

**Minutes of the
City of Portsmouth's
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
October 8, 2025**

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

Members Excused: Dennis Souto

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

1. Acceptance of the September 10, 2025 Meeting Minutes

*The September 10 meeting minutes were **approved** as presented.*

2. Tree Removal Requests

Note: The tree removal requests were not addressed in sequence. 141 Colonial Dr was addressed first.

- **1140 South St:** 1 American elm, fair condition, removal requested by resident. The resident at 1126 South St is requesting the tree be removed due to difficulty seeing traffic on South St. The tree has a thinning canopy and a bit of deadwood.

[Timestamp 20:17] Lauren Greenwall was present on behalf of her father, Tony Greenwall, the resident of 1140 South Street. Ms. Greenwall said the neighbor wanted the tree removed but that she thought the neighbor should consider other alternatives instead of removing a healthy tree. Mr. Wiater said he told the neighbor who requested the tree's removal that he would not recommend removal because it seemed to be more of an issue with South Street than the tree. He said it would be different if the tree were very close to the road. The committee also noted that there were not many American elms left in the city.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to table the request with the caveat that City Staff will look at the site distances. Vice-Chair Griffin denied the request to table it.*

It was further discussed. Mr. Rice said that tabling the request would allow the review of the site distances and would not entail taking the tree down.

Mr. Rice again moved to table the request with the caveat that City Staff will look at the site distances. Mr. Wiater seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0.

- **141 Colonial Dr:** 1 Norway maple, fair condition, removal requested by resident. The resident is requesting tree removal because they feel it is not safe, and a previous house-facing leader failed some time ago.

The resident Christine Samra was present and said she was concerned about safety issues because a large branch dropped a few years ago and the tree roots were getting into the driveway. She said she wanted to replace the driveway eventually. Vice-Chair Griffin said he did not think the tree deserved to be removed. Mr. Wiater said it was a rough summer but did not think the tree was a viable candidate for removal. Mr. Rice said the committee's goal was to maintain a tree as much as possible and noted that Mr. Wiater was a certified tree risk assessor. It was further discussed. Mr. Wiater said City Staff could do pruning that would pull the canopy inward. Ms. Samra said she was also concerned about the new driveway and said she would plant a replacement tree. Mr. Wiater said some root pruning could be done but not much because the tree was close to the driveway. He recommended pruning the tree and going back to check the roots when the driveway was excavated.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to take it out of order, seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams.*

Mr. Rice moved to table the request so that City Staff could prune the tree and Mr. Wiater could report back to the committee. He also suggested exploring a replacement tree if it seemed that the tree might fall in a year or two. Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0.

- **224 Elwyn Ave (on Sherburne Ave):** 1 Norway maple, fair condition, removal requested by resident. A limb fell into the resident's driveway on 9-25-25, and they would like it removed for safety reasons. The top portion of the canopy is declining and there are vertical minor vertical cracks and exposed wood.

[Timestamp 39:52] Mr. Wiater said a moderately-sized branch recently fell onto the driveway. He said if the tree were removed, he wanted to group it with the maple on the left that was leaning heavily toward the other property. He said he was hesitant to remove the Norway maple, however, because of the other tree and thought it should just be pruned. He said the tree wasn't at risk of failing and that he had not seen any decay in either tree.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams moved to have City Staff do heavy pruning on both trees, seconded by Mr. Dupere. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0.*

- **508 Richards Ave (in backyard):** 1 crab apple, poor condition, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. There is a large cavity in the base of this tree, there are large dead branches, and it overhangs a neighboring driveway. A branch failed several years ago and the resident is concerned about overall safety. See Meeting Packet for images of the trees or review using the Portsmouth Public Tree Viewer to sort for trees proposed for removal.

[Timestamp 33:27] Carol Milcher of 480 Richards Ave was present and noted that her great-grandfather planted the tree around 1914. She said the tree was not in good condition but a screech owl had a home in it, so she wanted the tree to be pruned instead of removed. Mr.

Wiater said the City owned the tree by eminent domain and that there was a large cavity in the tree's base but thought the tree could be pruned but noted that pruning would not alleviate all the risk that the tree was presenting. He said if the tree fell, it would hit the driveway or garage. Mr. Rice suggested topping the tree and leaving the trunk so if it did fall, it would not fall too far. Mr. Wiater said there was potential for reduction in the canopy and thought the tree could be preserved.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams moved that the tree be pruned instead of removed, seconded by Mr. Rice. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0.*

3. New Business

- **Discussion on the Topic of Miyawaki Forests, or “Pocket Forests”**

[Timestamp 44:10] Mr. Wiater distributed a diagram about what a Miyawaki forest is and what it consists of. He said the former city arborist Chuck Baxter had previously considered a pocket forest project years ago when the city of Cambridge, MA had a Miyawaki Forest installed by the SUGi Project in 2021. The intent was to create a space where mostly native species were planted closely together at the same time. He said it would take a few years for it to become a self-sustaining micro forest. He suggested that it be planted somewhere where there were not already a lot of trees. Mr. Rice said he knew a teacher who wanted a Miyawaki forest as a learning tool for school children. Chair Bagley said children could be involved in that project and that it would benefit them, the climate, and the community aspect. Ms. Chag said it could be a living classroom for the children. The cost of the soil and other materials was discussed. Mr. Rice noted that there was a grant program.

Action Item: Mr. Wiater said he would meet with the teacher and report back.

- **SUGi Project**

This topic was included in the previous discussion.

- **Discussion on Receiving Arboretum Status for Park or Facility**

[Timestamp 54:25] Mr. Wiater said the City would qualify for a Level One status and would need to have 25 or more tree species, have a maintenance plan for them, and there would have to be one public event a year. He suggested South Mill Park for a location and said the committee's annual Arbor Day event could be held there. Other committee members agreed.

- **ArbNet Accreditation Program**

This topic was included in the previous discussion.

- **Tree Signage for Portsmouth NH 400th Trees**

[Timestamp 58:58] Mr. Wiater said the DPW interns had inventoried and labeled trees in the past with small hanging plaques and was sure that something similar could be done for tree signage for at least the 200 trees that the City planted. He suggested discussing it at the next meeting when Mr. Souto was present.

4. Old Business

Vice-Chair Griffin said a project was recently approved that extended behind the swimming pool to Ledgewood Avenue, and he asked if Mr. Rice had looked at the site plans for the project. Mr. Rice said it was still in discussion and did not think it had been approved yet.

Next meeting: Wednesday, November 12, 2025

The meeting **adjourned** at 9:02 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker