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

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

Members Excused: None.

Also Present: Project Manager Dave Desfosses, Bob Uhlig of Tighe and Bond

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the February 8 meeting

The February 8 meeting minutes were unanimously **approved** as presented.

2. Tree Removal Requests

- Commercial Alley: honey locust, city/Eversource request, removal recommended by city. This tree needs to be removed to facilitate a total reworking of electrical and walking infrastructure throughout the alley.

City project manager Dave Desfosses was present to speak to the request. He said Eversource and their partners needed to remove the overhead wires in Commercial Alley and run conduit underground to rework the electrical and walking infrastructure throughout the alley. He explained the history of when Portsmouth redid Market Square in the 1970s and planted one conduit, leaving all the wires to go to different buildings. He said underground power will be fed into Commercial Alley and each building will be penetrated underground so that there are no wires in Commercial Alley. Regarding the tree to be removed, he said in the past that they were able to get around the tree when they ran drainage in the alley, but the tree has gotten larger and root damage is almost certain to kill it.

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

- Walford Lane at Banfield Road: several maples, homeowner/community request, removals recommended by city. These trees present a line-of-sight hazard for residents of Walford Lane when turning onto Banfield Road.

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Mr. Wiater said there was a line-of-sight issue for the residents. Mr. Rice agreed that the intersection was dangerous, and it was further discussed. Mr. Wiater said the removal of the trees will make it easier for the machinery operators to maintain the area in the future.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Bagley moved to recommend removal of the trees, seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

3. Landscape Plan Approval

- Tighe & Bond are seeking committee approval to fulfill Condition 2.1 of the Site Plan Approval process for 2 Russell St.; proposed tree grates, planting detail, and planting species will require approval from the Trees and Greenery Committee.

Tighe and Bond landscape architect Bob Uhlig was present and reviewed the proposed work to fulfill the Site Plan Approval process for the project. He discussed continuous raised tree planters, open space, grade changes, wooden benches, planters, and public space. He reviewed the species they wanted to plant and their proposed locations.

Mr. Rice asked if silva cells would be used around any of the raised planters. Mr. Uhlig said they would only be used on individual trees. Mr. Rice noted that the city had good luck with silva cells in the past. Ms. Chag said she had read that the Kentucky coffeetree bark was poisonous to dogs. Mr. Rice said it wasn't. Ms. Bagley asked if one of the perennial choices was an invasive plant. Mr. Uhlig said it was under a street tree and would be contained. Vice-Chair Adams said the species selections were good. Mr. Rice said if there were any significant changes in the project related to landscaping, Mr. Uhlig would return to the committee.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Bagley moved to recommend the landscape plan, seconded by Mr. Souto. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

4. Tree Planting for the City's 400th Anniversary

Mr. Wiater said there was a meeting scheduled for the following week to finalize all the tree planting details. He said April 28 was the planned Arbor Day celebration. Ms. Chag asked how many people had signed up so far for trees. Mr. Wiater said most people just wanted more information but that it would be further discussed at the meeting. Regarding operations, he said they were getting all their materials together and tentatively planting 13 trees at Little Harbour School. Ms. Chag noted that the seven trees near the BRGR Bar looked pathetic. Mr. Wiater said something would be done about them as well as the trees on the other side of the street.

Chairman Loughlin noted that Mr. Dupere gave the committee a lesson in tree identification at one meeting, and he thought it would be a nice idea to do something similar at each meeting. He said Ms. Bagley would discuss Frederick Law Olmsted.

5. Frederick Law Olmsted 1822-1903 Discussion Led by Pat Bagley

Ms. Bagley said she visited her son's college in Massachusetts and noted that the campus was an Olmsted design. She said she also came across a book with all the states that had Olmsted properties, which she passed around to the committee members. She gave a brief history of Mr. Olmsted and said the most influential aspect in his vision was a trip to Birkenhead Park in Liverpool in 1850, which was the first park created for people using the public's money and influenced his Central Park design. She named he believed that parks should be active with people and provide respite from city life. She said he was considered America's Father of Landscape Architecture at a time when there was no formalized course of study until he helped formulate one, and his two sons were among the 11 people who founded the American Society of Landscape Architecture in 1899.

Ms. Bagley asked if Portsmouth's neighborhoods could be connected better and have the same kind of vision as a parkway that Olmsted used, of if there could be other improvements than just planting a lot of trees. Mr. Rice suggested that the committee look at a map and highlight the green spaces and parks throughout the city. He said that, in terms of pedestrian and bicycle connections, there were areas in the city that were islands and trapped by roads, but the city had been fortunate with the expansion of Little Harbor Road. He noted that there were several places in the city, like Jones Avenue and the railroad corridor, to create a bicycle/rail trail and open up a lot of green space. He said the Recreational Master Plan also identified green space and connectivity. He said a map would be a good starting point for the committee to come up with a vision for connectivity or expansion projects. He noted that there were funds set aside for parks and playgrounds. He said the City Council was looking at a parks and recreation vision. Assistant Mayor Kelley noted that the Governance Committee was also considering that. She asked if the Trees Committee had previously discussed whether green space and open park space issues should come to them or to the Recreation Committee. Ms. Chag said the Adopt-a-Spot was a wonderful community service. Mr. Rice said it was hard to do that on a consistent basis and that it was a matter of resources. Assistant Mayor Kelley said she thought the role of the Trees Committee should be expanded to include parks instead of handing it off to the Recreation Committee. Chairman Loughlin said the city in the last 25 years had redone every park and thought the committee had to be vigilant and keep going. Mr. Griffin said he thought it would be beneficial if the committee were actively involved in Portsmouth's parks. Mr. Rice cautioned that the city had worked hard on parks and maintenance and the infrastructure side of things had been consolidated under his group. He said the move to create another department with its own equipment and staff would dilute his department's ability to do the work. He said he did not think additional committees were necessary because existing ones had the interest and ability and wouldn't create separate entities. It was further discussed. Mr. Rice suggested that a representative from the Recreation Committee attend the Trees Committee meetings so that there was cross communication.

6. Old Business

Assistant Mayor Kelley asked that the amount of paper for the meetings be reduced. Mr. Rice said he and Mr. Wiater would work on it.

Mr. Wiater said 3-4 new trees on Peirce island died and that he would inspect all the trees that were planted last spring. He said the trees at Cocheco Park would be replanted in the spring and that the city had inherited that project from Salmon Falls. He said the city would also do the clean-up and tree removals at Spinnaker Way.

7. New Business

There was no new business.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 12, 2023

The meeting **adjourned** at 9:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Recording Secretary