

**MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
January 10, 2024**

Members Present: Chair Peter Loughlin; Director of Public Works Peter Rice; City Arborist Maxwell Wiater; Members Patricia Bagley, Dennis Souto, Michael Griffin, and Deborah Chag.

Members Excused: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, A. J. Dupere

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the December 13, 2023 meeting.

The minutes will be approved at the February 14 meeting.

2. Tree Removal Requests

- **12 Shearwater Drive:** 2 red maples for the Shearwater Dr subdivision project. These two trees are located directly on top of sewer infrastructure that needs replacing and will conflict with new sidewalks. They're almost directly on top of the water line as well. we'll replace the two trees and add 3 more trees along the right of way.

Project Manager Neil Hansen of Tighe and Bond was present. He said the lot would be subdivided into nine individual ones for single-family homes. He said the two trees were in the right-of-way and had to be removed due to utility upgrades. He said they would replace the two maples and add three more trees along the right-of-way. He said he and Mr. Wiater had discussed tree species and decided on three oaks and two Sweet gums. He noted that the power lines were on the opposite side of the street.

Mr. Griffin asked why a third red maple wouldn't be removed. Mr. Wiater said that maple could stay because it wasn't near the utility replacement and wouldn't be impacted by the new sidewalk. Mr. Griffin asked if the Norway spruce would be saved. Mr. Hansen said it would be removed along with other nearby trees, and it was discussed.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend removal of the two red maples, seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

Note: At this point, the committee addressed Item 3, Landscape Plan Removal, because the landscape architect and McNabb Properties representative were in attendance.

- **67 Willard Ave:** 1 Norway maple, poor condition, removal recommended by City. This tree has been declining over the last few years. There have been at least two significant instances of storm damage limb failures in the last several years, most recently a month ago. There is also a wound with decaying wood in the tree's trunk.

Mr. Wiater said the Norway maple was declining and that it required more pruning and maintenance than the other tree on the property, so he thought it should be removed. He said he would inspect the other tree more thoroughly and discuss at the February meeting whether it should be removed or not.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Bagley moved to recommend removal of the Norway maple, seconded by Mr. Souto. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

- **Woodbury Ave at Thornton St:** 1 Norway maple, fair-to-poor condition, removal recommended by City. A significant leader of the tree failed in a recent storm, and this occurrence is prompting this removal request.

Mr. Wiater said a significant leader of the tree fell off from storm damage and the amount of canopy loss was close to 50 percent, so he felt that the tree should be removed.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend removal of the Norway maple, seconded by Ms. Bagley. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

3. Landscape Plan Approval

581 Lafayette Rd at Ledgewood Dr: The ground cover surrounding three Carolina silverbell trees (on private property) extends into the right of way.

Project landscape architect Terrence Parker and Marie Bodi of McNabb Properties were present. Mr. Parker said he worked with the existing plant materials and noted that there was a lot of pavement removal associated with the new development. He said a long line of evergreen trees was removed as part of the planting on the lower side of the development, and some arborvitae and oak trees were also slated for removal and would be transplanted to the road barrier. He said they were all in good condition. He noted that the most recent plan he submitted had none of the ground cover that was shown on the prior plan and that all the trees and ground cover were on private property.

Mr. Rice remarked that a note on the plan indicated that partial wire would be left, and Mr. Parker said it was an old detail and that the note would be changed to reflect that no wire would be left. Chair Loughlin suggested that there be some street trees near Ledgewood Drive. Mr. Wiater said additional shade trees would conflict with all the plantings next to the sidewalk and the new manicured installations and would compete for resources. Mr. Rice said the property owner did a nice job of maintaining the landscaping and that City trees would take away from the owner's incentive of maintaining the area. Ms. Chag asked if there were City trees by the bus stop and bike rack. Mr. Wiater said he flagged that area for some proposed planting sites but there were

underground utilities there and he would prefer to avoid it. Chair Loughlin noted that the work done at that location and on Lafayette Road was remarkable and transformed the area. Mr. Rice said the City invested a lot of resources into that gateway. Ms. Shag said she thought Mr. Parker's choices of plant material were great and that she'd like them to be examples for other developers to use.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend approval of the landscape plan, seconded by Ms. Chag. The motion passed unanimously.*

4. Arbor Day 2024 Update

Mr. Wiater said there was no further action on the issue of transplanting the horse chestnut tree saplings. He said he reached out to the owner who was interested in donating them and that he would continue to pursue it. Regarding the Sustainability Fair, he said he secured two pollinator packs that would benefit lots of trees, bushes, and shrubs.

5. Update of Tree Planting for the City's 400th and 401st Anniversaries

Mr. Wiater said the order for the 150 trees was confirmed and that some of the trees would be planted at Pannaway Manor and at the new skate park, and 80-90 trees would be planted in the City at large.

Mr. Griffin said the committee needed to recognize former Vice-Chair Richard Adams' years of service. He said Mr. Adams' favorite tree was a hackberry and suggested planting one in the City in his honor. Mr. Wiater said he had ordered ten of them and that one could be saved for Mr. Adams. Mr. Griffin suggested that Mr. Adams decide where the tree would be planted. Mr. Wiater noted that ten hackberry trees were planted in 2023 throughout the City and only two of them lived. He said he thought they had poor root systems and that he would do further research on them.

6. Old Business

Chair Loughlin asked how the soil for the new skate park would be prepared. Mr. Wiater said he would add 25 percent of the City's super loam to the parent soil and follow it up with composting.

7. New Business

Ms. Bagley said she noticed two tall silver maples on the Langdon House property construction site and thought they were architecturally beautiful in the winter but that they might be dead. She asked if silver maples were normally impacted by construction. Mr. Wiater said it depended on how they were pruned and that they also had weak wood. He said he would research it further.

Mr. Wiater said his crew would now carry iPads when they set out to do tree-related work. He said a lot of work was done on trees that wasn't captured and that it should be part of the tree inventory maintenance. He said he had been working with the City's GIS department to adapt the existing system they had instead of using the 'Daily Tree Keeper', which would be more costly.

Mr. Griffin said the pathway to the Hall Cemetery off South Street was completed and looked great.

Next meeting: Wednesday, February 14, 2024

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Greenery Committee Recording Secretary