

**MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
February 9, 2022**

Members Present: Chairman Peter J. Loughlin; Peter Rice, Director of Public Works; A. J. Dupere, Michael Griffin, Deborah Chag, and Patricia Bagley (via ZOOM); Arborist Foreman Chuck Baxter

Members Excused: Vice-Chair Richard Adams, Dennis Souto

Also Present: City Council Representative Kate Cook (via Zoom)

Chairman Loughlin called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the December 8, 2022 Meeting

The minutes were approved as presented.

2. Tree Removal Request

- **790 McGee Drive- two spruce trees requested by the resident**

The resident Will was present and said he didn't actually want to have the two trees removed but was concerned that they may fall down due to the westerly wind from the pond that took down other trees in the area or that they would be impacted by power lines. He asked if the City could come up with a plan to assess their trees in the neighborhood on a regular basis to detect issues before having to cut the trees down. Mr. Baxter said one whole side of McGee Drive was lined with Norway spruces and in the past had failures every year. He said it was hard to determine the property line and that some of the trees were clearly the City's, but the two at 790 McGee Drive were difficult to tell. He said there were no visible hazards or decays seen as yet, but one spruce that came down the previous year had decay inside. He said he was concerned about setting a precedent that all the spruces on McGee Drive would get removed. Mr. Rice suggested doing a risk assessment, and it was further discussed. Mr. Rice said he would also work with his staff to see if they could identify where the boundary line was.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to monitor the two spruce trees and do a formal tree risk assessment for many of the trees on McGee St, seconded by Mr. Dupere. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

3. Presentation by Peter Stith, AICP, Portsmouth Planning Department Principal Planner regarding Portsmouth Open Space Plan

Mr. Stith said he was the project manager for the Portsmouth Open Space Plan. He noted that Portsmouth had conducted studies over the past 10-15 years and that the Open Space Plan focused on undevelopable land assessment. He said the Master Plan called out for developing open space plans as well and that \$50,000 was allocated to develop the Open Space Plan by the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). He said the purpose of the plan is to prioritize additional undeveloped land for protection, acquisition, and improvements. He said Portsmouth sent out an RFP and received 6-8 proposals in 2018, and a company called Resilience Planning was selected. He said a steering committee consisting of the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Recreation Board and others was established that did an inventory of existing conditions as well as a public outreach. He said the public outreach was great in providing feedback to the consultant and included a wiki map that people could click on and leave comments. He said two maps were developed, one of which was the opportunities map showing what the potential opportunities were, and a second map that reviewed improvements to existing lands that were protected or under conservation. He said both maps had similar matrixes with different criteria that prioritized whether goals were high, medium, or long-term future ones. He said the first project was the Great Bog and that there was also a request to add more funding for acquisition. He said the Conservation Commission used the plan to identify parcels for acquisition and narrowed it down to six parcels. He also noted that when people had new projects, the Planning Department consulted the plan to see if the property to be developed was identified in the plan, and the applicant would be encouraged to either develop the property or conserve a portion of it.

Mr. Rice said the City wasn't averse to being a landowner but that it depended on the responsibilities associated with it. He said a lot of the open spaces that the City owns are unimproved and are past recreation, so there's very little involvement from a maintenance standpoint, but there were more and more requests from citizens for trails, tree work, and so on. He said it's an amenity for the residents and their quality of life, so there were several reasons to support it and that it was also consistent with the City's Master Plan. Mr. Stith noted that there were also incentives for developers if they provided community green space or urban open space for residents to congregate on, and it was further discussed. Ms. Bagley asked if the Trees and Public Greenery Committee would be involved with the Open Space Plan. Mr. Rice said it wasn't the committee's purview other than supporting the efforts to protect land and have open space, but that the committee would have purview on the trees once a property was purchased.

4. Old Business

There was no old business.

5. New Business

Mr. Rice said they planned to rehabilitate and revitalize the Bridge Street lot and would bring a plan forward to the committee in March. He said the intent was to rework the space and expand some of the park area on Islington Street that would coincide with Portsmouth's 400th

anniversary and create a gateway to Islington Street's west end. He said the sidewalks would be reworked in that area, as well as the trees and shrubs and that they intended to put a line of trees on the Bridge Street side.

Mr. Baxter said the order for 100 new trees was submitted and that he had about 60 trees already sourced. He said he would send out a tentative list to the committee and asked that members let him know if they had suggestions or knew of empty green strips that needed trees. Ms. Chag said the Portsmouth Garden Club could work with Mr. Baxter and perhaps do education signage.

Mr. Rice said the Rotary Club donated money for planting 100 trees, which was part of 'The 400' -- the 400 trees that would be planted by 2023 to coincide with Portsmouth's 400th anniversary. He said the City would contribute 100 trees as well and that he was trying to figure out how to get the other 200 trees. Mr. Dupere said he would look into whether the State had a program. He also suggested working with residents to plant trees on their properties.

Mr. Rice said the sidewalk projects for Pannaway Manor and Maple Haven would impact trees and that he was working with Mr. Baxter to figure out how to mitigate those impacts. He said a survey was received from the two neighborhoods and that he and Mr. Baxter would review them and present their findings to the neighborhoods.

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 9, 2022

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Public Greenery Committee Recording Secretary