation to quote for the project has gone out but he hasn’t heard back yet. He sent requested to Salmon Falls, J&L, Stratham Circle, and Labrie Associates. Mr. Adams mentioned that Mr. Souto has expressed an interest in being present when they plant to evaluate the condition of the trees.

Ms. Stevens wanted to make sure that the homeowners get Attorney Loughlin’s letter outlining how to care for the tree.

6. **Report on Condition of 2012 planted trees and**

7. **Discussion Regarding Cost Effectiveness of Replacement Warranties.** – Mr. Adams has been looking at the trees that have been planted since 2008 and he has been very pleased to find that almost without exception they are in very good condition. He has done some minor pruning and made notes of some that need a ladder. He wondered about what they are paying for replacement warranty and whether it is worth it. Since 2008 they have only had a handful of trees that haven’t survived. Mr. Croteau explained that the warranty is worked into the price when they put it out to bid. He will ask and find out what the difference in cost would be. Mr. Dupere thought they were probably adding 10% - 15% to the cost. They have their costs broken down so it shouldn’t be too difficult to find out.

8. **Volunteer pruning plans** - Mr. Dupere stated he won’t be able to do any scheduling until later today for this month. He can do something early May but the earlier the better to get into the trees. Pruning after hours also works for him. The last class of tree stewards came out of Great Bay and would probably be interested. He felt they may have a better chance of getting people after work.

Pruning was scheduled for Tuesday, April 23rd and Thursday, April 24th at 5:00 to meet at the City Hall parking lot. Mr. Adams will bring a list of trees. Mr. Dupere will bring some brochures on how to prune a tree.

Mr. Parkinson requested a list of names so that the City can identify them properly. Mr. Adams shared that the City ID card that he received has been very valuable when inspecting trees in front of people’s homes.

9. **Tree Ordinance** – Mr. Adams requested that they take one last look at the ordinance and then send it along to City Council. Mr. Parkinson suggested taking one more look to make sure it is what they want and then send it along with a cover letter to the City Manager and he will have it placed on an appropriate City Council agenda. It will also be important for members of the Committee to be present and for someone to make a presentation. Mr. Adams felt it was important that it reads the way they want it to because they are not likely to see the Council revisit this anytime soon

10. **Old Business** -

(Taken out of order):

d. **Ceres Street Proposal** - Elizabeth Wivell and Timothy Dezzell were both present as sop owners on Ceres Street. She provided photos of the area. Mr. Adams asked what they would like the City to consider. Ms. Wivell was unclear on exactly what the Committee does but everyone on Ceres Street would like more greenery to make it more inviting. The chain link fence is not very attractive and makes it precarious coming down the road. They don't want to block the view of the tug boat. Trees would be wonderful but maybe they could just have some planters along the very narrow strip. Maybe they could have lights on them to periodically turn on because at night it is a little dark and "iffy". There is a lot of pedestrian traffic during the tourist season and it is a historical street. It is mostly a walking street, especially in the evenings. They aren't experts but something that would survive year round would be good. She was sure the merchants would work with the City. She also noted that the tugboat yard gets kind of junky. Mr. Parkinson asked if the merchants would be interested in doing plantings in planters that the City might possibly provide. Ms. Wivell was confident that the merchants would be willing to maintain the planters. They are also thinking about adopting the area next to the Dolphin Striker. There are always a lot of cigarette butts on the ground. Ms. Stevens asked if the City provides smoking receptacles. Mr. Parkinson confirmed they do not. Ms. Wiffel stated the two that John Golumb bought were stolen. She noted that Mr. Golumb's side of the street looks very nice.

Mr. Dupere asked what they have for space in the area. Mr. Croteau confirmed the strip of land is not a sidewalk but, rather, is a street dressing. Putting something on that strip would not block the marine vehicles. Mr. Dupere indicated that in Chicago they have put in planters where nothing else will fit. They are removable and they are growing full size trees in them. They have a cage across the top so that it can't be filled up with trash and cigarette butts. Unfortunately, the chain link fence doesn't block all of their equipment which is an eyesore. The fence belongs to the Morans so maybe they could consider putting up a wood picket fence. More evergreen vines are not going to grow in this harsh area and usually only grow where they are comfortable. Ms. Wivell responded that they figured planters would be a lot easier to maintain and if they can't find anything that likes the environment year round then they would have to rotate plants for the seasons. Mr. Parkinson felt the first step would be to make contact with Moran to see if they have any objection to having the open view across their property blocked for security reasons. If they don't have a concern, he would note be interested in putting up a fence of any kind because of the maintenance issue and would prefer something like a planting box of some length with some height to it with maybe a trellis behind it to allow greens to grow up on it. The tenants could work with Mr. Croteau and his staff to come up with an acceptable planter that would not be intrusive.

Ms. Wivell stated she will try to catch Moran and speak to them. The key thing is that they would only take up the one side and the gate where they go through would be left open. She understands the security aspect. Mr. Souto thought they might ask if they will allow the City to use their fence. Mr. Parkinson would like to stay away from that and keep it independent. Mr. Dezzell asked if the City

has a budget. Mr. Parkinson indicated that they do not have a budget and he would have to look to other sources for funding.

Ms. Wivell asked about adopting the space at the top corner by the Dolphin Striker. Mr. Parkinson stated they would go through the Public Works Department. He thought they may still have a stump in there. Mr. Croteau added that they can prep the soil properly for them.

Mr. Stevens noted that narrow planters in that spot will need to be watered regularly. Mr. Parkinson felt they could probably get this done by June.

a. State Entomologist -

Mr. Dupere introduced Angie Hammond from the Urban Forestry Center who was present to talk about the Emerald Ash Borer. Mr. Dupere stated that this "pest" came in from Michigan and was shipped here from Asia. It was not believed to be in NH because of our cold however it was found in Concord on March 28th and it eat and kills Ash trees by the area. It has a way of getting into an Ash Tree that you can't see. The City of Portsmouth has quite a few Ash trees. They are looking for an initial indicator of woodpeckers, who seem to know more about this pest than we do. The borers are basically shredding off the bark from the outside of the tree. Their larvae will be hatching and coming out in the next few weeks. Ms. Hammond explained that other things go after Ash trees but usually the other things will wait until the tree is declining or sick where as the emerald ash borer goes after healthy trees and kills them within one to three years. Mr. Dupere indicated that they do not know what their action plan is going to be exactly but the tree where they were spotted is coming down on Thursday. They have established a quarantine in Merrimack County so no ash wood can move in or out of Merrimack County for any reason. Their Rangers will be going around to all of the old logging jobs in the past year to find out where that wood went and see if any of it is still around. They will do a 2 mile survey around Concord.

Mr. Adams felt this sounds the same as what happened to the American Chestnut. One in four trees in the US used to be American Chestnut and there was wholesale cutting but that didn't work. Mr. Dupere indicated that when that came around in 2000 he cut all of their trees within a 2 week notice that were infected. They cut them, chipped the, quarantined them, sprayed them and they had pretty much given up on the fight.

At the present time, Mr. Dupere stated that they will be asking people to give them samples and his boss can allow them on private property at any given time and technically they can cut any tree. They try to avoid that because it can get messy. They are trying to get ahead of this with pamphlets and tv coverage. They are looking for public support.

Mr. Parkinson asked if they had any idea why it was only the Ash. Mr. Dupere indicated that the most devastating bugs in their history are tree specific. The disappointing aspect of this is that green ash was planted by massive amounts out west as a housing development tree. It is a tough tree, takes a lot of abuse and is relatively easy to mass produce. NH doesn't have a lot of them anymore but the City of Dover is green ash from one end of Central Avenue to the other.

Ms. Hammond explained that they lay eggs on the exterior of the tree in crevices and it is the larvae that is doing the damage and they can only be seen in the tree after you take the bark off. Mr. Dupere indicated they are trying a method of putting liquid on the bark on the outside of the tree but they then have to keep kids away from the tree. This bugs are designed by nature to hide from us.

Mr. Adams asked if Dover was doing anything. Mr. Dupere didn't think they were yet but he will learn a lot more today. He assumes in the next two weeks they will know how bad the infestation is in Concord. Mr. Souto asked if they can set out traps for the adults. Mr. Dupere confirmed they have been doing that. The bugs are attracted to purple, for some unknown reason, so they have made the traps purple. But they haven't found any so he doesn't know how effective the traps are.

Mr. Souto stated that there is a ground nesting wasp that they found colonies in Portsmouth and you can watch what they bring back. If there are Emerald Ash Borer in the area then they will bring them back. There was a colony at Yokens but this is gone with the construction. There are still a couple of good ones at some of the ballfields and also at the golf course at Pease. They are yellow and black and look like yellow jackets and they don't sting. Mr. Souto stated that the ground nesting wasps tend to be very specific on the prey that they want to bring back to their young.

Mr. Adams stated that they haven't planted any ash for quite a few years. Mr. Dupere explained that they didn't plant it as he has other issues with ash because of the litter that comes out of it. They haven't consciously stopped planting ash yet but some nurseries have stopped growing them. He believes the Emerald Ash Borer will soon be wide spread starting in Concord. The biggest thing is to diversify their species. Some elms have survived and some haven't and no one knows why. Ms. Hammond added that the bugs can smell the phloem in the tree which is the connective tissue in the tree. The bigger the tree, the more phloem there is. That's the inner bark that touches the wood. Mr. Souto added that one of the problems with ash is that it is on the outside of the tree.

Mr. Dupere advised the members that as they start examining ash trees, they should look for bark on the ground underneath the tree where it has been shredded and chunks of the trees that are bark-free inside the crown. Ms. Hammond added that any type of crown die-back should be investigated.

Mr. Dupere would like to do a City wide inventory. He and Mr. Croteau have talked to Jamie McCarty regarding the City GIS system. Mr. Dupere has funding for a full time person this summer. They were trying to figure out how to get this off the ground and he feels that they could have someone with a laptop go around and enter information into City GIS system. His focus is to have a specific person and make it his responsibility. They are looking at identifying the species of the tree and its location, and some other information such as its diameter and any existing issues. This could also be done in the Excel program. He will have a better idea of what direction they will be going in at the next Trees & Greenery meeting. He asked the Committee to think about what data they would like. He felt this was an ambitious project to complete in one summer but believed it could be done.

Mr. Souto really liked this idea and wondered if it would be difficult to identify which trees were actually City trees. Mr. Dupere thought they would work that out with the laptop program of either Excel or Viewworks. This inventory would also help with pruning. As work orders come in they can look them up on the computer and get answers immediately. .

Mr. Adams felt this was a massive project. Mr. Croteau indicated that is why they should keep it simple and just collect the basic information. Manchester did what was called a windshield survey and put the trees in classes and generalized them. Mr. Dupere added that they would limit it to about five items.

b. Fernald tree - This is a 4-unit building across from Leary Field. Mr. Adams advised the Committee that the owner has asked them to consider trees along what he called a green strip between

the sidewalk and the street, however, Mr. Adams noted that there is no green strip in front of this house so he doesn't know what they can do. Mr. Parkinson added that the area is also still under construction and is still all torn up. They need to wait and see what the finish is going to be and if there is any space left. Ms. Stevens mentioned that they have also been talking about replacing a lot of the trees on the opposite side of the street. Mr. Adams will make sure that Mr. Fernald receives a response.

c. Tree Ordinance – See Item 9 above.

d. Williard Avenue Proposals. - Trice Edwards provided a list of trees for Willard Avenue for planting. Some are already on the list because of construction. Mr. Croteau indicated that Timberland is doing a project off Pierce Island and 4 Red Maples are going in there. Ms. Stevens believed that the discussion they had last time was whether they were going to try and do a second planting this spring and, if so, whether we could get some of these put in. Mr. Croteau felt they need to get the quotes in first for the first round and see what is left over. There will be construction at the corner of Willard and Wibird but Willard is not getting torn up like Lincoln. Ms. Stevens felt they should think about the fact that these are motivated homeowners who are willing to assist with the trees. They need to give some thought on the best way to handle this. Mr. Croteau will have quotes on Friday and he will put the information out to the members. Mr. Souto didn't want to be planting trees in streets that will be torn up down the road. Ms. Stevens pointed out that a lot of trees have been taken down on that road and there are a lot more that are unhealthy so even if it is a 5-year window it is still worth putting some trees in. Mr. Croteau felt that the other thing about planting before construction starts is it may impact the street design so it may be advantageous to hold off and put the infrastructure in. Then the trees will fit properly on the street. It was agreed that they should wait and see what they have left over for money. Mr. Parkinson noted that a lot of people were asking to have trees planted exactly where the old ones were and that's a problem and the people need to be educated on that. Mr. Parkinson summarized that they have the quotes coming in to determine what they have left for money, they will check the schedule for the sewer construction to determine their time line and if they have people willing to contribute that will help with the cost.

Miscellaneous Items:

Mr. Adams also wanted to bring up the Children of the American Revolution who had a 10' Liberty Elm that they wanted to plan and asked Mr. Croteau if he had heard back from them. Mr. Croteau indicated he would follow up on that.

Ms. Stevens wanted to make sure they are keeping an eye on the really big Ash tree on Lincoln with the pole in the middle and the flower painted on it. That is a big one that may not have survived. There is also a big Norway Maple tree on the northern end of Broad that may be dead. Mr. Parkinson thought that is probably on private property.

A motion to adjourn at 8:50 a.m. was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse
Administrative Assistant
Planning Department