

**Minutes of the
City of Portsmouth's
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
August 13, 2025**

Members Present: Chair Patricia Bagley; Vice-Chair Michael Griffin; Director of Public Works Peter Rice; City Tree Supervisor/Arborist Maxwell Wiater; Members Dennis Souto, Michael Griffin, Deborah Chag, and Ian Hanley

Members Excused: Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams, A. J. Dupere, Scott McDermott

Chair Bagley called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

1. Acceptance of the June 11 Meeting Minutes

*The June 11 meeting minutes were **approved** as presented.*

Note: The Tree Removal Requests were not reviewed in order.

2. Tree Removal Requests

- **239 Colonial Dr:** 1 Eastern red cedar, fair condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. The homeowner will expand the driveway and to minimize the impact on the mature linden, they are proposing the removal of this cedar.

Mr. Wiater said the resident wanted the tree removed because of changes to the driveway and because the tree was stunted by the large linden on the other side of the driveway.

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

Ms. Chag stated that she did not look at the tree's removal as a convenience for the driveway.

- **50 Colonial Dr:** 1 little-leaf linden, fair condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. A storm caused the failure of a main leader of the tree. This resulted in a significant wound that is located below most of the tree's overall canopy and is a structural defect that increases the likelihood of failure.

The resident John Cooper was present and said the tree lost a third of its canopy due to a June windstorm but that he did not ask for it to be removed. Mr. Wiater said he looked at the tree after the storm and saw that the failed part of it was blocking more than half the road and that it had also had a significant tear out. He said the tree crew first pruned the tree to align the canopy, but the tear was so significant that it was about 40 percent of the overall circumference of the tree's leader. He said if the tree was smaller or the tear out was less significant, it might be appropriate to leave the tree. He said the damage also extended into

the inside of the tree. He said he did not recommend keeping the tree, and it was further discussed. Mr. Wiater said a few trees could be planted in the spring of 2026 and that he would coordinate the planting with the resident.

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

- **16 Barberry Ln:** 1 black cherry, fair condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. After the ash tree removal this tree is more exposed and is top heavy with a bit of lean. The tree also appears stressed and declining slightly.

Mr. Wiater said a large dead ash tree was previously removed from the property, which caused the black cherry to be more exposed. The tree also showed signs of stress. He said he agreed with the resident that the tree should be removed because no pruning would help it.

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

- **Russell St:** 4 pin oak, poor condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. Three of the four trees are covered in galls that girdle branches. Broken and removed leaders, deadwood, and low vigor also present on these trees.

Mr. Wiater said all four trees were in poor condition and covered in galls, except for one tree that had no galls but had no central leader. He said the galls shut down the branches. Due to all the work happening on Russell St, he said it was a good opportunity to remove the trees and plant new ones later. He explained that insects created a gall by putting an egg inside the tree, and if there were dozens of galls on a single branch, the tree was not worth keeping. He said the four trees were so close together that they were passing the pest to one another. Vice-Chair Griffin recommended a replacement plan for the future due to all the ongoing building. It was further discussed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to recommend removal of the four trees, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **Deer St at Russell St:** 1 Bradford pear, poor condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. This tree, along with the other pear trees on this road, are significantly declined and likely impacted by fungal disease and environmental stress. This tree needs to be removed to facilitate the intersection reconfiguration that will coincide with the other construction on Deer and Russell St.

Mr. Wiater said the tree had to be removed because the intersection would be realigned. Ms. Chag noted that the tree wasn't a good suburban tree anyway.

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

- **Deer St at High St:** 2 Bradford pears, poor condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. These trees, along with the other pear trees on this road, are significantly declined and likely impacted by fungal disease and environmental stress.

These trees need to be removed to facilitate a new electric conduit installation, related to the Russell St and Deer St intersection reconfiguration.

Mr. Wiater said the trees were in poor condition and had to be removed because Eversource had to run underground conduit to a box on the other side for the new intersection.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to recommend removal of the two trees, seconded by Mr. Souto. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **828 Woodbury Ave:** 1 Bradford pear, poor condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. The tree has steadily declined due to fungal disease.

Mr. Wiater said the resident requested the tree's removal and wanted to plant a European hornbeam.

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

- **Cater Park:** 1 boxelder, fair condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. The boxelder are typically weak-wooded and is not suitable to be next to the playground. Multiple stems is a structural defect that increases the likelihood of tree failure.

Mr. Wiater said the boxelder was growing into the park's fence and also had a structural defect in its center. He said the tree was located right over the playground, so he thought it should be removed. He noted that boxelders broke easily and that the tree was not appropriate for the site. Mr. Rice said there could be a potential shade structure as an alternative.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Hanley moved to recommend removal of the tree, seconded by Mr. Souto. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **Lincoln Ave at McNabb Ct:** 2 Norway maples, poor condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. Both trees have declined significantly likely due to environmental stress.

Mr. Wiater said the two maples were affected by either a strange weather pattern or an environmental shift during the spring because they were fine last year. He said the same thing happened to a lot of the City's sweet gum trees.

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

- **600 Kearsarge Way:** 1 Silver maple, good condition, removal requested by resident. The resident claims the tree is a nuisance by producing an abundance of litter, the roots are impacting the lawn, ruining the integrity of the property, and is too large for the location.

The resident Mary Pombriant was present and explained that the tree morphed into something monstrous over the years and had become a nuisance to her due to its invasive

roots, seed pods, and so on. She said the tree also enclosed the streetlight. She said the tree should be removed and another tree that was more in scale should be planted. Mr. Wiater said the tree was in good condition and that he did not see it as a candidate for removal. He said structural pruning could be done to remove large limbs and thin out the canopy, and he thought the tree was a great one for the site due to the rounded bump out and the fact that it was far away from most structures. He said it could be pruned so that it would not screen the streetlight. Ms. Pombriant said there was a poor lengthy section on the side facing the house. Mr. Wiater said pruning would remove it. Ms. Pombriant asked how the roots coming up through the lawn would be handled. Mr. Wiater said sections of grass between the raised roots could be filled in with mulch.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved that Public Works will do some pruning and address the tree's base and roots and do mulching if appropriate. Mr. Souto seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

- **196 South St:** 1 little-leaf linden, fair condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. This tree is not appropriate for this site; street and structure clearance will be always significant and given the vigorous and low-growing habit of the tree, it will always be at odds with site requirements.

Mr. Rice recused himself from the request. Mr. Wiater said the resident requested the tree's removal. Mr. Rice noted that the tree was a weeping linden and not a little-leaf linden. Mr. Wiater said the tree was not appropriate for the site and that the street and structure clearance would affect it. Mr. Rice said a lot of residents complained that when they were driving, the branches blocked their view. Mr. Wiater said a small and tight tree could be planted.

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

- **City Hall, lower parking lot:** 1 Norway spruce, poor condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. The tree is exhibiting signs of fungal needle cast.

The resident Gary Laurash was present. Mr. Wiater said the tree was showing signs of fungal needle cast and thought it should be removed. Mr. Laurash said the tree abutted his property line and that he did not want it removed, noting that the City already removed a tree in the corner of his property. Mr. Wiater said the disease was so present throughout the tree that it should not be treated. He said the neighbor to the right of Mr. Laurash requested the tree's removal due to a concern about falling limbs. Mr. Souto said the committee did not like to remove trees but when they did and there were other big trees around it, the tree's removal would be less noticeable. Mr. Rice noted that a risk assessment was always done when a tree was brought to Public Work's attention, and if it was a City-owned tree and fell on the property, there would be a liability issue if someone was hurt. It was further discussed. Mr. Rice recommended that Mr. Wiater report back at the December meeting.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved that the Staff will report back at the December meeting once the foliage is off the surrounding trees. Ms. Chag seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

3. New Business

- **Review of Two New Urban Forestry Door Hangers for Tree Work and Japanese Knotweed.**

[Timestamp 54:28] **Note:** At this point in the meeting, Vice-Chair Griffin had to leave for another meeting. Mr. Wiater showed representations of the two door hangers and said the goal was to put the Japanese Knotweed door hanger on the doors of residents who had that type of invasive shrub in the hopes that they would not cut it down and leave the debris. He said the door hanger would also inform residents on how they could treat the shrub and on what the City does in general. He said the door hanger has a QR code link to a NH State article about its treatment and care. Ms. Chag asked if the practice for other invasives was to cut and bag them. Mr. Wiater said he did not know because he did not often get requests for that type of thing, but he said it paled in comparison to the Knotweed. Mr. Rice said the committee's website page and newsletter would include the information. Mr. Wiater said the purpose for the other door hanger was to inform residents of City pruning projects that would be done on the City right of way or their properties. He further explained it and that he will consider creating a general email address for inquiries related to the door hanger.

4. Old Business

No old business was discussed.

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 10, 2025

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

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker