

**Minutes of the
City of Portsmouth's
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
May 13, 2026**

Present: Chair Patricia Bagley; Vice-Chair Michael Griffin; City Tree Supervisor/Arborist Maxwell Wiater; Dennis Souto, A. J. Dupere, Deborah Chag, Scott McDermott and Ian Hanley

Members Excused: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams; Director of Public Works Peter Rice

Also Present: Stephanie Seacord, Public Information Officer

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

1. Acceptance of the April 8, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Hanley moved to approve the April 8 meeting minutes as presented. Vice-Chair Griffin seconded. The motion passed unanimously, with Ms. Chag abstaining.

2. Landscape Plan Review

1465 Woodbury Ave: Review of the revised plan regarding tree selections and placements within the City right-of-way and designated public spaces.

Mr. Wiater discussed the changes that were made to the landscape plan. He noted that Matt Silva was the representative. He said people were concerned about the number of boxwoods, so the number was cut in half and replaced with dwarf arborvitae, hostas, and catmint shrubs to add more variety. He said Malus "Sparkling Sprite", and Carpinus caroliniana (American Hornbeam) were also added to the right-of-way, as well as several Freeman Maple 'Firefalls'. He explained where the trees would be located near Citizens Bank and Market Basket. Ms. Chag asked why the trees were outside of the actual site. Mr. Wiater explained that the bank would develop community space to make the area more pedestrian and resident friendly and that the trees would be added afterwards, along with a sidewalk, picnic tables, and more access to businesses. He said the Kousa dogwood, higan cherry, and the American Hornbeam were ornamental trees but the maples and the Kentucky Coffeetree were shade trees that would flank the overall project. He said the Freeman maples would be on the far left near Wendy's and far right side nearest Market Basket.

Ms. Chag said she was still concerned about the use of the many boxwoods, and she asked what would happen at the site in 5-7 years. Mr. Dupere said the site needed tough trees and that boxwoods don't spread too much. Chair Bagley said the Committee represented Portsmouth and have to live with what they see there for years, and they

wanted it to be self-sustainable. Mr. Wiater said the right-of-way spaces were being decided and if the Committee was okay with the tree selection, the Committee could also say that more variety could be added to that area of the bank or the number of boxwoods could continue to be decreased and replaced with another type of shrub. He said the maintenance of all the trees did not fall on the City, but the City was still responsible for confirming what went in those spaces, and less so for the bank property. The removal of the boxwoods and the tree selection were further discussed. Mr. Dupere noted that the recommended trees had to be small and short so that the front of the bank could be seen.

Matt Silva was present via speaker phone and said that the bank had strict requirements for the types of plants put into their area. He said security was an important issue for the building and drive-thru, in addition to the visibility of the building. He said they took more freedom on the tree selection for the public right-of-way and the community space. He said he agreed with all the changes that were made. Mr. Wiater said the added variety of trees was better than what was originally on the landscape plan.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Wiater moved to give final approval for the plant selection. Mr. Souto seconded. The motion passed by a vote of 7-1, with Ms. Chag voting in opposition.*

3. Tree Removal Requests

2 Mariette Dr: 1 red elm, poor condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. Recent storm damage prompted this removal request. It is estimated that half of this tree's canopy is declining or dead, and the central leader is also dead. Other small and large deadwood exists throughout the canopy. Nearly half of the 34-inch diameter at breast height (DBH) is exposed sapwood, and these sections extend into the root zone of the tree. The missing cambium and potential loss of roots explains the general decline of the tree.

Mr. Wiater said the resident requested the removal of the red elm due to the reasons listed in the description above. Mr. Wiater said the site was a harsh one right next to the road and he did not think continuous pruning of the tree would be appropriate. He said it made sense to remove it.

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

• Community Campus (opposite the Wilder Zen Garden): 2 eastern hemlocks, poor condition, removals requested and recommended by the City. These trees are declining likely due to environmental stressors such as salt pollution and dry compact.

Mr. Wiater said the two trees were opposite the Wilder Zen Garden and near the entrance to a pedestrian trail. He said the trees were declining due to the general use of the site and the overall environmental stressors of salt pollution and dry compacted soils. He noted that a lot of people use the trail, which did not help the trees. He said the other trees were not as bad and would be removed as necessary in the future. He said there was interest in

revitalizing the area but that it was not a tree replacement site for now. Mr. McDermott discussed leaving cut-down trees for the habitat instead of moving them off the property.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. McDermott moved to recommend removal of the two eastern hemlocks, seconded by Mr. Souto. The motion passed unanimously, with Vice-Chair Griffin abstaining.*

4. Old Business

Tree Planting Wrap-up: Discussion on Planting Operations for 2026.

Mr. Wiater said the tree planting was finished the week before and that everything went well. He said every year there were always one or two species that had mangled roots, and this year there were a few ginkgo trees that had rough-looking roots but that he was hopeful that they would be okay. He said a few other species were a bit undersized but he hoped they would get established. He said 150 bare root trees were planted as well as an additional eight trees that included a spruce and some arborvitae. The topic of soil amendment was discussed. Ms. Chag asked if there was a City right-of-way near the Markt Basket and Rite Aid site on Woodbury Avenue so that plants could be placed there to make it look more friendly. Vice-Chair Griffin said the sidewalk had to be rebuilt in that area. Mr. Dupere said chemical treatments would be necessary for some of the area's beech trees. It was further discussed.

5. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Next meeting: Wednesday, June 10, 2026

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:46 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker