MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
February 8, 2023

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

Members Excused: Vice-Chair Richard Adams, Dennis Souto

Also Present: Sue Sterry, Co-Chair of the Portsmouth Historic Cemetery Committee; Landscape Architect Robbi Woodburn; and Arborist Technician Aaron Gilman

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the January 11, 2023 meeting.

The January 11, 2023 meeting minutes were unanimously **approved** as presented.

2. Tree Removal Requests

- Community Campus: (3) ash, city request, poor condition, removal recommended by city. These trees have significant exit holes and woodpecker damage suggesting an EAB infestation. Located to the left of the main entrance.

Mr. Wiater said the three ash trees had exit holes and EAB infestations and should be removed as soon as possible. He said they would be replaced in 2024 with trees other than ash trees. Chairman Loughlin asked if the rest of the trees in that area were ashes and would be removed. Mr. Wiater said they would eventually be removed but that he would address each tree on an individual basis.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend removal of the three ash trees, seconded by Mr. Griffin.*

Mr. Rice noted that the community campus area had been managed by a land trust the past few years and was a nice area for people who enjoyed walking in the woods. He said the city was happy to pay some attention to it. Mr. Wiater said they had spent two weeks pruning trees as well as cleaning up the parking lots and roads in and out of the campus.

*The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

- Public Library: birch, city request, good condition, removal recommended by city. This tree is causing structural damage and issues for the planting box/bench it is growing in. Located near the item drop off circle.

Mr. Wiater said the birch was in a planting box and causing issues with a bench and a big planter as well as doing some possible damage to the building's structure. He said the city wanted to remove it to keep it from causing further damage. Ms. Chag asked how long the tree had been there. Mr. Rice said it was there since the library was built and its location was a poor choice but that it would be replaced with another tree. It was further discussed. Chairman Loughlin said he was concerned about taking down a healthy tree in such a visible location.

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

3. 28 South Street (ROW behind)

Sue Sterry, co-chair of the Portsmouth Historic Cemetery Committee, seeking the approval of the Trees and Greenery Committee to allow tree removals on ROW behind 280 South St. This clearance will allow access to a cemetery that is set back 350' from South St.

Sue Sterry was present to speak to the tree removals. She gave a brief history of the Colonial cemetery, noting that it started out as a family cemetery but now the city owned it and had maintained it. She said the right-of-way was 16 feet wide but that trees and brambles prevented access to it. She said she was asking that the trees in the cemetery that weren't near any headstones and the ones in the right-of-way be removed, which was a total of 25 trees. Chairman Loughlin suggested that the trees to be removed be tagged and discussed at a subsequent meeting. A site walk was discussed.

Petra Huda of 280 South Street said there was an old maple that she had been trying to keep healthy for several years and that city employees had trimmed twice. She said she would be happy to have a path trimmed to the cemetery but didn't want any clear cutting. She said there was no reason to cut down the healthy trees in the cemetery. She also noted that there were trees along the stone wall in the back, so she didn't know how the city would get equipment there unless they got access from the neighbors. She said the city adjusted the property lines when they put in bumpouts on South Street, so her property line came out and was complicated by the easement. She said her concern was how people would access the cemetery and whether it would be maintained. She emphasized that she did not want the old maple to be cut down.

Kim Schroeder of 280 South Street said she agreed with Ms. Huda. She said nothing had been done in the cemetery for 4-5 decades, and the tree growth was providing a habitat for animals. She said there was also a lot of wet area back there that the trees and brush helped absorb. She asked what the mission of the Historic Cemetery Committee was. Ms. Sterry said it was to bring all eight historic cemeteries up to good standards, after which the city would maintain them.

The right-of-way was further discussed. Ms. Wiater said they would clear brush and saplings. He said a lot of the maples in the cemetery were undesirable Norway maples. He said the trees growing through the fences on properties also had to be addressed because they were muti-stemmed and weak. Chairman Loughlin said the trees would be tagged and a site walk would be done. Ms. Sterry asked that the city do a survey first to find out where the 16-ft right-of-way was, and then Mr. Wiater could mark the trees that needed to be removed. The issue of being able to get equipment in the area to cut the trees down was further discussed.

Mr. Rice said the boundary survey would be done first, after which Mr. Wiater would identify and mark the trees that should be removed. Chairman Loughlin said the site visit could be set up at the March meeting.

4. **9 Kent Street Public Right of Way Planting Requests**. Robbi Woodburn of Woodburn & Company is 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 9 Kent St. In addition to the planting, DPW has committed to attempting a transplant of the sweetgum that would be removed because of this project.

Landscape architect Robbi Woodburn was present to seek approval for the removal of a sweetgum tree due to a project. She said a garage needed to be put under a new home and that two trees were in the way of the proposed driveway, including the sweetgum that was a city tree. Mr. Wiater said they could remove the sweetgum and transplant it in the nearby park and would then plant two sweetgums in the same right-of-way location. Ms. Woodburn said they would be going to the Technical Advisory Committee for approval for the driveway and then the Board of Adjustment for a variance. Chairman Loughlin said he saw no reason why the sweetgum couldn't be moved. He said it could be moved immediately and the two new trees would be planted after the project's completion.

5. Tree Planting for the City's 400th

Ms. Chag said the city website for the City's 400th tree planting was a bit cryptic and thought there should be a separate site for it. She said a letter should be drafted from the Trees and Public Greenery Committee regarding the tree planting information. Mr. Rice said the City Manager's office should see the letter before it was sent. He said there was some confusion on the website relative to resident activity and that the language should be clarified to say some residents would be given a tree that they would plant themselves. Mr. Wiater said they would send out letters to homeowners asking whether the owner wanted a tree or not. Mr. Rice noted that people could also adopt trees. Mr. Dupere said trees would be planted in late March or early April.

An Earth Day symposium being held later in the month was discussed, as well as Arbor Day. Mr. Wiater said they would have a proclamation for Arbor Day but didn't have anything else planned other than the 200 trees to be planted.

6. Old Business

Mr. Griffin asked if the contract for the Pannaway Manor sidewalks was awarded. Mr. Rice said it had and would probably occur in April. Chairman Loughlin discussed the attendance list.

7. New Business

Chairman Loughlin said the Governance Committee would be at City Hall on February 13th to discuss strategic planning around open spaces and parks around the city. He said members of other committees with experience handling different aspects of parks would also attend.

Mr. Wiater introduced the new arborist technician, Aaron Gilman.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 8, 2023

The meeting **adjourned** at 9:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Recording Secretary