

**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
TREES & PUBLIC GREENERY COMMITTEE**



WED, SEPTEMBER 9, 2026, 8 am

City Hall Conference Room A

1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH

Please register in advance to participate via Zoom:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_0Xce50RPS_uzinXTUljzvw

"There is not a village in America, however badly planned at first, or ill-built afterwards, that may not be redeemed, in a great measure, by the aid of shade trees in the streets ... and it is never too late or too early to project improvements of this kind."

Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852)

AGENDA

1. Acceptance of Minutes for August 12, 2026 meeting
2. Tree Removal Requests -- Reminder: interacting with the listed address on a computer or smart device will open Google Maps to the location of the tree(s) marked for removal.
 - [105 Essex Ave](#): 1 white ash, poor condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. This large ash tree is declining and exhibiting signs of Emerald ash borer infestation.
 - [238 Austin St](#): 1 corkscrew willow, fair condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. This tree will conflict with the renovation of the new building and there is a metal band at the base of the tree that may girdle it.
 - [Sylvester St \(end of pavement/on paper road\)](#): 1 sugar maple, 1 black cherry, 2 red oak, and 5 white pine, fair conditions, removals requested by Eversource, removals recommended by the City. The removal of these trees will allow Eversource to upgrade all current dated utility infrastructure. This span has never been maintained properly, and additional small and dead trees will need to be removed to effectively manage the utility clearances.
 - [361 Hanover St \(on Rock St\)](#): 1 black locust, fair condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. This tree established next to the building that is slated for significant renovation. The constructed wall will be replaced and there is no meaningful way to protect this tree.
3. New Business –
 - Review of DPW 2027 tree selections and planting program adjustments moving forward.
 - CIP citizen request from Japan-America Society of NH for cherry trees
4. Public Comment
5. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted, Patricia Bagley, Chair

**Minutes of the City of Portsmouth's
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
August 12, 2026**

Present: Chair Patricia Bagley; Vice-Chair Michael Griffin; Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams; City Tree Supervisor/Arborist Maxwell Wiater; A. J. Dupere, Dennis Souto, Ian Hanley (via Zoom), and Scott McDermott.

Members Excused: Public Works Director Peter Rice, Deborah Chag

Also Present: Stephanie Seacord, Staff

Chair Bagley called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

1. Acceptance of the July 8 Meeting Minutes

Vice-Chair Griffin moved to accept the July 8 minutes as submitted. Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams seconded. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

2. Tree Removal Requests

- **270 South St: 1 sugar maple, fair condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City.** Recent storm damage has prompted this request. A central leader failed from the top of the trunk and there is now a large wound exposing decayed wood. There are other cracks and cavities along the trunk. The crown of this tree has been raised several times, resulting in a canopy that will be difficult to effectively perform a retrenchment or end weight reduction prune.

Mr. Wiater reminded the committee that at the previous meeting, comments were split on how the tree should be approached. He said he received a third-party review since then from Liz McKinley, who works with Mr. Dupere. Ms. McKinley was present via Zoom and said she noticed that the tree had been pruned so heavily that it acted like a sail during windstorms and that it also had significant rot and was near a building. She recommended that the tree be removed before winter. It was further discussed.

No one from the public was present to speak to the tree removal request.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to remove the tree, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

Note: 270 South St resident Petra Huda later phoned into the meeting and thanked Mr. Wiater, his staff, and the committee for doing a comprehensive study of the tree.

- **11 Oak St: 1 silver maple, fair condition, removal requested by resident.** Tree roots are exposed at the grade of the yard and is causing damage to the walkway. Mechanical damage to the roots has occurred, there is a cavity on the western side of the trunk, and there is minor canopy decline on small twigs.

Mr. Wiater said the resident requested the tree's removal because the roots are at the surface grade and are destroying the walkway and making the owner's ability to walk up to his house and to mow the lawn challenging. He said the tree is in overall fair condition, but the damage caused by the roots is significant and there is no easy solution. He noted that the tree's removal could open an argument for healthy tree removals across the city. Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams suggested creating a matrix regarding the severity of a tree's condition. Mr. Dupere commented that an industry standard exists for tree risk assessment that uses a square box matrix but explained that it is associated with a professional credential and not something widely available. He also suggested that the committee members research TRAQ (Tree Risk Assessment Qualification) through the ISA (International Society of Arboriculture). The city's liability was discussed. Mr. Wiater said currently there is nothing that the city or its insurance provider would do. He said if the city removed the tree, the resident would be responsible for any repairs. He said the city pruned the tree and pulled it away from the house years ago. Mr. McDermott said he had a similar situation in front of his house and that he ripped up the asphalt to put in a path. He said it was a potential solution for the homeowner to consider.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. Vice-Chair Griffin *moved to remove the tree, seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams. No one voted in favor, and the motion failed.*

Mr. Wiater said Public Works would continue to monitor the tree and that he would work with the homeowner to come up with a solution.

3. Landscape Plan Approval [Timestamp 20:35]

- **53 Green St: 2 Zelkova serrata** are proposed to be planted in the City right-of-way.

The development project landscape architect Vicky Martel was present. She reviewed what kinds of trees surrounded the project. She said the City of Portsmouth's Tree Detail Plan was included as well as an engineering plan that covers the structural soils, tree guard, and so on. Mr. Wiater asked that the general contractor coordinate with the city because there was language included that stated that anything going into the right-of-way would have to be inspected as it came in and then as it was planted by the city. Ms. Martel said the trees would have a caliper of 2-1/2" to 3" and would be ball in burlap. She said Chinburg would have a subcontractor who was required to water the trees through the final acceptance of the project. Vice-Chair Griffin verified that the specifications required that the burlap and wire cages would be removed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams moved to approve the planting of the two trees, seconded by Mr. McDermott. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

4. New Business [Timestamp 26:16]**• Discussion on TPGC member voting for tree removal requests**

The discussion was delayed until the September meeting when Mr. Rice would be present and legal input would be included.

• Discussion of plan for Haven Park post-storm destruction

Mr. McDermott asked how many trees were lost vs. severely damaged. Ms. Wiater said about 18-20 trees were lost, which now included the one at 270 South Street. He reviewed the types of trees that were lost and their locations. Chair Bagley said Haven Park needed some TLC, especially some cleaning up along Pleasant Street near the Little Library because there was a lot of “stuff” grown together. She noted that the removal of several trees allowed more sunlight and openness to the park. It was further discussed. Vice-Chair Griffin recommended removing the trunk of an oak tree in a certain corner in order to clean it up. He said the monument would also be more visible. Mr. Wiater agreed and said he would discuss the committee’s comments with the foremen.

Resident Kyle LaChance of 86 S. School Street said she received a request from some of the committee members to find out whether Friends of the South End could do fundraising to contribute to planting trees, and she asked what the process would be. Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams said they could donate it through the city’s website and earmark it towards something within the city. Ms. LaChance said they were also leading a fundraising campaign to help rebuild the wall around the Point of Graves Cemetery and hoped to raise \$300,000. She said they already had a donor who contributed a fair amount of that figure, so the money they would continue to collect would be contributed toward the beautification of the cemetery instead of the actual wall.

The pattern of the major tree failures on Haven Park was discussed.

5. Public Comment [Timestamp 42:20]

Karyn Denicola of 281 Cabot Street said Goodwin Park was greatly improved over the past 12 years. She asked if there was a plan for the two trees with very large branches and the dead magnolia tree. Mr. Wiater said the magnolia tree would be addressed and pruning would be done on the trees that were determined to remain. He noted that a few magnolia trees in the park died 2-3 years in a row and that he had a soil sample kit ready so that he could see what was going on. He said a horticultural technician was also recently hired who pruned and planted several shrubs. Ms. LaChance asked if the Click ‘n’ Fix website feature could be used to request tree pruning, and Mr. Wiater agreed.

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Wiater introduced the DPW Urban Forestry summer intern Boden Gendron. Mr. Gendron said he took care of 100 of the 300 new plantings and other small projects during the summer. Mr. Wiater said he appreciated Mr. Gendron’s hard work and hoped Mr. Gendron would return the following summer.

6. Adjournment

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 9, 2026

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker

DRAFT

Portsmouth Trees and Public Greenery Committee September 9, 2026

Prepared by Max Wiater

Public Works Arborist Foreman



Urban Forestry intern Boden Gendron climbing a red oak in Maplehaven Park



Tree Removal Request: 105 Essex St



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This large ash tree is declining and exhibiting signs of Emerald ash borer infestation.

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This tree will conflict with the renovation of the new building and there is a metal band at the base of the tree that may girdle it.

Trees Removal Request: Sylvester St (end of pavement/on paper road)



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The removal of these trees will allow Eversource to upgrade all current dated utility infrastructure. This span has never been maintained properly, and additional small and dead trees will need to be removed to effectively manage the utility clearances.

Tree Removal Request: 361 Hanover St (on Rock St)



1 black locust, fair condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City.

This tree established next to the building that is slated for significant renovation. The constructed wall will be replaced and there is no meaningful way to protect this tree.

Large Trees

5 *Acer miyabei* 'Morton' – **State Street maple**

- 50'H x 35'W
- Comparable to a hedge maple regarding leaf shape and bark texture, but growing taller and more vigorously
- Has proven to be a dependable and rapid urban tree

5 *Alnus x spaethii* – **Spaeth's alder**

- 50' H x 30'W
- Great *Fraxnius* replacement regarding general appearance and growth rate
- Used regularly in Europe as a street tree that also performs well here

5 *Betula papyrifera* 'Oenci' – **Renaissance Oasis paper birch**

- 50' H x 30' W
- Improved cultivar of NH state tree
- Cultivar is more resistant to bronze birch borer and more drought tolerant than species

5 *Cladrastis kentuckea* – **yellowwood**

- 40'H x 35'W
- A large ornamental tree, terrific white flowers
- A very dependable urban selection

5 *Ginkgo biloba* 'Autumn Gold' – **Autumn Gold maidenhair tree**

- 45'H x 35'W
- Unique fan-shaped leaves turn yellow in fall
- Tolerates compacted soils, pollution, and variety of soils
- It tends to be a difficult tree to establish from bare root stock

5 *Gymnocladus dioicus* 'Espresso' – **Espresso coffeetree**

- 50'H x 35'W
- A tough, urban tolerant tree that takes the place of *Ulmus* and *Gleditsia*
- Very tolerant of drought, heat, and cold

5 *Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Fastigiatum' – **Columnar tulip poplar**

- 50'H x 15'W
- Narrower and shorter than the species and a better choice for smaller green spaces
- Fast growing, and unique large flowers

5 *Nyssa sylvatica* 'Tupelo Tower' – **Tupelo Tower black gum**

- 40'H x 15'W
- Narrower than the species and a better choice for smaller green spaces
- Other varieties have established in the ROW with little issue despite a general intolerance of urban pollution and soil conditions

5 Platanus x acerifolia 'Exclamation!' –

Exclamation! London planetree

- 55'H x 35'W
- Adaptable shade tree with a strong central leader
- Resistant to mildew and fungal issues
- The hairs on the underside of the leaves collect dust and fine particulate, making it a valuable tree for abating air pollution
- However, interacting with the leaf can cause respiratory irritation

5 Quercus prinus – **Chestnut oak**

- 65'H x 65'W
- A keystone tree species, it is valued for its ability to support all kinds of wildlife
- This will be planted in large sites such as parks

Ulmus x 'Patriot' – **Patriot hybrid elm**

- 50' H x 40' W
- Tolerant of Dutch elm disease
- More narrow than other varieties of hybrid elm, and branches remain rigid and upright
- Its parentage consists of four elm species, and is considered urban tolerant

Small trees

5 Acer negundo 'Sensation' – **Sensation boxelder maple**

- 30'H x 25'W
- Not a typical boxelder, this variety is seedless and grows slowly which improves branch structure
- Will be utilized in difficult locations
- Noted for great autumn color

5 Amelanchier laevis 'Rogers' – **Autumn Brilliance serviceberry**

- 20' H x 15'W
- Considered a better choice for serviceberry due to reliable tree form and structure
- Flowers turn to edible small fruit

5 Carpinus betulus 'Lucas' – **Columnar European hornbeam**

- 30'H x 10'W
- Used commonly as a hedge
- Tree remains tight and upright that tolerates urban conditions
- Leaves may persist through winter

5 Cornus x 'Starlight' – **Starlight hybrid dogwood**

- 30'H x 20'W
- Upright form provided by Pacific dogwood parent
- Disease resistance provided by Chinese dogwood parent

Portsmouth, NH bare root tree order 2027

5 Cornus mas 'Saffron Sentinel' – **Saffron Sentinel cornelian cherry dogwood**

- 22'H x 12'W
- Vigorous, symmetrical grower provides many seasons of interest
- Has been a reliable small tree in the ROW here in Portsmouth

5 Syringa reticulata 'Ivory Silk' – **Ivory Silk Japanese tree lilac**

- 20'h x 15'W
- Flowers bloom early in the spring
- Tree is very dependable and hardy

5 Malus 'Gladiator' – **Gladiator crabapple**

- 20'H x 10'W
- Red buds turn to pink flowers then small fruits
- Foliage remains purple throughout the year
- The tree is upright and narrow for small spaces

5 Parrotia persica 'Golden Belltower' – **Golden BellTower Persian ironwood**

- 30'H x 12'W
- A low maintenance, well-structured cultivar
- Species is considered very urban tolerant, but there has been difficulty establishing it from bare root stock

5 Sorbus aucuparia 'Cardinal Royal' – **Cardinal Royal European mountain ash**

- 35'H x 20'W
- Vigorous grower with symmetrical branch growth habit
- Heavily fruiting tree that will not work in all possible sites



COP Historical Marker: <https://files.portsmouthnh.gov/community/markers/NichinanCherryTrees.pdf>

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT CITIZEN REQUEST

Project Type:

Other: DPW Urban Forest Division resource access

Project Title

Portsmouth Peace Treaty Living Memorial Cherry Trees Path

Location:

1 Junkins Avenue, south bank of South Mill Pond and crosswalk to South Mill Pond parking lot and Playground.

Project Description

The Japan America Society of NH (JASNH) seeks to work with the City's Arborist Foreman, informed by the Municipal Building plan, to create more accessible access to the historic Portsmouth Peace Treaty Living Memorial Cherry Trees located on the bank of South Mill Pond.

This project, **supported by the Trees & Public Greenery Committee and the Sister City Committee** as well as the Department of Public Works seeks to **steward the historic cherry trees for the future** and to **correct the deficiencies in access by the public**, especially during the traditional “Sakura” or “cherry blossom viewing” season each spring.

The timing of this project will align with the completion of the Municipal Building Complex and might be **factored into landscaping expenditures** that will be part of that project.

As reflected in the Trees & Greenery and Sister City support, **this request by the Portsmouth-based Japan America Society of NH seeks to protect the historic gifts of cherry trees from the city’s Sister City of Nichinan and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, recognizing the historic role of Portsmouth in securing the Portsmouth Peace Treaty of 1905.

Background on the Cherry Trees: There are two rows of trees. The older trees closest to the pond were purchased with funds from Nichinan Japan as a gift on the signing of the Sister City agreement in 1985 between Portsmouth and Nichinan -- the birthplace of Baron Jutaro Komura. He was the lead diplomat accompanying the Japanese delegation to the 1905 peace conference that ended the Russo-Japanese War. The second row of trees, at the base of the hill and closer to City Hall, were the 2013 gift of the Foreign Ministry of Japan through the Japan America Society and **are descended from the iconic cherry trees in Washington DC**. This gift recognized the importance of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty to the gift of those original trees from Tokyo in 1913 to Washington DC, as detailed in the autobiography of the Mayor of Tokyo.

Project Description: City Arborist Foreman Max Wiater has suggested that a more accessible path from the South Mill Pond Playground parking lot, across Junkins Avenue and among the trees, as well as educational signage, would make it possible for residents and visitors to more fully appreciate the trees and their history, especially during cherry blossom season in April-May. The City's Urban Forest team also manages the care of Portsmouth Peace Treaty Living Memorial Cherry Trees at each of the Portsmouth Public Schools and at the Senior Activity Center. A City historical marker farther down the causeway explains the significance of the cherry trees in the context of the City's Sister City relationships, but there is no information about the trees directly adjacent to them. Part of the project may include taking cuttings from the existing trees to graft onto cherry sapling stock to ensure replacements are available if needed in the future.

Project Justification

As the City moves forward with plans for the Municipal Building Complex, this project is a proactive initiative anticipating the possibility of changes to the South Mill Pond landscape to address sea level rise and cherry trees that will age-out over time. The DPW Urban Forest Team has included the cherry trees in its Tree Viewer and cares for them, recognizing their historical importance. This project raises awareness of the trees and further cements their protection as City resources.

Budget:

A preliminary cost of \$150,000 for design and cost refinement is estimated, with \$1.5 million recommended as an out-year placeholder for the project.

Q. What's the story with the cherry trees at South Mill Pond?

A. There are two rows of trees. The ones closest to the bank of South Mill Pond were purchased with funds from Nichinan, Japan after Portsmouth formed a Sister City relationship in 1985. Some of the original trees were removed and the others are pruned as they age-out. Anticipating that aging, another row of cherry trees were planted behind them, closer to City Hall. These trees are direct descendants of the iconic Washington DC cherry trees and were the gift of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2013, the 100th anniversary of the gift of the DC cherry trees from Japan.

Q. How is the City planning to protect the historic cherry trees around South Mill Pond during the Municipal Building Complex construction?

A. As the City moves forward with plans for the Municipal Building Complex, the City is working with staff, the Trees & Public Greenery Committee, the Sister City Committee and a citizen CIP project request to protect the landscape and improve access to the cherry trees once construction is complete. The DPW Urban Forest Team has included the cherry trees in its Tree Viewer and continues to care for them, recognizing their historical importance.