

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

**MINUTES**

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, October 11, 2017  
Portsmouth City Hall**

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

**Members Excused:** Leslie Stevens

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

**1. Acceptance of Minutes of the September 13, 2017 Meeting.**

*It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the September 13, 2017 minutes.*

**2. Tree Removal Requests:**

**53 Decatur Road – Norway maple**

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was located at the end of the resident's driveway and was in decline. He suggested removing the tree and planting something else in its place. He noted that he had talked to the resident about planting another tree.

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

**1808 Islington Street – Black cherry**

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was decayed, and it was further discussed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend the tree's removal, and Ms. Walker seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

**245 Lincoln Avenue - Linden**

The resident Bruce Campbell and his wife were present. Mr. Campbell stated that the tree was a hazard because it was always dropping branches, and they felt that it should be removed. He noted that the tree was on a City-owned strip of land. Mr. Hallowell said the tree would be okay if it was pruned and that he didn't think it was hazardous.

Chairman Loughlin explained to the Campbells that the Committee was reluctant to recommend the removal of healthy trees and generally had the tree pruned to see if it could be salvaged. Ms. Campbell

said it was a safety issue because her tenants couldn't park in front of the house due to big limbs falling on the sidewalk, the lawn, and the wires. She also said that children also played in the area.

It was further discussed. Vice-Chair Adams noted that a large limb was cut off several years before, and the wood at the wound site was spongy and asked whether it was a concern. Mr. Hallowell said he didn't believe so. He said he also wasn't too concerned about the canopy weight on the leaders.

Chairman Loughlin suggested that the request be continued to the November 8 meeting. Mr. Rice said that Mr. Hallowell and his staff would do a hazardous tree evaluation on the tree and report back.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend that the request be continued to the November 8 meeting and that Mr. Hallowell do a hazardous tree evaluation and perhaps some pruning on the tree before the November meeting. Vice-Chair Adams seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

### **238 Miller Avenue – Pin oak**

Mr. Hallowell said the City Traffic Engineer needed to install a flashing crosswalk sign and that the ideal spot was where the tree was located. He said, however, that the tree might be able to be placed on the other corner and that he had to check whether the gas line crossed in that area.

Mr. Rice said they considered removing the tree due to issues of sight distance, crosswalk, and challenges with the children crossing the street. Mr. Hallowell said that, if the tree was approved for removal, it would be based on not being able to locate the crosswalk sign anywhere else.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Dupere moved to remove the tree as a last resort or else remove 4-5 limbs. Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Chairman Loughlin said the tree looked very healthy and that he could support its removal only if it was absolutely necessary. Mr. Rice agreed but said they received several requests from parents. He said the crossing was very dangerous due to cars speeding and that he would hate to make a decision that would result in someone getting hurt. It was further discussed. Mr. Rice suggested that the City Traffic Engineer Eric attend the November meeting to discuss the situation.

*The previous motion was withdrawn.*

Chairman Loughlin asked for a new motion. *It was moved, seconded, and unanimously passed to continue the request to the November 8 meeting when the City Traffic Engineer would be present to discuss the issue.*

### **4 Van Buren Avenue – Red maple**

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was in serious decline. He said his staff pruned the dead limbs, but they were still falling into the street. He said it was a busy area, with children walking to school. Mr. Souto noted that there were other nice trees around it that would lessen the impact of losing the red maple.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a new motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend the tree's removal, and Mr. Umbro seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

### **65 Wibird Street – Norway maple**

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was in decline and that the resident wanted to remove and replace it. He noted that none of the Norway maples looked good at that particular time of year and recommended that the Committee wait until spring to see how the tree looked then. He said there was root damage because of street construction.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a new motion. *Vice-Chair Adams moved to recommend that the tree be monitored throughout the year until spring, and Ms. Walker seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

### **5 Ruth Street – Cherry (note: this was not on the agenda)**

The resident Herb Lloyd was present. Mr. Hallowell stated that the base of the tree was decayed and that he had told Mr. Lloyd that the request to remove it would be added to the November 8 meeting because it had been submitted too late.

*Action: The request for the tree removal would be added to the November 8 meeting.*

### **3. Eversource Enhanced Trimming – Update**

Mr. Hallowell said he hadn't had time to prepare the topic and wasn't prepared to discuss it.

### **4. Tree Grant Program Draft Application (attached)**

Mr. Hallowell said his only concern about the draft was that it stated that the tree, once planted, would become the resident's responsibility. He said it should state that the tree would become the resident's property to clarify that the resident would have more ownership and responsibility.

*Action: Chairman Loughlin said he would change the draft to read that the tree would become the property of the landowner.*

### **5. Discussion of Salt Impact on Sugar Maples**

Chairman Loughlin said he sent photos to the Committee of sugar maples that he had planted over the years and that were in decline. He said Mr. Dupere suggested that it might be helpful to look at soil types. Chairman Loughlin said he and his wife planted 250 sugar maples during a 15-year period and that some of them declined after a while. He said the trees planted close to the street seemed to decline more and more every year, but the ones planted away from the road had almost no dieback.

Mr. Dupere said he looked at some of the trees and found that some of the trees near the road were in areas that had no grass, so they were subject to compaction issues, road construction, and other things that might be attributed to road salt. He explained it in detail and summarized that sugar maples liked well-drained loam, which wasn't typically available near the street. He suggested that the soil be tested during March or April of 2018 after the spring snow melt to see whether it was salt damage.

It was further discussed. Mr. Souto said the Committee knew that sugar maples were not good urban trees and didn't see why a lot of time and effort would be spent determining whether the issue was salt or soil compaction. He suggested replacing the trees if they were declining, like the Committee did with other species. Mr. Hallowell said sometimes the issue was multiple things, including environmental and soil factors, and not just salt damage. He noted that the Committee had agreed that sugar maples would not be planted next to roadways. He said he agreed that it might not be necessary to test trees in decline when their decline was visible, and that logic could be used to determine that there were already several contributing factors to the trees' decline. He said the Committee could agree that it was a good idea not to plant sugar maples as street trees.

Chairman Loughlin said he agreed with Mr. Hallowell.

(At this point in the meeting, Mr. Croteau arrived).

#### **6. North Caltapa Tree on Banfield Property (Tee Pee Man)**

Chairman Loughlin said he received an email from Michael Griffin asking whether the City had thought of preserving the tree. Mr. Hallowell said the City had protected the tree and also the willow. He suggested that a thank-you letter be sent to Deputy Chief Hines, who brought the matter to the City's attention during the Fire Department's training exercise. Mr. Hallowell said the City put down wood chips to preserve the root system, put a snow fence around the willow tree. He said the City would also prune the Caltapa tree.

Chairman Loughlin asked whether there was a place near the Rails to Trails to park cars. Mr. Rice said there were three different spots: Route 33 Park and Ride, Heather Lane, and the end of Banfield Road. He said they also anticipated building a ball field on Route 33, which would include parking.

Mr. Dupere said he was trying to find land from which structures could be removed so that the land could be Federal-protected land. Mr. Rice said he would discuss the issue with Mr. Dupere.

*Action: Chairman Loughlin said he would write a letter to Deputy Chief Hines thanking him and his crew for their efforts.*

#### **7. Planning Department Request for Discussion Regarding Shade Trees at Sanderson Fields Subdivision on Spinney Road**

Chairman Loughlin stated that he received an email from Peter Britz of the Planning Department requesting that the issue be discussed. Chairman Loughlin said he was in a conflicting position because he worked for the developer and was an abutter to the development, so he would have to recuse himself from the motion. He noted that the developer got subdivision approval three years before and that the plan only showed seven red maples. He said the trees were being planted and that Mr. Britz contacted the project engineer Christopher Berry to say that the Committee should approve the trees.

Chairman Loughlin said it was a bit late for the Committee to look at the trees since they were already being planted, but he said Mr. Britz said the trees could be removed if they weren't the appropriate species, which Chairman Loughlin thought was harsh.

Mr. Rice recommended accepting the trees as they were, and Mr. Hallowell agreed.

Mr. Hallowell said the trees weren't planted well, with exposed root ball tops. He recommended that the soil level be raised to cover the root balls properly, and he recommended that the trees be mulched for water retention purposes. It was further discussed.

The project engineer Christopher Berry of Berry Surveying and Engineering was present. He stated that the trees were in the process of being planted when the developer was notified that the trees should have been approved by the Committee. He suggested that Mr. Hallowell meet with the landscaper to make sure that the trees were being planted to the Committee's satisfaction. He noted that the canvas was peeled back, which was the only change to the construction detail on site, and that the trees were not staked. He said all the other plantings shown on the plan were planted according to plan, including the rain garden plants and the spruce trees.

Vice-Chair Adams asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend that the shade trees be accepted as they were, and Mr. Hallowell seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

## **8. Old Business**

### **Planting Sites for 2018**

Mr. Hallowell said he would email the list to the Committee so that the list could be finalized at the November 8 meeting. He said the Committee could figure out species at that meeting as well.

Vice-Chair Adams asked Mr. Hallowell whether he would provide recommendations for species for each site. Mr. Hallowell said he wanted to do some soil tests first. Vice-Chair Adams said the coming winter concerned him.

*Action: Mr. Hallowell said he would email the list to the Committee so that it could be finalized at the November 8 meeting. He said a species list would be drafted at the December meeting and finalized by January.*

## **9. New Business**

*There was no new business.*

## **10. Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 8, 2017**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
Recording Secretary