

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, February 11, 2015
Portsmouth City Hall**

Members Present: Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice-Chairman; Leslie Stevens, A. J. Dupere, and Peter Rice, Director of Public Works

Members Excused: Todd Croteau, Public Works General Foreman; Dennis Souto

Chairman Loughlin called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

1. Minutes of the January 14, 2015 Meeting

The minutes of the January 14, 2015 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

2. Tree Removal Request – 15 Wibird Street

It was noted that a red maple was previously removed on the street, but there was another maple that was in bad shape and should be removed as well. Ms. Stevens asked who requested that the tree be removed, and Chairman Loughlin replied that he did.

*Ms. Stevens moved to have the tree removed, and Mr. Rice seconded the motion. The motion was **approved** by unanimous vote.*

3. Presentation by Harbor Corp Re: Landscaping for Deer Street Building

The landscape architect Mr. Pat Carroll showed the Committee the finalized plan. He discussed how the proposed roundabout at the corner of Market and Russell Streets dovetailed into the City's project and how the linear park section from Green Street to Market Street tied in with the proposed streetscaping on Market Street. He noted that Russell Street would be realigned as it entered Deer Street and that the trees on Russell Street would have to be removed as part of the realignment. Chairman Loughlin asked whether the City had requested the realignment, and Mr. Carroll agreed. Ms. Stevens asked whether there was enough space to put the trees back, and Mr. Carroll said there wasn't. Mr. Carroll stated that the bottom end of Russell Street would be re-landscaped for screening and also noted that the Whole Foods outdoor dining area would be revised for handicapped access.

Mr. Rice asked why some trees on the plan were colored in dark gray and others in light green. Mr. Carroll replied that the light green ones were raised planters and the gray ones were tree grates. Mr. Rice discussed the issue of balancing the pedestrian and snow removal ability and how he wanted everything flush where there was less than 8 feet. He asked Mr. Carroll why the restaurant seating area was flush. Mr. Carroll said it was due to the raised planters and whether or not to integrate them. Mr.

Rice discussed the differences in distance, saying he was concerned about blocking the sight line at the corner. Mr. Carroll stated that they would be reconfigured by pulling a tree back or removing it. Mr. Rice said that the sight line would be seen by people coming off Green Street, depending on the type of tree. Vice-Chair Adams asked Mr. Carroll to identify the tree species. Mr. Carroll stated that one species was ginkgo, and there were seven London Planes as well as zelkovas here and there. Vice-Chair Adams said he didn't care for zelkovas because they were low-branching trees. Mr. Carroll said they wanted something upright and not very wide. Vice-Chair Adams noted that the larger size of the tree put in, the slower the growth. Mr. Rice suggested Silva Cells. Mr. Carroll said they could consider Red Maples and English oaks instead of ginkgos. Ms. Stevens mentioned the rock ledge, and Mr. Carroll said they could replant in pockets. Ms. Stevens asked what types of trees were along the railroad tracks and was told they were zelkovas. Mr. Rice said there wasn't a lot of soil in the ledge area and that it was still in debate.

Chairman Loughlin asked for suggestions for supplementing the ginkgos. Vice-Chair Adams asked how tall the building was where the ginkgos would be, and Mr. Carroll replied that it was 65 feet. Vice-Chair Adams noted that there were six ginkgos and suggested alternating them with something else. Chairman Loughlin said he wanted an impact on the streetscape and asked how much impact ginkgos would have. Mr. Carroll said it wouldn't be an immediate impact and would take 3-5 years. He suggested going with maples instead. Mr. Dupere thought it was a tough spot for a tree and that maples would get fuller faster. Ms. Stevens suggested oaks, but Mr. Dupere said they were trying to stay away from oaks. Ms. Stevens then suggested mixing maples in with the ginkgos. Vice-Chair Adams asked how much width that particular side of the project could accommodate, and Mr. Carroll replied 25 feet.

Chairman Loughlin said he agreed with the concern about monoculture and wanted variety. He mentioned the Tupelo tree, which was urban but wide. Mr. Carroll suggested English oak. Vice-Chair Adams asked if they would consider Pioneer or Chinese elm. He thought the building was too large for the site and not set back enough from the street, so there wasn't much that could be done. Mr. Dupere suggested some maples and oaks to have some spread.

Chairman Loughlin asked Mr. Carroll where he was in the approval process. Mr. Carroll said that he could make the changes and resubmit them to TAC and then submit it to the Planning Board in April. Mr. Dupere thought that the definite species selection could be fluid so that it could be adjusted if there was too much ledge. Mr. Rice stated that he'd like some of the design details adjusted, due to a TAC issue. He discussed taking the wire and the burlap out. Vice-Chair Adams said that complete removal had been previously discussed.

Mr. David Desfosses asked how the cage under the tree would be removed without destroying the root ball, and Mr. Rice explained how it was done at Portwalk. Chairman Loughlin asked what the problem was in cutting the cages on the big trees a bit. Mr. Dupere replied that the roots got entangled in the cage and the tree died. He further discussed burlap issues, saying that burlap was often chemically treated and therefore did not decompose readily. Trees were often shipped in material, and he preferred to take everything off. Vice-Chair Adams said the Committee had addressed the issue previously and concluded that it was best to remove everything. Mr. Carroll stated that he would be willing to remove the material. He stated that he would make the changes around the hotel and update the planting details.

4. Finalizing of Recommendations Concerning Market Street Gateway Entrance Improvements

Ms. Nancy Carmer and Mr. David Desfosses were present. Ms. Carmer stated that she and Mr. Desfosses were co-managing the project. She introduced Mr. David Saladino, the representative from RSG. She said there was a concern about monoculture and that she would present the findings from the meeting to Richardson and Associates, who would be at the March meeting for final approval on the plan's landscaping element. She passed out copies of the January 15 updated plan.

Ms. Stevens asked whether the road would remain the same or be widened. Mr. Desfosses said there was no spot where it would be widened. Ms. Stevens noted that part of the road became narrow because the center got wider in some spots, and that it looked like the distance from the sidewalk and the road was fairly narrow. Ms. Carmer said it had been modified. Mr. Dupere noted that there was a 2-4' wide strip between the road and the sidewalk. Ms. Stevens saw that the space between the road and the sidewalk was three feet and asked if the trees were all lindens. Mr. Desfosses replied that some were, along with inkberry, hollies, and junipers. Ms. Stevens asked Mr. Desfosses whether he thought it was too much for that space, and he said that the sidewalk would be reconstructed and would be eight feet wide and would be a multi-use path for walking and biking. Chairman Loughlin asked if the planting strip would remain the same width that it presently was, and was told that it would. Ms. Stevens thought it was a lot of trees to put in the 8-foot wide strip and too dense. Mr. Desfosses said the point was to create vistas. Mr. Saladino noted that the strip was actually 10 feet. Ms. Carmer said she had asked for something low-maintenance because there would be no mowing.

The monoculture issue was discussed. Ms. Carmer asked for a list of interspersed trees from the Committee. Mr. Rice said he would cut the number of trees by half. Ms. Carmer thought that might be too much because Portsmouth was a designated Tree City that cared about impressions and a beautiful corridor. Chairman Loughlin thought the effect would be lost with anything less than 40%.

Ms. Stevens asked how wide the linden tree canopy would be. Mr. Dupere thought it would be 25-30 feet. They discussed how many linden trees would fit in that space. Chairman Loughlin felt that 35 feet was reasonable for a nice promenade. He said the Committee was almost ready to go to bid. Mr. Saladino asked how long the list that the Committee had come up with was. Vice-Chair Adams said there were roughly ten trees that were considered tall street trees and suitable for urban conditions, like Chinese elm and black gum. He felt it could be a mistake to think too short-term and expect immediate results and that they should look at the long term, like 50 years. He thought there was a tendency to plant trees too close. Mr. Desfosses thought that 35-40 feet was a good compromise. Mr. Rice asked if undergrowth was really necessary, saying they could become trash accumulators. Ms. Stevens said they wanted to figure out how to manage the middle corridor without having to do maintenance. Chairman Loughlin said he was good with the 40-foot difference. Ms. Stevens asked if they could use existing trees. Mr. Desfosses said he didn't think there were any trees worth saving.

Chairman Loughlin discussed the parking issue, stating that street parking was reckless and there was plenty of room for on-site parking. He was concerned about families with children crossing Michael Soucy Drive because it was dangerous. He also noted that acorns from oaks didn't present any problems. Ms. Stevens asked if the 36 red oaks were all in the same location and was told that they were, and she thought having them on all sides of the street may create a hazard with acorns.

Mr. Saladino confirmed that the Committee wanted a change from maples as well as a different set of species west and east of the bridge, perhaps changing from lindens to oaks. He asked whether there should be a different feel on each side of the bridge. Ms. Adams didn't think it was as important as having different species. Mr. Desfosses said it was desirable to have the trees in the same zone have the same shapes and not necessarily have the same tree species. Ms. Stevens said the Committee could look at the shrubs to get a sense of the density and to ascertain whether they needed as many. Mr. Desfosses said he would ask Richardson to update their plans and then would talk to the State representative to get approval for areas around the turnpike.

Chairman Loughlin asked Ms. Carmer about her timetable for approval, and she said her goal was to present the Committee's suggestions to Richardson and then attend the March meeting for approval. Mr. Desfosses said he'd like approval so he could go to the State.

Chairman Loughlin summarized that comments to Richardson would include the monoculture issue, 40 feet on center, a mix of trees that blended (including red oaks), and that the 10-foot strip on the east side of the street was okay. Ms. Carmer said she would ask Richardson to incorporate some of the existing species. Chairman Loughlin asked why parking couldn't be put on the other side and was told that the reason was a wetlands impact. He reiterated that he had an issue about the danger in crossing the busy street and would email a letter with his concerns. He told Ms. Carmer that Richardson could contact him with questions and he would circulate them to the Committee.

5. Status of Requests on Bids for Spring 2015 Tree Planting List

Mr. Rice stated that he would have the status for the March meeting.

6. Old Business

There was no old business discussed.

7. New Business

There was no new business discussed.

8. Next Meeting – Wednesday, March 11, 2015

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Recording Secretary