

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, November 8, 2017
Portsmouth City Hall**

Members Present: Peter J. Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice-Chairman; Leslie Stevens; A. J. Dupere, Peter Rice, Director of Public Works; Todd Croteau, Public Works General Foreman; Corin Hallowell, City Arborist; Joan Walker

Members Excused: Dennis Souto, Dan Umbro

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

1. Acceptance of Minutes of the October 11, 2017 Meeting.

It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the October 11, 2017 minutes.

2. Tree Removal Requests:

Chairman Loughlin brought up the 65 Wibird Street project and noted that it was discussed at the previous meeting. Mr. Hallowell said he would continue to evaluate the tree and that it had been affected by the road project.

ETT Eversource Project:

Across from 300 Constitution Avenue – 1 Red Oak; 1 Black Birch; 2 Poplar & 1 Hemlock

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Dupere moved to recommend the removal of the trees, and Mr. Hallowell seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

Mr. Hallowell said he wouldn't recommend replacement for the trees because it was dense woodlands.

Across from 680 Peverly Hill Road – 1 Black Locust & 1 Red Oak

Mr. Hallowell recommended keeping the red oak and pruning it, noting that it was a beautiful tree that was away enough from the wires. He said the locust could be removed because it was too close to the wires.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Hallowell moved to recommend keeping the red oak and pruning it and to removing the black locust. Ms. Walker seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

325 West Road – 2 White Pine

Mr. Hallowell said the trees had been topped by the utilities company year after year and were not good specimens.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Stevens moved to recommend removal of the trees, and Ms. Walker seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

7 Mirona Road – Norway Maple

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was mutilated by the utilities and would be no great loss to the City. He didn't recommend replacement.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *It was moved, seconded, and passed to recommend the removal of the tree.*

2 Shearwater Drive – 2 Black Cherry

Mr. Hallowell said the trees were volunteer ones that were less than six inches under the power lines.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Hallowell moved to recommend removal of the two trees, and Mr. Dupere seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

43/45 Shearwater Drive – Silver Maple

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Hallowell moved to recommend removal of the tree, and Mr. Rice seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

Mr. Hallowell recommended planting a utility-appropriate tree. Mr. Rice said it could be a good candidate for a private partnership.

26 Shearwater Drive – Sugar Maple

Mr. Hallowell said that the homeowner was opposed to removing the tree. Mr. Hallowell said he agreed because it was a healthy tree and could be pruned and wouldn't affect the power line.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Hallowell moved to recommend that the tree not be removed, and Vice-Chair Adams seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

2 Blue Heron Drive – 1 Blue Spruce; 2 Norway Spruce & 1 Silver Maple

Mr. Hallowell said the owner was okay with removing the trees. He said that the blue spruce and the two Norway spruces had been topped over and over. He said the maple looked like a volunteer tree and had been mutilated by the utilities. He said the trees were no candidates for replacement.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Stevens moved to recommend removal of all the trees, and Ms Walker seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

12/14 Staysail Way – Silver Maple

Mr. Hallowell said the homeowner did not want the tree removed. Mr. Hallowell agreed that it was a fine tree and could continue to be pruned. He said it was just barely in proximity to the wires.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Walker moved to recommend that the tree not be removed, and Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

100-124 Spinnaker Way – Pin Oak

Mr. Hallowell said the condo association was opposed to removing the tree. He said he agreed because it was a beautiful tree that added a lot to the environment. Mr. Rice said he wasn't sure if the tree was in the City's right-of-way and thought the condo took it over. It was discussed further. Chairman Loughlin suggested that the Committee not recommend removal of the tree, and if Eversource wanted to contest the ownership, they could contact the condo association. Mr. Hallowell said he would recommend to the utilities company that they contact the condo association. Chairman Loughlin said he could write a letter to Eversource stating the Committee's concerns and have a note placed on the tree. He said it was on City property and didn't recommend that it be removed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend that the tree not be removed, and to make a determination on whether it was on City property. Vice-Chair Adams seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

Just after 1700 Durgin Lane – 2 Crab Apples

Mr. Hallowell said the trees were directly under the utilities and were located between the old Circuit City store and Pep Boys.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Hallowell moved to recommend removal of the tree, and Mr. Dupere seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

Between 144 & 171 Echo Avenue – 6 Norway Maples

Mr. Hallowell said the trees were directly in the wires and looked like they were seeded by other Norway maples in the forest.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Hallowell moved to recommend removal of the trees, and Mr. Dupere seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

Other Tree Removal Requests:

5 Ruth Street – Black Cherry (requested by resident)

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was located in the back of the resident's house and was decayed at the base. He recommended removing it.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Adams moved to recommend removal of the tree, and Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

1061 South Street – Horse Chestnut (Requested by DPW & resident)

Mr. Hallowell said the utilities company had been pruning the tree over the years and that the top had bowed out of it, making it difficult to prune. He said the neighbors would be happy to see it go and that they were interested in participating in the Tree Grant Program.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Adams moved to recommend removal of the tree, and Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

245 Lincoln Avenue – Linden (Requested by resident)

Mr. Hallowell said the decay from the removed limb of the tree was extensive. He said the tree might as well be removed because it wasn't the greatest quality and there wouldn't be a lot of it left by the time it was pruned.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Hallowell moved to recommend removal of the tree, and Mr. Dupere seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Chairman Loughlin asked whether the tree should be replaced. Mr. Hallowell said he wasn't sure if the homeowner was a big fan, due to the power lines. He said they could plant a smaller tree.

Action: Chairman Loughlin said it was an important location and suggested that it be placed on the Recommended Tree List. Mr. Hallowell agreed to do so.

238 Miller Avenue – Pin Oak (Requested by DPW)

City Traffic Engineer Eric Eby was present to speak to the request. He said they had received many requests from parents walking their kids to school because of the difficulty in seeing vehicles at the crosswalk and the vehicles not seeing the kids. Mr. Eby said they considered other measures. He said a four-way stop didn't meet criteria. He said they put out a speed radar sign and a center sign, but they weren't permanent measures. As a result, he said they were looking at other methods, like a pedestrian sign that would be activated with flashing lights. He said an overhead sign would require a mast arm and a pedestrian pushbutton on each corner. He noted that the pin oak on the corner blocked the sightlines of the pedestrians who were trying to cross, as well as the sightlines of approaching vehicles, so they were requesting that the tree be removed.

Chairman Loughlin noted that the Committee said they would recommend removal if it was absolutely necessary. Mr. Eby said it was. He explained why it would be difficult to place a four-way stop sign at that location.

Mr. Rice said he had received requests to remove the tree for 15 years. He said it was a nice tree but was in a dangerous intersection, and he believed that removing it was the best solution. He said it was possible to make the road narrower so that the speeds were slowed down, but it would be a significant capital investment and wasn't a priority at that time.

Mr. Croteau said they considered every possible way to get around removing the tree. He said there would be significant root damage done to the tree from the sign construction. Mr. Hallowell said he stood at the tree in a red jacket and couldn't get across the road because the drivers didn't notice him.

Chairman Loughlin said it was more than removing a tree to put a sign up. He said it blocked the view of people heading to City Hall. He said the Committee was very reluctant to remove healthy trees, but it seemed like they didn't have much of a choice in that case. It was further discussed. Mr. Hollowell recommended that he figure out sightlines for future plantings and not plant trees in those problem locations anymore, which would prevent similar issues in the future.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend removal of the tree, and Mr. Dupere seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

3. Islington Street Improvement Plan, Presentation by Greg Bakos, Senior Project Manager for VHB regarding Phase 1 of Islington Street Improvement Plan scheduled to begin next spring.

(The Committee jumped to the Section 7, Tree Grant Program Request of 36 Marston Street, because the homeowner was present. They then went to the Islington Street Improvement Plan).

Greg Bakos, Senior Project Manager for VHB, was present to discuss Phase 1 of the Islington Street Improvement Plan. He stated that the location for Phase 1 was from Spinney Road and Route One, just past Columbia Street. He said Phase 2 would go from there to Maplewood Avenue. Mr. Bakos said the preliminary design for the corridor was done and would go out for construction bid. He said they had an arborist and assistant and that the key consideration was the overhead utility line, which was taken into consideration when selecting the tree species. He said they chose 12 different species to make a diverse group. He noted that the corridor presently had no trees within the public right-of-way and that they would re-define the curb lines and increase the sidewalk widths to allow tree plantings and streetlights. He said the latest planting technology, like silva cells, would be incorporated to promote tree root growth, and that each tree in a sidewalk area would have a grade and guard. He said the trees would have a 5"x4-1/2" granite border. He said there were a few places where they didn't know where the underground utilities were, but they would still have room for the trees because they were moving the curb further into the road. He said they had 59 trees proposed for the first phase, of which 55 trees were within the public right-of-way. He noted that Bank of America had large parking areas they wanted screened, so the trees would be placed just outside, with a few more by the plaza. He said they wouldn't block any business signs.

Chairman Loughlin noted that a number of trees in Plaza 800 had died in front of the Rite Aid and asked whether some of them could be replaced in the existing planting aisles. Mr. Rice said they could consider it. Mr. Eby said that Rite Aid requested an irrigation system in exchange for the easement. Mr. Dupere asked whether the project would be held up if there were budgetary problems. Mr. Rice said they usually had the budget and that the start of Phase 2 was already funded, so they could take money from Phase 2 if necessary. Mr. Bakos said they had a \$2M landscaping budget and were \$1M over the budget.

Chairman Loughlin asked whether the plan showed any trees in front of Gallagher's Plaza. Mr. Bakos said they had a center turn lane and weren't able to get the necessary sidewalk width. He said they could go outside the right-of-way. He said he would work with Mr. Hollowell and Mr. Eby to make sure that happened. Chairman Loughlin said he could probably use the Tree Grant Program to get an agreement with the Plaza that they allow plantings.

Mr. Hallowell gave the Committee a list of trees that were selected for each site. Mr. Bakos said they would go to bid in a month. Chairman Loughlin said the Committee could encourage the abutters to work with the City on a unified program.

(At this point, Mr. Rice and Mr. Eby left the meeting).

Mr. Bakos said he would talk to Mr. Eby and Mr. Rice about CVS being part of the project or funded separately. Chairman Loughlin said there was some momentum for it because that part of Islington Street was probably the most unattractive in the City. He said he hoped that some of the landowners would agree to participate and maintain the trees if the City paid for them.

Vice-Chair Adams asked where the dawn redwood would be located. Mr. Bakos said it would be on the corner of Islington and Spinney Road and would be an entryway type of tree.

Chairman Loughlin asked Mr. Bakos what he needed from the Committee. Mr. Bakos said he needed their comments on the plan so that they could be incorporated into the final version before the project went to construction. Mr. Hallowell said it would be a species amendment.

Mr. Bakos said he would look for other sites in the meantime. Chairman Loughlin said Mr. Hallowell and Mr. Baxter had looked at the species and that the other Committee members would look at them and submit their comments. He said he wanted to pursue the idea of getting some of the abutters to buy into it as well. Mr. Hallowell suggested that the Committee discuss potential planting sites at the December 13 meeting. Chairman Loughlin said he would make a list of the landowners and see how they could be approached.

Action: It was decided that the potential planting sites would be discussed at the December 13 meeting.

Mr. Hallowell also acknowledged Chuck Baxter, the City Arborist, for choosing the species for the sites and doing all the research. He said they would provide Mr. Bakos with the City's planting requirements so that the trees would be planted properly.

4. Power Point Presentation on Importance of Tree Diversity and Tree Species Selection for Phase 1 of Islington Street Improvement Plan by Chuck Baxter, Certified Arborist for City of Portsmouth.

Chuck Baxter, Certified Arborist for the City of Portsmouth, reviewed the importance of tree diversity and species selection. He stated that diversity was important in a city environment. He said that city trees had many benefits, including air quality, energy conservation, stormwater improvement, economic value, and beautification. He showed several examples of tree diversity in cities. He said tree stress was caused by urban conditions and made vulnerable by pests and disease. He noted that brick and asphalt were impervious to water and absorbed and released heat, causing a city tree surrounded by brick to experience high temperatures. Excessive heat, he said, was the leading cause of tree failure. He showed an example of impervious root growth and another example of two restored sugar maples in Goodwin Park, which he said was a great environment for trees.

Mr. Baxter discussed a new project on Porter Street, where porous pavement was installed that was air spaded and reduced tripping hazards of a tree grate. Chairman Loughlin asked whether porous

pavement would allow sufficient water to get to the tree, and Mr. Baxter agreed. He further explained how the tree was able to move as it grew because the porous pavement was pliable and paved in place and was different from a porous pavement in a parking lot.

Mr. Baxter discussed how pests and disease increased in relation to impervious surfaces. He said that several urban stresses contributed, but heat was the main factor. He showed a photo of a cracked sidewalk that caused a few trees to decay, noting that dying and neglected trees indicated a neighborhood in decline. He noted how millions of American elms were lost due to disease. He showed a street in Worcester, MA that was empty of trees, noting that the Asian longhorn beetle destroyed most of the maples. He said Worcester had lost 31,000 trees since 2008 and showed some before-and-after photos.

Mr. Baxter said the solution was to diversify. He said it was only a matter of time before pests migrated to Portsmouth, and even though chemicals were a way to fight pests, it wasn't enough for a city. He said diversification had to be looked at city-wide and not just for each project. He said the best management practice was to plant no more than 10% of a species, 20% of a genus, and 30% of a family. He said the City had a tablet of species that would be constantly updated, and he recommended that the right trees be found for the right site. He said it would entail more labor, soil samples, and research, but the trees would last longer. He noted that there were challenges, such as nursery stocks, because the classic species tended to sell better. He said it was also difficult to find diverse species for a particular site. He suggested a few resources for tree diversity that Portsmouth could use.

Ms. Stevens said she had been trying to educate herself about how choices affect insects and birds. She recommended a book, *Bringing Nature Home*, by Doug Tallamy that indicated how the insect population was being decimated, which in turn decimated birds. She noted that a red oak was home to 800 or so caterpillars and that more should be planted for that reason. She said that the top ten trees recommended in the book were homes to 1,400 different insects and caterpillars, and she suggested that the City should plant from that list. Ms. Stevens said she would provide the list to the Committee members.

5. 2018 Planting Sites

Chairman Loughlin asked whether anyone had additions to the planting list. He said he discussed with Mr. Hallowell the trees that the Committee agreed to replace and would ensure that those locations were on the list. Mr. Hallowell asked whether he could start sending letters out or whether the list should be refined. Chairman Loughlin and Vice-Chair Adams agreed that the current list could be used to send letters to landowners and that the same letter template could also be used.

6. Tree Grant Program – Updated Application

Chairman Loughlin noted that a change to the application was made that Mr. Hallowell recommended.

7. Tree Grant Program Request – 36 Marston Street Avenue

Chairman Loughlin said the tree was a river birch and explained that Mr. Hallowell had developed a Tree Grant Program for locations with no public right-of-way that needed trees. He said the 36 Marston Street was a request to do so.

The resident and landowner Jack Barclay was present and said he was happy to have gotten the old ash tree removed and delighted that it would be replaced with one offset from the power lines and in the center of his front yard. Mr. Hallowell said he thought the property was a good candidate for a grant. He said they replanted two other trees across the street and that it would be another opportunity to add more trees to the neighborhood.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend removal and replacement of the tree, and Ms. Walker seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

8. Old Business

Vice-Chair Adams asked if the Norway maple at the end of Elwyn Avenue at South Street was to be removed soon. Mr. Hallowell said that tree and the pin oak at Wibird and South Streets would be removed in December.

9. New Business

There was no new business.

10. Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 13, 2017

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

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Recording Secretary