

**MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
July 13, 2022**

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

Members Excused: Chairman Peter Loughlin

Vice-Chair Adams was Acting Chair and called the meeting to order at 8 a.m.

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

The minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

2. Tree Removal Requests

- **Six red maples at Peirce Island (bordering the outdoor pool fence).**

Mr. Rice explained that the tree removals were associated with the pool renovation project. He said the existing block filter wasn't adequate to house the equipment needed for the infiltration system and that, given its location, it would have to be moved away from the shoreline to comply with wetland permits and so on. He said the trees also crowded the area and that their roots would be eventually impacted. He said it would be better to remove them and plant alternative trees far enough away from the building. Mr. Baxter said it would be part of the pool renovation project and agreed that replanting in that area by the pool would destroy the trees. Mr. Griffin asked if there would be a new water line or pump station. Mr. Rice said it was a large underground vault and pump area for the filters and pipes, and the area was deep. Ms. Bagley said it was unfortunate that the trees would be removed because there was so little shade at the pool. Mr. Rice said he could try minimizing the number of trees taken down.

At this point, Acting Chair Adams asked for a motion before further discussion.

Mr. Souto *recommended removal of the six maples, seconded by Mr. Rice.*

Ms. Chag asked for more detail on minimizing the trees. Mr. Baxter said he would have to see if they could dig without damaging the roots and try to save all six trees. Mr. Dupere said there would have to be several on-site decisions as to which trees should remain or be removed. Mr. Rice said the project had to be completed by next summer, and it was further discussed. Mr. Dupere said even if a few trees remained, there would be impacts because it was a tough site.

Resident Tom Smart of 133 Lincoln Avenue was present and said there were two trees within the court that were slated for removal. He said the trees currently prevented volleyballs from going into the pool and thought the fence's height could be increased. He said some of the roots seemed to grow horizontally and encroached on the court's border and that he and a few other people did some volunteer work and started taking up the roots. Mr. Baxter said that he'd be cleaning up a mess in two years because it would be the same situation. He agreed that there would be less shade in the pool area if the trees were removed, but they couldn't stop the infrastructure project and they might as well be proactive. Mr. Rice said the Recreation Department was aware of the situation and might build a pergola or do a flat area where people could sit. He said it was a legacy type of investment, noting that the pool had been there for almost 100 years and that more planting would eventually be done. Acting-Chair Adams noted that the pool was built in 1946 and was originally fed by salt water right out of the river.

*The motion to remove the six maples was **passed** by unanimous vote.*

3. Update from City Arborist Chuck Baxter

Mr. Baxter said they were watering this year's and last year's trees two days a week and that things were looking good except for a few mortalities. He said at least one tree would be replanted in the fall. He said they were also doing lots of resident service requests for pruning as well as requests from the trash truck because employees were getting whacked by limbs. He said there were some long-term projects for the summer, including redoing the porous pavement on Porter Street where the Zelcovas are and other downtown tree areas that needed it. He explained that the product was a bag of stone and recycled truck tires that were combined in a mixer and then had a binder added in, and it took about 12 hours to set. He said the intent was to get it done in the next month or so. He noted that there were already several requests for planting for next spring and that they were also organizing the 400th Anniversary trees. He said City Staff would plant 200 trees instead of 100 and would have a tree drive for residents, so another 200 trees would be brought in and residents could pick up their tree and plant it where they pleased. Ms. Chag said winter was a good time to prune. Mr. Baxter said he would spread the word.

4. Tree Planting for the City's 400th Anniversary

Acting-Chair Adams said he and Ms. Chag met with Valerie Rochon, Managing Director of the 400th Anniversary project. Ms. Chag said Acting-Chair Adams presented a tremendous history of the city's trees. She said they thought Public Works could hold a community rally for the residents to learn how to plant and water trees properly and could also suggest that trees be planted in places that citizens weren't choosing to plant, like low-income neighborhoods.

Mr. Rice and he, Mr. Baxter, and Mr. Dupere discussed how they would proceed with the project. He said 200 trees were a significant challenge to water, so an additional seasonal staff person would have to be hired to help with the watering and that another watering tank would also have to be built. He said they discussed buying another 200 bagged trees and having them staged at the Urban Forestry Center, where they would designate a specific weekend that people

could come and see a demonstration of how to plant and water the trees properly. He said they would also have a video and said any marketing assistance from Ms. Chag and Acting-Chair Adams would be appreciated. Ms. Chag agreed.

Mr. Dupere said some trees would have cloth bags with handles and would be 4-6 feet tall depending on the species, and there would be blocks of 50 or so for each species. He said he would have confirmation by mid-September, would receive the trees in early March, and would get the trees out to folks around mid-April. He said they would use the Urban Forestry Center parking lot because it could handle 700 cars at once. He said the trees would be ordered this week and noted that Eversource would provide funding for ten large trees, which he thought could be shifted into more small trees. Mr. Rice said the Rotary Club pledged \$15,000 as well. He said a lot of help would be needed the day the trees were given out to citizens to make sure things went smoothly. It was further discussed. Mr. Dupere said the trees at the nursery could be seen online by accessing the website [bigorliners](#).

Acting-Chair Adams said he found a pamphlet at the Athenaeum about the 1876 dedication of Langdon Park, where 100 trees were solicited from the citizens and over 600 were received. He said all the tree species and donors were listed on the pamphlet and that he would get the digital version from the Athenaeum to post online.

A few other trees were discussed. Mr. Baxter said the Dawn redwood near the playing field close to the library was 100 feet tall. Mr. Rice said the spruce in Langdon Park that was hit by lightning looked like it was declining. Mr. Baxter said he would look into it. He suggested doing a habitat spar, explaining that it was a dead tree with cavities that some species of nesting birds could use, as well as birds of prey that could use it as a perch.

5. Old Business

Acting-Chair Adams asked what the status of the Pannaway Manor project was. Mr. Rice said that the City planned on having another public discussion in September. He said the Pannaway Manor and Maple Haven projects were on hold but there was a lot of feedback from residents who wanted the sidewalks and wondered why the project had stopped.

6. New Business

There was no new business.

Next meeting: Wednesday, August 10, 2022

The meeting was **adjourned** at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Public Greenery Committee Recording Secretary