

**Minutes of the
City of Portsmouth's
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
February 11, 2026**

Members Present: Chair Patricia Bagley; Vice-Chair Michael Griffin; Director of Public Works Peter Rice; City Tree Supervisor/Arborist Maxwell Wiater; A. J. Dupere, Dennis Souto (via Zoom), Deborah Chag, Scott McDermott and Ian Hanley

Members Excused: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams

Chair Bagley called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Mr. Rice left the meeting at 8:15 due to another commitment.

1. Acceptance of the January 14 Meeting Minutes

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion passed unanimously.*

2. Tree Removal Requests

• **45 Pleasant Point Rd:** 2 river birches, fair-to-good condition, removal requested by the resident. The new owner of this property is planning a renovation and will include the removal of these trees. They are multi-stem trees with typical dieback. (See included proposed landscaping plan.)

Landscape architect Robbie Woodburn was present to represent the owner. She said they wanted to remove the two large river birches that were in the right-of-way of the home renovation taking place and replace them with three other trees on the other side of the property. She said the three tree species they were interested in were the sweet gum, tupelo, and ginkgo. Chair Bagley asked if there was a height issue with any of the choices. Ms. Woodburn said there was not a height issue. Vice-Chair Griffin asked when the owner became aware that the trees were on City property. Ms. Woodburn said it was when the owner received the City survey. Ms. Chag asked how mature the trees would get. Ms. Woodburn said the trees would go in as 2-1/2-inch caliper trees per the City's requirement. Ms. Chag asked if a larger tree could be chosen instead. Mr. Rice said the benefit to planting a lower caliper tree was because it grew faster than a large caliper and was healthier. Mr. Wiater asked if the three trees would be planted on private property. Ms. Woodburn agreed. Mr. Wiater said the City would prune them as required but that the owner would be responsible for removal or anything more substantial. The tree species were further discussed as well as the concern that something else would get planted instead. Ms. Woodburn said the owner would follow through with the recommended trees and that the trees would not block the view of the home. Ms. Woodburn noted that evergreens would fill any gaps between the trees and serve as an

effective screen. Chair Bagley said she liked the Liquidambar sweet gum. It was further discussed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Griffin moved to recommend removal of the two trees and to replace them using three sweet gums. Mr. Dupere seconded. The motion passed by a vote of 8-1, with Ms. Chag voting in opposition.*

Note: At this point, Mr. Rice left the meeting.

- **484 Union St:** 1 fire cherry, fair condition, removal requested by resident. Black knot is widespread throughout the canopy. Control through pruning will result in a heavily reduced tree.

The owner Anthony Blenkinsop was present. Mr. Wiater said the fire cherry had a fungal issue in the form of black knot. Mr. Blenkinsop said the tree had done well up until two years ago, when a lot of the branches died. He said last July several large black knots appeared throughout the tree. He said black knot tended to spread from tree to tree and thought the tree should be removed. He said he would like a replacement tree. Ms. Chag asked if the fungal issue could be contained. Mr. Wiater said the black knot was prevalent throughout the tree's canopy, and removing all black knot from the canopy will be a significant undertaking and there is no plan to apply fungicides. It was further discussed. Mr. Blenkinsop said he would work with Mr. Wiater to get a replacement tree.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Hanley moved to recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Mr. Dupere. The motion passed unanimously.*

Note: the two following tree requests were addressed together.

- **Hislop Park, Preble Way:** 3 Norway maple, 1 black cherry, fair conditions, removals requested by Eversource, removals recommended by the City. Utility infrastructure improvement requires the removal of these trees.

- **Preble Way Pump Station, near Hislop Park:** 2 Norway maple, fair conditions, removals requested by Eversource, removals recommended by the City. Utility infrastructure improvement requires the removal of these trees.

Andy King of Eversource was present and said the three Norway maples and the black cherry were slated for removal due to the utility infrastructure work. The line extension in the park was discussed. Mr. Wiater said the two other Norway maples on the other side of the pump station were slated to be removed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Hanley moved to recommend removal of the six trees related to Hislop Park. Ms. Chag seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **18 Sewall Dr:** 1 Norway maple, poor condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. There is a large wound located at the base of the tree and several instances of storm failure. This tree is next to a trail that leads to the tree farm.

Mr. Wiater said he inspected the tree in December and that the base looked rough.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion passed unanimously.*

• **Prescott Park, near The Prop building:** 2 Norway maple, poor conditions, removal requested and recommended by the City. Both trees have previous instances of storm failure. One of the trees is leaning significantly and the other is very top heavy. There are many targets surrounding the trees and pedestrian targets increase in the warmer months.

Mr. Wiater said the storm failure happened in the last few months and that one of the Norway maples was very top heavy and the other one was leaning significantly. He said the 10-year Prescott Park project was put on hold, so since there would be no significant changes to the park's layout, he was comfortable putting a tree back that was rugged and could withstand that type of soil. He said it would likely be planted in the fall of 2027. The park's soil conditions were discussed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Hanley moved to recommend removal of the two trees, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion passed unanimously.*

• **420 Lincoln Ave on Willow Ln:** 1 silver maple, poor condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. The tree is declining and has been reduced previously. The tree may have been negatively impacted during the Lincoln Ave renovation in 2012.

Mr. Wiater said the silver maple had a lot of deadwood and that the silver maple to the left of it also had some deadwood but could be pruned. He said it looked like the trees had no protection during the Lincoln Avenue renovation construction that was done ten years ago and were most likely impacted by it.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Griffin moved to recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Mr. Dupere. The motion passed unanimously.*

3. Old Business

Mr. Dupere gave an update on the Tree Pruning class and said there would be a class that afternoon on tool sharpening. He said they would also be pruning crab apple trees that day. Chair Bagley asked if there was an online site that listed the classes. Mr. Dupere said the site was called Nature Groupie and had dozens of different random activities. It was further discussed.

4. New Business

Mr. Wiater said the contractors that he worked with wanted a preferred species list for tree planting. He said he would bring a preliminary list to the March meeting. He said he created his own Tree Risk Assessment Form that he could include with certain tree removal requests but was presently using it as an internal document for himself so that he could come up with ideas. He said his Arbor Day plan was to work with the Robert J. Lister Academy, which had a robust maple syruping program. He suggested planting a

sugar maple tree on the campus so that the students could see how the City planted trees. He said the students could show the City their maple syruping process in exchange.

5. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 11, 2026

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker