

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, December 11, 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; Dennis Souto

Members Excused: n/a

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 January.

2. **Acceptance of Minutes of the November 13th meeting** – postponed to January.

3. **Tree Removal Requests:**

9 Lens Avenue – This was identified as a gnarly tree. Mr. Souto made a motion to remove the tree. Mr. Dupere seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

1430 Woodbury Avenue – This is a big Ash. Mr. Adams made a motion to remove the tree. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Croteau mentioned that they have several more in this area that will be coming forward soon.

86 Haven Road (Multiple Trees) – A letter was received this morning from Ian Kaner and Kerrin Parker. Mr. Croteau explained that Mr. Kaner wants to promote the growth and health of the oak and he believes the Norway is competing with their space. He feels if he removes those norways it will encourage the oak to grow upright. Mr. Dupere stated there are four trees which are 4-8" in diameter. One is an ash and the rest are norways. He has a valid point to try and thin things out. Ms. Stevens asked if this was City property. Mr. Croteau responded that most of the fence is on City property. The previous property owner (Mike Coffee) put the fence up. Mr. Adam felt that more trees than are marked should be removed. Mr. Croteau added that Mr. Kaner wants us or them to plant back into this area. Mr. Dupere confirmed that Mr. Kaner is asking for permission to remove the trees and for the City to remove them. Attorney Loughlin would encourage them to remove them as they don't have any effect on the City. This amounts to private property and someone's yard but he doesn't want to spend Mr. Rice's money to cut them down. Ms. Stevens doesn't want to start taking down trees that don't have anything wrong with them and only for aesthetic reasons. Attorney Loughlin felt that, despite his years of championing the norway maples, he is starting to take them down in his tree farm because they don't allow anything else to grow around them because of their thick foliage. Mr. Adams agreed with Attorney Loughlin, that if they are too close together nothing else is going to

thrive. Mr. Dupere noted that a couple are multi-stemmed on the same stump and that will be a problem down the road. He would look at taking the Cherry tree down before he would look at anything else. Mr. Adams didn't think it would be a huge impact on Mr. Rice's budget. Mr. Rice agreed. Mr. Croteau felt it would be easier for them have control and he doesn't like having private contractors work on private property.

Mr. Rice made a motion to remove the identified trees using city staff. Mr. Adams seconded the motion. The motion passed with Ms. Stevens voting in the negative.

Ms. Stevens asked if there are other places in the City where people have usurped city property for their own use and were they setting precedent. Mr. Rice did not believe so and added that precedent is already set. Most of the people who come before this Committee are trying to make improvements to their property. He doesn't have an issue with this.

Mr. Rice asked to add to the motion that they have identified the trees, but if they decide to leave one, that would be the City's decision.

Mr. Adams was reviewing the City Council minutes from 1879 – 80 and he was struck by the fact that they addressed on a great number of occasions a citizens' requests to cut down a tree so even at that time they seemed to have this competing situation about whether the tree was on private property or city street and would should pay for it.

Ms. Stevens asked whose responsibility it would be to plant trees in that area. Mr. Rice stated they don't want people planting trees on City property without permission. They need to make it clear to them that they would have to come to the Commission and request replacement trees.

4. Update on Sewer Separation Contract 3B Plantings – Mr. Rice stated that Rick Dolce said they were going to try and do the plantings this week but he thinks it's too late and it is on hold until next spring. He will check and report back next month. Mr. Dupere added that species selection at nurseries isn't too bad at this time for some reason.

Ms. Stevens asked if anyone had followed up on Fernald on Rockland, with the two trees. They had scoped it out and the trees were put back in the wrong place. They wanted the trees in front of the house. Mr. Adams believes Mr. Dolce understands what needs to be done.

5. Update on Route 1 Bypass/Lafayette Road Intersection Reconstruction/Planting. Mr. Dupere indicated he has not moved forward with that design. They won't be ready until the spring so he has some time. Mr. Rice requested that Mr. Dupere call him so that he can connect him with Mark Nelson. They have meetings on Tuesday mornings with DOT and he might want to attend one of those meetings.

6. Update on Middle School Plantings. Ms. Stevens stated that there was a JVC meeting tonight and she will inquire but suspects they have bigger issues to deal with now.

7. Discussion of 2014 Plantings Using Committee Members' Individual Tree Lists – Attorney Loughlin reminded the Committee members that they were all going bring a list of 10 trees. He suggested postponing this to the January meeting. Mr. Adams felt the intent was to have a break from our current practice of going out on the coldest day of the year to establish spring planting sites. Ms.

Stevens has mentioned streets in the past, Leslie Drive, Coakley Road, Clinton Street, and Broad Street.

Mr. Rice indicated that the Market Street Gateway Project has a lot of plantings planned. This is in the initial stage of design at the moment but probably in another month they will get a set of drawings. The Committee will be able to make planting suggestions.

Mr. Souto asked if the individual tree lists they are preparing are for planting trees in the future. Attorney Loughlin confirmed they were to help plan for the future and to be able to plant earlier.

8. Discussion of Possible Fertilizing of Larger Trees Affected by Sewer and Other Construction – this was postponed to the next meeting.

9. Notification of Property Owners at New Planting Sites – Ms. Stevens brought this up last month. Ms. Stevens stated that she and Mr. Dupere prepared a brochure and she handed them out to all homeowners on Williard Avenue. She didn't put a note with it from the Committee which would probably be nice in the future. Mr. Rice stated he would like to get that on the DPW website. Mr. Dupere was not sure they can reproduce the brochure but Mr. Rice suggested posting the link to the site. They are produced by the Arbor Day Foundation, it is part of the Tree City USA Program, which is partially funded by the US Forest Service, so they may be public domain. They are identified as document #1438.

Attorney Loughlin felt that the idea of actually handing somebody something is a great idea. Mr. Rice agreed and also likes putting something on the website. They should have a contact person and it should probably be Todd Croteau.

There was a discussion about having something on the City website so that people would be able to contact the Committee members.

10. Discussion of Planting Techniques – Burlap v. No Burlap. Mr. Dupere did not have time to research this issue and will have it for the next meeting.

11. Letter from Philip Whisler Re: New Franklin School Maple Syrup Project. Ms. Stevens stated that New Franklin Elementary School wants to have access to some City trees to tap for maple syrup for a school project. Mr. Dupere felt that tapping a tree causes injury to the tree when done incorrectly. There are procedures they should follow based on the area and tree size. Another problem that occurs is vandalism that ensues with a food grade product. Kids put things in the buckets to contaminate it and the school needs to be aware of this. Mr. Rice felt that the Health Inspector would probably have an issue if this wasn't done properly. Ms. Stevens does not know if this has been vetted through the School Department. Mr. Rice suggested a cautious response saying that although they support this educational effort they think there are a number of questions that need to be resolved before they move forward, such as School Board approval, the Health Inspector's approval, assurances they will prevent vandalism, and make them realize that this is not a simple thing.

Mr. Souto sensed that this request was whether they could use City trees and it sounds like the answer is "No". Ms. Stevens agreed that the issue of using private trees is not an issue for this Committee. Mr. Rice reiterated that it is a great educational tool for the kids but there are some valid concerns and risks. Mr. Dupere added that tapping Silvers and Norways is a horrible idea because it would go from 35:1 to 100:1 so they would be boiling constantly. Attorney Loughlin understood all of the issues that

go with the overall project but that is not their purview. Mr. Rice also thought it would be a lot of work for the Committee. Mr. Dupere felt they could look at the trees pretty quickly and give them some advice. Mr. Adams sees this spiraling out of control and he doesn't see any reason to put City trees at any more risk. Attorney Loughlin felt an answer could be that street trees, especially sugar maples, are already under enough stress that they are reluctant to authority tapping and they would prefer they not tap the City street trees.

Mr. Rice made a motion to have Attorney Loughlin send a letter on behalf of the Committee, explaining why the Committee is not in favor of this. Mr. Adams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

12. Old Business. n/a

13. New Business

Mr. Adams asked if there was some information about an infestation of wooly adelgid in Haven Park. Mr. Croteau stated that they took one tree out. They had sprayed it but it still had the wooly adelgid. There were three trees in total and one has come down. Mr. Dupere said that there was no action that would be taken this time of year. But, to follow up, there is a new biological control for hemlock wooly adelgid. They previously released little bugs all over Portsmouth and they ate all the adelgid. This caused a panic in Elwyn Park when they first put the notice out for this but the bugs only eat the adelgid bugs. Therefore, when the adelgid population dies off, the little bugs die off because their food supply is gone. There is a new bug, but he doesn't know what it's called, and they are going to raise the new bugs at the Forestry Center. Mr. Souto indicated that part of the problem is that they get predators from Asia and in Asia the Hemlock trees have a certain amount of resistance to the hemlock wooly adelgid. They are asking these bugs to do the same amount of work in the US where our Hemlock trees are not resistant at all and that is where they fail. We are asking them to more than they are programmed for. Mr. Dupere will talk to Chris and he will see what he wants to do.

Mr. Rice was concerned about the PSNH trimming program. He doesn't know how much control they can have over the contractor and their pruning practices. Mr. Croteau indicated that they started off well but in the past three weeks, they got behind, and bought in other crews. Junkins Avenue was an example of where they did a bad job. Mr. Dupere indicated they can go out and follow up with Bob at PSNH, go out for a ride with them and show them the trees. PSNH has standards that they are supposed to follow and he can point out the problem areas. Ever since the 2008 storm they have been going crazy. They only prune what they need to prune, but they often only cut one side of the tree.

14. Next Meeting – Wednesday, January 8, 2014

A motion to adjourn at 8:20 a.m. was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse
Administrative Assistant
Planning Department

