

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, May 8, 2013
Portsmouth City Hall, 1st Floor, School Board Conference Room**

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

Members Excused: n/a

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

1. Acceptance of minutes from April 10, 2013 meeting.

Mr. Adams asked that the April 10th minutes be revised to read that “Steve Parkinson said the area was not suitable for replanting because there is not enough room.” Also at Paragraph 10 it should read “storeowners”.

Mr. Adams made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Tree Removal Requests:

213 Aldrich Road, request by resident. Cynthia and Michael Hart, the property owners, sent a letter stating the branches continue to fall off, along with bark and sawdust. They have had two instances in storms where branches have taken down the powerlines. They have contacted PSNH and the rep said they needed to contact the City. With the upcoming sewer construction it would be best to have it removed. There have been several visits from DPW over the years.

Attorney Loughlin indicated they had this request several years ago. He felt the tree is a healthy typical silver maple. Mr. Dupere noted there was a good column of rot going up inside the crack on the back side and several other types of trees growing out of it. This is typical to similar silver maples around the City. Mr. Croteau believed it was pruned last year. Attorney Loughlin added that a silver maple tree was removed across the street last year, emphasizing the lack of trees in this location. He acknowledged that silver maples are not ideal but they are what made Aldrich Road attractive. Ms. Stevens though this was a tough call as it looks like every other silver maple on that street, which is near the end of its life.

Mr. Parkinson asked Mr. Dupere if he saw anything that was in danger with the tree. Mr. Dupere felt it was hard to tell without poking into the rot. This is what silver maples tend to do. He felt that DPW could go out and get a good look into it. He suggested postponing this matter until they have more information. Mr. Parkinson made a motion to postpone this to next month's meeting. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Stevens commented on Aldrich. Similarly to how they are doing it on Willard, she felt they need to have a plan for this street. You can't just take every tree down. They need to actively manage the street. Mr. Dupere felt there were some spots where they could start some planting. Mr. Croteau indicated the sewer construction is going out to bid now. Mr. Parkinson added that the sidewalks are remaining as they are as they have already done those but they will be doing sewer and drains.

55 Rock Street – multiple. Request by DPW. Mr. Parkinson stated that in the next two weeks they will be demolishing the old Rock Street warehouse. These trees were not planted, they are volunteers, and they are embedded in the retaining wall and causing it to pitch. They are the trees along the side of the building. Mr. Croteau added there is one in the back where the tree has been girdled and it's not long for this world. There are no plans for the property after the demo. Ms. Stevens asked if the community garden was active. Mr. Rice confirmed it would not be this year but there is an interested group. It is not a great spot for a community garden due to the environmental issues associated with the area. Ms. Stevens made a motion to remove. Mr. Parkinson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

1808 Islington Street – request by resident. Ms. Stevens had a question about the tree next to it which looks dead. Mr. Croteau confirmed that tree is on private property and it is dead. Mr. Dupere made a motion to remove. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

38 Haven Road – request by resident. Mr. Adams made a motion to remove the tree. Ms. Stevens mentioned that the sign on the tree was missing so she wanted to confirm that it was the little tree in the middle. She seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Ranger Way Street Improvements

Attorney Loughlin first wanted to mention that he went out to the Plains ballpark and felt it looks fantastic. He also walked down Lincoln and Spring Street recently and thought the City did a great job putting that neighborhood back together.

Adam Cannon addressed the Committee. He works in the Community Development Department with David Moore. He indicated that have just received the preliminary plans for this project. Robbie Woodburn is their landscape consultant and she was present to give a review of the project.

Ms. Woodburn stated that the job was to bring the street up to the conditions of the other improved streets and to provide additional formal parking up and down Ranger Way to support the ballpark. People currently park haphazardly and there is a lot going on. The street has a row of Norway Maples and inside there is an irregular row of honey locus however those are out of their purview and they are not looking at those. On the other side there is a collection of burning bush, other Norways that have been cut and now there are multiple small trees. They prepared an inventory and a list of things that should be removed. Between the Honey Locus and the Norways there are some random spruce that they feel should come out. In terms of removals, the spruces, some burning bush and a Zelkova which is dead and needs to come out. The emphasis was to provide the parking and they wanted to protect the Norway Maples because they buffer the view and sound from the bridge.

Ms. Woodburn explained that they are adding parking and a sidewalk and they needed to determine how to protect the Norways at the same time. The proposal is to lower the street so they will have a small fillslope on the outside of the sidewalk and the majority of the tree root mass will be untouched. The shoulder is now compacted and is gravel so those roots have already been affected by the

compaction. Therefore, they feel that a little bit of fill should not affect the trees.. That is their compromise to getting the street, parking and sidewalk in as well as keeping the trees, although they will have to watch the trees.

Going back to the other side of the road, they have identified a curblin and bumpouts and formalized the driveway entrances so they now have an area to plant. However there is an overhead utility wire so they needed to find a tree that was upright and wasn't going to grow more than 15 – 25' wide and it had to be a urban tolerant, tough tree. The choices were Gingko which are an upright variety withstands urban conditions well. Because they were fairly limited in their locations, they made them all one type which she knows is not encouraged. She felt in this instance there are few places to place trees and they did not want to be random with it. The other thing is that their property line goes onto another property so they are taking out the burning bush and have discussed with the neighbor whether they would like a tree on their property. Mr. Cannon confirmed the neighbor is agreement to have a tree planted.

David Moore indicated that, as in past projects, they have come to the Committee early during the design stage and they will come back at a later date. They are requesting input from them at this stage.

Ms. Stevens asked for clarification of the trees that are being removed. Ms. Woodburn indicated the red dots on the plan are the items they are removing and she reviewed them on the displayed plan. Ms. Stevens stated that she parks below the highway area and asked if that is a park area too. Mr. Parkinson clarified that the State owns that area and the City has permission to have a recreation area there. Last year, because of the condition of the existing area, they created a designated fenced off dog area. The area outside this project will be a subsequent project in the next year or so.

Mr. Dupere asked about their time frame. Mr. Moore responded that they will get their federal funds after July 1st, so they could bid and construct this year. Mr. Dupere stated they are reluctant to get back into areas until all construction machinery is completed. Mr. Parkinson felt that the reality is that the planting will probably be next spring.

Ms. Stevens references the species of trees. She is not a fan of monoculture and she is not a fan of Ginkos. Ms. Woodburn agreed that when the Ginkos are young they look like a hat rack but then they take off. They have beautiful fall color and survive urban conditions. They are male trees so there's no fruit. They are planting six trees. Attorney Loughlin understood that they grow painfully slowly but there are some out at the Plains and they are good size.

Mr. Moore reminded the Committee that being mindful of Attorney Loughlin's comments about the Ginko at the Plains project, and understanding the challenges of the location, they are here today for input. Ms. Woodburn added that there are other upright varieties, some of which are not quite so suited to urban conditions – Red Maples, White Oak, but that has acorns, and they could research other varieties but they feel they are appropriate.

Mr. Parkinson felt that in this particular environment and with the overhead lines they were appropriate. Mr. Dupere felt that anytime you are plantings more than one of the same tree you are susceptible to what might develop with that variety. They don't have a lot of Ginkos in the City. Mr. Moore noted that in many instances they are working with the wires behind the houses.

Mr. Dupere felt they should go out and look at the site. Mr. Moore stated they would like to get this wrapped up the sooner the better. Mr. Parkinson suggested that they get tree suggestions to Mr. Moore within the next two weeks so they can go out to bid.

Ms. Woodburn added that should they want to break up the monoculture look, they might make two trees of one variety and four trees of another variety.

4. Second Spring Planting.

Mr. Croteau indicated they are ready to start the first planting. Mr. Dupere stated they spent over \$8,900 of their funds. Mr. Parkinson stated they can support the second planting financially but he wasn't sure they had time to do it. They would have to go out for additional quotes. Mr. Croteau indicated they have another 6 week period at a minimum for additional quotes. Ms. Stevens felt they could do Willard Street where they have partnered with those families to help care for the trees. Mr. Croteau felt they would have to move on this immediately. Six weeks from now is June 19th and that is not an ideal time to be putting trees in. They have done it in the past with pretty good success but they don't like to do it. Mr. Adams suggested that they wait until early fall. Mr. Parkinson asked how many trees they are talking about. Ms. Stevens responded that there were six or seven for Willard and those are families who will help care for them. Mr. Parkinson felt they could see if they could get more trees at the price they have already received and they could get them in quickly. He asked them to get the number and species they are looking for and get it to Mr. Croteau and they can order them immediately. They can tack it right on to the work they are doing now. Ms. Stevens confirmed they will get that to Mr. Croteau on Friday.

Ms. Stevens was thinking about trying to reach out to residents in the Aldrich Street area because that is going to be a big project. Mr. Parkinson felt that over the next few years they are going to lose more of those trees. Ms. Stevens added that Aldrich Street is a monoculture.

6. Tree Ordinance

Mr. Adams had a few comments. He wants to make sure it is exactly what they want and will work well over the years. His comments are small and he does not believe they require Legal review.

8.307, The Authority of the Tree Warden. It says "Jurisdiction over all street trees" and he felt that was too limiting. He asked about trees in parks, for example. Mr. Dupere felt if that language was taken from the Tree Warden State statute they may or may not be able to change that. Attorney Loughlin suggested adding "and all trees in any park, public way, right of way, easement, or other public places within the City". He felt they are just clarifying it and he believed it was okay.

8.3.10, A.b., should be changed to "shall be liable to the City for all costs associated with replacement or damage to any trees or public greenery under the jurisdiction of the City Tree Warden".

Mr. Adams noted that they refer to public greenery in the title but do not define what that is. Attorney Loughlin confirmed they will put in a definition of public greenery. Mr. Adams was referring to a planter, for instance.

Mr. Dupere noted that the Tree Warden responsibility is very broad in the RSA so he would think they could talk about any trees that they want.

Mr. Adams referred to Enforcement, line A, it reads “any person, natural or otherwise,…” and he assumes this some kind of a past legal fiction. Attorney Loughlin indicated it was a new legal fiction and believes an unnatural person is a corporation and it does have a legal definition.

Mr. Parkinson made a motion to accept the recommended changes to the Tree Ordinance. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Attorney Loughlin stated he will advise Attorney Sullivan of the changes.

Mr. Rice asked what the schedule is to bring this before the City Council. Mr. Parkinson indicated that they finally have it in a form that they are happy with and they will send it to the City Manager with a request that it go before the City Council for adoption.

7. Cherry Tree Planting Sites

Mr. Dupere is still waiting for feedback. They just picked up another 40 trees and brought them to Portsmouth. He went out with Dave Allen and Ken Linchey looking for locations at several schools. The trees are only 3 – 4’ high and as big as a pencil. The intention is to have staff at the school take care of them. There is a function on Saturday however he has not heard back from Chuck Doleac with details.

Mr. Dupere reiterated how many man hours and work it will take to nurture these trees until they are large enough to be planted throughout the City and, once planted, they will continue to need extra attention.

Attorney Loughlin made a motion to leave this matter in the capable hands of Mr. Dupere. Mr. Parkinson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Old Business

Mr. Adams asked if anyone has heard back about the Liberty Elm from the Children of the American Revolution. Mr. Croteau responded that they have been told the tree will be planted by the Fitz William Monument in Whipple Park.

Mr. Croteau had an ad hoc tree group for some construction issues with Crabapple Trees on Miller Avenue due to the installation of the drain line. The trees were not very good specimens and as the truck was going by them they slid into the trench and there is not enough base left to hold the tree up. Therefore, that construction company will be responsible for replacing those two trees.

Mr. Croteau noted that a tree at 272 Highland Street was just brought to his attention. The tree is directly over all utility services and they have a gas line in the way. They cannot re-route the house services because of the tree and it looks like the tree will have to go. They are 3-4 days away from having to tie into that house so everyone should drive by and take a look at it. The tree is probably 15-20 years old tree.

Attorney Loughlin noted that this is Steve Parkinson’s last meeting before his retirement. Peter Rice will be taking over his responsibilities. He commented on how much things have changed over Mr. Parkinson’s tenure and what a wonderful job that DPW does with the trees around the City.

9. New Business – n/a

10. Next Meeting – Wednesday, June 12, 2013.

Isabel Munck was present and indicated she was interested in what was going on in the City. She would be available to volunteer if they need any help with anything.

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