MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
July 12, 2023

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

Members Excused: None.

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the June 14 meeting.

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

2. Tree Removal Requests

- ***5 Ruth Street***: 2 black cherry trees, City request, removal recommended by City. The two trees are located behind the house located at 5 Ruth St, on the border of an unmaintained lot owned by the City. One tree has signs of decline in the canopy as well as basal cavities and wounds. The other cherry is a multi-stem cherry with an included base and is showing signs of decline in the canopy.

Mr. Wiater said the homeowner had safety concerns about the two City trees and that the trees have structural issues. He said he didn't think their removals would detract from the area. He recommended removing the two trees and said they could be removed toward the end of August.

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

- ***Georges Terrace Island***: 1 Norway maple, City request, removal recommended by City. A portion of the tree has been in decline during the project, and it is time to consider removal and replanting the site next spring along with the rest of Colonial.

Mr. Wiater said a good portion of the tree's center has started to decline and the tree is under a power line. He said Public Works would plant intensely in that area next spring and thought it was a good opportunity to remove the tree and replace it. It was further discussed.

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

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- ***City Hall Community Garden***: 1 Norway maple, resident request. The maple, while relatively healthy, is growing in a site that is being utilized as a community garden behind the Boiler Room at City Hall and is negatively impacting the garden beds. Some bark is beginning to slough off, revealing a long wound that extends from the base into the canopy.

Mr. Wiater said he discovered a wound extending from the base into the canopy and that the tree was also leaning toward a fence. He said one of the homeowners said the tree was impacting the raised garden beds. Chairman Loughlin asked if the tree's removal would impact the neighbor's shade. Mr. Wiater said he spoke to the neighbor, who agreed that the tree should be removed. He said other neighbors also agreed and that several of them used the community garden.

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

3. Update of Tree Planting for the City's 400th Anniversary

Mr. Wiater said Public Works received two trailers to mount the new compact watering tanks onto, which would free up some of their time. He noted that some Japanese zelkova and oakleaf mountain ash trees were declining and said he would monitor them. Ms. Bagley mentioned that two trees on State Street across from South Church had not leafed out. Mr. Wiater said he would look at them, and it was further discussed.

4. William Whipple Horse Chestnut Seedlings/Four Tree Island

Chairman Loughlin said the Planning Board Chairman Rick Chellman had a connection with the Moffatt Ladd House and said there were four seedlings from the William Whipple horse chestnut tree available to plant. He suggested planting them on Four Tree Island. Ms. Chag asked whether the island was a good place to plant the seedlings, and it was further discussed. Mr. Wiater said he would check on the status of the seedlings and see what stages they were in but advised that they should probably mature a bit and be planted in a park where they could be maintained better. He said if Public Works did the plantings, he preferred that they be planted during the regular planting season. He said they could be made the dedication trees for the next Arbor Day.

Action Item: Mr. Wiater will report the status of the seedlings at the August meeting.

5. Update on Beech Leaf Disease and Other Threats

Mr. Dupere said beech leaf disease was all over New Hampshire. He described what a diseased leaf looked like and said the Forest Service was trying to figure out how the disease was spread.

6. Old Business

Ms. Chag said she sent a draft to Mr. Wiater and Mr. Souto about doing extra postings on ash trees as an educational tool. It was further discussed. Mr. Wiater said it was a valuable thing to do for Portsmouth residents and said he would bring a design mockup to the next meeting but thought something should be done before then. He said he spoke with the Public Works sign person and thought reusable metal removal notices would work better than plastic and paper ones. He said the sign would be the same form but perhaps have some reflective material that would grab people's attention more. He said a notice was posted on the Public Works website on June 14 and that information could be taken from that and put into the newsletter and that he would coordinate it with Stephanie Seacord. Ms. Chag said she would reconsider the wording of it. Mr. Rice asked that the wording have an urgency to it so that people would respond. Ms. Chag agreed and said she would get back to the committee on it.

Action Item: Ms. Chag will reword the posting and report on it at the August meeting.

7. New Business

- Mr. Rice said it was National Parks and Recreation Month and that the Mayor commended all the Public Works crew efforts in maintaining the parks and their associated values.

- Vice-Chair Adams said he received several phone calls from Portsmouth residents concerning a variety of issues. He said a resident on Islington Street said tree branches were scouring the cedar shake roof on the Islington Street Powder House, so he asked that they be cut back. He said Ms. Bronson on 828 Woodbury had a concern about two trees in front of her house. Mr. Wiater said he had spoken to her and the call seemed to go well. Vice-Chair Adams asked if the tree in front of the Starbucks on Market Square should be removed. Mr. Wiater said it probably would be removed. Tree soils were discussed. Vice-Chair Adams said there was a large dead Siberian elm on Middle Road and asked if it was a City tree. Mr. Wiater said he would check on it.

- Mr. Griffin asked why the City's fruit trees weren't blossoming. Mr. Dupere said it was due to the recent frost and noted that peach trees got hit by freezing temperatures in February. Mr. Rice said it was a statewide issue.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 9, 2023

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

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Recording Secretary