

**MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
April 19, 2023**

Members Present: Chairman Peter Loughlin, Vice-Chair Richard Adams; City Arborist Maxwell Wiater; Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley; Members Michael Griffin, Dennis Souto, Patricia Bagley, and Deborah Chag

Members Excused: A. J. Dupere; Peter Rice, Director of Public Works

Also Present: DPW Representative Marc Batchelder; Scott Richardson of Eversource; Sue Sterry, Co-Chair of the Portsmouth Cemetery Committee

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the March 8 meeting.

The March 8 minutes were unanimously **approved** as amended.

2. Tree Removal Requests

Portsmouth Library: 5 ash trees, city request, removal recommended by the city. These trees are in poor condition (relating to EAB), and when considering the location, it is appropriate to remove them before a more hazardous scenario arises.

Mr. Wiater said the ash trees in the city weren't doing well, considering their locations and the associated risks, and that it was safer to remove the trees before they became a bigger issue. He said there was one standalone tree and a cluster of four trees and that the plan was to replace one or more next spring. Ms. Chag asked if planting could be broadened to include bushes and other greenery. Mr. Wiater said he saw no reason not to plant more groundcover and shade trees if there was an opportunity to do so and that it came down to who would do it. Ms. Chag suggested a blueberry bush for the library. Mr. Wiater noted that they could do an Adopt-a-Spot in the future. He said he would try to get as many shade trees by the library as possible, but what would be planted would be based on what was in the tree nursery. It was further discussed.

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

379 Colonial Drive: linden, homeowner request. Homeowner cites several observations as the basis for removal: trees are completely decayed, branches are always falling near powerlines, and roots are coming towards the foundation of their home.

Mr. Wiater said that two linden trees were originally tasked for removal but one was accidentally removed in the process of removing all the other trees for the sidewalk project. He said he had an official statement from John Brown & Sons regarding it. He said it was unfortunate because the other linden tree was healthy and not identified as an issue for the project. He noted that almost mature 30 trees were being removed from that neighborhood. He read the statement from John Brown & Sons to the committee that indicated that the project foreman noticed that the tree wasn't part of the removal project and stopped its removal, but the city contacted him and asked to have it removed because it wasn't appropriate to leave just that one part of the tree that was left. He said the remaining linden tree is healthy and won't be impacted by the project.

DPW Representative Marc Batchelder said he told the homeowner that the tree wasn't part of the sidewalk project.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Bagley moved to **not** recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Ms. Chag. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

The homeowner Joseph Parisi was present and said he thought the root system would be an issue because it was cut in the past but came back stronger. He said the root was going toward his foundation and gas line. Chairman Loughlin said the committee did not recommend removal of a tree if it was healthy and not causing any problems, especially if it was part of the streetscape. Mr. Parisi asked why he could not have the tree removed when the city had removed numerous trees on Colonial Avenue. It was further discussed. Mr. Parisi asked how old the tree was. Mr. Wiater said it was around 50-60 years old and there were no signs of decline. He said a tree root would go where there was an opportunity for it to go and that it could go into the foundation but would not necessarily do so. The root was further discussed. Mr. Parisi asked who would pay for the damage to his foundation. Chairman Loughlin said it was unlikely that the city would pay for it because if that were used as a criteria, there wouldn't be a tree left in Portsmouth. Mr. Parisi emphasized that the tree was on his property, and it was further discussed. He asked if the city would at least cut the root. Mr. Wiater said he would have to go out and look at the tree.

224 Elwyn, tree on Sherburne: one maple, homeowner request, removal recommended by the city. This tree has several structural defects present, and a good portion of this tree failed in a recent storm.

Mr. Wiater said a portion of the maple tree failed and the homeowner wanted the city to clean up the mess after the storm. Mr. Wiater said it was best to remove the tree.

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

138 Bartlett St: one ash, city request, removal recommended by the city. This request is related to the infrastructure improvement that will be occurring on Bartlett St.

Mr. Batchelder said the project he was working on for Public Works involved redoing the utility and roadway system for Bartlett Street up to Dennett Street. He said there was only one side of Bartlett Street that had a sidewalk from Cate Street to Morning Street and they were going to continue the sidewalk on the south side from Morning Street and connect it to Cate Street. He said the tree on the corner of Morning Street was in the way. He said it was a narrow street and narrowing it more wasn't an option.

Ms. Chag asked if there could be a sidewalk work-around. Mr. Batchelder said an easement would have to be requested and that DPW didn't like to go that route. Chairman Loughlin asked if it was a question of just the sidewalk or if there were pipes underneath. Mr. Batchelder said there were already pipes underneath and that a new water and sewer system would have to be put in. He said they expected to get into the root system when they did the utility work. Chairman Loughlin asked if there was a way to explore how to get an easement. Mr. Batchelder said the project was still in the design phase and that it would go out for bid by the end of May. He said they were trying a temporary roundabout to see if it could get incorporated into the project. He said the potential start of the project was the fall. Ms. Chag said she'd prefer to get a work-around solution. Mr. Batchelder said there was a concern of getting a sidewalk around it at the property elevation. Vice-Chair Adams observed that work-arounds on Lincoln Avenue ten or more years ago proved unsatisfactory in that the trees soon died, leaving meaningless cutouts in the affected sidewalks.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Adams moved to recommend removal of the ash tree, seconded by Mr. Souto.*

Ms. Bagley said ash trees were beautiful and such a contribution to the landscape and nature and asked if the tree could be retained until it died. Ms. Chag asked if the holes could be filled in with big trees instead of small urban ones. Mr. Wiater said the trees would have to work long term because they had to be pruned and topped.

The motion passed by a vote of 6-1, with Ms. Chag voting in opposition.

387 Lang Rd: one maple, Eversource request, removal recommended by the city. There is a large cavity in the upper crown of the tree.

Eversource Representative Scott Richardson was present and said the tree had a very large cavity and leaned out.

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

777 Middle Rd: four ash trees, Eversource request, removal recommended by the city. These trees all appear to be in fair/poor condition in a heavily wooded ROW.

Mr. Richardson said there was one standalone ash and a cluster of three ashes near the condominium association that were in poor condition.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend removal of the four ash trees, seconded by Mr. Griffin . The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

100 Lafayette Rd: one ash, Eversource request, removal recommended by the city. The tree is in poor condition (relating to EAB).

Mr. Richardson said the tree was a white ash. Chairman Loughlin asked if there was an advantage to cutting down a tree that didn't involve wires. Mr. Richardson discussed how the emerald ash borer affected trees, sucking out its nutrients, and that leaving the tree standing would just promote the infestation. Mr. Wiater said that, when he worked in Denver, ash trees were selected to be removed before the emerald ash borer could infest them.

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

Note: at this point in the meeting, Assistant Mayor Kelley left for a previous commitment.

Coach Rd: 6 birch trees, city request. These trees will be used for chainsaw felling instruction in a class sponsored by Primex and will include participants from neighboring municipalities.

Mr. Wiater said he flagged six trees on Coach Road because he thought it would be the least offensive place to host a felling course through Primex.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend removal of the six birch trees, seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 6-1, with Ms. Chag abstaining from the vote.*

3. Tree Grant Planting Requests

182 Edmonds Ave: two large shade trees in front yard (Liriodendron tulipifera, Ginkgo biloba)

Mr. Wiater said it was a good site for two large shade trees. He said a sidewalk project was in the works for all of Edmonds Street, and the tree selection was based on what he had left in his planting inventory. Mr. Griffin asked if the trees were too close. Mr. Wiater said they were initially 30 feet away from each other but there were issues with underground utilities.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to recommend planting the two trees, seconded by Ms. Bagley. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

170 Aldrich Rd: two large shade trees in front yard (Quercus bicolor, ginkgo biloba)

Mr. Wiater said the trees would be planted where the ground was flatter. He said the oak would be closer to the road and the ginkgo would be on the other side.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Bagley moved to recommend planting the two shade trees, seconded by Vice-Chair Adams. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

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

Mr. Wiater said the trees from the giveaway were gone, except for five that he was sure would be taken soon. He said about 120 trees were left for the planting operations and they had four more confirmed sites. Mr. Griffin asked what types of trees were planted on the South Mill Pond. Mr. Wiater said they were smaller varieties of trees due to the fireworks.

5. Portsmouth's Initial Parks Presentation by Dick Adams

Due to the lack of remaining time, the committee decided to continue Vice-Chair Adams' presentation to the May 10 meeting.

6. Old Business

Co-Chair of the Cemetery Committee Sue Sterry was present. She said the survey to verify the access to the Hall Cemetery off South Street was done. She noted that the committee members previously said they would do a walk-through to see what trees would be removed. She clarified that it would be just a path down to the cemetery and would involve no clearcutting. Mr. Wiater suggested continuing the issue to the next meeting so that a site walk could be done.

7. New Business

Mr. Wiater said there was a tentative plan to plant 13 trees at Little Harbour School on Arbor Day. He discussed what time the events would be and said there would be a press release on the city website. He said he would email the press release to the committee.

Ms. Chag said the Sustainability Fair would be held on Friday from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Connie Bean Gymnasium at the Middle School and would have 30 vendors sponsored by private citizen groups and the library. She said it would be informative and that the Garden Club and Public Works would attend.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 10, 2023

The meeting was **adjourned** at 9:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Public Greenery Committee Recording Secretary