

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

**MINUTES**

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

**Members Present:** Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice-Chairman; Leslie Stevens, Dennis Souto, Peter Rice, Director of Public Works, and Todd Croteau, Public Works General Foreman

**Members Excused:** A. J. Dupere

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

**1. Minutes of the February 11, 2015 Meeting**

*The minutes of the February 11, 2015 meeting were approved with minor corrections by unanimous vote.*

**2. Tree Removal Requests (None)**

**3. Finalizing of Recommendations Concerning Market Street Gateway**

Mr. Dave Desfosses told the Committee that he had a final plan. The project would be built in two pieces. The Submarine Way and Albacore Way would start in the fall and go into spring. The second half would get built after the Sarah Long Bridge was completed. They would redo the intersection with the Submarine Way Connector. When both projects were complete, the rest of the Gateway project would be completed.

Mr. Todd Richardson of Richardson and Associates stated that they had increased the diversity of tree species as well as increased tree spacing dimensions. They also conserved existing trees. He went through the plan, pointing out blocks of trees and the addition of two species. Mr. Richardson said that there were 113 trees in the previous proposal, but the spacing increased from 35 to 40 feet, so the number of trees was reduced to 91. Of the 113 trees, the previous emphasis was on the silver linden and red oak, and they included the red maple, Chinese elm and two other trees, for a total of five species. Mr. Richardson said he cross-referenced them with the City's list. The 91 trees favored various percentages of red maple, red oak, Japanese pagoda, silver linden and Chinese elm, and they applied logic as to where the breaks would occur. Their design intent was to reflect a coastal condition, which he believed was successful due to the break in the corridor showing significant open space and the park. A similar character and stature of trees were maintained as far as canopy spread, form and height. The street tree spacing was increased from 35 to 40 feet to push the higher limit of the distance between the trees, but it shifted from species to species.

Mr. Richardson noted that they had researched the existing trees and found that most of them were invasive or colonizers. They could spade a tree and reintroduce it elsewhere, but it would present challenges because the tree would have to be stored for the project's duration and then reintroduced, and there was no guarantee that it would work. It would also incur additional expense. He felt that it wasn't worth it unless the species was unique or was a gift to the City. He would not change the existing grading significantly, and he proposed that they add a note on the construction drawing to identify whether a tree was in good health or not and should be conserved.

Ms. Stevens asked Mr. Richardson about the small park at the end. Mr. Richardson replied that it contained river birch and some other species, similar to the other park. Ms. Stevens also asked if there were red oak and Japanese pagoda trees past the bridge, and Mr. Richardson agreed.

Vice-Chair Adams asked Mr. Richardson if he had screened the trees for salt tolerance, and Mr. Richardson said that he had. He added that the design lapped over from one species to another so that there was no real transition zone, which would provide attractive diversity.

Ms. Nancy Carmer asked what the groundcover along the island was, and Mr. Richardson replied that it was shrub plantings. Ms. Carmer stated that their plan for the corridor's maintenance for the first year or two was to outsource it to get a sense of cost and what was required, and she asked the Committee whether that was still the case. Mr. Rice replied that it was, providing they could get additional funds. They could structure the bid to have two years of maintenance, and they would bid it out as a separate item to see what the value was.

Mr. Rice asked Mr. Croteau if the groundcover would be low maintenance. Mr. Croteau said they would spread primarily shrubs and swaths of meadow and shrubs and that it would be low maintenance. They tried to emphasize simplicity by planting shrubs that spread and grew together. Ms. Stevens verified that it would be groundcover between the trees and not grass, and Mr. Croteau agreed and said it would be bayberry. They would widen some of the grass areas and decrease the amount of shrubs. He also noted that there were shrubs under the trees in the median.

*Mr. Rice moved to **accept** the plan as proposed, and Mr. Souto seconded the motion. The motion was **approved** by unanimous vote.*

#### **4. Review of Landscaping plan for 46-64 Maplewood Avenue**

Mr. John Chagnon from Ambit Engineering discussed the redevelopment of the parking lot on the Maplewood Avenue and Deer Street corner. There were street tree plantings along Maplewood Avenue that included lindens on the corners and honey locusts and other shrubs to fill in. A lot of the site between the building and the curb was brick sidewalk, and trees were in raised islands. He stated that the approval from TAC was subject to the Committee's concurrence on the plant species.

Ms. Stevens asked about the boxes of shrubs and was told that they were Rosa rugosa. She asked if there were shrubs along Maplewood Avenue, and Mr. Chagnon agreed. Ms. Stevens noted that there were six lindens and asked where the other two were. Mr. Chagnon replied that one was on Deer Street and one on Bridge Street. They discussed the break in the sidewalk and a stairway entrance where there was a planting area. Ms. Stevens noted that a linden was a spreading tree that needed

sufficient space, and she suggested something taller and thin, like a Sunset red maple or English oak. She and Vice-Chair Adams discussed it further, relating it to the Harborcorp plan. Vice-Chair Adams noticed that the planning notes indicated that all trees and plants would be mulched, and he commented that landscapers liked to mound up the mulch. Mr. Chagnon agreed to ensure that the trees be mulched in a saucer pattern, with the mulch not touching the tree trunks. Mr. Rice asked Mr. Chagnon if the plan had been approved or was still pending. Mr. Chagnon said it had been approved by TAC and the next step was the Historic District Commission.

Ms. Stevens noted that there were no trees on the other side of Maplewood Avenue and assumed it was due to utilities. Mr. Rice stated that Portwalk had given \$250,000 to the streetscape changes to that section of Maplewood Avenue, so the sidewalk would be widened to allow space for trees and to activate the streetscape. He also said that there was some discussion with developers about the Gary's Beverage area and they had implied that the sidewalks would be made wider. Mr. Rice said his biggest concern was maintenance of the section of road in front of the VFW. He wanted to ensure that they had a minimum of eight feet so that sidewalk traffic could get through. He didn't like the raised curbs around the trees in those areas because it created pinch points for the planters. Chairman Loughlin thought that the tradeoff was the protection. Mr. Rice said he would prefer it flush with the grate but thought there was adequate space to make it work. Mr. Chagnon stated that the sidewalk was about 25 feet from the door to the crosswalk. Ms. Stevens wondered if they could do a small area with a few trees, and Mr. Chagnon said there would be visibility issues. Mr. Croteau asked if Mr. Chagnon could do round raised beds instead of rectangular ones for the plantings on the Maplewood Avenue side to give the perception of a wider angle. Mr. Chagnon said there wasn't a big range there. Chairman Loughlin noted that there was a history of trees with square beds not surviving on the lower end of Congress Street, so he understood the benefit of circular beds but thought there was more room for the tree with a rectangular bed. Mr. Rice suggested putting silva cells around the street trees to provide more room for them to grow into. Chairman Loughlin asked if it was part of the TAC approval, and Mr. Rice said he didn't think they had gone into that level of detail.

Chairman Loughlin verified that there was a suggestion for four lindens on Maplewood Avenue and also Sunset red maples on Deer Street. Ms. Stevens noted that there had been problems with honey locusts in the past. Chairman Loughlin agreed that honey locusts in downtown Portsmouth had suffered so they were cautious about using them. Ms. Stevens suggested a second variety. Vice-Chair Adams said they had had good luck with Chinese elms.

Mr. Rice asked that silva cells be added to the Maplewood Avenue trees as well as circular versus square raised curbs. Chairman Loughlin asked if there was a diameter on State Street, and Mr. Croteau said it varied but was no smaller than four feet. They discussed it further. Mr. Chagnon asked the Committee whether they still wanted a grate and was told yes.

Chairman Loughlin verified that the motion was to approve the design with a circular minimum of a four-foot width. Mr. Rice suggested that a 4'x8' rectangle be created for the root area, making it two feet on either side parallel to the road for a root breakout with an inside diameter of four feet, and he also suggested that the planning notes include removing the burlap and wire.

*It was moved to **approve** the design with the stipulations that a circular minimum width of four feet and a 4'x8' rectangular area for the root area be created, that the remaining planned lindens stay as*

*planned, i.e. four in planting boxes, and another at the entrance to the parking lot, and that the planning notes include removing the burlap and wire.*

*The motion was seconded and **approved** by unanimous vote.*

**5. Status of Bids for Spring 2015 Tree Planting List**

Mr. Croteau stated that he was going through the bureaucratic process and discussing different species and that all trees would be planted by June 1. Vice-Chair Adams asked him to specify a planting window, and Mr. Croteau said they would start planting on May 1. Vice-Chair Adams asked why planting wouldn't start in April, and Mr. Croteau said he assumed that it would start in April because it had to be completed by June 1.

**6. Old Business**

Mr. Rice stated that he received an email from Chris Thompson regarding concurrence with their plans on the Harborcorp project. Mr. Thompson had felt that they were done with the trees and greenery aspect and hoped to plant in the near future. Ms. Stevens said that an email was sent to Mr. Thompson regarding English oak and red maple, and she thought that was the only outstanding item. Vice-Chair Adams asked if it would constitute a contract if it was signed, and he was told that it would. They further discussed where the plantings would be located.

**7. New Business**

Ms. Stevens suggested that the Committee go out as a group once the snow melted to see whether trees needed pruning.

**8. Next Meeting – Wednesday, April 8, 2015**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
Recording Secretary