

**Minutes of the City of Portsmouth's  
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting  
October 14, 2026**

**Members Present:** Chair Patricia Bagley; Vice-Chair Michael Griffin; Public Works Director Peter Rice; A. J. Dupere, Deborah Chag, Scott McDermott and Ian Hanley.

**Members Excused:** Dennis Souto, Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley-Adams

**Also Present:** Maxwell Wiater, City Tree Supervisor/Arborist

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

**1. Acceptance of the September 9, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

*Ms. Chag moved to approve the September 9 meeting minutes as amended, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

**2. Tree Removal Requests**

- **Ledgewood Dr:** all trees in the right of way will be removed to develop the lot. Species will include pine, maple, cherry, beech, birch, and oak. See plans in packet for additional context.

Mr. Rice recused himself from the vote. Mr. Wiater explained that the project developer wanted to clear the site and use it as a stormwater retention area and to create a driveway on the lot for the housing facility. Mr. Rice clarified that it will be a conveyance or drainage swale and not designed to retain water. Ms. Chag asked if the white pines were included in the list of trees. Mr. Rice noted that the elevation would be higher than the existing wetland and the right-of-way was wide. He explained that the drainage would be rerouted and brought around on public property and that the trees had to be removed to enable the project. He said if the developer could clear the area for the drainage swale, it would impact what would be done on the property and an alternative approach would be necessary. Chair Bagley suggested tabling the motion so that the Committee could get more information before deciding to have the trees removed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to table the tree removal request until the Committee had more information that included a solid plan and potential alternatives. Vice-Chair Griffin seconded. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0, with Mr. Rice abstaining.*

- **86 Thornton St:** 1 spruce, good condition, removal requested by resident. The resident is concerned about windthrow and the tree is close to the house. There is a slope with surface-level roots that may impact the trees stability.

Mr. Wiater said he did not see any structural issues but noted that the tree was next to a slope and had surface-level roots that could impact the tree's stability should the grade of the slope change over time by erosion or compaction. He said he did not see a need to remove the tree at this time, however, and suggested pruning it and giving it more clearance.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to **deny** the removal request, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion passed unanimously 7-0.*

- **213 South St:** 2 hemlock, poor condition, removal requested by the resident, removal recommended by the City. Both trees are exhibiting low vigor with thinning canopies and large dead sections.

Mr. Rice recused himself from the vote. Mr. Wiater said he agreed that the two trees should be removed because they had declined. It was further discussed. Ms. Chag asked that the tree on the left remain. Mr. Rice said the homeowner was his neighbor and that it was just a matter of time before the tree on the left would decline. Mr. Wiater agreed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Dupere moved to authorize the removal of both trees, seconded by Mr. Hanley. The motion passed by a vote of 5-1, with Mr. Rice abstaining and Vice-Chair Griffin voting in opposition.*

- **99 Boyd Rd (on paper road near Garden St):** 1 Norway maple, poor condition, on paper road, removal requested by resident, removal recommended by the City. There is a large torsion wound wrapping around the trunk, and large dead branches through the center of the crown.

Mr. Wiater explained why the tree was a good candidate for removal.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Hanley moved to authorize the removal of the tree, seconded by Mr. Rice. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

- **400 Colonial Dr:** 1 little leaf linden, fair condition, removal requested by the resident, removal recommended by the City. This large linden has a cavity at the base, but there is a great amount of reaction wood forming to seal the defect, though the heartwood is significantly rotten. A column of decay appears to descend from the union of the two major leaders.

Mr. Wiater said the wound on the base of the tree and the column of decay were worrisome and noted the structure of lindens attribute to failure at unions. He said he had been watching the tree for a while, and in terms to the reaction to the wound, it was good growth but within that union between the two large leaders was a cavity and a pocket that were part of the entire column of decay. He said that lindens like to tear out but did not know if that would happen in this case. He said he could also do some reduction on the loads of the two leaders and shrink the canopy. Mr. Rice said the tree was nearing the end of its life and he was not in support of any efforts to extend its life.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to authorize the removal of the tree, seconded Mr. Hanley. The motion **failed** by a vote of 3-4 with Chair Bagley, Ms. Chag, Vice-Chair Griffin, and Mr. McDermott voting in opposition.*

Mr. Rice said the Committee needed to be cognizant of the City's limited resources in investing the time and cost into a tree like that. Mr. Wiater said he would see what kind of reduction pruning could be done and would continue to monitor the tree.

- **15 Woodworth Ave:** 1 silver maple, fair condition, removal requested by the resident. A recent storm failure has prompted this request. This tree has been pruned by Eversource, and it has a codominant stem with half of the canopy weight toward the house.

The homeowner David Raymond was present via Zoom. He said he spoke with Mr. Wiater earlier about cabling the tree but that they both did not feel good about keeping it. He said he would like to replace it with another tree. Mr. Wiater said the silver maple had two significant leaders and was growing next to the power line. He said cabling the tree would not be a good option. Mr. Dupere agreed. It was further discussed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to authorize the removal of the tree. No one seconded. The motion **failed**.*

- **122 Thaxter Rd:** 1 red oak, removal requested by resident. A new driveway proposed on Sewall Rd will require the removal of this tree.

The homeowners Stephanie and Matthew Langlois were present via Zoom. Mr. Langlois said the driveway was in rough shape and they thought about relocating it to Sewall Rd but were trying to figure out their options. Mr. Wiater said the tree was around 40-50 years old. Mr. Wiater suggested creating more of a circular driveway away from the tree. The neighbor Don McCole of 90 Fields Rd was present and suggested moving the patio so that the driveway could be widened. It was further discussed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to **deny** the request, seconded by Mr. Rice. The motion passed by a vote of 6-1, with Mr. Dupere voting in opposition.*

- **17 Thaxter Rd:** 2 silver maples, fair condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. Eastern jack-o-lantern mushroom is growing in a low, decaying union as well as around the base of the tree. At the base of the other tree there are several instances of hen of the woods growing in the root zone, suggesting decaying buttress roots.

The homeowner Jesse Choquette was present. He said the trees were an important part of his landscaping and that he did not want them removed. Mr. Wiater explained the symptoms of decay and the deadwood that could cause instability in the structure of the two trees. Ken Jennings of 63 Thaxter Rd was present and said removing the trees would change the character of the neighborhood. He asked if anything could be done to slow

down the decay. Mr. Wiater said the internal decay was playing host to the fungi but thought the trees could be monitored.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Ms. Chag moved to monitor and maintain the two trees, seconded by Vice-Chair Griffin. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

- **Langdon Park (behind 19 Kent St):** 1 oak, fair condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. The tree is declining with uniform deadwood throughout the canopy. There are many instances of shelf fungus in the root zone of the tree, which suggests decaying buttress roots and potential instability.

Sandy Mikolaities of 19 Kent St and Peter Smith of 9 Kent St were present. Mr. Smith said of lot of trees in the park were dying. Mr. Wiater said they were just old trees, and he explained that there was uniform decline throughout the oak tree. He said if it fell over it could reach a structure next to it. Ms. Mikolaities said she was also concerned about the loss of large trees in the park as well as the wildlife they housed. Mr. Wiater said they would do staggered planting of chestnut oaks in that area. It was further discussed.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Dupere moved to prune the tree instead of removing it and to continue to monitor it. Ms. Chag seconded. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

- **Langdon Park (behind 55 Kent St):** 1 sugar maple, fair condition, removal requested and recommended by the City. This tree has a large crack at the base and significant shelf fungi in a basal wound and along the trunk near the crack.

Mr. Wiater said there was a large crack at the base of the tree as well as significant fungi.

Chair Bagley asked for a motion. *Mr. Dupere moved to authorize the removal of the tree, seconded by Mr. Hanley. The motion **failed** by a vote of 2-5, with Chair Bagley, Ms. Chag, Vice-Chair Griffin, Mr. McDermott, and Mr. Rice voting in opposition.*

### 3. Old Business

- **Sylvester St Removals Update:** Eversource removed all trees approved in September with exception given to the large pine near the end of the street.

The Committee was happy that the pine tree was saved.

**Note:** At this point in the meeting, the engineer for the Ledgewood Dr tree removal request, Erik Poulin, joined the meeting via Zoom and asked if the Committee had questions. Mr. Rice said the Committee voted to table the request because they needed an updated set of drawings and to see if there was a way to save any of the trees. He recommended that Mr. Poulin attend the next meeting and present more information.

- **Tree Planting 2027:** Letters have gone out and residents have two months to respond with preferences.

Mr. Wiater said all the letters were distributed and that there was a QR code that could be scanned to bring up a slide show of all the selected species. Ms. Chag asked Mr. Wiater if he could give the Committee the guidelines for developers. Mr. Rice said the site plan review process had those details.

### **New Business**

- **Holiday Tree:** This year's holiday tree is being donated by a resident in Eliot, ME. The tree will be moved on November 17th.

Mr. Wiater said the tree would be about 35 feet tall.

- **Urban Forestry Ordinance:** Inclusion and definition of "exigent circumstances":  
Section 8.309: G. The Tree Warden shall order the issuance of permits for tree removal only after a public hearing is held by the Trees & Public Greenery Committee and after the Committee finds that the desired action is necessary and the proposed methods and workmanship are satisfactory. Except for exigent circumstances, the decisions of the Tree Warden shall be subject to prior review and approval by the Trees & Public Greenery Committee, which will consider the following: (1) the reason for the request; (2) the health of the tree; and (3) the importance of the tree to the streetscape and/or neighborhood.

Mr. Hanley said the ordinance noted that the tree warden may move forward with removal in exigent circumstances but that the Committee did not have a policy on what exigent circumstances were, so he recommended that the Committee have one. He said it would be prudent for the Committee and the City to have so that the City could move forward without the Committee's full approval. Mr. Rice said he would not want to preclude his authority to remove a tree if it was an emergency situation and he deemed the tree unsafe, but he supported the types of things that Mr. Hanley recommended as well as making it clear what those types of things were and why that type of authority was appropriate. Mr. Hanley said he would present a draft at the next meeting.

### **4. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Note:** At this point in the meeting, the Committee discussed moving or cancelling the November meeting due to the holiday. Chair Bagley said she would check with the City Clerk's office to discuss rescheduling.

### **5. Adjournment**

The meeting **adjourned** at 9:28 a.m.

**Next meeting:** Wednesday, December 9, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
Trees and Greenery Committee Meeting Minutes Taker

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