

**MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
March 12, 2025**

Members Present: Chair Patricia Bagley; Vice-Chair Michael Griffin; Director of Public Works Peter Rice; City Tree Supervisor/Arborist Maxwell Wiater; Members Dennis Souto, Michael Griffin, A. J. Dupere, Deborah Chag, and Scott McDermott

Members Excused: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams

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

1. Acceptance of the February 12 Meeting Minutes

The February 12 meeting minutes were **approved** as submitted.

2. Tree Removal Requests

There were no tree removal requests for March.

3. Arbor Day 2025: Recommendations or ideas for April 2025 celebration

Mr. Wiater said he found out that the City was donating a large piece of pink granite to former Chair Peter Loughlin as a bench for his tree farm. He said the intention was to give Mr. Loughlin the bench and to plant a tree on his tree farm on Arbor Day in celebration of that day. He said he would find out if Mr. Loughlin agreed to host Arbor Day at his tree farm and that he would select a tree and a location for the bench.

Ms. Chag suggested that the Committee consider areas that were different from typical parks for future Arbor Day celebrations, like a small city parcel or a development where everything was clearcut, as an example of the Committee's values. Mr. Wiater said it was a great idea but would depend on what the city had available. He said there were other options to use as a backup in case Mr. Loughlin's tree farm did not work out. He noted that the Robert J. Lister Academy recently moved to the Community Campus and had a maple sap boiler in the parking lot. He said a sugar maple could be planted and that it could be an educational opportunity. Mr. Dupere said he could get a sugar maple, the Green Mountain.

4. Tree Planting 2025 - Discussion on final order after all changes, and review of operations and sites

Chair Bagley said the list was a fabulous list of tree and a great resource. Mr. Wiater said there were only three substitutions other than caliper differences. He said one was a columnar tulip poplar that he would substitute for an alder. Chair Bagley asked where the

large trees would be planted. Mr. Wiater said it was a 50-50 mix of small to large trees for sites where there were no powerlines and that he decided on the planting sites based on what he read online and in publications, urban conditions, and other stresses. Mr. Souto said it was an incredible list and that he was impressed. It was further discussed. Chair Bagley said the Stewartia tree in the fenced-in area of the park on the corner of Marcy and State Streets looked like it needed some care. Mr. Wiater said he would check on it. He said the other substitutions on the list were five Galilean Dogwoods instead of five Celestial Dogwoods, and five Persian Ironwoods instead of the Red Fox trees. Ms. Chag asked about conifers. Mr. Waiter said he intended to plant at least three of them and had sites lined up for them. He said the trees would be delivered April 1 and placed in one of the City's garage bays so they would stay cool, with no lights. He said a half-day of planting would likely start April 1 and then on every workday until all 150 trees were planted. He said Dig Safe flags would be put out a few weeks before and that he would send the door hangers out. He said the trees would be maintained for two years and watered once a week during the spring, summer, and fall except in a drought situation, in which case they would be watered twice weekly.

Ms. Chag asked if trees would be planted in the cages on Islington Street. Mr. Rice said it would be in the spring. Chair Bagley asked how long the ID tags stayed on the trees. Mr. Wiater said they stayed as long as the staking remained, and it was further discussed.

5. New Business

Mr. Wiater said the Urban Forestry crew would be giving out saplings at the Sustainability Fair on April 11. He said they would do pollinator-friendly shrubs and trees and distribute them to residents.

6. Old Business

- **Update on Shearwater Drive tree removals**

Mr. Wiater said the Shearwater Drive trees were no longer being considered for removal because the developer discovered that the gas line in that lot wasn't permitted to be there. He said the gas company was willing to relocate the gas line, so the trees would remain. He said the gas company would also pay for a small path cutting off the corners of that property to relocate the gas line. Ms. Chag said she would still like to have plantings beyond the trees on that corner. Mr. Wiater explained that the new gas line installation would require monitoring due to the silver maples in that area. He said the gas line would not get close to the honey locusts.

- **Update on Miller Avenue tree removals**

Mr. Wiater said he asked Eric Eby, City Engineer of Parking, Traffic and Planning, to inspect the two trees. He said the linden tree near Lincoln Avenue and Miller Avenue posed no line-of-sight hazard, but the maple tree was a mixed bag. He said normally a tree is not considered to be a sight distance obstruction unless it is so large as to completely block the view of an oncoming vehicle, which the maple did, but only

because the privately-owned fence also forced drivers to pull closer to Miller Avenue than required. He said both the tree and the fence were blocking the line of sight but if the fence were removed, the tree would not be a line-of-sight issue. He said the fence did not meet a few ordinances. He said the two maples on the corner of Spring Street and around the corner on Miller Avenue would be pruned to ensure nothing blocked that line of sight.

Public Comment

David Hudlin of 260 Miller Avenue was present via Zoom. He said he didn't think the property owner would want to take the fence down. He said he appreciated that the linden and silver maple would be pruned but still thought there was a safety issue. He said at the previous meeting, an engineering study was mentioned pertaining to the tree and line of sight. He said the other issue was that Miller Avenue was a heavily-traveled street and that a lot of drivers sped. He said the Miller Avenue residents had to back out of their driveways onto Miller Avenue, so it was a challenging street regardless of the line of sight. He said some other streets, like Aldrich Street, had permanent asphalt speed bumps, and he asked if those were installed because the residents were concerned about speed. He asked if the City could do something similar on Miller Avenue to slow the traffic speed and increase the safety of getting on and off Miller Avenue. Mr. Rice said the process typically started by sending a traffic calming request to the Traffic, Parking and Safety Committee. He said having multiple people sign a petition would help. He said the fire and police departments were not enthusiastic about speed tables and speed bumps and would likely overrule that request. He suggested that Mr. Hudlin reach out to Eric Eby at the next Traffic, Parking and Safety Committee meeting in April but thought the best thing to do was to formally make the request and get it into the system. He said there was a traffic calming request form on the City's website. Mr. Hudlin asked how Aldrich Street was chosen to have speed bumps and not Miller Avenue. Mr. Rice said part of it was that the police and fire department personnel used that street more frequently but also because the residents signed a petition and lobbied the City Council. He said the process went through several designs and changes and took 10-15 years. Mr. Rice suggested that Mr. Hudlin call him for further discussion and also contact Mr. Eby.

Ms. Chag said she noticed all the big and little trees in the South Cemetery that Mr. Griffin had been working on. She asked whether it was succession planting. Mr. Wiater said they would do it if they knew a tree would be removed soon, but they didn't need those planting sites because there were many other vacant sites that needed trees.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 9, 2025

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker