MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
August 9, 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, and Deborah Chag.

Members Excused: Patricia Bagley

Also Present: Eversource Representative Scott Richardson; Intern Emily (last name indecipherable)

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the July 12 meeting.

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

2. Tree Removal Requests

Chairman Loughlin stated that the tree removal recommendations would be considered and voted on as a group, with any questions by the members addressed beforehand. Chairman Loughlin opened the public hearing. Resident Judy Miller (via Zoom) had questions about the Hanover Street Garage trees near Hanover Street (listed on page 2) and a dead tree on Hanover Street close to Row 34 restaurant. A city resident was also present for the tree removal for 560 Lincoln Avenue, which was addressed next and voted on separately. All the other tree removal requests were voted on as a group.

Note: the order of the agenda's tree removal requests was not changed, and all comments and questions from the public and Committee (if any) are listed under the appropriate tree removal request.

South Mill Playground:1 red oak, fair condition. The tree suffered a large limb failure in spring 2020 and has had difficulty compartmentalizing the wound. There is a large cavity present.

Mr. Souto asked about the red oak. Mr. Wiater said a large leader was torn out of the tree and another large branch was hanging over the playground. Mr. Rice said the City planned to replace the playground with new structures and the tree's removal would give more space for that reconfiguration. He said he wasn't comfortable with leaving that tree, and Mr. Souto agreed.

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Hall Cemetery: 2 Norway maples, removal recommended by City. These two trees were not identified in the initial posting for the cemetery project. These removals will allow for better access.

Portsmouth Senior Activity Center: 10+ ash trees, EAB related, removal recommended by City. There are many ash trees lining the parking lot of the Senior Activity Center in various stages of decline from EAB.

Mr. Dupere asked if the two dead aspen trees would be identified. Mr. Wiater said he was focused on the ash trees close to the parking lot but would tag the other declining trees near the parking lot including the two dead aspens.

235 Union St: 1 ash, EAB related, removal recommended by City. (There are new sewer pieces on the road in front of this tree.)

209 Middle St: 1 Norway maple, poor condition, removal recommended by City.

599 Middle St: 1 ash, EAB related, removal recommended by City.

729 Middle St: 1 Norway maple, poor condition, removal recommended by City.

761 South St: 1 Norway maple, poor condition, removal recommended by City.

560 Lincoln Ave: 1 ash, EAB related, removal recommended by City.

City resident Patrick Clary of 550 Lincoln Avenue said the tree in question had dead and falling branches and that he'd like it removed and replaced by a different species that wouldn't grow as fast. Mr. Dupere said there were utility wires involved and that utility companies except for Eversource would have to be involved. Chairman Loughlin said the Committee's policy was to replace any tree that was removed but that it couldn't guarantee how quickly any of the trees would grow.

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

377 Thornton St: 3 ash trees, EAB related, removal recommended by City.

Ms. Chag asked if the maple next to the three ash trees would be removed due to a dead limb. Mr. Wiater said he would tag it. Ms. Chag asked if each individual tree could be listed instead of grouped. Mr. Rice agreed that each tree should be posted so that citizens knew exactly which ones would be removed.

Hanover Garage near High St: 4 yews, poor-fair condition, removal recommended by City. Construction has prompted these removal requests.

Resident Judy Miller (via Zoom) asked if the yew trees on the side of the garage were tagged. Mr. Wiater said some of the yews had declined but others had not. He said he was asked to remove four yews for the Hanover Street project. Mr. Rice said the trees would be replanted after the construction project was finished and the trees on the edge of the garage would be addressed at that time.

Pleasant St + Porter St: 1 linden, poor condition, removal recommended by City. The tree has been in a state of decline, and a recent limb failure has prompted this removal request.

Near 865 Woodbury Ave: 1 ash, EAB related, recommended by City.

880 Woodbury Ave: Norway maple, poor condition, removal recommended by City. Tree has trunk and basal wounds and declining canopy.

Near 673 Woodbury Ave: 1 ash, EAB related, removal recommended by City.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend removal of all the trees on the list (with the exception of 560 Lincoln Ave that was already approved), seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion passed unanimously.*

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

Mr. Wiater said he was looking at species that the City would likely to be able to choose from. Mr. Rice asked what the window of selection was in terms of timing. Mr. Wiater said he saw some small maples that would do well under power lines but there were only 10 available. He said other tree species were more abundant.

Mr. Rice moved go give Mr. Wiater the authority to select 50 new trees that he thought would be interesting and then select 150 more traditional trees that had less restriction in terms of availability. Ms. Chag seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Michael Griffin's South Cemetery tree planting and blue bird housing projects

Mr. Griffin did a short presentation of South Cemetery tree planting and bluebird housing. He noted that the cemetery was comprised of five interconnecting cemeteries, which he discussed briefly. He said the Harmony Grove and Sagamore sections were purchased by the Griffin family in the 1880s and maintained by the Society for Perpetual Care. He said he wanted to encourage birds and trees in South Cemetery and that his inspirations and ideas often came from places like Mt. Auburn, the Arnold Arboretum, and others. He discussed what species and methods he would use. He said he maintained about 10 birdhouses in the cemetery to attract bluebirds and that his goal was to plant a total of 100 trees. Mr. Souto asked if tree roots affected the headstones. Mr. Griffin said the headstones were toppled over time by other things, such as coffin decay. Chairman

Loughlin said the City was fortunate to have the Griffin family's interest, and it was further discussed.

5. Old Business

Mr. Souto asked about badges for the Committee members. Mr. Rice said he talked to the City Manager about it and that it wasn't objected to.

Ms. Chag asked when signage would go on the trees. Mr. Wiater said he hadn't been able to do anything yet but he felt that canvassing, like knocking on residents' doors or leaving pamphlets, might be a more direct way of getting the information to the residents.

Assistant Mayor Kelley asked if the Committee wanted to present to the City Council that they were removing a few hundred trees in the next year and a half. Mr. Rice said he preferred to discuss the matter with the City Manager first. He noted that in the last ten years the City had added more trees than had been removed. Mr. Griffin asked if residents reached out to Mr. Wiater with special requests for species. Mr. Wiater said about a dozen or so trees out of the 200 planted were by special request. He said more special requests were anticipated due to the upcoming Pannaway Manor project. Mr. Rice said the City tried to accommodate citizens but that it couldn't please everyone, and it was further discussed.

Mr. Griffin said that in a few years there probably wouldn't be any ash trees left. Mr. Souto asked what other communities did with their dead ash trees in terms of firewood or for people in need. Mr. Dupere noted that Angie's Angels got the wood to the people who needed it and that the City of Dover and other organizations stacked and processed the wood to give to needy residents.

6. New Business

Mr. Dupere said his employer was interested in doing a tree giveaway. Mr. Rice said he'd have to know the dollar value but that it could probably be done. He said he could present it to the City Manager once he got the dollar value.

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 13, 2023

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Greenery Committee Minute Taker