

TREES AND PUBLIC GREENERY COMMITTEE
City of Portsmouth

MINUTES

7:30 AM – Wednesday, August 10, 2016
Portsmouth City Hall

Members Present: Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice-Chairman; Peter Rice, Department of Public Works; Todd Croteau, Public Works General Foreman; Leslie Stevens; A. J. Dupere; Dennis Souto; Joan Walker; and Dan Umbro. City Arborist Corin Hallowell was also present.

Members Excused: None.

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

1. Minutes of the June 8, 2016 Meeting

The motion to approve the June 8, 2016 meeting minutes was approved by unanimous vote.

2. Tree Removal Requests:

139 Aldrich Road, requested by resident

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was a silver maple that was in decline due to the recent drought but looked fine structurally. The Committee discussed it further.

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

260 Aldrich Road, requested by Committee

Mr. Hallowell said the silver maple was in decline.

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

30 Elwyn Road, requested by Committee

Mr. Croteau said the tree had recently been reposted.

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

245 Essex Avenue, requested by Eversource

Mr. Hallowell stated that the request was for four small trees and a larger tree to be removed. He said they were not in decline but needed to be removed for the line project.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Dupere moved that the five trees be removed, and Mr. Croteau seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

1414 Islington Street, requested by DPW

David Desfosses stated that the DPW would remove the tree if necessary, but he hoped to save it. He noted that the tree further down at 1752 Islington Street would have to be removed (note that the request is listed below on the agenda). The Committee further discussed it.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Ms. Walker moved to remove the tree at 1414 Islington Street only if Mr. Desfosses could not find a way to save it, and also to remove the tree at 1752 Islington Street. Mr. Croteau seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

1447 Islington Street, requested by Eversource

Mr. Dupere stated that the tree would be removed by Eversource.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Dupere moved to remove the tree, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

1752 Islington Street, requested by DPW

See 1414 Islington Street request above.

Lister Academy (Sherburne Avenue), requested by resident

Mr. Hallowell told the Committee that the academy requested that a Norway maple in serious decline be removed and replaced with a sycamore tree. The Committee further discussed it.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Souto moved to remove the tree, and Vice-Chair Adams seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

At this point, the owner Amy Leahy of 260 Aldrich Road arrived and spoke to her request, which was addressed earlier by the Committee. She requested that the two stumps across the street be ground down. She said she would also like a new tree.

Mr. Hallowell said the stumps would be grounded in the next few months. Chairman Loughlin said a list of new trees to be planted would be compiled for the next year.

161 Park Street, requested by Committee

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was a small crab apple that was half dead.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Souto moved to remove the tree, and Ms. Walker seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Stevens noted that the resident wanted a replacement tree.

Pierce Island (Across from Dog Park Entrance), requested by DPW, and
Pierce Island Pool Parking Lot, requested by DPW

Eric Meserve of AECOM stated that some of the trees in the dog area and the park were not flagged and that the area was a staging area for the contract. He asked whether the removed trees could be replaced in kind, and he also ensured that the remaining trees would be protected. He noted that an Invasive Species Control Plan would be in effect throughout construction and for a year afterwards.

Mr. Dupere said that one of the trees was a memorial tree, and he also felt that an additional elm tree should be removed. He recommended that the same species not be planted because both existing trees were dying of Dutch elm disease. Vice-Chair Adams noted that the memorial tree was paid for by friends of the deceased. Mr. Rice said the tree would be flagged as a memorial tree. Mr. Dupere asked what the punitive damages would be if the remaining trees were not protected, and Mr. Meserve said there were none in place. Mr. Rice said he was concerned about having major machinery that would damage trees and cause them to have to be replaced. Mr. Dupere said he was concerned about the memorial tree and thought punitive damages should be enforced if it was damaged. It was further discussed. Mr. Meserve said he would have representatives on site to monitor the contractor.

Vice-Chair Adams said the three white oaks looked healthy and was told that, because of the large machinery that would unload in that area, the trees would be removed to facilitate ingress and egress.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Croteau moved to remove the marked trees in the parking lot and dog entrance, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

326 Thornton Street, requested by DPW

Mr. Hallowell said a tree was damaged by a tractor trailer and had a large limb torn off. He also noted that the tree had been topped several times and wouldn't recover. Ms. Walker said the tree looked healthy and asked whether the tree could be monitored for a year and then revisited.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Ms. Walker moved to monitor the tree for one year, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

3. Eversource Mill Pond Substation

Mr. Croteau stated that the Eversource plan was the final one after their on-site meeting and that Eversource had incorporated all the recommended improvements.

4. Eversource Tree Removal and Replanting for Portsmouth Hospital – Borthwick Avenue Area

The Eversource representative Michael Stanek distributed a handout to the Committee and said they wanted to do a tree-for-tree swap of a similar species instead of continually topping the tree. He said it would eliminate the need to come back as well as lower the cost of maintenance. He suggested that a flattering tree, like a dogwood with a mature height of 15 feet, be planted. He said Eversource would cover the cost of planting and that it should take only a few days. He recommended that Mr. Croteau meet with the landscaper on site and put together a species list.

Chairman Loughlin said the Committee was always concerned about monoculture. Mr. Stanek said they didn't want to create a monoculture and could be flexible. Mr. Hallowell recommended that Eversource adhere to the Committee's planting specifications.

Chairman Loughlin suggested that Mr. Hallowell and Vice-Chair Adams work with Mr. Stanek to come up with a list of species.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Croteau moved to remove the trees, and Mr. Rice seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

6. Bill Humphreys (PPMtv) – Marcy Street Hedges

(Mr. Humphreys was present, so Chairman Loughlin heard the request out of sequence).

Mr. Humphreys stated that he wanted to have the hedges removed and the ground cover replanted because the existing ones masked the front of the building and its historic nature.

He introduced Ken Collins of Clipper Landscaping, who said he was researching the types of plantings incorporated into the ground cover. He said the front retaining wall was damaged and needed to be repaired, so most of the hedges would have to be removed. He said he was also concerned about the curb appeal of the building and wanted to plant lower bushes in the front of the building and perhaps a few cherry trees. He noted that he researched the plantings at the Moffatt-Ladd House and would try to buy the same flower type to keep the historic look.

The Committee discussed what their jurisdiction was, noting that it was a City building. Mr. Humphreys discussed the retaining wall. Mr. Rice said David Moore was working with Mr. Humphreys and would discuss the retaining wall at some point.

Vice-Chair Adams moved to conceptually approve the request, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Humphreys asked what the next step for submitting a proposal would be. Mr. Rice told him to work with David Moore on a planting list and bring it back.

Chairman Loughlin noted that Colin (last name not given) of Ambit Engineering was present to discuss 77 State Street (not on the agenda).

Colin stated that there was a small tree grate on the sidewalk off of the State Street entrance to the parking garage, and there was a tree on each side of the entrance. Mr. Hallowell said the tree next to

the building would stay small because it was a windy site that needed something small and rugged. The Committee discussed planting one tree per site, and the same species for both locations.

5. Discussion of 2017 Planting – Draft notice to City Website & Draft Letter to Homeowners

Chairman Loughlin stated that a draft notice would go on the website advising people who were interested in trees to let the Committee know. He said a draft letter would go to homeowners if the Committee did selected sites. He also suggested that Mr. Hallowell’s email address be included.

Vice-Chair Adams recommended that the homeowners be told the exact wording regarding the exact species to be planted, depending on overhead wires and so on. He said they could add the benefits of planting trees and shrubs to the website, which would emphasize the species that were frequently used but also note that there were many others as well.

Mr. Dupere said that a few species could be removed from the list for a few planting seasons to break it up and diversify, and he named a few, which included honey locusts and sycamores. Mr. Hallowell suggested that dogwood and some Japanese trees be removed from the list as well. Mr. Rice cautioned against opening up Pandora’s Box and said the Committee members were the experts.

Chairman Loughlin asked whether the Committee had to be so specific about letters to each homeowner recommending a specific tree, which he thought seemed to be a lot of work. Mr. Dupere said the biggest problem was the lack of space due to power lines and so on. Mr. Hallowell suggested that the letter state that a tree would be selected for someone’s site, and if they had a special request, they could contact the Committee and discuss it. Mr. Rice and Mr. Dupere agreed.

Chairman Loughlin said he would redraft the letter and add Mr. Hallowell’s email address to it.

6. Bill Humphreys (PPMtv) – Marcy Street Hedges

See above.

7. Discussion of Tree at South & Marcy Streets

The Committee discussed it, noting that the request didn’t get posted previously and that the situation hadn’t changed for several years. Mr. Rice said that, at the time, there was discussion about re-orienting the intersection, but it wouldn’t be done for a long time. He said he didn’t think the tree had to be removed. Mr. Hallowell said that the concerned citizen Stuart Wisong had called him again and said the tree had a wood-decaying fungus and that he and his partner wanted the tree removed.

Mr. Rice said the Committee should consider replacing the tree at some point but asked whether it should jump to the top of the list. Mr. Hallowell said he personally would want it replaced and recommended removing the tree. Mr. Rice said the City was the property owner and, considering there were a lot of trees to manage, he didn’t want to set a precedent of doing tree removals just because people had a vendetta against a specific tree. He suggested putting the tree on the replacement list. Mr. Hallowell said the site would be more beautiful with a different tree. Mr. Croteau suggested posting the request for removal to see if there was any outcry from surrounding residents.

Chairman Loughlin said the request would be on the list for the next meeting and noted that it would be nice to accommodate Mr. Wisong, a vigilant tree lover, if they could without affecting their principles. Mr. Croteau agreed to post the tree for removal for the next meeting.

8. Old Business

Mr. Croteau stated that Carol Edwards of 391 Colonial Drive wanted the tree removed for various reasons. Mr. Rice asked Mr. Hallowell if he had looked at the crown, and Mr. Hallowell said the tree was great. Mr. Rice concluded that the situation was no different than the last time. Mr. Croteau said he would add the tree on the list of trees to be yearly monitored. Mr. Dupere said Ms. Edwards noted that the State statute allowed pruning and that she wanted to prune everything that went over the boundary line. Mr. Croteau said the City was protected by State statute.

9. New Business

Chairman Loughlin said that the St. John's Episcopal Church staff was redoing the parking lot and had removed all the pavement and put up new walls. He said he wrote to a church member he knew, who told him that it was a critical spot. Chairman Loughlin said he told the member to ask the Committee for authority to plant trees and to also tell them that they the City would donate the trees. He was concerned that the staff might pave the whole parking lot and deal with the trees later. Chairman Loughlin referred to other examples where he had convinced the owners to leave a planting strip. He said it could be a major improvement if the church left spaces along the wall for 2-3 trees. Mr. Croteau asked who would be responsible for maintenance, and Mr. Rice said the church would.

Mr. Rice said that if it was a company instead of a church, the City wouldn't donate the trees but would direct them to put trees in. He noted that a parking lot configuration generally went through a site review. Chairman Loughlin said he didn't think a site review was necessary. Mr. Rice said that the church may have done enough to trigger a level of review, perhaps administrative. He said he was uncomfortable donating trees in that particular case and that, if he could be convinced that it was an acceptable use of public funds, he would still have concerns and would prefer to encourage the church to plant trees as part of the work.

Chairman Loughlin said he personally planted trees at other City locations or encouraged City contractors to give City prices for trees because it was a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve an area. Mr. Rice agreed and said he would not oppose recommending that trees be provided to them.

Vice-Chair Adams suggested that the Committee first find out whether the church was willing to plant the trees themselves. If they couldn't afford it, it could be further discussed. Ms. Stevens agreed and suggested that the Committee talk to the church pastor.

In addressing other new business, Mr. Hallowell said new trees were recently planted at 478 Lincoln to appease the homeowner and were coming along well. He said Stuart Wisong also reached out to him out of concern for the dead cherry trees around Mill Pond, and he told him and his partner that the City was working on replacing the trees.

Mr. Hallowell introduced the new Tree Specialist, Chuck Baxter, to the Committee. Mr. Rice acknowledged Messrs. Hallowell, Croteau, and Baxter for being a professional top-notch group.

Mr. Hallowell said there was a dead tree on private property behind the Pavilion in Prescott Park and that he was trying to convince the owner to remove it but had not received a response. He said the Committee needed to address it and that the tree might have to be removed.

Mr. Dupere said he met with a Prescott Park representative, who said some of the trees had a fire blight that was an ongoing issue and that he would work with them to address it.

Mr. Dupere also said there were two tree posts on State Street that were planted below grade and that he and Mr. Hallowell wanted to plant two trees in that area in the fall. Mr. Rice said to get it done.

10. Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 14, 2016

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Recording Secretary