

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

**City Manager's Conference Room  
City of Portsmouth, One Junkins Avenue**

**MINUTES**

**Wednesday, August 14, 2013 – 7:30 a.m.**

**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

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

1. **Minutes of the July 10, 2013 meeting.**

*Mr. Adams made a motion to approve the Minutes as presented, which was seconded by Ms. Stevens and approved by unanimous voice vote.*

2. **Tree Removal Requests.**

350 Broad Street – Mr. Mark and Ms. Holly Adamie identified themselves as the property owners. As they were in attendance, Chairman Loughlin suggested that the Committee consider this request first. Mr. Adamie stated they were having some trees pruned on their property and had been advised by the tree service that the subject tree was owned by the City. They did not intend to have the tree removed as it looked healthy and added value to their home and neighborhood.

Mr. Croteau stated that the Norway Maple had a significant cavity on the back with three quarters of the inner wood gone. Mr. Dupere had looked at the tree and confirmed that there was rot at the base and at a few stems. Although there was decent wood on the outside holding the tree together, the column of rot extended a long way up the interior and there was also a split at the bottom of the crack in the area noted by Mr. Croteau.

An extensive discussion followed among Committee Members and Mr. and Ms. Adamie. The property owners stated that Piscataqua Tree Service thought the tree was in good health. They felt the tree was “healing in” and would prefer to trim it rather than take it down. Mr. Dupere stated what they termed “healing in” was a protective mechanism but the rot wouldn’t disappear and would expand internally. When the possibility was raised of pruning and monitoring the tree, Mr. Adams stated that he and Mr. Souto had examined it carefully and the tree did not have anywhere near the 8” of sound wood necessary for support. Mr. Souto explained to the property owners that nutrients could be channeled through the outside so that the tree could appear healthy while being structurally unsound. Mr. Croteau added that trimming more than 30% of the tree would kill it.

Ms. Stevens concurred that so much rot was not healthy for the tree and taking more out of the crown would be another strike. With little holding it up, the tree could not be saved and prolonging its removal became a safety issue.

Chairman Loughlin commended the property owners for their interest in saving the tree. While the Committee often served as advocates for the tree, they also had to consider potential liability and, once an issue had been brought their attention, they had to take action. He asked if there was room for additional trees to be planted and Mr. Dupere stated there was, on both sides of the street. The Committee discussed planting one or two replacement trees, noting that there were non-invasive, quick-growing, species that would last for many years. Mr. Croteau stated that, if approved, the tree would be removed within the next three weeks, with appropriate notification to utilities, and the stump ground. Mr. Rice confirmed that the City would pay for the replacement. Ms. Stevens pointed out that a 2” calibre tree could suffer less transplant shock than a 4” calibre and the stated willingness of the property owners to water and care for the trees would be half the battle. Chairman Loughlin stated that the planting would be in the spring as the City had to go through a bid process. It was decided that Mr. Croteau would meet with the property owners to choose a tree that they would like.

*Ms. Stevens made a motion to remove the tree, which was seconded by Mr. Rice and approved by unanimous voice vote.*

### **265 Colonial Drive**

Mr. Dupere stated that in the past few weeks a split caused by wind had opened in the tree extending into the ground. The new area on this multi-stem tree was the problem. It was noted that the property owner across the street wanted the wood. The City would not move it for him but he indicated he would contact the property owner at 265 Colonial Drive to make arrangements.

*Mr. Adams made a motion to remove the tree, which was seconded, and approved by unanimous voice vote.*

Ms. Stevens commented that this side of the street had a number of fully grown trees but there were none on the other side and she recommended that one or two trees be planted on that side.

### **903 Middle Street**

There was a hickory tree which was broken off due to decay.

*Mr. Adams made a motion to remove the tree, which was seconded, and approved by unanimous voice vote.*

### **156 Woodlawn Circle**

Mr. Croteau had received a call, from a homeowner concerned about limbs falling on her car, that the crown of a Norway Maple had died out. There was rot at the base and at least a third of the top of the tree was dead and defoliated. If they topped it, the value would be diminished, there would be a danger from falling limbs, and he didn't know how long the tree would live.

*Mr. Adam made a motion to remove the tree, which was seconded by Ms. Stevens and approved by unanimous voice vote.*

#### **14 Wallis Road**

It was noted that this Black Cherry Tree had come up the previous year with no decision made as more information had been needed. Mr. Croteau stated that there was a little hole about 10' – 11' up through which it could be seen that it was rotted.

*Mr. Souto made a motion to remove the tree which was seconded by Ms. Stevens.*

Mr. Adams stated that he opposed that action based on a tiny hole and asked what warranted removal. Mr. Croteau stated he had been contacted to look at it and when he looked in the hole, it was much like the tree on Broad Street, hollow with maybe 2" of wood around. Mr. Dupere added that something was definitely living inside it.

*The motion to remove the tree was passed by majority voice vote, with Mr. Adams voting in opposition.*

#### **Rockland Street (above tennis courts).**

There were two trees on Rockland, which had not been posted. These were near Elwyn Avenue with one with woodpecker holes and one further up with the top that was two thirds dead with almost nothing left.

#### **Parrott Avenue Parking Lot.**

There were a couple of trees to be considered at the next meeting in the Parrott Avenue parking lot near Junkins Avenue and Citizens Bank. The one along Junkins Avenue was virtually dead with some mold or fungus eating off dead wood. Mr. Croteau stated that these would be posted.

#### **Northwest End of Peirce Island Bridge.**

The completely dead tree just before you go over the bridge needed to be removed.

#### **Additional Tree Removals:**

The following trees also needed to be investigated for possible removal and posting:

- Prescott Park - Two trees at the concession stand that need to be removed due to the expansion of that building.
- Middle Street - The one discussed at a previous meeting.
- 295 Thornton Street – The tree may have been pruned as a result of storm damage so that it looks like a telephone pole. It also has rot at the base.

- 373 or 374 Richards Ave – On the block between Lincoln and South. The tree was completely dead and starting to shed. Some samples had been taken to be tested. This potential removal did not technically have to be posted due to the construction. Mr. Rice noted that some pruning was starting on the street that day on the street with Mr. Croteau adding that there was some additional light pruning to be done but the bulk had been completed before the first round of construction.
- The Liberty Tree – The leaves on three quarters of the tree have been totally decimated by Japanese beetles. Mr. Dupere stated that was not generally fatal but tough on a new tree. It had been sprayed and Mr. Croteau noted that grub treatment would be done around the base this fall. Mr. Rice stated they would table for now and see how it fared next year.
- 85 Mendum Avenue – Mr. Croteau stated they would have to determine what was happening with this tree.
- 845 and 864 Woodbury Avenue – The tree in front of the parsonage at St. Catherine’s and the one on the corner of Farm Lane.

### **3. Ceres Street Update**

Mr. Rice had spoken to Ms. Nancy Carmer regarding the proposed installation of a \$1,700 planter and flower bed on a cost share basis. The Ceres Street group had been approached and had a chance to respond but, due to budgetary considerations, declined to participate at this time. It was left that the proposal would be revisited next year. Mrs. Wivell had expressed a direct interest in the proposal and it was indicated that Ms. Carmer had advised Mrs. Wivell of the project’s status.

### **4. Update on Tree Ordinance**

Chairman Loughlin stated that, since their last meeting, there had been a memorandum to the City Manager from the City Attorney recommending passage to the City Council. This was slated to be on the Council agenda for August 5, but Mr. Adams had pointed out several issues which had been forwarded to Attorney Sullivan. The first issue dealt with the paragraph the Chairman read from the proposed Ordinance which established a Trees and Public Greenery Committee consisting of the seven specific voting members he listed which included “four individuals with an interest in trees and public greenery.” Mr. Adams had pointed out that they now had five individuals and adoption would mean losing one of the present members. The concern was raised with the City Attorney resulting in the Ordinance being put on hold until the issue was resolved.

A discussion among the Committee members followed in which members noted that the City Council determined the number of members with the Mayor appointing the members. There had been more members in the past. One suggestion was to have the designated number of individuals be described as at least four which opened it up to having more than that number. Another possibility was that the language allow up to nine voting members with at least four non-specified individuals. Chairman Loughlin stated that, in terms of the perception of the Committee’s actions, it was important to have a majority of non-City-staff members.

Mr. Rice stated that he would like to add a designee for the Public Works Foreman in charge of tree maintenance so that there would be some flexibility if Mr. Croteau couldn’t attend. Mr.

Dupere wondered if eligibility was limited to residents and Chairman Loughlin stated that those designated as “individuals” just had to have an interest in trees on public lands. It was decided that the recommendation would be for the Committee to consist of the following: City Manager or designee, the tree warden or designee, the Public Works Foreman or designee (the latter a change) and up to six individuals with an interest in trees and public greenery. (change in number).

Chairman Loughlin referenced one other grammatical issue Mr. Adams had raised. Mr. Adams was to confirm the change which would be then be referred to the City Attorney with their recommendation.

## 5. Old Business.

- Willard Avenue – In response to a question from Ms. Stevens, Mr. Croteau confirmed that the Willard Avenue planting would go forward in the fall. A few more sites could possibly be accommodated if they had time to go through the process. Mr. Dupere commented about the need to get the feet of the trees established which was dependent on the weather.
- Department of Public Works Commendation. – Mr. Dupere commended Jason, a member of Public Works, for the job he did in tending to the trees. Chairman Loughlin agreed, stating that overall Public Works had done a great job in watering through the drought. They had also been successful in removing the previously discussed stump on Miller Avenue.
- Tulip Tree – Messrs. Adams and Croteau briefly discussed a tree which had been the topic at a previous meeting. It had suffered shock and, unlike other trees of the same species planted at the same time, was not displaying leaves. This was to be removed and Mr. Dupere would examine the base when it was pulled to determine what had happened.
- 213 Aldrich Road – The property owners’ belief that roots were getting into their sewer lines had been previously discussed. The consensus was that taking the Silver Maple down would set a precedent for removal in similar situations. Chairman Loughlin read an e-mail from Mr. Jeff Ott, a recipient of the previous agenda, in which he stated that roots could only penetrate sewer lines through a crack or other opening and the problem was with the lines. Regarding any health issues, he felt that the tree might be taking up some of the outflow. Mr. Rice agreed that, depending on the condition of the sewer line, roots could get in and block lines. Mr. Adams cited a location where they replaced the line with plastic line and the problem was solved at a reasonable cost. The following were decided:
  - That Mr. Chairman Loughlin would send another letter to the homeowners reiterating that the trees would be pruned at a future date.
  - That sewer improvements, bringing plastic lines to the back side of the sidewalks, were planned for Aldrich Road to the top of the hill.
  - That Mr. Croteau would check to see if the project would include this location and advise Chairman Loughlin before his letter was sent so that the homeowners could take advantage of the timing to install plastic lines on their portion at a more advantageous cost.

Mr. Dupere suggested that, in general, it would be a good idea to advise homeowners of this opportunity. Mr. Rice stated that they hold public meetings when replacement is planned and note that this was an ideal time for homeowners to replace their water and sewer service. Where there was a concern with tree roots, they point out that this was an opportunity to relocate the line so that they would not have to dig through a mature tree's root system.

**6. New Business.**

- 214 Concord Way – The Committee had been informed of a resident at this address removing a tree, he believed he had killed by trimming, and planting a replacement. Mr. Rice requested the Committee's opinion on his proposal to send the homeowner a letter advising that work should not be done on City trees and that a specific species had been selected for that location. The original tree was deciduous and the replacement was an evergreen. He would confirm what exactly had been planted. After a brief discussion, it was decided that Mr. Rice's approach was appropriate and that the issue, of whether what was planted would be acceptable or if it would have to be removed, would be continued pending Mr. Rice obtaining further information.

**7. General Discussion.**

- Inventory – This discussion arose out of Mr. Adam's suggestion that they consider starting early with picking sites for the spring tree schedule, i.e. in October while there were still leaves on the trees. Mr. Dupere stated that the new inventory would help. Their intern had finished two thirds of the downtown and Elwyn Park with Atlantic heights remaining. In the process, she had been marking open spots on a map. It was expected that an inventory of the streets would be done before winter and a preliminary map could be generated to provide some direction
- New tree trimmer – Conditional offer signed, an arborist and graduate of UNH Forestry Program.
- European Hornbeam planted near Allie's. Mr. Adams asked if it was premature to cut the number of low hanging branches before they were broken. Mr. Dupere stated they were trying to leave as long as they could but would trim before fall.

**8. Next Meeting – Wednesday, September 11, 2013**

A motion to adjourn at 8:45 a.m. was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary E. Koepenick  
Administrative Clerk  
Planning Department