

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

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

Members Excused: None.

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the March 13, 2024 meeting.

*The March 13 minutes were unanimously **approved** as presented.*

2. Tree Removal Requests

- **45 Lookout Lane:** 2 black cherry trees, poor condition, removals recommended by City. One tree has structural issues relating to being a multi-stem tree. The other has a significant lean toward a utility line. **Homeowner request.**

Mr. Wiater said one tree was over the power line and the other tree has structural issues related to the dead half of the tree at the base.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Griffin recommended removal of the two trees, seconded by Ms. Chag. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

- **800 McGee Dr** (revisiting from last month's meeting): 2 Norway spruce, fair condition, removal recommended by City. The root flare of both trees appears below-grade, which can be problematic for overall tree health.

The homeowner Darren Kenney was present and said the two spruce trees had taken a beating recently. He noted that a third tree close to the driveway showed gapping along the base. Mr. Wiater said this tree was removed right after the windstorm due to a separation of its base, which was a general indication that there was a lot of material built up on the base. He said the two remaining trees had the same issue and were just as structurally compromised when compared to an appropriately planted Norway spruce. He noted that the spruce at 790 McGee Drive that was approved for removal at the previous month's meeting was removed, and he recommended removing the two Norway spruces at 800 McGee Drive. Mr. Griffin asked why the trees were more susceptible. Mr. Kenney said the trees were tall and in a wide open space, and there was nothing to stop the wind.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto recommended removal of the two trees, seconded by Assistant Chair Bagley. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

3. Arbor Day 2024 Update

Mr. Wiater said he would contact Dick Adams about suggestions about where to place the hackberry tree. He said the tree would be picked up by the end of next week, and there were other trees for purchase. Assistant Mayor Kelley said she would not be able to attend the Arbor Day celebration but would find out who would read the proclamation and would let the committee know and would also include the information in the City's newsletter and send a notice to the Portsmouth Herald.

4. Update of Ongoing Tree Planting for the City's 401st Anniversary

Mr. Wiater said the trees were received a week early and a lot of planting was done, but then the storm came through and held the crew back to the standard planting timeline. He said the crew would complete the first planting phase on Colonial Drive that day and plant 7-8 trees or more. He said all the tree cleanup was complete and all the hazardous trees from the storm were removed. He said the new trees were in the DPW's bay waiting to be planted and that he would be relieved once they were all planted. He said all the desired trees were received except for the black tupelo, which didn't transplant from bare root very well and would be sourced later this year. He said next spring that the crew would check the status of the newly-planted trees. Chair Loughlin asked how much time it took to plant a tree. Mr. Wiater said the process took about 45 minutes from start to end. It was further discussed. Mr. Souto said he was impressed with the tree plantings and new sidewalks and thought the cleanup at 378 Colonial Drive and on Willard Avenue was magnificent and asked Mr. Wiater to tell the crew.

Ms. Chag asked what kind of trees were planted on Colonial Drive. Mr. Wiater explained that five small and five large tree species were given to homeowners to choose from, like a Japanese tree lilac or hawthorn, and if the homeowner didn't have a preference or did not respond, he would see what trees hadn't been planted and would choose something unique. Mr. Souto asked what percentage of homeowners responded, and Mr. Wiater said it was about 60-70 percent. He said some tree planting sites will be available to plant after Phase II of the Pannaway Manor project next spring on Decatur Road and Colonial Drive.

5. Old Business

Mr. Griffin asked if the committee found anyone to take Dick Adams' place. Mr. Wiater said he told someone who was interested to contact the City Clerk's office. Ms. Chag said she knew two people who were interested and that she would further discuss it with them.

Chair Loughlin said some people had asked him if replacement trees could be planted on the Peverly Hill Road Stables property. Mr. Rice said the road would be realigned and there would be a multi-use path at some point, so the corner radius would get bigger and have a shallower curve that would get on the farm's property. He said DPW would work with the owner to see if he wanted trees planted there. He noted that the City was presently in the easement procurement stage.

Ms. Chag asked what the status of the emerald ash borer issue was. Mr. Wiater said he had been in a few neighborhoods where some trees were showing indications of infestation and had been removed. He said he often drove around to see if he could find infested ash trees. As of January 1, he said DPW started updating all the work they had been doing, which included their tree inventory, and that he would cross-reference what was already removed and would report on any outstanding trees at the next meeting.

Ms. Chag asked if there were any policies to make certain that developers who proposed landscape projects completed them. Mr. Rice said Vincent Hayes ensured that they were done for approved site plans.

Assistant Chair Bagley referred to last month's topic of dogs peeing on trees and said there had not been a decision on how to move forward. She said she felt that education was something that could be done via a notice in the City's newsletter. She noted that some residents did not know that the City even had a tree trust, and she thought they could be made aware of it and all the other tree opportunities if there were a paragraph written about it. Ms. Chag said there was a notice about dog registrations on the City's website and that it might be a good opportunity to include any other information about dogs. She also thought signs could be posted in dog parks or perhaps there was a dog group in Portsmouth that could be contacted. Mr. Rice said it would be great if some of the committee members could generate content. He said the winter had done incredible damage to the grass areas in several city parks and that those areas would be fenced off to repair the grass but would also restrict dog activities. He suggested posting signage for dog owners along the fenced area. Ms. Chag said she also researched clover lawns, and it was further discussed. Ms. Bagley said she saw a bumper sticker stating 'Trees are infrastructure' that she thought was excellent. She said reminders to raise awareness would be and that she would draft something up with Ms. Chag.

Ms. Chag asked if trees would be discussed at the Sustainability Fair. Mr. Wiater said he talked to the State Forest Nursery personnel and that the trees would be ready to be picked up on Friday in time for Sunday's Sustainability Fair. Mr. Dupere noted that seedling would be given away at the NH Fish and Game Day on April 20.

6. New Business

Note: Some New Business items were included in the Old Business discussion.

Next meeting: Wednesday, May 8, 2024

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Greenery Committee Recording Secretary