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

Members Present: Chair Peter Loughlin; Vice-Chair Richard Adams; Director of Public Works Peter Rice; City Arborist Maxwell Wiater; Members Michael Griffin, A. J. Dupere, and Deborah Chag.

Members Excused: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley, Patricia Bagley, Dennis Souto

Also Present: Members of the public Bob Thoresen, former City Planning Director; Robert Smith via Zoom, and Ellice Groski-Carlson via Zoom.

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the October 11 meeting.

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

There were two changes: 1) Mr. Griffin said he voted not to remove the silver maple at 88 Lincoln Avenue (page 3) but that it wouldn't change the vote. Ms. Chag said she wanted to revisit the issue. It was further discussed.

*Ms. Chag moved to add the 88 Lincoln Avenue silver maple to the December 13 meeting agenda.. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

Change No. 2: the term ABVC Building on page 2 was changed to AVC Building.

2. Tree Removal Requests

- **End of Marjorie St:** 1 willow, 1 maple, good condition, removals recommended by City. These trees should be removed to facilitate the construction of a pump station at the end of Marjorie Lane. The root systems will be impacted to the point it will become a health and safety concern. Other historic site details weigh on this decision as well.

Mr. Dupere asked if the multi-stemmed elm tree behind the two trees needed to be included for removal because it had a huge hanger. Mr. Wiater said it would be contracted out as part of the construction process. Ms. Chag asked what historic site details weighed on the decision. Mr. Wiater said the willow was in the manufactured embankment and the grade was raised in the 1970s, so that it looked like a lot of that area was buried. He said that tree has been there since then and didn't think it would withstand the damage that would be done to it by the project utilities.

DRAFT

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to* ***recommend removal of the tree****. The motion* ***passed*** *by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

At this point in the meeting, Ellice Groski-Carlson of 51 Marjorie Street called in via Zoom and asked if the trees could remain or be trimmed because they soaked up a lot of water and were a good sound barrier from Route One. She said a storm drain was also in the woods. Mr. Wiater said underground utilities would be installed and trenched out in that area for both trees and it would be a liability to keep them with that amount of root damage because they would decline and become greater hazards. Mr. Rice said the Department of Public Works would ensure that the storm drain was functional and would replant trees in that area.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *It was moved and seconded to* ***recommend removal of the tree,*** *and the motion* ***passed*** *by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

- **78 Coakley Rd** (City property off Borthwick Ave, tree over backyard): 1 ash, fair condition, removal recommended by City. This large, multi-stem ash is showing a fissure between the two stems, with one loaded heavily toward the home. Other ash trees nearby have died from EAB, and while this tree shows no signs yet, the removal of this tree becomes more complicated and dangerous if left alone. This tree is in a remote area behind this address, and it is requested no one enters the property without permission. There is very limited accessibility to this tree from Borthwick Ave. Please refer to the attached photos regarding this tree.

Mr. Wiater said that a seam ran between the two leaders, so imminent failure was probable.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Griffin *moved to* ***recommend removal of the tree.*** *The motion* ***passed*** *by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

- **85 Aldrich Rd:** 1 maple, fair condition, homeowner request, removal recommended by City. Significant storm damage has occurred, despite significant end weight reduction from two years ago.

Mr. Wiater said the tree was pruned but it was just a matter of time before it deteriorated.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Griffin moved to* ***recommend removal of the tree.*** *The motion* ***passed*** *by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

Note: At this point in the meeting, resident Bob Smith called in via Zoom and said he had a tree near his property that had to be looked at for removal. Mr. Rice said the City Arborist would look at it within the month and advised people watching the meeting to contact the Department of Public Works for tree removals.

- **Market St Greenway near Michael Succi Dr**: 9 maple, 3 linden, removals recommended by City. All in various stages of decline, fair-to-poor condition. All sites will be planted next spring.

Mr. Wiater said the site needed to be vacant for replanting next year. He said all the central leaders of the trees were dead and most of the trees had other issues.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to **recommend removal of the tree.** The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

- **Langdon Park near 45 Lincoln Ave:** 1 ash, poor condition, removal recommended by City. This tree is showing signs of EAB infestation.

Mr. Wiater said the ash tree had exit holes and a failing canopy.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to **recommend removal of the tree.** The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

- **404 Middle St on Cabot St**: 1 ash, poor condition, removal recommended by City. This tree is showing signs of EAB infestation.

Ms. Chag recused herself from the vote. Mr. Wiater said the ash had EAB and that he would get a replacement tree for it.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to **recommend removal of the tree,** seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 6-0, with Ms. Chag abstaining.*

- **31 Dearborn St**: 1 ash, poor condition, removal recommended by City. The tree is showing signs of EAB infestation.

Mr. Wiater said the tree was in rough shape, and it was further discussed. The property owner was present and asked if the City could grind the stump out. Mr. Wiater said it would be a surface grind and that he would revisit the issue.

Chair Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to **recommend removal of the tree,** seconded by Mr. Griffin. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

3. Memorial/Donation Tree Planting Requests

***Note**: the two requests were not reviewed in the agenda's sequence.*

- **Dr. Geoffrey Clark**: Mark Falzone of Scenic America is proposing that a memorial tree be planted for Dr. Geoffrey Clark, a longtime Portsmouth resident, gastroenterologist, pharmaceutical entrepreneur, and philanthropist, who passed

away this past January. It is proposed a native tree is selected for planting, and a location should be near the Clark residence on Middle Street.

Mr. Wiater said Mr. Falzone and the NH Democratic Party wanted to plant a memorial tree for Dr. Geoffrey Clark. He said the tree was proposed to be located near Dr. Clark's home on Middle Street but it was difficult to find a good spot for a large shade tree on public property. Other locations were discussed. Ms. Chag suggested a location in front of the public library where other trees were recently removed. Mr. Rice said the memorial tree would have to go before the City Council to be accepted, and if it was accepted, the library personnel should be spoken to about it. It was further discussed.

*Mr. Rice moved to **recommend to the City Council** to accept the donation of the memorial tree. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

- **Sue Thoresen**: Bob Thoresen, a previous City Planning Director, proposed that a tree be planted in honor of his spouse Sue for her birthday. The Thoresens are longtime supporters of the Pontine Theater, and a kousa dogwood is proposed for the grounds located at 1 Plains Avenue, with support of this planting from the theater staff.

Mr. Thoresen was present and said the tree would sit back 25 feet from the street and from the building. He said the water and sewer lines had been marked, the tree was bought, and a person was hired to plant the tree.

*Ms. Chag moved to **recommend planting the tree.** The motion **passed** by unanimous vote, 7-0.*

4. Update of Tree Planting for the City's 400th and 401st Anniversaries

There was no discussion, but Mr. Wiater briefed the committee on plans and progress on this issue.

5. Old Business

The issue of when the Richards Avenue and Hillside Drive tree removal decisions (at the October meeting) would be revisited was discussed. Mr. Rice said the residents of Hillside Drive requested a sidewalk on the north side of Greenleaf Avenue, which would take the whole row of trees out. He said the CIP process was underway and anticipated that a motion would be made by the City Council to add it to the CIP. He said it would be likely that a decision would be reached in 90 days. He said the Richards Avenue tree that was denied by the Committee would be followed up by Mr. Wiater.

Ms. Chag asked about EAB signs. Mr. Wiater said they would be forthcoming and that there would also be folding A-frames.

6. New Business

Mr. Griffin said the trees on Russell Street and Deer Street had all been tagged but didn't know who tagged them, and it was further discussed.

Next meeting: Wednesday, December 13, 2023

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:41 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Greenery Committee Recording Secretary