

**MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
August 10, 2022**

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

Members Excused: None.

Also Present: Assistant Mayor Jo Kelley; Co-Chair of the Cemetery Committee Sue Sterry.

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the July 13, 2022 Meeting

The minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

2. Tree Removal Requests

- **88 Lincoln Avenue – Silver maple, resident request**

Mr. Baxter said there were actually two large silver maples on the site and that the smaller one has extensive root damage that was caused a few years ago when the house was extensively renovated. He said there was heavy root damage on both trees, however. He explained that proactive soil injections and retrenchment were done and hoped that the larger tree would survive. He said the smaller tree was a liability because it could fall down at any time. Mr. Rice said DPW worked with contractors to make them aware of the values of trees and who to contact if there are problems, but some slipped through the cracks or a subcontractor wasn't aware of the permit. The committee discussed researching which city ordinances impact trees.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Vice-Chair Adams moved to **remove** the smaller silver maple, which was seconded.

Matthew Beebe of 81 Lincoln Avenue said he was a contractor and said he watched some of the construction work. He said Unitel made extensive cuts in the larger tree's roots, and the smaller tree was chopped to let the wires through. He said the two trees could fall and asked if they could be replaced. He also recommended that the Inspection Department be involved. He said an excavation permit was usually necessary and that the contractor was responsible to ensure that the excavator didn't affect the tree that was supposed to be saved. He said there should be a penalty if a contractor didn't follow through. Mr. Baxter noted that the large tree had root damage previously and DPW had done a lot of pruning. He said he would send the committee a

copy of the potential tree protection ordinances to review. Mr. Rice said it would be a draft that had to be reviewed by the Legal department.

The motion to remove the smaller of the two trees **passed** by unanimous vote.

- **Pleasant Street Burial Ground (located adjacent to the parking lot of Wentworth Senior Living) – eight arborvitaes along Pleasant Street, resident request**

Sue Sterry, Co-Chair of the Cemetery Committee, was present to speak to the request to remove the trees along the cemetery wall that was 270 years old. She showed photos of the cemetery and briefly reviewed its history, noting that a lot of important residents from the 1700s were buried there. She said the cedars were too close to the wall and negatively affected it and that they also obscured the cemetery.

Robin Lurie-Meyerkopf of 53 Whidden Street phoned into the meeting and said she was concerned about losing the shade the trees provided along the sidewalk. She said the trees were home to a lot of birds. She asked that a compromise be made in which the trees would be trimmed rather than removed.

Ms. Bagley said the entrance could be improved by removing some of the tree limbs to open up the space. Mr. Baxter said the trees could be trimmed so that their canopies didn't start until eye level, or they could be removed. It was further discussed. It was suggested that trees be planted along the parking lot edge instead. Mr. Rice asked about the stumps if the trees were removed. Mr. Baxter said the stumps could be removed. He said the parking lot edge was too soft and wasn't appropriate for big trees, so replanting wasn't a good option. He noted that he had not ground stumps in historic cemeteries before. Mr. Dupere said the stumps could be ground down a few inches below grade and covered by mulch.

Mr. Rice moved to **remove** all the trees. He said the goal was to reclaim the cemetery and preserve the wall. The motion was seconded.

There was further discussion. Ms. Chag suggested cutting the trees down in phases to see how it looked. Mr. Rice said the city's cemeteries had been neglected for a long time, which outweighed the trees in this case. Ms. Chag said the trees nearest the entrance could be removed to make the entrance more inviting, and the others could be made into more of a hedge. Mr. Baxter said he could take the lower canopy off the trees so that they weren't touching the wall and remove the trees near the entrance and then every other tree along the wall.

Mr. Rice **amended** his motion to move that the trees near the entrance would be removed along with every other tree along the wall. The motion **failed**.

Mr. Rice again **amended** his motion to move that every other tree along the wall would be removed and the main entryway would be opened up, at the arborist's discretion. The motion **passed** unanimously.

3. Update from City Arborist Chuck Baxter

Mr. Baxter said he got a lot of calls from citizens about downed trees due to damage from the recent microbursts. He said the tree surrounds were installed on Porter Street and work would be completed on the downtown areas that needed them. He said the watering schedule for the current year's new plantings was intense and was done at least twice a week, including last year's plantings. He said the Islington Street project contractor was supposed to be monitoring the Islington Street trees.

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

Mr. Baxter said he would know in September what the final options were for the tree list. Ms. Chag asked if oaks could be part of the list. Mr. Baxter said there were five species and oaks were one of them.

5. Old Business

There was no old business.

6. New Business

There was no new business.

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 14, 2022

The meeting was **adjourned** at 8:54 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Public Greenery Committee Recording Secretary