

**MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
December 14, 2022**

Members Present: Chairman Peter Loughlin; Vice-Chair Richard Adams; Peter Rice, Director of Public Works; Joanna Kelley, City Assistant Mayor; City Arborist Maxwell Wiater; Members Michael Griffin, Dennis Souto, A.J. Dupere (via Zoom), Patricia Bagley, and Deborah Chag

Members Excused: None.

Also Present: City Project Manager David Desfosses; Assistant City Engineer Zack Cronin; CMA Engineer Phil Corbett.

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the November 9 meeting.

The November 9 minutes were unanimously **approved** as presented.

2. Tree Removal Requests.

Note: The tree removal requests were taken out of order; 459 Broad Street and 70 Kensington Road were addressed first.

- **Union St Area Improvement Project (including five removals) presented by City Project Manager Dave Desfosses.**

City Project Manager Dave Desfosses, CMA Engineer Phil Corbett, and Assistant City Engineer Zack Cronin were present. Mr. Corbett reviewed the project area, streetscape and sidewalk issues. He pointed out which areas were affected by construction and said they were working with the City to optimize roadway and sidewalk widths. He noted that some sidewalks were very narrow on the north side of Union Street and that some trees would be worked around. He said there were two large oaks at 130 and 173 Union Street that they wanted to keep. He showed trees by color-coded groups and noted which ones would be impacted. He said the major impact on Union Street was getting rid of the grass strip on the north side as well as trees that were in proximity to homes and would be affected by reconstruction or reconnection of utilities.

Vice-Chair Adams asked Mr. Rice how much lead time there usually was in knowing a project like that was coming along. Mr. Rice said he had known about that particular project since 1997 because it had been a problem area and had to be addressed. Vice-Chair Adams said some of the hawthorns and maples were planted not that many years ago and that in all probability the status of the project was too uncertain to weigh the desirability of planting or not, but in the case of

trees planted at the intersection of Maplewood and Woodbury, several were planted and taken down just a few years later because the roadway was changed. He said enough advance notice was needed going forward so that trees weren't planted and then taken down soon afterwards. Mr. Rice said one of the projects was a water line project and adjusting the roadway was done through public input, so Public Works would not have known that planting trees in that area wasn't appropriate. He said it was a different approach when an urban forest was involved because it entailed more preparation and work. He noted that sometimes it took 20 years for a project to begin, and if Public Works knew there would be a potential bypass going through the area, they then would not plant in that area. Mr. Desfosses said they generally had a good idea of what would happen within 24 months, so they would work with the arborists.

Ms. Chag asked if it would be possible to keep the ginkgos at 107 and 109 Union Street or transplant them. Ms. Wiater said they would be difficult to transplant because they were well established. Mr. Dupere disagreed, saying that they were a tough species and could be removed early in the spring and replanted. It was further discussed. Chairman Loughlin read a letter from the owners of 107 and 109 Union Street, who said the two trees were a part of their lives and asked that they not be removed. Mr. Desfosses said he thought the two ginkgos could be saved by eliminating the parking on one side and narrowing the road.

Mr. Rice said it was a balance, noting that people wanted parking on the street and active sidewalks but wanted to keep trees. He said there were only so many things that could be done with certain road widths. He said residents asked for multiple things but there had to be compromises. Chairman Loughlin said the Committee's role was in advocating for trees and greenery. It was further discussed. Mr. Desfosses said he would take another look at the ginkgos but wanted approval for the other trees in the meantime.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to recommend removal of the red maple at 87 Union Street, the hawthorn at 104 Union Street, and the tree (no species given) at 119 Union Street and wait for further information from Mr. Desfosses on the two ginkgo trees at 107 and 109 Union Street. Assistant Mayor Kelley seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

- **Alex Ross of Ross Engineering LLC. seeking approval to fulfill Condition 1.11 of the Site Plan Review Regulations of selected species to be planted in the right-of-way at 140 West Rd., 1.11. Plantings in the public right-of-way receive approval from the Trees and Greenery Committee.**

Mr. Ross said the proposal went before the Technical Advisory Committee and the Planning Board and that it was recommended that the trees and landscaping design for the aisle off West Road be reviewed by the Trees and Greenery Committee. He said TAC preferred that the crab apple trees that were originally proposed be changed to a more suitable species.

Mr. Griffin asked who removed the pin oaks. Mr. Rice said they were removed before the project. Ms. Chag said it would be a benefit for wildlife. Mr. Wiater agreed that a few trees

would attract pollinators and would provide good shade for the parking lot. He said it was a hardy species for an urban environment. It was further discussed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to **recommend approval** for the selected species in the right-of-way at 140 West Road, seconded by Mr. Souto. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

- **457 Broad St - homeowner request.** Silver maple, poor health, removal recommended by the City. Significant damage occurred during October storm, living canopy failure totaling 50%. The City has pruned tree recently, but with the damage done and the discovery of basal decay, it is appropriate to remove.

Mr. Wiater said what remained of the tree after the storm damage wasn't sufficient to keep the tree.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to **recommend removal** of the tree, seconded by Ms. Bagley. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

- **70 Kensington Rd - City request.** Norway maple, poor health, removal recommended by the City. The arborist crew responded to a splitting leader of the tree and determined removal of the leader was appropriate as the split appeared larger after a recent windstorm. The leader represented 1/3 of total healthy canopy. There is also significant decay and fruiting bodies on the house side of the tree that runs the height of the trunk into where all major unions are attached.

Mr. Wiater referenced the explanation above and said it was appropriate to remove the tree.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to **recommend removal** of the tree, seconded by Ms. Chag. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

- **The following five trees listed are recommended for removal as part of the Union St Area Improvement Project:**
 - 87 Union St: red maple
 - 104 Union St: hawthorn
 - 107/109 Union St: (2) Ginkgo biloba
 - 119 Union St (no species noted).

These were addressed in Item 1.

3. Evergreen Identification Presentation

Chairman Loughlin said Ms. Chag recommended that Mr. Dupere give a tutorial on Evergreen Identification. Mr. Dupere said he would address it at the January meeting.

4. Update from City Arborist Maxwell Wiater

Mr. Wiater said the City was still trying to fill an arborist technician position. He said the last month was spent decorating the downtown area. He noted that he received his Tree Root Assessment qualification.

5. Tree Planting for the City's 400th

Chairman Loughlin read a letter from some school students who had 100 trees that they wanted to plant but needed guidance on the best place to plant them. Mr. Wiater said he would get in touch with the students and coordinate it.

6. Old Business

Note: the following issue was addressed earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Griffin referred to the South Street pin oak issue that was tabled from the November meeting and asked why the tree was still posted for removal. Chairman Loughlin said the Committee had discussed recommending that it not be removed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Griffin moved to **not recommend removal** of the pin oak, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

7. New Business

There was no new business.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 11, 2023

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Public Greenery Committee Recording Secretary