

**Minutes of the
City of Portsmouth's
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
May 14, 2025**

Members Present: Chair Patricia Bagley; Vice-Chair Michael Griffin; Director of Public Works Peter Rice; City Tree Supervisor/Arborist Maxwell Wiater; Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams; Members Dennis Souto, Michael Griffin, A. J. Dupere, Deborah Chag, Scott McDermott, and Ian Hanley

Members Excused: None.

Also Present: City of Portsmouth Public Information Officer Stephanie Seacord

Chair Bagley called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. She introduced new member Ian Hanley.

Stephanie Seacord, the City of Portsmouth's Public Information Officer, was present, but as a volunteer member of the Japan-America Society of New Hampshire and a member of the Portsmouth Peace Treat Anniversary Committee. She said the Japan-America Society discovered in 2012 that the Foreign Ministry of Japan was doing a cherry tree program and distributing saplings from the Washington, DC trees to various places in the United States. She said the Mayor of Tokyo gave the cherry trees to Washington, D.C. in 1912 in recognition of President Roosevelt's help with the Russo/Japanese War in 1905, orchestrating the negotiations in Portsmouth that produced the Portsmouth Peace Treaty. She said consequently the DC trees are the result of Portsmouth's help. She said Portsmouth received 100 saplings that Mr. Dupere planted around Portsmouth and New Hampshire, and she distributed copies of a poster of all the cherry trees in Portsmouth to the Committee members along with a fact sheet. She said they were planted near all the schools in Portsmouth and at key treaty sites, like the Naval Shipyard and Temple Israel as well as South Mill Pond where the front row of cherry trees was planted in 1985 as the gift of Portsmouth's Sister City of Nichinan, Japan, hometown of the lead Japanese diplomat in 1905. She further discussed the history of the cherry trees and said Mr. Wiater and his staff were doing a great job of maintaining them.

1. Acceptance of the April 9 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Chag said she left the April meeting early and that she was present for only the Broad Street vote. She said her early departure did not change any of the other votes that were unanimous, but she asked that her early departure be reflected in the minutes.

*The April 9 meeting minutes were **approved** as amended.*

2. Tree Removal Requests

Note: The tree removal requests were not addressed in sequence.

- **Marcy St dam near Sanders Fish Market (red flagging):** 2 crab apples, 1 box elder, good condition, removals requested and recommended by the City. Tree roots are growing around the dam and bridge infrastructure and if the trees remain, they will impact the site integrity.

Mr. Wiater said the three trees were growing close to the dam infrastructure.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend removal of the three trees, seconded by Ms. Kelley-Adams. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

- **Connors Cottage, 1 Junkins Ave (southern entrance):** 1 tree lilac, good condition, removal requested by Portsmouth Housing Authority. The removal of this tree will facilitate the construction of an accessibility lift that will allow residents to enter from that side of the building.

Mark Lentz, Facility Director for Portsmouth Housing, said he was working with the City on an access improvement for Connors Cottage. He said the tree lilac was in the way of a new handicap accessibility lift and that the project could not move forward with the tree there. He said he met with Mr. Wiater and asked if the tree could be removed or possibly transplanted elsewhere. Mr. Lentz said he also considered planting a tree in its place, but that there is not a lot of space to plant one. Ms. Kelley-Adams asked if the tree could be transplanted. Mr. Wiater said it would be a big undertaking for his staff logistically and that he did not think it would do well if it were transplanted.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend approval of the removal of the lilac tree, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

- **479 Broad St:** 1 Norway maple, 1 thornless cockspur, good condition, resident request. The removal of these trees will allow the grade of the sidewalk to be corrected and a driveway to be created.

Brian Ratay said he owned the 475 Broad Street parcel and had spoken with the City's Construction Project Manager David Desfosses about what was needed based on the City's requirements for the driveway he planned to have built. He explained that Mr. Desfosses said that, due to the incline between the street and the sidewalk, quite a bit of the sidewalk had to be taken down to gradually grade it to a point where the maximum grade was allowed to make a turndown for a driveway. Mr. Ratay asked if there was a way to remove less sidewalk so that the two trees could be saved. He said he would have his driveway made more narrow and asked if the Committee could work with Mr. Desfosses to minimally impact the area. Mr. Rice said the DPW had no plans to do anything there and that the ADA requirements were such that there could not be a pitch that was side-to-side greater than a quarter in and forward and back, and so on. He said Mr. Desfosses had meant that, given the grade change and the pitch of the driveway and to avoid having a steep cross slope, the driveway would have to be

chased back a bit. He said the Committee would not know if the trees would be impacted significantly or not until that point was reached.

Krista Clark of 479 Broad St was present and said the maple was the only source of shade for her home. She asked that the Committee consider allowing the tree to remain, but she said she understood if the tree had to be removed for the project. Mr. Dupere said a sidewalk panel was raised up several inches by the roots of the tree, and he asked if new sidewalk construction was a Public Works project. Mr. Rice said it was not but that he would try to keep the tree. Mr. Dupere said the contractor could cut the tree's roots to sustain more protection of the tree. Mr. Rice said the contractor could also pull the sidewalk back towards the house to make up for the grade. It was further discussed. Ms. Chag asked if the hawthorn tree could be transplanted. Mr. Wiater said it was possible, but to manage expectations. Ms. Kelley-Adams said the tree was not a topic of removal for the committee to vote on at that time and that it would depend on the crew doing the work. She said it was up to the contractor to do as much due diligence as he could to save the tree.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Kelley-Adams moved to **table** the vote, seconded by Mr. Rice. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

- **462 Lincoln Ave:** 1 little-leaf linden, fair condition, resident request, removal recommended by the City. There is decay and dead bark around the majority of this tree's base. The top of the tree's canopy is declining and not vigorous.

Mr. Wiater said the cause of the tree's damage was due to the long-term effects of 2011 construction. He recommended that the tree be removed and that two new trees get planted on the site in 2026.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to recommend the removal of the linden and to plant a few more trees afterwards, seconded by Mr. McDermott. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

- **178 Highland St:** 1 red maple, poor condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. There is a crack forming in a decayed section of the main stem, and the weight of the canopy is encouraging the defect.

The owner Tess Feltes was present and said she spoke to Mr. Dupere, who convinced her that the tree should be removed. She said the street was a nice residential one and that she would like to have other trees planted to replace the maple. She noted that half of the maple was still alive and asked if anyone would be interested in reusing the wood. Mr. Wiater said normally the wood went into the chipper, but if someone were present to pick up the wood within 24 hours, he saw no problem in leaving the wood there. He said he would contact Mr. Feltes.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Ms. Kelley-Adams. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

- **Indoor Pool Parking Area (Andrew Jarvis Dr):** 2 Norway maple, fair-to-poor condition, removals requested and recommended by the City. Indoor pool staff are

concerned that the trees can harm patrons of the facility. There is significant woodpecker damage to one tree and the other is declining.

Mr. Wiater said one of the maples had damage from a woodpecker and the other maple was declining but not at risk of failing. He said the City asked that both trees be removed because the parking lot would be redone. He said after the lot is paved, several trees could be planted. Mr. Rice said DPW also planned to do some paving for emergency access ADA accessibility to the pool in the summer, so it was a timely issue.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Griffin moved to recommend removal of the two maples, seconded by Mr. Dupere. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

- **16 Barberry Ln (red flagging):** 1 ash, poor condition, resident request, removal recommended by the City. This tree is infested with EAB.

Mr. Wiater said the tree was pruned and some dead wood was removed, but there was no saving the tree and he recommend removal.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend removal of the ash, seconded by Ms. Chag. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

- **Pease Wastewater Treatment Facility:** 1 Red maple poor condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. There is a significant amount of dead bark at the base of the tree, and there is a large cavity in the base with decaying heartwood. There is a crack forming between two included leaders.

Mr. Wiater said the tree had structural issues and if it were to fail, it would cause damage to the City's infrastructure. Mr. Rice said the City had a big construction project coming up in 2026, so the tree would likely be damaged.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend removal of the maple, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion **passed** unanimously.*

3. Recap of Arbor Day 2025

Mr. Rice suggested that the committee members who had not attended the Arbor Day celebration go to the park to see Peter Loughlin's walking area. Chair Bagley said the granite fence was outstanding and that the bench was very well done. Ms. Kelley-Adams said it might be a great place to do a free library.

4. Tree Planting 2025

Mr. Wiater said 163 trees were planted and that the only trees with limited activity were the parrotia tree. He suggested making a change to the Portsmouth Public Tree Viewer map so that the committee can see what trees are proposed for removal on the map.

5. New Business

Mr. Wiater said there were a few missing key components for the compost tea brewer and that he hoped the parts would come in soon. The transfer station and the composting were discussed. Ms. Kelley-Adams said if anyone wanted coffee grounds for their compost, they could bring a bin to her coffee shop and she would call the person when it was filled so that it could be picked up.

6. Old Business

The update on the Board of Adjustment request for the Spring Street project was mentioned. Mr. Wiater said the next BOA meeting is scheduled for one week before the next TPGC meeting. Chair Bagley said she would keep checking on it.

Next meeting: Wednesday, June 11, 2025

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:52 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker