

**Minutes of the City of Portsmouth's
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
September 9, 2026**

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

Members Excused: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams; Scott McDermott

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

1. Acceptance of the August 12 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Hanley moved to approve the July 8 minutes as submitted, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

2. Tree Removal Requests

Note: the 238 Austin Tree request was heard first.

- **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.

Mr. Wiater said the tree was showing signs of Emerald ash borer infestation.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Mr. Souter. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

- **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.

Property owner Matt Boyer was present. He said the current one-story home was unsound and would be replaced with a two-story home that would meet the setbacks, so the dwelling would be farther from the tree than it currently was. He said someone put a barrel around the base of the tree and the iron rings remained, so the tree was girdled. He said he was concerned about the girdling and the tree's long-term health, so he asked that it be removed and replaced by another tree. He said the other willow also had to be removed because the new driveway would be in that location. It was further discussed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Mr. Dupere. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

- **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.

Mr. Wiater said the proposal was to remove the trees and upgrade the infrastructure to service a home off Marjorie Street. He said the marked trees would be removed and other trees would be pruned, and Eversource would upgrade everything for the house and the corridor to make it safer. Ms. Chag explained why she was concerned about cutting big trees down and the replacing them with small caliper trees like other utility projects. She asked if there was a way to work around a large white pine at the end of Sylvester Street. Mr. Wiater said the vegetation management foreman told him that cutting down the tree was the path of least resistance, but he would discuss it further with the foreman.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to recommend removal of 8 trees. The removal of an additional large white pine will be decided in the field by Mr. Wiater, who will work with Eversource in an effort to save this tree. Mr. Wiater will report back to the Committee in October. Mr. Souto seconded. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

- **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.

Mr. Wiater said the building and site would be reworked to make it residential. He said part of the project would be façade work and rebuilding the large retaining wall, and the black locust was in the way. Ms. Chag asked if the tree had to come down. Mr. Rice said an electrical line would run up to a new transformer that would service the neighborhood and improve reliability and security to the area. Mr. Wiater said two ash trees were already removed but the oak behind the utility pole would have a tree protection barrier.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend removal of the locust, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion passed by a vote of 5-2, with Ms. Chag and Chair Bagley voting against.*

3. New Business [Timestamp 18:50]

- **Review of DPW 2027 Tree Selections and Planting Program Adjustments moving forward.**

Mr. Wiater reviewed the 2027 tree selections and planting program adjustments. He said he was excited about getting more Spaeth's alder in the mix because they had great foliage and grew quickly. He said the columnar tulip trees and chestnut oaks were back. He said some trees that were lost during the June storm, like in Langdon Park, would be replaced. Ms. Chag asked Mr. Wiater to explain the process further. Mr. Wiater said he usually looked at tree removal sites over the past years but generally looked at the right-

of-way boundary as the primary location for most of the trees. It was further discussed. He said the Sensation Box Elder was a fruitless cultivar unlike the species, so when it was planted it should stay as one tree and not spread. He said he would put that tree in locations where it was hard to grow trees. Ball and burlap trees were discussed. Mr. Wiater said 100 trees were ordered and that two years of care was the standard but it could go up to three years. The success rate of the trees was discussed.

- **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Citizen Request from Japan-America Society of NH for Cherry Trees** [Timestamp 40:16]

Stephanie Seacord, a member of the Board of Japan-America Society of NH for Cherry Trees, was present. She said the Portsmouth Peace Treaty Living Memorial Cherry Tree project grew out of the two rows of cherry trees on the back of South Mill Pond by the municipal complex. She said the older trees were purchased by the city with funds from Japan when Nichinan became Portsmouth's sister city and had been in that location since 1985. She said they were subject to South Mill Pond flooding and were looking stressed but 10 of the trees in the back row had done very well. She said in 2013 the government of Japan decided to give cherry trees to the country on the 100th anniversary of the Washington, DC cherry trees. She said the CIP request from the Japan-American Society was to work with Mr. Wiater and his team to make the cherry tree area on the bank more accessible and that it would be implemented once the municipal building project was completed. She also noted that there could be a cherry blossom event in the spring. She said the idea was to eventually align the crosswalk from the playground parking lot with the area of the cherry trees to make it more accessible to wheelchairs and so on but that the ground level would have to be raised. She said they would perhaps take cuttings from the older and new trees and graft them onto saplings that could replace other trees when necessary. She noted that the newer trees were direct descendants of the Washington Yoshino cherry trees. She said the memorial project was created to plant cherry trees at all the public schools in Portsmouth as well as other locations. Chair Bagley asked who would do the grafting. Ms. Seacord said they were still in discussions but said the historical landscape curator at Strawberry Banke expressed an interest.

Ms. Chag said she thought it was a great idea. Chair Bagley asked how the trees would be impacted by raising the ground. Mr. Rice explained that the municipal building project would need a laydown area and to widen the roadway, so the cherry tree project would fit in nicely at the end for restoration. He said he also envisioned a retaining wall and some stormwater treatment and perhaps a stone terrace. Chair Bagley asked how much time the project would take. Mr. Rice said there would be 1-1/2 years of design after getting approval and 3-5 years of construction. It was further discussed.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Adjournment

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:58 a.m.

Next meeting: Wednesday, October 14, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker

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