

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

**MINUTES**

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, December 9, 2015  
Portsmouth City Hall**

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

**Members Excused:** None.

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

**1. Minutes of the November 4, 2015 meeting.**

*The motion to approve the November 4, 2015 meeting minutes with minor changes was **approved** by unanimous vote.*

**2. Tree Removal Requests:**

203 Cass Street (root damage during construction) requested by resident:

Chairman Loughlin told the Committee that the tree was a tagged Norway maple. Ms. Stevens said the owner was anxious to have it removed due to safety issues.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Stevens moved that the tree be removed, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Ms. Stevens noted that the owner requested a replacement tree.

26-30 Elwyn Road (believes tree is dead) requested by resident:

Mr. Croteau said that the tree was pruned significant during the summer and had small cavities in it but was not dead. He thought it could be better judged if it was foliated.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Adams moved that the request be continued, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

35 Elwyn Avenue (tree is in poor shape) requested by resident:

Mr. Croteau said that the sugar maple's back side had an open wound and that the resident wanted it removed. Chairman Loughlin said he didn't think the tree was a hazard, but Mr. Dupere said that the scar tissue would continue as the tree got bigger and recommended that it be removed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Adams moved that the tree be removed, and Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Ms. Stevens noted that the owner was interested in replacing the removed tree with two magnolias.

175 Fleet Street (continued from the November meeting) requested by DPW:

Mr. Croteau stated that the tree was growing beside a retaining wall. Mr. Rice said there was no intention for greenery in that location and it would damage the retaining wall.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved that the tree be removed, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Haven Playground (8 trees) requested by DPW:

The request was addressed under Item 3 below.

129 Miller Avenue (2 trees, parking lot of church) requested by Church administration:

Art Munson, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Methodist Church, stated that there were three trees among several along the sidewalk that had deteriorated due to the previous installation of a new sidewalk, and he was concerned about safety issues. Mr. Croteau noted that two of the trees were posted and were in the right-of-way. The other tree was in the church lot and could be removed by the church without the City's permission. Vice-Chair Adams asked Mr. Munson if he wanted replacement trees, and Mr. Munson said he did.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Adams moved that the two trees be removed, and Mr. Croteau seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

14 Worthen Road requested by DPW

Mr. Croteau said the tree was in rough shape and that the resident had requested that it be removed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Croteau moved that the tree be removed, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Mr. Dupere recommended that the neighborhood be included on the Committee's list for revisiting, and Chairman Loughlin agreed.

**3 Presentation on Haven Park Improvements by Assistant City Manager for Special Projects, David Moore**

David Moore, Assistant City Manager for Special Projects, stated that the playground was one of 11 playgrounds scheduled for a major overhaul. He gave a brief history of the project, saying that he and the landscape architect met with the neighbors several times to discuss the challenges and budget constraints. He then introduced the landscape architect, Todd Richardson.

Mr. Richardson showed photos of the existing condition of the site, a park plan, and a diagram and photos of the different trees. He explained that a lot of trees were lindens with dense crowns, and he discussed the unique condition of the timber retaining, the series of fences along one edge, and how there were different grade levels of tree plantings. He reviewed which trees would be removed and which would be retained, which totaled eight removals and four replacements, with a net loss of four trees. He noted that the new trees would be planted at the right grade. Mr. Richardson said that the most notable change would be at the edge of the park where the trees were closely spaced. He said some of the neighbors felt that the existing trees brought too much shade. For the replacement trees, they proposed four red maples, and they also proposed to have plantings that included dogwoods, shrubs, low-bush blueberry and 18-24" hybrid blueberries.

Three members of the public were present. Joan Berman said that she loved the park but wanted safety issues resolved. Lawrence Brewer said that he thought removing the trees was a good idea and liked the choice of replacement trees and their location. He felt that the park was too shaded and wanted some sunlight. Chuck Callahan said there were too many trees on a very small lot and that he thought the trees that would be retained would be appropriate for the lot size.

Vice-Chair Adams asked what the rationale was for keeping the linden on the corner and what would have been done differently if it were a clean slate. Mr. Richardson replied that he wasn't sure a tree would be in that location if it were a blank slate because it was bursting out of its timber box. The preserved trees would get new containers to retain their existing condition. If he were to start fresh, he said it would be a different species and would not be in an elevated spot. He also felt that the linden was an anchor tree for the corner and paired up nicely with another large tree.

Mr. Rice said he didn't think the tree would survive well due to construction and recommended that it be removed and replaced rather than build a wall and have the tree die in five years or so. Mr. Dupere agreed, noting that simply removing the asphalt around the base would cause more root damage. Mr. Rice said that the schedule called to pull out the retaining walls in a few weeks, but that the wall in question might have to wait until spring.

Ms. Stevens asked Mr. Richardson whether he would rebuild the same planter if two particular trees were saved. Mr. Richardson said they would enlarge the area to accommodate the roots and then rebuild in a similar fashion with larger wood containers. The corner tree was further discussed. Mr. Richardson said they could use a product called BioBarrier that had a chemical to deter roots from pushing against the edges. They further discussed removing the asphalt and potential root damage.

Chairman Loughlin stated that the corner tree was spectacular and that he hated to see it removed. He also noted that the three trees on one side of South Street were the only ones of any size and, if removed, would be gone forever. He said he had gone to the park on a hot summer day and that it was an oasis. He felt that the new plan of saving the park was a great compromise and a beneficial proposal. Vice-Chair Adams said that keeping the trees in the cribs would invite long-term problems and favored doing it correctly the first time.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion on all the trees identified for removal. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend for discussion the removal of all the identified trees. Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion on the spectacular corner tree and one other beautiful tree. Mr. Moore said the tree wasn't posted for removal, and Ms. Stevens said she wanted to look at the tree first. Mr. Rice said they could postpone working on that particular tree and corner.

*It was decided to table the approval until the January meeting.*

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion on the plantings. Mr. Rice stated that the blueberry bushes would be problematic because they would attract flies and other pests, so he was hesitant on voting for it. Mr. Dupere noted that the plantings would stay green. There was no motion made.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion to support Mr. Richardson's plan. *Mr. Dupere moved to approve the plan, and Ms. Stevens seconded.*

Mr. Rice said he wanted to mix up the species a bit. Vice-Chair Adams asked whether honey locusts had been considered, noting that they were airy. Mr. Moore said the neighbors wanted more light and air throughout the park but also wanted some dense shade introduced back in.

*The motion was approved, with 6 in favor and Mr. Rice opposed.*

**4. Update on Removal of Chinese Elm at 67 Crescent Way:**

The owners Ed and Dale Valena were present. Mr. Valena said that the tree had been approved in July to be removed and asked what the process was. Mr. Dupree said the tree was infested with aphids and had other issues, like storm damage and incorrect pruning. Ms. Stevens noted that the Committee voted to remove the tree at the October 4 meeting.

*Mr. Croteau stated that the tree would be removed by the end of the week.*

**5. Committee Member Tree Lists for Spring 2016 Plantings:**

Chairman Loughlin said he was going to consolidate the two lists but first had to look at the sites. Mr. Croteau noted that he had five more planting requests.

*It was decided that the Committee would look at the sites on January 11 at 9:30 a.m.*

**6. Update on Activities of Public Works Tree Crew:**

Chairman Loughlin asked Mr. Croteau for a summary of City's utility mechanic Corin Hallowell's activities. Mr. Croteau said that Mr. Hallowell decorated the holiday tree. They had also removed 16 trees since August and had responded to 73 tree service requests since July. Mr. Hallowell had also been trained in tree risk assessment.

**7. Old Business:**

There was no old business.

**8. New Business:**

- Chairman Loughlin told the Committee that City Council Representative Josh Denton sent a letter to the City Manager, who had referred the letter to him. The letter addressed ideas for tree identification. Mr. Denton was present and stated that the Atlantic published an article about how Melbourne assigned an email address to every tree in the city so that people could email the tree's identification to the City and request service on it. Mr. Denton said that the article indicated how it brought people closer to nature and that he thought it was a great idea to do so in Portsmouth. He requested that the article be forwarded to the appropriate personnel. Mr. Dupere said an inventory program was modified out of a system that the DPW used and that trees were identified as to size, species, location, and so on. He said that at least two-thirds of the City's street trees were on the plan but there was still work to do. Mr. Rice said they could look into assigning an email address to trees but was concerned that it might be too complex, but if it was easy to do and beneficial to the public, he thought it could be pursued. They already had the 'Click and Fix', which was a great tool for the public. They further discussed it. Chairman Loughlin said that the Committee was a good voice for trees and was supported by the citizens, and any way to keep that going was good.

Mr. Rice said the Committee would read the article and consider it.

- Mr. Dupere told the Committee that he was invited to participate in an online series from the University of MA about trees and construction damage and thought it may be worthwhile to do.
- Vice-Chair Adams noted that the Committee's ordinance called for an annual report, but one was never done. Chairman Loughlin agreed and said he would look into it.
- Mr. Moore handed out copies of the adopted Sagamore Creek Master Plan.

**9. Next Meeting – Wednesday, January 13, 2016.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
Recording Secretary