

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

Members Present: Chairman Peter J. Loughlin; Vice-Chair Richard Adams; Peter Rice, Director of Public Works; A. J. Dupere, Michael Griffin, Deborah Chag, and Patricia Bagley; Arborist Foreman Chuck Baxter

Members Excused: Dennis Souto

Also Present: Eversource Representative Scott Richardson, City Project Manager Dave DesFosses

Chairman Loughlin called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. He handed out Certificates of Perfect Attendance for 2021 to Ms. Bagley, Ms. Chag, and Mr. Rice.

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the February 9, 2022 Meeting

The minutes were approved as presented.

2. Tree Removal Requests

- **800 McGee Drive**– 3 Norway spruces, resident request

Mr. Baxter said the trees should be removed due to serious decay up the trunks and at the base of one of the trees. He said the removals would be a start in managing the whole row of Norway spruces on that street. He said the resident had also expressed valid concerns.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice recommended removal of the three trees, and Mr. Dupere seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **28 Sherburne Ave** – 1 Norway maple, resident request

Ms. Chag said the tree was across from the power lines and was a large and beautiful tree. Ms. Bagley said she saw it the previous day during the heavy winds and noticed debris in the owner's and neighbor's yards. She thought pruning the two limbs that went toward the house would be beneficial. Vice-Chair Adams said he thought the tree was ugly and that no one would deliberately plant a tree like that, and that it was clearly a "volunteer" that sprang up unattended. He said that it was across from the power lines and that the site could handle a large tree. He advocated taking the tree down and planting a nicer one that would be properly managed. Mr.

Dupere said he was concerned about the bark damage all over the tree's base. It was further discussed. Mr. Baxter said two or three shade trees would possibly be planted in the green strip, where there were currently no trees and no problems with being right under the wires.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Bagley recommended removal of the tree, and Mr. Griffin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **4 Fairview Drive** – 1 European beech, Eversource request

Mr. Baxter said he met with the resident the day before. He said the street pole was rerouted too close to the tree and caused the tree to catch on fire, which was why the stem was decayed. He said he hoped to prune the leader below the wire and cut the branch going toward the house to try and preserve the tree. The resident Emily Hunt was present and said she had been advocating to keep the tree, which was probably planted during the time that Frank Jones owned the property. She said it was a beautiful tree and that the fire was an unfortunate incident. Eversource Representative Scott Richardson said Eversource was fine with preserving the tree.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Dupere recommended pruning the tree's front stem and the one that goes back toward the house. Ms. Chag seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **Dodge Avenue (across from 40 Dodge Ave)** – 3 white pines, Eversource

Mr. Baxter said there was a lot of concern about the three white pines due to significant decay from being topped often. He said they had no future and should be removed. He noted that other trees would be replanted in place of them.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice recommended removal of the tree, and Ms. Chag seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **533 Colonial Drive** – 1 linden, Eversource request

Mr. Richardson said the tree was touching the other wires and was in decay. Mr. Baxter said Colonial Drive was a good example of wrong trees planted in the wrong locations and that it was a proximity issue. He said the tree didn't have a future due to the location of the wires. The resident Anne Sowers called into the meeting via Zoom and said she wanted to be apprised a few days before the tree would be removed. Mr. Richardson said he would contact her. Mr. Rice said Public Works was planning significant sidewalk projects in that area and that tree was one that would likely be damaged anyway. He said they identified a number of trees and strategies to avoid impact and were having public meetings with the neighborhood to discuss the project. He said he would give the Committee a more specific list of trees to be removed at a later time.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Rice recommended removal of the tree, and Ms. Bagley seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **208 Colonial Drive** – 1 linden, Eversource request

Mr. Baxter said the tree had a split and was within a foot of the wires. Ms. Chag asked if it was part of the Pannaway Manor sidewalk project. Mr. Rice said it was on the same side of the road. Chairman Loughlin said he hated to wipe out all those lindens under any circumstance. Mr. Rice said he understood and that they were not proposing to replace sidewalks on both sides of the street and would figure out alternate ways of getting around the impacts. He said the residents had waited for the project a number of years and the City Council appropriated funds for it but that he was sensitive to the balance involved. Mr. Richardson said Eversource had donated trees for several causes in the past and could do so again. Mr. Rice noted that the Rotary Club intended to donate 200 trees for Portsmouth's 400th Anniversary and that residents were encouraged to do so as well. Mr. Baxter noted that when Aldrich Road was redone, a lot of trees had root damage but were saved by doing retrenchment prunes, and he thought that could be an option for Colonial Drive as well.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Rice recommended removal of the tree, and Mr. Griffin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

3. Presentation by City Project Manager Dave DesFosses discussing:

- **Islington Street Project**
- **Goodwin Park Changes**
- **Bridge Street Pocket Park**

Mr. DesFosses gave a brief synopsis of the three projects. He said the streetscape design was part of the overall planning for the Islington Street project and that 80 percent of it was finalized. He said they were selecting the final locations for trees. He said different methods of treatment for the trees would be used, including solar cells and structural soils. He said Goodwin Park had gone through several revisions and that they planned a new main entrance to the park as well as a grand entrance around the monument in the center and the addition of bollard lights. He said some work would be done at the Bridge Street Pocket Park as well.

Landscape architect Jeff Hyland said there was a list of trees for Islington Street, trees that had been successful in northern New England streetscape projects. He said there would be approximately 40 new trees planted on Islington Street. He noted that the power lines were mainly on the south side of the street and that the best opportunity to plant was on the north side where there were very few power lines. He said the larger shade trees would be planted on the north side and smaller trees planted on the south side. He said the tree spacing would vary and that they were trying to get a nice rhythm. He said they had a tight planting scheme for several reasons, including traffic calming, pedestrians, infrastructure goals and shading, but the primary goal was to make sure the trees lived for a long time. He noted that urban trees don't usually survive for very long, so the right location, tree, and soil are important. He reviewed different types of soils used on past infrastructure projects.

Vice-Chair Adams asked if there were any consideration given to species selection based on the effects on trees owing to global warming and climate change. Mr. Hyland said an urban streetscape was a challenging one for trees and pests, and new and more widespread pest

problems have arisen owing to climate change. He said maples were trees that they were using less of on projects due to concerns with pests.

Mr. Dupere said it was important to have continuity of tree species on Islington Street. Mr. DesFosses said the trees near traffic signals had to be small, and pedestrian and vehicle crossings were also important factors. It was further discussed.

Mr. Hyland said they were trying to create a situation where Goodwin Park has a strong connection to the streetscape by putting a central access in it, lighting it, and making a prominent entry as well as making two corner secondary entry points. He said three new small flowering trees were proposed to be added to the park. He said the rhythm and density of the trees along the corridor were important as well as the placement of the trees in relation to on-street parking. Ms. Bagley asked about the distance between two shade trees. Mr. Hyland said it depended on what was in the way, like water and gas lines, power lines, and roadway lighting – things that made it difficult to get consistency in spacing. Mr. Rice said it was more about species than locations. Ms. Bagley asked what species would be planted on Islington Street. Mr. Baxter said he had a list of potential trees that were very diverse but that there would be adjustments throughout the project. He said the important thing was to be on site with the contractors when the planting started to ensure that everything was planted correctly. Iron grates and tree boxes were discussed. Mr. Hyland said maintenance components and limitations indicated whether grates or boxes should be used, and structural soils were also used. Mr. Baxter said the preference was granite planters. Mr. DesFosses said he would come up with a final tree and location list by April.

Chairman Loughlin asked if it was possible to do the granite protection and vertical tree grates, noting that trees had little protection against snow plows. He also remarked that Goodwin Park had several improvements over the last four years, including safety and sanitary issues around the monument. Watering contracts were discussed

4. Garden Club Tree Labeling

Ms. Chag said the Garden Club would meet on March 16 and that a list was compiled of tree identifications and locations. She said she would have a better idea for labeling after the meeting.

5. Update from City Arborist Chuck Baxter

Mr. Baxter said the recent storm caused a large linden on Colonial Drive to break in half and also damaged a pine on Little Harbor Road. Both were removed through emergency authorization. He said he was gearing up for spring planting and planning for Arbor Day. He asked the Committee for ideas for Arbor Day. Ms. Chag suggested Adopt-A-Spot. Mr. Baxter said normally 2-3 trees were planted. He said the formal garden crabapples at Prescott Park would be pruned as well as several downtown trees. Mr. Griffin asked about previous issues near Market Square. Mr. Baxter said his contact for supply chain issues was lost but that there would be spots that would have to be redone, like Porter Street. Mr. Griffin asked if anything would be replanted on Little Harbor Road. Mr. Richardson said there was no plan, due to the density and road proximity issues. Mr. Baxter said it was an undesirable area to plant in and that the road had shrunk as a result of the

road being paved. It was further discussed. Mr. Rice said the city was very fortunate to have the Trees and Public Greenery Committee as well as Mr. Baxter and others to preserve and maintain city trees. He said the City Council was in favor of promoting the committee and city arborists. He said it could be a quick synopsis on the city's website, and it was further discussed.

6. Tree Planting for the City's 400th

The issue was previously discussed.

7. Old Business

There was no old business.

8. New Business

There was no new business.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 13, 2022

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Public Greenery Committee Recording Secretary