

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, November 13, 2013
Portsmouth City Hall, 1st Floor, City Manger's 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;

Members Excused: Dennis Souto

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. and introduced the members of the Committee.

1, **Acceptance of Minutes of the October 9th Meeting.** – postponed to December.

2. **Tree Removal Requests:**

60 Decatur Road, requested by resident. Mr. Adams made a motion to remove the tree as it has extensive rot around the center. Mr. Croteau seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

140 Decatur Road, requested by resident. Mr. Croteau stated the tree had a lot of hollow rot holes inside. Mr. Rice made a motion to remove the tree. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

152 Clinton Street, requested by DPW. There was a letter from an Arborist provided by a resident stating the Norway maple tree should be removed. It has large cavities, has had considerable branches loss, and has dead wood. It extends over the driveway and a falling limb creates a hazard. Mr. Boyer was present.

Attorney Loughlin received a call from Alan Brady and he said he enjoyed the tree and he would prefer to see if remain but if it comes down he would like to see a replacement tree.

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

Ms. Stevens indicated that she felt this is a street they need to spend some time on because there are very few trees left. Mr. Rice stated that roadwork is two years out but it may move up to next year. Ms. Stevens was also concerned about a tree on the corner of Clinton and requested that Mr. Croteau look at it.

Mr. Boyer stated he would like a native tree planted close to where the tree is taken down. Last year's micro burst caused extensive damage in the neighborhood.

1374 Islington Street, requested by resident. This tree was discussed at the last meeting but the tree was not posted. Attorney Loughlin summarized that the DiBernatto's spoke of their concerns of disease and the damage that may result from falling limbs. Mr. Dupere looked at it and felt it unfortunately needs to be removed.

Mr. DiBernatto was present and stated he was looking for the Committee to reaffirm last month's consensus.

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

Mr. Adams noted that they have previously established that the limb hanging over the house is hazardous, he asked when the tree will be taken down. Mr. Croteau confirmed it is scheduled to come down on December 26th.

3. **Landscaping Proposal for Portsmouth Discovery Center, Portsmouth Historical Society and Piscataqua Landscaping.** Mary Ellen Burke of the Discovery Portsmouth Center, was present. They are located in the old City library site. They have had previous inexpensive landscaping done along the Islington Street and Middle Street sides and they now have a formal proposal from professional landscapers who are donating their services. Also present were Pamela Durack and Booth Hemmingway from Piscataqua Landscaping. A landscaping plan was provided to the Committee to review.

Mr. Hemmingway stated that this building needs some TLC on the outside. They came up some ideas and plant selections to enhance the exterior and they have also agreed to continue to maintain the plants.

Ms. Durack added that the ongoing care is important and why the landscaping hasn't been successful in the past. They have attempted to soften the look and create an inviting atmosphere for all of the seasons. They are using native species, including witch hazel, hydrangeas. Mr. Hemmingway said they looked at the history of the building but there are some limitations, such as under the honey locust tree and the maple tree. Ms. Durack felt the honey locust was beautiful and much loved by folks but it is problematic for the building as it sheds a lot of leaves onto the roof. They could possibly reduce some of the over branches but the tree is not well. Ms. Burke stated that they put in a new roof drain system which caused some major problems initially and they have to go up on the roof every couple of weeks to manually clean out the drains because the tree sheds so much. Ms. Durack stated they have a combination of shrubs and perennials with a few highlighted spaces for seasonal color and it is meant to look like a garden.

Attorney Loughlin asked about their time table. Mr. Hemmingway responded they will start next spring. They may pull everything up and prep the soils this fall. This will be a two day job with his full crew. There is no outdoor water to the building so he is going to have a plumber run water outside. Ms. Burke added that they are always looking for volunteers to help.

Mr. Rice asked if they were considering an irrigation system. Mr. Hemmingway indicated that they will probably install a simple system and, in the end, they will probably make it automatic. Mr. Rice noted that would be expensive as they get charged sewer and water. Booth said it may be a manual system then!

Pam Durack, Booth Hemmingway.

Attorney Loughlin noted they should have a press release on the City website or in the newspapers about Piscataqua Landscaping donating their services.

Mr. Adams made a motion to approve of the beautification of the Discovery Portsmouth Center. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Update on Willard Avenue Plantings.** Ms. Stevens stated they are all planted and look good. They planted seven trees but have not sent notes to the people who were adopting the trees. Mr. Dupere had a brochure they can give them.

5. **Update on Sewer Separation Contract 3B Plantings (Cass/Broad/Merrimack/Lincoln/Miller/ Richards/Rockland).** Ms. Stevens advised the Committee that they will try and get the trees in this week. Mr. Dupere felt they were pushing the envelop trying to get these in so late. They will have to mulch the daylight out of them and pull the mulch back in the spring. The contractor will have to provide a guarantee. (Albanese Brothers, Inc.) Mr. Adams felt they should establish some sort of protocol for new planting standards and how to deal with the burlap. Mr. Dupere stated there are many schools of thought on that. Landscapers leave the burlap in because it is faster and easier and cost effective and the tree roots will eventually grow outside of the burlap. Some companies wrap in synthetic burlap so it takes that much longer to rot. The trees they just put in had been triple wrapped in burlap because the burlap had started to rot and the problem was the rot was three layers deep. Landscape standards allow for 2/3 or 3/4 down the side of the ball should be removed. He can pull those standards out. Mr. Rice agreed that they need to have a set procedure and have it clearly stated. Mr. Dupere added that it is time consuming to put the new trees in correctly. Their best bet is to take everything out of the burlap bags but the downfall is that you sometimes break some of the roots or cause disturbance. Attorney Loughlin stated that years ago a nursery planted trees with synthetic burlap and three years later every one of them died. He put a number of trees in a few years ago in burlap and when he took them out a year later all of the burlap was gone. Therefore, he felt it was better to leave the burlap on.

Mr. Dupere will look at the standards are and see what the City cites in their contract and then see what they can require.

6. **Update on Route 1 By-ass/Lafayette Road Intersection Reconstruction/Planting.** Mr. Dupere went and looked at some of the species they were putting in and he wanted to see what the layout on the ground will be, but it's not completed to a point where he can see that. The species appeared to be high maintenance plantings for the City to maintain. Mr. Rice noted they have until spring to resolve this. He will advise DOT that they are putting a hold on this. Attorney Loughlin felt that high maintenance needs to be balanced with good looking trees. Mr. Dupere stated they can put plants out there but they have to be able to take the abuse with salt and dirt. The site is probably not going to get much water as it will be a difficult to get to.

7. **Update on Middle School Plantings.** Ms. Stevens did not have an update.

8. **Discussion of 2014 Plantings.** Ms. Stevens thought it would be good to know what are safe areas to do planting. Mr. Rice said it was just mill and pave work and will not disturb plantings. Mr. Adams thought each of them could keep their eyes open and keep a list. Attorney Loughlin asked

everyone make a list of 10 trees for the next meeting. Mr. Croteau has one spot between Route 33 and Greenland Road, where they took out Harvard Street, there was a group of rhododendrons that all suffered from the snow being piled on them. A woman is requesting that some evergreens be planted there for sound attenuation.

9. **Discussion of Policy of Fertilizing Trees in Construction Impacted Areas.** Attorney Loughlin explained that they had talked about future contracts and that something be added so that the contractor goes back and fertilized trees that have been impacted. He mentioned that to Mickem from Piscataqua Landscaping and whether it would be worthwhile to inject fertilizer into the impacted trees.

Ms. Stevens indicated she would like to know what works best to fertilize trees. Mr. Dupere stated there are many options including topical on the ground is the cheapest and easiest but no a lot gets into the ground and soil injections of either chemical or organic. Well established trees do not need any fertilizer as it has found its medium where it likes to grow in whether the soil is lousy or not. Disturbed roots benefit from a slow release with a phosphorous base. By putting it in the ground they eliminate run-off and reduces issues. He would be interested in helping to start an experiment to see if there are real benefits to this or not. He does not fertilize his trees and takes a tough love approach. They can try fertilizing a few trees and monitoring them. Next spring would be a good time to do this.

Attorney Loughlin suggested that they look at the area from the last sewer contract and review those trees as a starting point. There was a tree at the corner of Lincoln and Richards, a Pin Oak, which was probably impacted and was a great tree so that might be a good one to experiment with. Mr. Rice asked what the fertilization cost was. Mr. Dupere did not know. Attorney Loughlin thought it was round \$80 per tree. He suggested picking a couple of trees as an experiment and determine whether it is worth the cost. Mr. Rice was concerned as his tree budget is very tight.

Attorney Loughlin also reminded Mr. Croteau about the strapping of trees.

Mr. Dupere confirmed that he will do some research and see if there is post construction information on this. UNH is doing research on tree root fertilization. He will present information at the next meeting.

10. **Discussion of Policy of Notification of Property Owners at Sites of New Plantings.**

Attorney Loughlin asked if they have a list? Mr. Dupere will bring a variety of different resources next month. Years ago they put together a little brochure that they gave to folks when they got their tree. Mr. Rice suggested posting it on the City Website as well.

11. **Old Business.** n/a

12. **New Business.**

Mr. Adams had three items. There was a 6 ½" Alberta Spruce offered to anyone who wanted to take it by a south end resident. It is too big for her space. Mr. Dupere felt from a street tree perspective, it has no street tree future as they are not tolerant of anything. It's a miniature sized tree. It would not be cost effective to remove it from her property. They could buy a new one cheaper than removing it from it's current location.

Mr. Adams stated that Public Works planted three trees last week. A Sycamore next to the Sherburn School in the open lot, an elm along the western bank of the South Mill Pond, and a Norway spruce

along the North Mill Pond parking lot. Mr. Dupere stated that the trees were supposed to go at the Connie Bean center but they were no longer needed.

Mr. Adams advised the Committee that he has an Eagle Scout looking for an outdoor project. Mr. Dupere asked about the trails out on Little Harbor Road. It was agreed that they should refer him to Peter Britz, the City Environmental Planner, for possibilities.

Mr. Rice stated they were approached by 85/95 Woodbury Avenue about some pin oaks in front of a resident's house which were trimmed up to the 14' elevation. She was very concerned about the pruning activities, felt they were done improperly and that they had destroyed the trees. Mr. Rice explained to her that she should be in contact with Attorney Loughlin to get on the Committee Agenda and that they have a process they go through for removing trees. In his opinion, he did not feel that they were doing aggressive pruning. There is a third tree that needs to be pruned and he felt it would be great if someone with some credentials, like Mr. Dupere, could talk to her. The branches at eye-poking height are a concern and the branches facing the street are all dead. Mr. Dupere agreed to take ownership of this issue and will speak to the resident. Mr. Croteau agreed to go with him.

Mr. Dupere shared that they have a proclamation from the Governor's Council Meeting and he presented it to Attorney Loughlin.

Mr. Dupere mentioned the Urban Forestry Center and Portsmouth Garden Club Festival of Trees is coming up on November 22nd – 24th and they are putting signs up and getting the word out.

Mr. Croteau mentioned that he had a conversation with Ian King, the gentleman who bought 85 Haven Road, Mike Coffee's old house. He was asking to thin some of the Norway maples that are adjacent to Clough Drive. He does not believe he has spoken to his neighbor. He is asking to thin the trees for the health of the existing larger trees. Mr. Croteau will go over and look at the trees and he will report back on this.

13. Next Meeting – Wednesday, December 11, 2013.

A motion to adjourn at 8:40 a.m. was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse
Administrative Assistant
Planning Department

Minutes approved by the Trees & Public Greenery Committee on January 8, 2014.