

**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

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