

**TREES AND PUBLIC GREENERY COMMITTEE**  
**City of Portsmouth**

**MINUTES**

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, July 9, 2014**  
**Portsmouth City Hall, 3rd Floor, City Manager’s Conference Room**

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

**Members Excused:** n/a

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

- 1. Minutes of the June 11, 2014 meeting** – no minutes were available.
- 2. Tree Removal Requests:**

**Pierce Island Elm** – this is the tree by the turnaround, before heading up to the wastewater treatment center. The other elm was already dead so it did not have to come before this committee. Mr. Dupere confirmed there was no chance of saving it past this season as it has Dutch elm disease. There is a danger to cars that park underneath it as it could fall down on them. Several Committee members had not seen it so they decided to postpone to the next meeting.

**395 Leslie Drive** – request to raise the canopy. Mr. Croteau stated they had taken a spruce tree down adjacent to this tree last year and the homeowner was not happy with the look of the tree. He explained a better course of action would be to lift the canopy to minimize the lack of growth on one side. There are trees in the area that are in worse shape than this one. Mr. Rice asked if there was any benefit in taking it out and replacing it with something else. Mr. Croteau did not think so. Mr. Dupere added that part of the reason for the bald spot was because the two trees were touching. They can trim it and make it look better. A motion to trim the tree up was made by Mr. Souto. Mr. Croteau seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Stevens suggested that they could plant something in front of it. Mr. Croteau responded that the issue is the next door neighbor who does not want any City trees near her house.

**423 Greenside Avenue** (continued from the June Meeting). Mr. Dupere went out and looked at this site again. There are half a dozen roots on the shed side of the tree, heading right towards the building. The roots are large enough to shift a foundation. Cutting that many roots will cause severe problems with the tree. He did not speak with the homeowner. Mr. Adams inspected the tree and he does not think the shed is sitting on

the ground. If the roots were going to raise the shed, it would have done so by now. In the absence of actual damage, he doesn't see any potential problem. He made a motion to monitor the situation and not take any action at this time. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**3. Update on Spring 2014 shade tree plantings** – Lists were provided and reviewed by the Committee. Mr. Croteau stated they currently have several trees to plant and several homeowners at various locations have made requests. No red buds were planted as the stock had some crown die back. That leaves 4 trees unaccounted for but he still has several spots that need trees.

**4. Status of recent plantings by Dick Adams and Dennis Souto** – A list was prepared for review by DPW and the Committee. Mr. Adams asked if DPW has the capacity to add bags to the new trees. Mr. Croteau confirmed that he could. Mr. Adams indicated that the Sycamore next to the school was very well planted but it's still not doing very well. Mr. Croteau felt as there is a lot of sand in that area it needs a lot of water. The honey locusts are not doing well, but it is assumed it is coming from the nursery. Ms. Stevens volunteered the Committee to go out and check on trees to assist the DPW crew. Mr. Croteau will be revising the planting requirements to conform to the new burlap standards and they will provide supervision for a while.

**Non-Agenda Item: Park Street** - Rick Dolce, of DPW, reported on a golden rain tree in the vicinity of a proposed sidewalk on Park Street. The tree was planted by a local tree advocate and they plan to relocate it across the street between the curb and the fence line. It is a better location as there are no wires and will be out of the shade of another tree. It seems to be a good fit and they can have the contractor do it on Friday of this week. Attorney Loughlin stated there was a golden rain tree on that property which the owner removed and then put up a fence. Ms. Stevens made a motion to accept Mr. Dolce's recommendation. Mr. Souto seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**5. Request concerning tree at island between March and South** – A letter was received from Stuart Wisong. Attorney Loughlin wondered if it is dying or has a limited life expectancy and if the island a good place for another tree. Ms. Stevens felt it was an unusual request to chop down a tree because it doesn't look good. Attorney Loughlin suggested having the tree pruned and monitored and invite him to put another tree on the island, as approved by Mr. Croteau. Mr. Adams felt that the tree is in the center of the island, where it should be. It's not a terribly attractive tree and he can see where a better tree would enhance the island but he also agrees with Ms. Stevens. Mr. Croteau stated that "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder". He agreed that a good course of action would be to prune it and then look at it again next month. Ms. Stevens felt there are other places where the City would love to have him plant a tree. Mr. Rice added that if that tree is taken out, he would advocate that they look at the orientation of the intersection for safety as the site line is terrible and dangerous. Mr. Rice made a motion to prune the tree and talk about it next month. Mr. Adams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Non-Agenda Item: Sagamore Avenue Bridge Plantings** - Tom Richter, of DPW, discussed the planting schedule for the Sagamore Bridge and handed out a Landscape plan. December is the projected opening. He was looking for any suggestions regarding their species selections. They are proposing some trees on top of the retaining wall and some further down to replace smaller trees and ugly growth. There will not be any stumping as they are in the 100' wetland buffer. They are getting ready to sign the agreement with the homeowner on Shaw Road. The trees are under the power lines so they will not be very tall. They are also taking out all invasive species. They will be back before the Committee in a month or two.

**6. Request concerning Aldrich Road Plantings** – An email was received from the property owner. Mr. Dupere stated they have been holding off, waiting for DPW to finish up their work. Mr. Rice confirmed they are almost done. Ms. Stevens suggested they use an approach similar to what they did on Willard Avenue by contacting homeowners to see what they want. Attorney Loughlin mentioned putting stakes out to notify homeowners of their plan. They are primarily concerned about the trees in front of people's homes in the hopes that they will help to care for it. Ms. Stevens asked how the Sagamore project went with the resident input and Mr. Rice felt they were very appreciative of the outreach the City made and they are still fine tuning it. He would like to be clear that once it goes to bid, the plan is final. Mr. Rice felt it made sense to do some outreach. Attorney Loughlin indicated it would help for the City to show where the planting areas are and show tree locations. Mr. Rice stated he would provide an 11" x 17" plan for the Committee to use to identify planting areas.

**7. Request from Discovery Center** – They have stated that they will be removing some of their trees. Mr. Croteau pointed out they were just planted last year but they are removing the hawthorns they just put in and are offering them to the City. He felt they could plant them around the Bridge Street parking lot. Mr. Dupere confirmed the hawthorns will take abuse and some are thorns so they would do nicely in the parking lot. They are relatively small and compact. Attorney Loughlin stated he will send a letter to Maryellen Burke that they will accept their offer. Mr. Croteau felt this could transition into the trees at the Bridge Street lot that are in pretty rough shape which they will identify and the Discovery Center trees can be transplanted to those locations.

**City Policy on placing Christmas Lights on downtown shade trees and tree mulch** – Mr. Rice stated they have received a number of requests for this as the store owners want a more festive downtown, especially in the Vaughan Mall and Ceres Street. In the past, the policy was that the lights were left in the trees and the City would have to cut them out. They need to look at whether this is acceptable. The lights are plugged into the City outlets. The City is placing holiday lights downtown but these are lights that people want to leave up year round. Attorney Loughlin remembers their past discussion about previous damage to the trees and also the issues with the Agave tree and he doesn't want this to influence whether retailers want trees planted near their businesses. Mr. Stevens asked who installs the lights. Mr. Rice felt it should be the City but the shop owners are volunteering to do it themselves. The City needs to make sure

they are using the proper quality light. The lights would have to be removed annually or the tree will grow into the lights.

On a different topic, Mr. Rice stated that the Vaughan Mall canopies are very low and “light-sucking” so the businesses want to create a more open feel. He suggests trimming the trees up. The Vaughan Mall is “ripe” for redevelopment as it will be seeing a lot more use. Ms. Stevens felt they could consider a pilot program. Mr. Rice agreed they could say that every year the lights would have to be replaced. He does not feel comfortable having private citizens climbing City trees so City staff should be responsible for stringing the lights. Mr. Adams asked why the City should have to assume this burden and Mr. Rice responded that he assumed they would bill the interested parties for the cost to put the lights up. They should limit the areas where the lights could go to the lower half of the tree and the trunk. Attorney Loughlin thought they could see if other communities have a similar policy. Mr. Rice will ask Jane Ferrini, in the Legal Department, to look into that. Attorney Loughlin confirmed they will revisit this next month.

The second item was regarding tree mulch. The PDA always puts a huge amount of mulch on their trees. Attorney Loughlin will write a letter to them concerning this issue.

**9. Old Business – None.**

**10. New Business:**

Ms. Stevens asked about the bridge park trees in the Memorial Park. Mr. Croteau stated four trees on the embankment were removed and they are monitoring the area.

Mr. Adams stated that the trees at 103 Richards and the Lafayette Road trees need to be looked at. Mr. Croteau is doing an inventory and it does look like it has been a tough winter. They came across a lot of fungus this year. They can’t pin point it to just one species and it appears to be across the board.

Mr. Adams had previously mentioned the trees in front of City Hall and he was talking about culling some of the volunteer samplings. Also in Haven Park. The desire is to clean them out. They will have Corbin Hallowell take a look with Mr. Adams.

Attorney Loughlin stated that Bob Shouse mentioned that the John Porter Statue is hidden and it may need to be trimmed up.

Ed Villella, of 67 Crescent Way, Atlantic Heights, spoke about the tree in front of his house which is dying. It is 5-6 years old. Every year it leafs out later, this year the beginning of June, and it has about 60% of its leaves. Mr. Croteau said he would go out and take a look at it.

Ms. Stevens wanted to acknowledge Jeff Ott passing. He came to the Committee often and was always willing to share his knowledge to help save the old trees.

Mr. Rice stated that the Worth Lot is getting resurfaced. He requested that trees be planted in the center island. There is a public meeting tonight and they will receive lots of input. They will come back with a planting plan. They will have a 4' raised island down the middle and they will incorporate drainage. They have already talked about the Vaughan Mall and he felt the Cherry trees should probably come out.

Mr. Rice asked the Committee to give some thought to pocket parks and gardens throughout the City, whether they want to do a policy statement and whether they want to encourage this or not. He is trying to determine what level of effort should go into this. They have an adopt-a-spot program and he asked if this Committee could determine which spots were and were not appropriate for that program. Other communities have corporate sponsors for their program. If they are going to have professional landscapers maintain the spots, it would take \$50,000 + to augment the work. The other issue is grass and he asked if the Committee has an opinion about what grass is appropriate. Mr. Adams felt it would depend on the site. Some areas should have a higher level of grass than others. Mr. Rice stated there has been public input that the grass needs more maintenance and attention. He is getting more and more requests to do more and he would appreciate the Committee getting involved and making a statement. Ms. Stevens was concerned about fertilizers going into the river. Mr. Dupere noted that if you put in Kentucky blue grass, it will require more maintenance and they would have to put in a weed killing device. There are reasons why the athletic fields are maintained so closely but it is very time consuming. Mr. Rice would like to see the Committee identify areas that would be appropriate for higher quality grass. Part of the issue is educating the public that it is intentional to use hearty grass and it is not lack of care or maintenance.

Mr. Dupere stated there is a pine tree on Greenside that was struck by lightening and it should be posted for next month.

**11. Next Meeting – Wednesday, August 13, 2014.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse  
Administrative Assistant  
Planning Department