

“There is not a village in America, however badly planned at first, or ill-built afterwards, that may not be redeemed, in a great measure, by the aid of shade trees in the streets ... and it is never too late or too early to project improvements of this kind.”

Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852)

AGENDA

**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH
TREES AND PUBLIC GREENERY COMMITTEE
8:00 AM – Wednesday, January 14, 2026
City Hall, Conference Room A and via Zoom**

To register in advance for this webinar via Zoom:

[V w](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mjH5trvTbWsUXnC2AD)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

1. Acceptance of Minutes for December 10, 2025 meeting
2. Removal requests: None.
3. Old Business:
Conversation regarding City Hall spruce, including review of a third-party tree risk assessment.
4. New Business:
2025 year in review, by the numbers.
5. Public Comment

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Bagley, Chair

**Minutes of the
City of Portsmouth's
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
December 10, 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; A. J. Dupere (via Zoom), Dennis Souto, Deborah Chag, Scott McDermott and Ian Hanley

Members Excused: None.

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

1. Acceptance of the November 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes

The November 12 meeting minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

2. Tree Removal Requests

- **45 Pleasant Point Rd:** 2 river birches, fair-to-good condition, removal requested by resident. The new owner of this property is planning a renovation and will include the removal of these trees. They are multi-stem trees with typical dieback. (See included proposed landscaping plan.)

City resident Reverend Betsy Tabor was present and said she bought the house to the left of 45 Pleasant Point Rd. She said there had been a lot of development in the area in the last ten years and approximately 50 trees were removed. She said the canopy of trees needed protection and that she would like to see the two birches replaced. Mr. Wiater said the landscape architect Robbie Woodburn was supposed to be at the meeting. Mr. Rice asked which trees were being removed. Mr. Wiater said the previous owner likely planted four birches in a row on the property line/right-of-way and that the two trees to be removed flanked the center walkway. He said based on the landscape plan there was no plan to replace those two trees. The construction in the area was discussed. Mr. Wiater suggested postponing the tree removal request to the January meeting when Ms. Woodburn could be present to provide more information.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams moved to postpone the discussion to the January meeting. Mr. McDermott seconded. The motion passed unanimously.*

Note: The Committee then took the agenda out of order and addressed Item #4, the Norway spruce removal request in the City Hall lower parking lot.

- **46 McNabb Ct:** 1 Norway maple, fair condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. The root flare is buried, and the soils are likely compacted due to location and use. It will be exposed to more external forces with the removal of the two other trees and its elevated location. The tree is within striking distance of several homes.

Mr. Wiater said the maple was brought up at the previous meeting and there were concerns about it remaining after the nearby two trees next to it were removed. He said the maple should be removed due to the lack of root flare and the amount of compacted soil around it that was likely caused by construction backfill. He said the tree was exposed on top of a small hill between houses, which could increase wind loading. He said it also made sense to remove the maple because the two trees near it were being removed. Mr. Souto said the tree removals would leave a big hole. Mr. Wiater said two large shade trees could be planted near the end of McNabb Ct.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to recommend the removal of the Norway maple, seconded by Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams. The motion passed by a vote of 9-1, with Vice-Chair Griffin voting in opposition.*

The nearby resident Derek Rolfe phoned in via Zoom and said the tree's removal would make the area feel barren due to the other two trees being removed. He asked if it was possible to keep the tree. The surrounding views were also discussed, as well as whether planting another tree in the high location would be feasible. Mr. Wiater said he saw no reason not to plant a tree up that high and thought a few rocks could be moved. Vice-Chair Griffin said his concern was the City's liability of a major erosion washout. He said he did not know how long the tree's roots would hold that soil condition. Mr. Rice disagreed and said a few Norway spruces were removed before in the area and that the soil had held together well for over ten years. It was further discussed. Mr. Wiater said the Norway would be more exposed due to the removal of the other two trees and that he did not think it was a good site for a single tree to be in because of the site defect with the buried roots and the multi-stem nature of the tree's structure. Mr. Dupere said a retaining wall could be built on the steep slope so that a few evergreens could be planted.

The **amended** vote was:

Mr. Souto moved to recommend the removal of the Norway maple, seconded by Ms. Kelley-Adams. The motion passed by a vote of 7-3, with Mr. McDermott, Chair Bagley, and Ms. Chag voting in opposition.

- **485 Union St:** 1 pin oak, poor condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. A previous leader failure on the house-side of the tree is of concern, and there is a decent sized wound as a result.

Mr. Wiater said the pin oak had a leader failure and there was a crack forming between the two leaders. He said he and the resident were concerned and thought it should be

removed. He said the tree would otherwise have to be extensively pruned, which he did not think would be the solution because the tear out was significant.

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

- **City Hall, lower parking lot (Revisiting from 8/13/25, updated):** 1 Norway spruce, fair condition, removal requested by resident. The tree is exhibiting signs of fungal needle cast. Decent foliage exists throughout tree, though foliage loss will likely continue. There are no structural issues observed from the ground.

Resident Gary Laurash of 18 Mount Vernon Street was present and said the tree directly abutted his property. He said he was at the August meeting when the issue was first discussed. Mr. Wiater said nothing had changed and that there was no structural issue to the tree and that it could continue to defoliate. He said it was in the middle of a larger cluster of trees and was declining, but he thought it could remain for several more years and then be re-addressed when all the needles were gone. Donna Acox of 14 Mount Vernon Street said she had been having the tree looked at since she bought her house in 2017 and that Micum Davis of Cornerstone Tree Care had thought the tree should have been removed in August 2019. She said she also contacted the former City arborist Corin Hallowell about it in 2019. She said her main concern was that her house was in the striking zone of the tree if the tree had a domino effect with a nearby one. Mr. Wiater agreed that the tree is declining and said there was a lot of decomposing material at the base of the tree and air spading could be used to investigate the base of the tree. He asked what Mr. Hallowell said about the tree in 2019. Ms. Acox said the action was tabled but two other trees were removed due to rot and access problems. Mr. Laurash said he did not feel that the tree should be removed because it looked the same as it had for ten years. It was further discussed. Mr. Rice suggested postponing the tree removal request so that he could get a second opinion from the tree expert Mr. Davis, which would give the Committee more information as to whether the tree should be removed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to postpone the vote until he had an opportunity to speak with Mr. Davis and get his opinion. Assistant Mayor Kelley-Adams seconded.*

There was further discussion. Mr. Dupere said digging around the base of the tree might reveal some details. Mr. Wiater said he was fine with postponing the request until the January meeting, noting that more investigation would be helpful.

The motion passed unanimously.

3. Old Business

No Old Business was discussed.

4. New Business

Ms. Chag said she and Vice-Chair Griffin would present information at the January meeting about tree identification. She said they were trying to construct QR codes on trees between the South Cemetery and the North Cemetery for the public to enjoy.

Mr. Souto said he gave a talk about trees at the Portsmouth Senior Center. He said people asked a lot of questions and that he would be happy to do another one. The Committee discussed giving talks at the Portsmouth Library and Community Campus. They also discussed educating and working with developers and architects to save more trees in Portsmouth. Ms. Chag said she would bring Eversource information to the January meeting about pruning trees amid power lines.

5. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Next meeting: Wednesday, January 14, 2026

The meeting **adjourned** at 8:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker

Time Out New York

News

Central Park has sadly chopped down the “Furever Tree,” a beloved pet memorial

A secret holiday tradition for New Yorkers and their pets has come to an end

Wednesday August 20 2025



Written by Laura Ratliff

Wednesday August 2025



Shutterstock | New Yorkers walking their dogs in Central Park

Central Park has lost one of its most secret—and sweetest—traditions. The so-called “Furever Tree,” an 18-foot Hinoki false cypress tucked deep inside the Ramble, has been cut down after more than four decades of service as New York’s unofficial pet memorial.

For years, dog owners, cat lovers and even squirrel enthusiasts flocked to the tree every holiday season to hang laminated photos, ornaments and notes for four-legged friends no longer with us. It was a shrine, a Christmas tree and a community hug rolled into one. Milo the “Good Boy,” Sherman the turtle and countless city dogs all had their spot on its branches.

But after months of decline, the Central Park Conservancy quietly removed the tree in August. “It was clear the tree had died due to a combination of environmental stress and wear on the landscape,” a Conservancy spokesperson confirmed to *West Side Rag*. Translation: drought, rough winters soil compaction, and—yes—possibly too much love.

Adding to the problem? Ashes. In recent years, a sign appeared near the tree pleading with visitors not to scatter pet remains at its roots, warning that “ashes are toxic to the tree.” Some caretakers now believe that practice may have accelerated its demise. One longtime visitor, Peggy Fields Goldstein, put it bluntly: “The pet memorial tree...apparently was the demise of that beautiful evergreen tree. It was loved to death.”

The loss stings particularly hard for Marianne Larsen, the tree’s unofficial “Keeper,” who along with fellow volunteer Larry Closs has helped tend the memorial for years. “For 45 years, the Furever Tree has been a healing place for pet owners to remember, honor and celebrate their beloved pets,” they said, adding that they’re already exploring ways to keep the tradition alive.

The Conservancy echoed that commitment, promising to work with the community on a “thoughtful, sustainable alternative” that won’t compromise the park’s landscape. Which means there’s hope that, someday, a new tree or memorial might sprout to take its place.

Until then, New Yorkers will have to say goodbye to one of the city’s quirkiest, most heartfelt holiday rituals. The Ramble may still be full of winding paths and secret corners—but one of its best-kept secrets has gone to the great dog park in the sky.



January 7, 2026

City of Portsmouth Tree Assessment

Prepared For:

City of Portsmouth
Maxwell Wiater
Arborist Foreman

Site Address:

Portsmouth, NH City Hall
1 Junkins Ave,
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Prepared By:

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City of Portsmouth Tree Assessment

Introduction

Background or History

I was contacted by Max Wiater, an arborist foreman for the City of Portsmouth, to evaluate a tree located near the Portsmouth, NH, City Hall. Mr. Wiater was responding to concerns about the tree's health and safety and was seeking an assessment of the tree from a qualified, unbiased arborist. We set up an appointment for December 18, 2025, and met at the site to show me the location of the tree. I performed a tree risk assessment of the tree, and the following are my observations and recommendations.

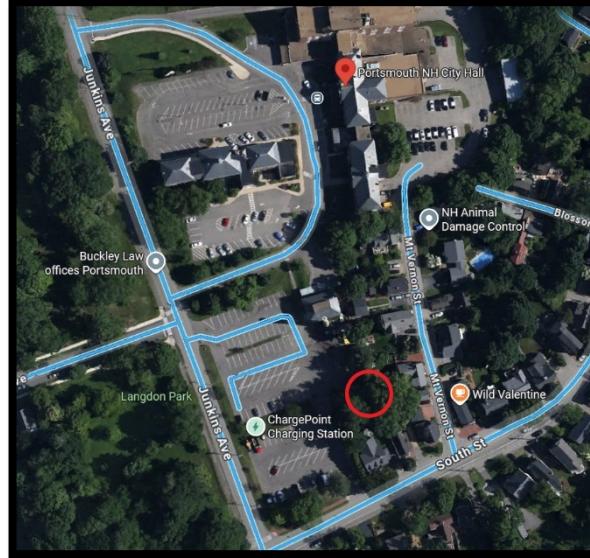


Photo 1: A Google Satellite map of the Portsmouth City Hall property, the red circle is where the subject tree is located.

Assignment

- Inspect the tree for any health and/or safety concerns, and assess the risk of the tree failing and striking nearby people, vehicles, or structures.
- Document all observations and recommendations in a written report.

Limits of the Assignment

The inspection was conducted from the ground; no aerial inspection was performed, nor a subsurface root inspection. The visual observations provided sufficient information to assess the health and safety of the tree and allowed me to provide viable recommendations.

Purpose and Use of the Report

The purpose of this report is to assess the current condition of the subject tree located on the City of Portsmouth property and provide any necessary mitigation recommendations. The report can be used and shared by Mr. Wiater, the City of Portsmouth, and whoever is needed to address any issues found.

City of Portsmouth Tree Assessment

Observations

Site Inspection

The subject tree is a 21-inch (") Norway spruce, *Picea abies*, and is located South of the city hall, near the lower parking lot (Photos 1 & 2). The tree is located between the parking lot and a fence that separates the city property from the neighboring residential properties.

There is a cluster of mature deciduous trees that surrounds the subject tree, and competes with it for light, water, and nutrients (Photo 3). The trees that are encroaching are two Norway maple trees and a large Silver maple, located right side of the subject tree in Photo 3. The Norway maples are shown in



Photo 3: A photo of the subject tree taken during the site visit on 12/18, 2025. Trees to the right and left of the tree are Norway maples, the large tree rear is a Silver maple.

Photo 2: A closer Apple satellite view of the subject tree circle in red.

Photo 4; they are located on either side of the subject tree. The large tree rear of the subject tree is a Silver maple.

As I approached the tree, I inspected the trunk and root flare of the tree. The tree had a healthy taper at the base of the trunk (Photo 4), and I could see no indications of fungal decay or lifting of the root plate. During inspection of the trunk of the tree, I did not observe any indication of decay, insect activity, or structural issues (Photos 5 and 6). The subject tree had a straight and upright **excurrent** growth pattern with no lean to the trunk or crown of the tree.

The tree's crown appeared to be less dense than that of a Norway spruce that has grown under ideal conditions, but there were no indications of dieback occurring (Photos 3, 5, and 6).

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There are some small dead branches on the lowest interior portion of the crown, which are near the encroaching maple branches (Photos 5 and 6). I observed that the tree had a crotch between two leaders, approximately 30 feet from the ground (Photo 7)

Photo 4: A view of the trunk, and root flare, there is not indications of insect or disease activity, the root plate is not lifted due to wind damage.



Photo 5: This photo was taken of the North side of the trunk, I could see no insect or disease activity.



Photo 6: This photo was taken of the Southwest side of the trunk, there is no indications of insect or disease activity.

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City of Portsmouth Tree Assessment

Photo 7 shows the crotch between the two leaders; the leader to the right is dominant and continues to the top of the tree. The leader to the left is smaller and ends approximately 20 feet above the crotch between the leaders. I can see that there is no **included bark** between the leaders, or indications of damage or decay. There is a small **overextended branch** near the top of the secondary leader, and the Norway maple that is located on the left side of the tree in Photo 3.



Photo 7: A close view of the subject tree where the trunk divides in to two leaders.

Information from Other Sources

I used Google Street View to observe the subject trees' condition over time. Photo 8 was taken in 2011; the tree appears healthy with a fairly full crown. There is another Norway spruce on the right side of the tree; it appears to be in fairly good condition. Photo 9 was taken in 2017, and it shows little change in the subject tree's condition. The Norway spruce on the right side of the subject tree appears to be stressed, with a thinner canopy than in the 2011 photo. Photo 10 was taken in 2019, and it also shows little change in the subject tree's condition. The Norway spruce on the right is dead in this photo. Photo 11 was taken in 2024, and it also shows little change in the subject tree's condition. The Norway spruce to the right has since been removed.

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Photo 8: A 2011 Google Street View of the subject tree which is circled with red. The evergreen tree to the right of the subject tree is also a Norway Spruce, it looks healthy in this photo.



Photo 9: A 2017 Google Street View of the subject tree circled in red. The Norway spruce located on the right side of the subject tree is showing indications of stress.

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Photo 10: A 2019 Google Street View of the subject tree circled in red. The Norway spruce to the right is dead, and still standing with no signs of any structural failures.



Photo 11: A 2024 Google Street View of the subject tree circled in red. The Norway spruce that was located on the right side of the subject tree has been removed.



City of Portsmouth Tree Assessment

Discussion

Site Inspection

I performed a thorough inspection of the subject tree during my site visit and could find no major health or safety concerns. The tree appears to be in fair condition and has a couple of minor structural issues. The division between the two upper leaders is one of the minor structural issues; I did not observe any included bark. This indicates that there is a strong connection between the leaders, which is less likely to fail under extreme weather conditions than one with included bark between the leaders. The second issue is an overextended branch located near the top of the secondary leader. Branches with these issues are more susceptible to failure during wind events; this issue on the subject tree can easily be rectified with pruning.

Information from Other Sources

I used Google Street View to observe the health of the subject tree between the years of 2011 and 2024. The tree has shown only minor changes over this period, which can be attributed to the encroachment by the neighboring Norway and Silver maples. As the subject tree is surrounded on most sides by maples, its growth rate is being suppressed by the competition for water, light, and nutrients. In these Street View photos, I also observed a nearby Norway spruce that in 2011 appeared to be fairly healthy. Over the following photos, the health of the tree declined, which led to the death of the tree. This tree showed signs of stress in 2017 and eventually died before 2019. It had a higher exposure to wind than the subject tree, but still did not show any signs of failure, even after it was stressed and died. This shows the structural strength of the species and its susceptibility to wind damage. The subject tree is less exposed to direct wind as it is surrounded by the neighboring maple trees. Although the tree is being suppressed by these trees, it is less susceptible to storm damage and/or failure.

Conclusions

The 21-inch Norway spruce is not showing any indications of previous storm damage and is protected from direct wind by the neighboring maple trees. The maple trees are also suppressing the tree's growth and competing with it for water and nutrients, which will continue to stress the tree over time. Despite these conditions, I could find no major structural issues that could lead to the failure of the tree. In my professional opinion, there are no structural or health concerns that would require removal. The issues I observed can be mitigated using proper pruning methods.

City of Portsmouth Tree Assessment

Recommendations

- Prune the deadwood 2" or larger to protect damage to a nearby vehicle, and the fence located beneath the tree.
- Have a qualified arborist inspect the junction between the two leaders for any signs of structural damage or decay.
- Have the tree inspected by a qualified arborist regularly, I recommend every 2 years, and after a major weather event such as a major storm or drought.

All work recommended in this document follows the ANSI A300 Tree Care Standards. All work performed as a result of this document should follow the same standards and comply with ANSI Z133 safety requirements for arboricultural operations.

ANSI A300 Tree Care Standards, including:

(Part 1) Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant Management - Standard Practices, Pruning.

(Part 5) Managing Trees During Construction

Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), Manchester, NH 03101

ANSI Z133 2017 - American National Standard for Arboricultural Operations-Safety Requirements. International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), Champaign, IL 61826

Glossary

Excurrent Growth is a tree form that develops when the central leader outgrows the lateral branches, forming a narrow, cone-shaped form with a clearly defined central trunk. The regulation of the form is by an actively growing apical bud (meristem). This is common for most gymnosperms, such as conifers.

Included bark is bark pinched or embedded between two adjoining stems or between a branch and trunk.

Overextended branches extend outside the normal crown area.