

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, June 12, 2013
Portsmouth City Hall, 1st Floor, School Board Conference Room**

Members Present: Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice Chairman; Peter Rice, 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. **Minutes of the May 8, 2013 meeting** will be distributed at the July meeting.
2. **Tree Removal Requests:**

Middle School Perimeter Fence – requested by the School Department Project Team. There was a site walk that some of the Committee members attended. Dan Hartrey presented on behalf of the School Department. He indicated that the school project is at the point for them to replace the perimeter fence that has been there so long that the trees have grown into the fence in many places and those trees will have to be removed to replace the fence. On inspection, many of the trees are dead or dying and many are called “trash trees”. They identified 10-12 trees which were posted and have since discovered others that will need to be removed. Mr. Hartrey was looking for what direction they need to go in as there is not any money in the budget to remove big, large trees. He is looking to find out what they can and can't do. There will be a 4-5' defined buffer on the back side. He displayed drawings showing that the lighting will define the edge of the driveway and there will be a little green space. They will leave what vegetation they can as green space. There are some shoots of box elder and some lilacs behind the Sise Inn property that they would like to leave. They have had a request from the Sise Inn to leave a vegetative buffer/screen if they end up taking everything down. Moving along to behind the church, there are 8 box elders which are in pretty bad shape. They lean rather than grow straight up. The larger drawing showed the Court Street residents and smaller drawing shows the Richards Avenue residents. There is one large box elder that is leaning way over into the neighbor's property and they would definitely like to remove. It is on City property and is behind the yellow house.

Mr. Hartrey stated they are scheduling this work for August. Attorney Loughlin asked if there are any substantial trees, other than the box elders, that are worth saving. Ms. Stevens stated there were not.

Mr. Rice asked if there was any budget for screening behind the Sise Inn? Mr. Hartrey stated it would have to be in addition to the existing budget. Ms. Stevens confirmed it was not part of the project.

Steve Taylor, of 69 Richards Avenue, was present. He lives in the orange house on the map. He indicated there is a lot of vegetation on both sides of the fence and he would like to see what they are going to do on the Middle School side of the fence regarding new vegetation as he understood that a lot of the trees and “crummy” vegetation will come out. He also wants to know what can be done to best preserve the vegetation on his side of the fence. Mr. Hartrey stated that Mr. Taylor was happy to have them remove what is on our side of the fence but because there is so much interwoven on both sides of the fence, they need to be careful they don't disturb his plantings. Ms. Stevens asked if the dog redwood was on Mr. Taylor's side of the fence. Mr. Taylor confirmed it was but that was not an issue. Mr. Dupere felt if the fence is maintained in the future there will be less tree and fence conflict in the future. Mr. Hartrey stated the fence will be a 6' high black vinyl coated chain link fence. The existing fence is 8' high.

Mr. Adams asked who will be responsible for the maintenance of the fence once it is installed. Mr. Hartrey indicated it would be the Portsmouth School Department. Mr. Adams asked because the box elders don't like to die and will put up shoots for years to come and unless that is maintained on a regular basis they will have trees weeding themselves into the new fence. That happened on Clough Drive.

Ms. Stevens asked about the vine on Mr. Taylor's property and whether he will he cut it and try to pull it out. Mr. Taylor did not have a plan yet. Leslie showed a picture and said it was beautiful. Mr. Taylor would like to save it, although it could be cut back. There are other greener plantings off to the right of his property that could be trimmed back. Mr. Rice asked if the fence removal crew could snip individual parts of the fence. Mr. Hartrey felt that was one solution but they would have to determine how to support it while the work was being done. Mr. Rice suggested they could leave that section in place and put the new fence up and then snip the old fence away to protect the vines. Ms. Stevens' other concern is about putting the vine back on the new fence. It would be more maintenance for the school. Attorney Loughlin asked why the fence needed to be maintained. He understands about the box elders but not a flowering vine. Ms. Stevens noted that the flowering hydrangea will continue to climb and grow to 50' and pull the fence down.

Mr. Rice pointed out that they will need 3' for maintenance. They should put a long strip along the edge and crushed stone to keep things from growing there. Mr. Rice asked if it is a fence or a lattice for vegetation. They are two different things. It is a school fence so it is their decision on how to deal with it. From a DPW standpoint they would think of it as a fence and would strip vegetation on both sides of it to maintain it. Ms. Stevens would want to do the same. Mr. Taylor added that the plant drops all of its leaves in the wintertime and you can see right through it as though it is not even there. Mr. Rice asked how close the root system was to the fence. Mr. Taylor was not sure how close it was to the fence but it doesn't hold snow at all. Mr. Rice asked about moving the fence over 3'. Ms. Stevens indicated that was their only green space for gym classes and it would significantly reduce the space. Mr. Hartrey indicated that his drawing was from a surveyed drawing used before and it shows Mr. Taylor's fence to be right on the property line although in other places the fence is further in on City property.

Attorney Loughlin asked if they have a motion to remove all of the vegetation that is in the path of the fence, and the hydrangeas in particular. This would have to be done next month as the fence is being installed in August. Mr. Taylor added it was his intent to have his plants trimmed back significantly to help with the process. Ms. Stevens wondered if he could put a piece of lattice on his property for the vine to grow on, rather than the school fence. Mr. Rice felt, unless you had a separation far enough

back, they would not be able to maintain it and it will just go right through the lattice and onto the fence.

Ms. Stevens noted that several trees were not posted. Attorney Loughlin stated that the only reason they may want to have a public hearing is that there are people in that neighborhood who may have concerns about the process. Mr. Hartrey confirmed that he notified all abutters of this meeting who would have vegetation disturbed. Attorney Loughlin felt they should hold off on the trees that were not posted.

Mr. Rice made a motion to clear the vegetation off fence sections that have been posted and work with the property owner to address his concerns about minimizing damage to the hydrangea. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion.

Mr. Taylor asked if they will put grass right up to the new fence after they clear the vegetation. Mr. Hartrey stated there is supposed to be a multi-use grass field on the other side. Whether or not there is some type of grass border, he is not sure at this point. Mr. Taylor indicated that an early plan showed new plantings. Ms. Stevens did not believe there will be any new plantings except where there is no screening at all. Mr. Hartrey added that the Building Committee would make the decision about additional plantings. Today they are only talking about the removal of the trees.

Mr. Hartrey asked if they will include the large multi-stemmed box elder behind Mr. Taylor's house. Mr. Croteau believes he put a posting on that tree. Mr. Taylor is happy to see that tree removed.

The motion to clear the vegetation off fence sections that have been posted and to work with the property owner to address his concerns about minimizing damage to the hydrangea passed unanimously.

66 Aldrich Road – requested by resident. This is a big ash tree. Mr. Croteau stated that the residents have concerns about the tree falling on their house. Attorney Loughlin asked if it was wet ash disease or was it just a dying tree. Mr. Dupere felt it was a little of both. His concern is that it strongly resembles a tree he cut down in Concord. The bottom is loaded with sprouts which indicates a plumbing problem with the tree. He would like to take some samples to the State entomologist. Mr. Dupere felt the tree should come down as about 30% has died back from the crown and there are 4-5 big limbs which are dead. The tree would either need significant pruning and treatment with chemicals or they should take the entire tree.

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

Haven Park – Hemlock – requested by DPW. Mr. Dupere indicated that they planted a tree in Haven Park for the DAR and he noted two hemlock trees. 30% of the top of one tree has died and the other one needs aggressive pruning and it may survive. He felt it would be better for the third tree to get rid of the others in poor condition. Mr. Dupere made a motion to remove the tree. Mr. Rice seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Croteau added that they had to remove a large birch tree that had completely died. Don't understand why it died. It was a perfectly healthy tree last year. Mr. Dupere also took out a small tree down by the waters edge. Mr. Stevens felt they will need to put some trees back in that park.

161 Aldrich Road – requested by resident. The roots are approaching the foundation. Mr. Croteau stated this was much like the one they did on Colonial Drive last year. There are a couple of spots where you can see the roots heading towards the house. The owner is worried about the foundation and the sewer laterals. Mr. Croteau told her that he didn't think the City could do anything for her but as the roots are on her property she could do the work herself. This street is being redone this year so all their sewer issues should end. Mr. Dupere noted that the larger diameter tree has a good sized column of rot on the back side. It is the same problem they have with the neighbor up the Street with a silver maple. Mr. Croteau confirmed this will be a complete rebuild of the street, but not sidewalks. Mr. Rice added that these were brought to the Committee before and the trees that needed to be removed were identified.

This was postponed from last meeting. Mr. Dupere went back and visited this tree and they are looking at big limbs and when they come off it will be a big chunk. All of these trees could use some internal pruning. Mr. Rice asked if there is a lot of dead wood up top? Mr. Dupere responded that there is some and some small branches but there was not a big capacity of dead limbs internally. By pruning them internally, you will lighten up the load and take off some of the hanging branches that cause the levering action.

Attorney Loughlin asked Jeff Ott to take a look at them. Mr. Ott said the cavity has good wood growth all around the cavity and his visual inspection did not reveal any major defects which would result in a recommendation for removal. He said the same for the other two silver maples a few doors down. Weeds growing from the cavities are not a problem indicator. All trees shed branches and limbs and that is their natural habitat. Mr. Dupere indicated that Jeff Ott specializes in big old trees and is an expert. Attorney Loughlin reminded the Committee that the neighbors concern about roots leading to their home has not been a reason to take down trees.

Mr. Croteau made a motion not to remove the trees but trimming is recommended. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Rice added that one of the things he looks at is what would happen if a limb broke and they need to protect residents from damage. He felt there was adequate space for branches to drop and not land on a person's house or car. Shedding branches is a natural function for trees, however, in an urban environment they need to make sure they protect pedestrians and people who live and work around the area. Planned shedding is better than natural shedding. He will have DPW look at this and do some pruning.

213 Aldrich Road – requested by resident. Mr. Rice made the same motion as 161 Aldrich above. Mr. Adams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Presentation on Recreational Facilities Proposed of City Property Off Greenland Road between Islington and Boston & Maine Railroad Tracks (formerly City Stump Dump).

Terry Desmarais, the City Engineer for Water and Sewer, was present. Today he was presenting the back ground of the project and would be requesting a site walk. Historically this was used as a shooting range and as a dump. More recently they have been using it as a staging area for contractors doing work throughout the City. At the close of that work they will ask the contractors to do work to prepare it for a multi-purpose recreational field. A conceptual plan was provided to the Committee. The work will include a new field with approximately 100 parking spaces and an entrance into the facility. The site has a varying grade and as you enter it dips down steeply and then flattens back out

towards the back end of the property. There is a significant amount of grading that needs to be done and as a result there will be impact to the existing vegetation on the site. There are three major areas: the area on the east property line will have to be raised up and filled. They are envisioning that all of the trees along that property line would have to be impacted as a result of the vehicle entrance to the roadway. On the left side of the current existing entrance there is a stand of trees that would be impacted as that area will also be filled with significant grading. On the southwest corner of the site there would be less impact but they are working through the Alternation of Terrain Permit so they may or may not have to modify how the drain system works so the exact limits of impact is unknown.

Mr. Dupere asked how much grade change they are looking at. Mr. Desmarais indicated the grade change would be 6 – 7' higher. The property line has been staked out so they can see exactly where the trees are. Attorney Loughlin assumed a lot of the material on the site will be used to fill in the grading. A site walk should be scheduled. Mr. Desmarais would like to come back next month with the posting all completed.

Mr. Rice indicated the benefit to the City is that they are getting a lot of work for free as they will be doing the drainage work and laying it out. This area has been in the CIP for years for a ball field and the City is looking at creative public funding for this. In addition to a multi field space, the State is moving forward with the conversation of the bike trail.

The Site Walk was scheduled for Wednesday, June 19th at 7:30 am. Everyone should meet at the stump dump.

Mr. Dupere asked to have some trees flagged to show the elevation change. He asked if there should be a public meeting on this. Mr. Demarais stated the intent is to just go through this Committee. Mr. Croteau stated there was only one abutter, Andy Sherburne. Mr. Rice stated that the initial work will not involve a big public process but there will be a public process when they get to the ball field. Attorney Loughlin indicated someone should advise Mr. Sherburne of site walk. Mr. Desmarais confirmed he will take care of that.

4. **Discussion on City Tree Inventory.** Mr. Dupere indicated this was moving forward very well. He has a new staff person, Corina Pappalardo, who is an intern working on this with with him. Jamie McCarthy has been very helpful. They are making up an inventory system which will work with the City's database. They will start at the northeast part of the City and they will note the location, the species, the tree size, and a general rating of overall health of the tree. There will also be a blank for future planting sites. They are not evaluating specific tree health and conditions as it is more important to just get the data in the computer. It is their intention to start the inventory this week. After getting the bugs out of their system, they will invite others to come in and join them.

Mr. Croteau added that they want to start on the outskirts of the City as there has not been much data on the trees in the outer areas. They will then work towards downtown.

5. **Update on Ceres Street Planting Status.** Mr. Croteau looked at some planters and there are some custom made planters available. The ones that fit with the downtown are aluminum with powder coating black which cost \$2,500 for two. He is looking for funding right now. Ms. Stevens asked if they planted at the top corner by the Striker. Mr. Croteau had not checked. The hanging planters were done by John Golumb. Attorney Loughlin asked if there was room for two planters. Maybe if the City paid for one, the neighbors would pay for the other. Mr. Croteau confirmed two planters would fit. When they originally approached the City they wanted the City to buy the planters and they would

plant and maintain them. Mr. Rice stated they will look at their budget to see exactly what money may be available.

Mr. Croteau stated he will follow up internally and then determine how to approach the shop owners.

6. **Update on Willard Avenue Tree Planting Program.** Mr. Croteau talked to Dave Short and he will honor the prices so they just have to see what they have in the budget and they can get that next round done. Attorney Loughlin noted that the Rockingham House trees are done and they look great. They also put a maple on Thaxter Street yesterday. Mr. Croteau stated he had a tough time finding trident maples so he made some changes.

7. **Update on Tree Ordinance.** Attorney Loughlin was waiting to hear from Bob Sullivan, City Attorney.

8. **Update on Spring Tree Planting.** (See above). Mr. Croteau confirmed that he was planting yesterday and he did not know if he finished all plantings. There was one at 106 Leavitt that they did not grind enough of the stump to plant a new tree so he will have to have Urban Tree come in and grind the tree. He doesn't want to put a backhoe down there so he has to wait on Urban Tree Service. Ms. Stevens thought that the tree bags were a great idea. Mr. Croteau indicated he will be purchasing some more. They are about \$20 each. They planted about 30 – 35 trees over at the Plains Park and he needs to get some bags on those because the soil is so quick draining. Attorney Loughlin had some bags he can donate.

9. **Update on Ranger Way Tree Planting.** There was a presentation from David Moore last month with Adam Cannon. There was a question about species. Ms. Stevens indicated that they went out and looked at them. They wanted to plant gingkos and the Committee was wary about the species. Mr. Cannon advised Mr. Croteau that they were planning on changing out two of the gingkos to pin oaks.

9. **Old Business.**

Mr. Dupere noted that on Daniel Street they had to hastily put trees in the ground prior to Market Square Day. The trees were put in that were spec'd out and they had to reject a few of them. Dave Desfosses and the contractor were great to work with. They are not on their planting list but they will be on the next round. This is with Cameron Nurseries. They know the trees were planted too deep and they will get everything worked out.

Attorney Loughlin asked about the pipes that were put in to drain into the ground. Mr. Dupere responded that the pipe is to reduce weed-wacker impact and protect the bark and when the grading system goes in it protects the trees. There will be cast iron grates on the sidewalk and cages on the five lilacs and European hornbeams. Attorney Loughlin felt it looked really great and was another "David Desfosses Design". He has been keeping an eye on the lindens and thought they looked like they need to be watched. The gator bags work great but sometimes they result in bark damage. Attorney Loughlin thanked Mr. Dupere for all of his hard work.

Attorney Loughlin explained that the reason he provided a picture of the Masonic Temple was to show all of the cars parking underneath the tree on the dirt. The City did a great job insuring that the pavement be removed from there and he is wondering if some stones could be put in to protect the tree. Mr. Dupere explained that this was one of the first projects that he worked with Dave Desfosses on.

There was going to be curbing but it was ultimately taken out to allow cars to access the parking spots. Mr. Rice felt they could do a split curb to allow the water to get in. They would need to touch base with the Masonic Temple and explain their concerns. There was some discussion at one point about putting a bumper stop in.

11. **New Business.**

Attorney Loughlin indicated that Dan Rawlins told him that he had a flowering tree that might be good in the triangle at Whipple Park and wanted to know the Committee's feelings about that. This is the spot where they took down the camper elm. Mr. Rice felt it was a depressed spot. Attorney Loughlin stated there are two trees there now and they took down a box elder. Mr. Croteau noted they need to watch the line of sight on that corner.

Ms. Stevens mentioned that during their site walk at the Middle School they noticed there are tree boxes at the school with no trees in them. One has an 8' viburnum shrub and she wants to make sure that is not a good choice. It appears that they keep mowing over the top of the viburnum. Mr. Rice said that the tree box company typically does not put trees in those boxes and they like shrubs and smaller things. This is a Portsmouth tree box design, specifically designed for State Street. Ms. Stevens asked what tree would be appropriate to plant in the box that she can bring back to the JBC Committee. It is in the front of the Middle School along Parrott Avenue. Mr. Rice suggested talking to the supplier of the tree box and see what they recommend, given the design. Mr. Dupere noted a problem was that nursery trees are grown for a certain size head and the ones downtown were not an ideal situation. They need to select a tree that is taller and more appropriate for that space. They need a tree with more body to it. They put red maples in downtown because they are such a tough tree. If these are just filtering out material they just need to put a tree or shrub that will take the urban pollutions. They should also have some sort of grate that won't be a danger to children.

Ms. Stevens noted that the City has Swamp Inc people going around and spraying the trees and shrubs in the parking lot. Are we worried that the round up will kill the shrubs. Mr. Croteau stated they should be spraying rodeo which is more environmentally friendly. Mr. Rice confirmed they should only be applying the material to vegetation that is coming up along the edge of the sidewalks. It sound like somebody is not giving them good directions and they will take care of that.

Mr. Rice mentioned that the linden on the corner next to Alie's Jewelers in rough shape and he would like to see it replaced. With the nice new streetscape coming down it's too bad to end with a poor tree. Mr. Rice would like to have that done now. Mr. Adams noted that one third of the cars coming down Daniel Street don't stop at that stop sign. He felt a more upright columnar tree would be above the stop sign. Mr. Croteau would need to post the tree. Attorney Loughlin was concerned they would lose a whole month and asked if they could call it a substitution. He would like to see a tree grate added also.

Mr. Dupere has received a request for more cherry trees at the Sherburne School. They still have a ton of cherry trees that they have to plant somewhere. He reminded them that they are a 3" tall stick at the moment so it has to be a protected area. The School Department is doing a great job with their trees.

Attorney Loughlin understands that the spring tree planting is a lot of work and everything look good. The young trees around the City really look good.

Mr. Croteau advised the Committee that the top of a tree on the corner of Lincoln and Junkins fell off. They cleaned up the mess but the tree guy said the tree was a hazard because there were so many holes. Therefore, he will be taking it down. There is also a large locust by the library that is rotten through and if it comes down it will crash onto the new library. He considers that a great hazard also. Mr. Rice felt that would be a great spot for a really big tree.

12. Next meeting – Wednesday, July 10, 2013.

A motion to adjourn at 9:00 a.m. was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse
Administrative Assistant
Planning Department