

**MINUTES of the  
City of Portsmouth  
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting  
December 11, 2024**

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

**Members Excused:** None.

**Also Present:** Tree crew members Steve Burns, Morgan Carver, and Fiona Current

---

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

**1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the November 13 Meeting**

The November 13 meeting minutes were **approved** as submitted.

**2. Update on City's Ongoing Tree Maintenance and Planting Plans**

Mr. Wiater said the Christmas tree, ornaments and decorations were put up throughout town and that the team was slowly shifting back to their typical tree work as weather allowed. He said the maintenance and planting plans were unchanged since the last meeting and that there were no significant changes to the species selection.

Mr. Wiater discussed the Portsmouth Public Tree Viewer, a new feature on the City's website that the public could access if they wanted information on the City's tree inventory. He explained the process and said the tree crew would verify that whatever they were working on was represented in the inventory and that they would make changes if necessary. He noted that all the tree plantings from the spring were added to the list and that future implementations would be done in parks and residential areas. He said if any of the residents had trouble with the website, they could contact Public Works.

**3. New Business**

**Year 2024 in review.** The tree crew, Steve Burns, Morgan Carver, and Fiona Current, were present to discuss the quantifiable achievements recorded throughout the year.

Mr. Wiater introduced the tree crew. He said they completed 238 work orders for clearance pruning, planted 153 trees, and removed 153 trees. He said included in the tree prunes were 45 complete prunes, 18 hazard prunes, and 3 retrenchment prunes. He said it all added up to 700 complete work orders for 2024. Mr. Rice noted that a tree request work order was the No. 2 request after a missed garbage collection. He said he was impressed with the work Mr. Wiater and his crew did, as well as the previous arborists before him, and felt fortunate to have such a talented group of arborists.

Mr. Griffin asked what the process was to determine that a tree could be removed. Mr. Wiater said it was based on what the issue with the tree was, and if it was a structural issue, it would be removed quickly. He said the schedule was adjusted daily as other things came up. Mr. Griffin asked about the pines at Hislop Park. Mr. Wiater said they were a low priority but that the trees had no significant structural issues and were just buried too deep. He said it was just a matter of time before the crew would work on those trees. Chair Loughlin asked what number a citizen could call if they wanted a tree pruned. Mr. Rice said the number was 603-427-1530 but that a person could also access the Click N' Fix feature on the website. The work orders and tree plantings were further discussed. Chair Loughlin said the City had always done a high number of tree removals but that he didn't know at what point the plantings started to catch up with the number of removals. Mr. Wiater said he was pleased that his crew broke even and said they usually numbered 85-90 removals. He noted that a lot of the removals were smaller trees that were dead along the roadside and that 20 removals of that type could be done in one day. The time spent getting rid of invasives was discussed. Tree watering was also discussed; Mr. Wiater said it was done through late spring, summer, and fall and involved a lot of manhours, but that a work order wasn't completed every time a tree was watered.

Mr. Rice said the City Council requested that additional resources be added to the Tree Planting Program. He said it started at \$40,000 and would escalate annually until it reached \$100,000. He said it was anticipated that the money would be used to help enhance downtown plantings where there were areas with difficult soils and lack of areas for roots to break out. He said they would look into putting silva cells and improving those plantings and that some of it would probably be contracted out.

Vice-Chair Bagley asked if any tree work would be put on hold due to the Market Square renovation or if the new earmarked money would be used. Mr. Rice said he did not think the tree work would be put on hold but thought they would invest in the perimeter of the Market Square area instead until they knew what Market Square would be. He said it would be a series of requests to the City Council for investment. Mr. Griffin asked if there was a line item budget for outsourcing. Mr. Wiater agreed and said it was for large hazardous tree removals and knotweed control, which were typically items for contractors. Ms. Chag asked if the large planters downtown were managed by the City or were private. Mr. Wiater said the City had oversight on planters within the sidewalk but places like Portwalk Place were private. Mr. Griffin asked where the chips of chopped-up ash trees were disposed. Mr. Wiater said they usually went to the dump.

#### **4. Old Business**

It was Chair Loughlin's last meeting. Vice-Chair Bagley thanked him for his service. She also thanked the minute taker Joann Breault for her work. Mr. Rice thanked Public Information Officer Stephanie Seacord for posting the meetings. Chair Loughlin thanked Mr. Wiater for putting together lists and including a bit of history on each one.

Ms. Chag said the decorated trees and ornaments for the holiday looked great. Assistant Mayor Kelley agreed.

It was noted that Scott McDermott would be a new member of the committee. It was not announced who would be the new Chair and Vice-Chair. Resident Ian Handley introduced himself and said he was interested in joining the committee.

Ms. Chag asked the tree crew what some of their funniest and odd questions from the public were. Ms. Current said some people thought the Market Square Christmas tree grew there year round.

Everyone thanked Chair Loughlin for his time and effort spent on the committee.

**Next meeting:** Wednesday, January 8, 2025

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:25 a.m.

Submitted,

Joann Breault  
Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker

DRAFT