

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

Present: Chair Patricia Bagley; Vice-Chair Michael Griffin; Director of Public Works Peter Rice; Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams; City Tree Supervisor/Arborist Maxwell Wiater; Dennis Souto, Deborah Chag, Scott McDermott and Ian Hanley

Members Excused: A J. Dupere

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

1. Acceptance of the February 11, 2026 Meeting Minutes

The February 11 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

2. Tree Removal Requests

• Garfield Rd and McKinley Rd: 1 white pine, 4 red maples (single/multi-stem), 2 sweet birches, poor-to-fair conditions, removals requested and recommended by the City. The removal of these trees will allow for intersection improvements and will create a new green space that could support tree plantings.

Portsmouth DPW Project Manager Christine Sproviero and Nick Masino, project manager with CMA Engineering, were present. Mr. Masino said the intersection of Garfield Rd and McKinley Rd was part of the broader Elwyn Park sidewalk and traffic calming project and was one of the problematic intersections being reconfigured. He said the project needed to rectify that particular intersection's geometry by teeing it up better and making it perpendicular with aligned approaches to make it safer, and doing so would require removing several trees on one corner. He said that corner also had wetland impacts, so he went before the Conservation Commission and was in the process of preparing a DES permit. Mr. Wiater said most of the trees were not in the best shape and that removing them and getting a better traffic configuration would be better than trying to save them. He said new green space would be created on the opposite side of the road and that there was a potential to plant trees there. He said the City would plant the trees but the residents would maintain them. Mr. Masino said he would talk to the property owners to see what species they wanted planted. Mr. Rice noted that it was only the first phase of a multi-phase project. It was further discussed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend removal of the trees, seconded by Ms. Kelley-Adams. The motion passed unanimously.*

• 10 Crescent Way: 2 Norway maples, fair condition, resident request, removals recommended by the City. The larger of the two trees (nearest to the shed) has a basal wound on the house-facing side and a 30' tall crack on the trunk. This crack

can be probed to a depth of 6 inches and sapwood feels decayed. The tree has not uniformly sealed the crack. Woundwood has occurred but has not yet formed a rib before moisture and decay entered the tree. The other Norway maple is a bit smaller in diameter and has smaller cracks on its trunk and is not as significant of a defect in comparison to the other. If the other Norway is removed, then this tree should also be removed due to the increased potential wind loading caused by the loss of the neighboring Norway. Increased loading and its top-heavy structure may exacerbate the defect and could cause failure.

Mr. Wiater said it was a resident request. He said the tree's intent was to completely seal the 30-ft crack in the larger tree, but it was now swelling with decay, so it was more difficult to seal the wound. He explained why failure was plausible within a 3-year period. He said the other tree also had a crack that was beginning to seal over, but if it was isolated by the other tree's removal, the likelihood of failure would increase. He said it would also be next to a new build and infrastructure, parked cars, and so on, so he thought it would be better to remove it. It was further discussed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend the removal of both trees, seconded by Ms. Kelley-Adams. The motion passed unanimously.*

3. Landscape Plan Review and Approval

- **1465 Woodbury Ave – Tighe & Bond**

Neil Hansen of Tighe & Bond was present, along with Tom Godfrey representing the owner Quincy and Company. Mr. Hansen said the project was a Citizens Bank in the Market Basket Plaza on Woodbury Ave and that it was approved by the Planning Board last fall. He said a large swath of community space was part of the approval and would be deeded to the City, so the trees to be planted would fall under the Committee's purview as well as other trees in the right-of-way along Woodbury Ave. He reviewed the various locations of trees and buildings on the site. Ms. Kelley-Adams said the client would be responsible for the maintenance plan because the project would be on the client's property, and if the client did not maintain it, the City had the right to do so and bill the client. She asked for more detail on the community space. Mr. Godfrey said green space was planned along the front of the parcel as well as other areas. Ms. Kelley-Adams asked if there were plans to deal with loitering. Mr. Godfrey agreed and said the owner would manage it. Chair Bagley asked why the client decided on boxwoods for plants. Mr. Godfrey noted that the landscape architect was not at the meeting. Mr. McDermott expressed concern that, from a maintenance perspective, a similar winter to this one could be detrimental to the boxwoods. Mr. Wiater added that boxwood blight is on the rise, and if one plant has it, the rest will be impacted and all would need replacement. Mr. Godfrey said they might consider replacing the boxwoods with something tougher. Mr. Wiater said a lot of the trees were not shade trees, so people sitting at the park benches and picnic tables would not sit there in hot weather. He suggested planting a few shade trees in those areas. Mr. Godfrey said they wanted to do the project as soon as possible. Ms. Chag asked if the discussion could be tabled to the April meeting so that the Committee could talk to the landscape architect and confirm the chosen plant material.

Mr. Rice recommended that Mr. Wiater speak directly to the architect before then so that the client did not have to wait another month to start the project. He said the landscape architect could then attend the April meeting to discuss it with the Committee.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved for conditional approval so that the landscape architect could review the landscape plan with Mr. Wiater as soon as possible and then report back to the Committee at the April meeting. Ms. Chag seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

4. Old Business

• Preferred Tree Planting Species List for Contractors

Ms. Chag asked how Mr. Wiater got the list to people once the tree species were decided on. Mr. Wiater said the list could be on the City's website and he will direct contractors to the website or send it to them directly. He said most of the list was based on trees that he had seen work well and that would stand up to most soil conditions and locations in the City, and that most of the trees were available at most nurseries. Chair Bagley asked if the City had ever planted Osage orange trees. Mr. Wiater agreed and said they did very well and that the City uses fruitless trees because the fruit was large and some people might not appreciate that type of tree. He said the tree filled the strange medium size tree specification of 35-40 feet maturing height and spread. Other trees on the list were discussed. Ms. Chag said conifers should be added to the list. Vice-Chair Griffin agreed. Mr. Rice suggested Miyawaki trees on the Woodbury Avenue parcel.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to accept the list with the addition of the conifers and post it on the City's Trees & Greenery website. Mr. Souto seconded. The motion passed with all in favor.*

• Arbor Day update

- On Friday April 24, 2026, at 1:30 PM, Portsmouth DPW will be guiding Robert J. Lister Academy students to plant two sugar maple trees on the north side of the Community Campus near the school entrance.
- Arbor Day will begin with an introduction and the reading of the Arbor Day Proclamation by the Mayor, or his representative.
- Lister Academy students and faculty will give a quick overview of their maple syruping facility and the process of turning sap into syrup.
- Lister Academy students will then break into two smaller groups with DPW arborists who will assist with the tree planting.
- The event should conclude around 3:00 PM.

Mr. Wiater said DPW would also plant two ‘Green Mountain’ sugar maples near the academy’s entrance. He said the trees would go well with the students’ maple syrup project. He said four DPW workers would guide the students through the planting process and would also help over the summer with watering. He said the DPW would prune the trees in a few years. Chair Bagley asked if the Lister Academy event should be included in the City’s newsletter so that the public was aware of it and could attend. Mr. Wiater agreed and said he would coordinate it with Stephanie Seacord.

5. New Business

- Ms. Chag asked if the City allowed portable toilets (Porta Potties) on construction sites if they impacted trees, especially the catalpa tree on a particular site. Mr. Rice said if the toilets were on the City’s right-of-way, the construction company had to get a license. He said Porta Potties were part of the construction process, so he wasn’t concerned about the issue, but if the Porta Potty damaged the catalpa tree, he would look into it. It was further discussed.
- Ms. Chag said the catalpa tree was on the tree walk that her group planned between the South and North Cemeteries. She told everyone to let her know if they had a particular tree that they wanted the tree walk participants to look at.
- Ms. Chag said Megan Rice, a teacher from the Portsmouth Middle School, told her the school was going forward with the Miyawaki Forest project behind the school. Mr. Wiater said Ms. Rice would present the project to the Committee at the April meeting.

6. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 8, 2026

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker