

**TREES AND PUBLIC GREENERY COMMITTEE
City of Portsmouth**

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, May 11, 2016
Portsmouth City Hall**

Members Present: Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice-Chairman; Peter Rice, Director of Public Works; Todd Croteau, Public Works General Foreman; Leslie Stevens, Dennis Souto; Joan Walker, Dan Umbro. City Arborist Corin Hallowell was also present.

Members Excused: A. J. Dupere

Chairman Loughlin called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

1. Minutes of the April 13, 2016 Meeting.

Chairman Loughlin stated that the minutes would be voted on at the next meeting.

2. Tree Removal Requests:

380 Richards Avenue

Mr. Croteau said that he spoke with the homeowner, who had young children who liked to climb trees, and wanted to tree removed. Mr. Croteau said he was in favor of removing the damaged tree.

Mr. Hallowell suggested that the Committee consider structural support for small trees like crab apples in the future to anticipate problems before they become significant.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved that the tree be removed, and Mr. Croteau seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Langdon Park (3 trees)

Mr. Hallowell stated that the sugar maple had big holes, the red maple had serious decay, and the box elder was growing into the pin oak. Vice-Chair Adams noted that the Committee had already voted on removing the box elder. Mr. Croteau said it hadn't been posted, as per the ordinance.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved that the tree be removed, and Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Vice-Chair Adams stated that the Committee had previously discussed leaving trees in nesting sites until after the season, and he recommended holding off on cutting down non-hazard trees with likely nesting sites until after the breeding season. Mr. Hallowell said he had not done a risk assessment on Langdon Park but thought it would be a low risk, so he agreed that the maples could remain.

Chairman Loughlin asked for an amended motion. *Mr. Souto moved that the two maple trees be removed around October after nesting season and Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Myrtle Avenue, back gate to New Franklin School (12 trees)

Mr. Rice said there was a traffic issue, with school busses and other vehicles pulling onto Blueberry Avenue and intermingling. They wanted to isolate the busses to Myrtle Avenue and provide an alternative means for them to come in, which would eliminate the bus traffic and allow it to go in a safer fashion. He also noted that when the bridge was replaced, the busses would get an alternate route. He said the reason that Public Works wanted the trees removed was to widen the cul-de-sac.

Ms. Walker noted that some of the trees were in bad shape, but she asked whether the evergreen tree close to the tennis courts could be spared. Mr. Croteau agreed that it could stay. Mr. Rice said Public Works would make an effort to save that tree and monitor it afterward.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Stevens moved that the posted trees be removed and that the tree closest to the tennis court be preserved. Ms. Walker seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Note: At this point, the Committee jumped to Old Business, Hanover Street lilac tree.

3. Spring 2016 Tree Planning Update – Contract Status

Mr. Croteau stated that the contract was finalized the previous week and delivered to the contractor. He said he would review the species list and begin staking locations that day.

Chairman Loughlin asked whether the trees would be planted by June, and Mr. Croteau said they would. Vice-Chair Adams asked about replacement trees. Mr. Croteau replied that Mr. Hallowell had a list that they would review and determine what trees needed to be replaced. He said he would contact the contractor. He said two species on the list were replaced and two species were not bid on, and he noted that Piscataqua was the lowest bidder of every species and left the trees unchanged.

4. Greenleaf Avenue Parking lot improvements

Elise Annunziata of the City Hall Community Development Department told the Committee that she oversaw the Block Grant Program. She said that the Greenleaf Avenue Recreation Center needed improvement and that they were using grant funds to improve the parking lot and the exterior site.

The contractor Mr. Weinrieb reviewed the site plans, noting that the recreation center was surrounded by pavement. He said they proposed to redesign the site, reduce the paved surfaces, and install three rain gardens. They also proposed to do a landscape buffer, move the entrance, specify crab apple trees to be below the power lines, and place other shade trees along the site.

Ms. Stevens read the tree types from the plan and noted that they didn't touch the skate park. Mr. Weinrieb said they would cut out one section due to the ledge poking through the pavement. They further discussed it.

Chairman Loughlin asked whether the Committee needed to do anything at that point. Mr. Weinrieb said no. He noted that they would need a Conditional Use Permit due to being in the 100-ft buffer and would also go before the Conservation Commission.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved that the Committee accept the plan, and Mr. Croteau seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

5. Tree Boxes – Email from Councilor Pearson

City Council Representative Nancy Pearson stated that she thought the tree box was a good idea and noted that the Facebook post received a lot of interest. She introduced the landscaper Micum Davis.

Mr. Davis stated that the bench box systems would limit people from walking over the trees roots and would also provide a bench to sit on. He explained how it would benefit the tree. He showed a photo of a tree box in Maryland and noted that there were different styles to choose from. He suggested Market Square or the Vaughan Mall as suitable locations and also suggested a private partnership.

Mr. Rice said it was a nice alternative and that they would have to consider associated costs and pedestrian traffic. He said there were a few spots they would look at and thought it was a win-win situation that would provide sitting space and would protect the tree. Mr. Hallowell agreed, saying that it would create an area with more of a nutrient base and allow people to interact with the tree.

Councilor Pearson asked who would pay for it, and Mr. Rice said the City Council would provide the money, if feasible. He said they already had a budget with money identified for parks and streetscapes, and would have a better feel for the tree boxes at the end of the year. Councilor Pearson asked whether a private partnership could be used, and Mr. Rice said that Public Works typically didn't do that except for memorial benches. He emphasized that the benches had to meet municipal requirements.

Mr. Croteau asked whether the Committee needed feedback from the Historic District Commission, and Mr. Rice said he didn't think so but they had to make sure the abutting businesses were comfortable with the bench boxes.

Mr. Rice stated that Public Works would research and report back to the Committee about the magnitude of the project and possible selected sites, and would also inform the City Manager to ensure that it was identified in a memorandum.

Ms. Stevens suggested reaching out to the high school wood and welding shops to get the students involved in building a pilot. Mr. Croteau stated that downtown benches took a lot of abuse and that a commercial-grade bench was required. He said he would research it and find something appropriate. Mr. Rice agreed that the benches should be uniform so that residents knew they were municipal structures. He said he wasn't comfortable with school projects for City sites but encouraged them in commercial sites.

Mr. Weinrieb said he would call Rockville Public Works for specifications and suggestions.

6. Arbor Day Program

Chairman Loughlin named the landscaping companies involved in the project and said that they and Mr. Hallowell did a great job. He noted that Portsmouth had a proclamation for a Tree City, which he said was a result of a lot of work. Vice-Chair Adams noted that two important memorial trees should be given special consideration.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion to send all the landscaping companies and Mr. Hallowell a letter of appreciation from the Committee. *Mr. Rice moved that the Committee send the landscaping companies and Mr. Hallowell thank-you letters. Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

7. Preliminary presentation by Terry Desmarais, P. E., City Engineer, on impacts of proposed waste water plant construction on trees in area of plant.

The City Engineer Terry Desmarais introduced the AECOM consulting engineer Eric Meserve, the project manager John Pearson, and the landscape architect Lorraine Black.

Mr. Meserve reviewed the site plan and said it was a large project that would consist of four years of construction to update the system's treatment technology. He said they would need a staging area and that they hired a contractor to deal with island restrictions. He emphasized that they looked at the least amount of staging area on the island. He said they would remove the fence and replace it, and would also add some landscaping.

Mr. Rice asked how many trees were within the fence line. Mr. Meserve said they would remove a total of 49 trees and would put in more than they were taking out. Mr. Rice asked if the trees had been posted, and Mr. Meserve said they were not. Chairman Loughlin said the Committee would look at them at a later date.

Mr. Pearson stated that the work would start in the late summer or early fall and that Peirce Island would be closed for the duration of the construction. He showed the areas that would be fenced off. Mr. Souto asked whether the parking lot and pool would be closed for four years, and Mr. Pearson said they would. Mr. Rice said the pool would be open in the summers but traffic would be displaced.

Mr. Meserve said they had a table identifying every tree that was anticipated to be removed, and that they would replace and restore them at the end of the project. Chairman Loughlin asked whether the contractor needed every inch of space on the islands with plantings, and Mr. Rice agreed and said that the area would be restored with similar trees. He also said that all staging spaces would be needed.

Vice-Chair Adams mentioned an American elm and a spruce on the island, and Mr. Meserve said they would be protected.

Ms. Black discussed the proposed landscaping and trees that would be removed, noting that species were chosen with regard to ones that have demonstrated an ability to thrive in the difficult Peirce

Island environment. She said the entrance would have redwood dogwoods and evergreens. She said they also proposed that the façade of the building seen from New Castle Island would have a series of trellises and recommended the Virginia creeper. Ms. Stevens asked whether the trellis would get into the brick, and Ms. Black said the trellis would be off the building, like a wire trellis.

Mr. Rice said it was a four-year project and that restoration would be done at the end of the project. He noted that other opportunities could come about, like an additional trail access, but they were currently identifying the landscaping costs and acknowledging that the project team would come before the Committee again. He said that if a species didn't work well, it could be rectified.

Mr. Croteau noted that the Committee had adopted specifications for removing 2/3 of the burlap and wire cages from trees and asked that the project noted it in their specifications plan.

A resident Micum Davis asked whether the wrap-around staging area would have fences around it and was told that it would. Mr. Meserve said that everything would fit within the fence line but noted that they had to maintain an open corridor for access to the rear of the facility.

Mr. Meserve stated that there was an extensive amount of invasive species and that they did a survey that was incorporated into an Invasive Species Management Plan that would last from the beginning of the project to one year post-construction.

Chairman Loughlin asked when the project team would return. Mr. Desmarais said they would come back as soon as they could, most likely in June. Mr. Croteau asked whether the Committee would do a site walk, and Mr. Rice said they would work with Mr. Desmarais.

Mr. Hallowell asked that the project consider placing a layer of wood chips in the area of fenced-off trees to protect the root system. Mr. Rice said he would work with Mr. Desmarais.

Vice-Chair Adams asked whether the Peirce Island Advisory Committee would be involved, and Mr. Rice replied that there would be a joint meeting with the Peirce Island Board, who had been kept apprised.

8. Status of health of street trees planted during 2015

Mr. Souto asked how many hornbeams were in the City. Mr. Croteau said he would find out for the next meeting. Mr. Souto noted that someone cut out the dead topping on a Cass Street tree and that a tree on Wibird Street had a dead top but didn't look too bad.

Mr. Hallowell stated that the process would change over time to avoid that type of thing so that it would be less commonplace. He said that the previous year's plantings were backfilled with soil from a truck that sprayed mulch, so it was a mixture of composed mulch and hydroseed, which posed a major problem. He said that proper soil would have to be used in the future.

9. Old Business

Lilac tree on Hanover Street

Member of the public Martha McGovern asked if the lilac on Hanover Street could be moved to a different location. Peter Rice said Peirce Island would be a good site and that Public Works would put a stake in a proposed location for Tree Committee approval.

Mr. Croteau said the tree could be relocated to Langdon Park or Haven Park. Mr. Hallowell suggested Peirce Island. Ms. Stevens asked whether the tree would be transplanted after it bloomed, and Mr. Hallowell agreed that it would. Mr. Rice said Public Works could stake the location so that Ms. McGovern could look at it. Vice-Chair Adams asked Ms. McGovern whether she had a particular location in mind, and she said she liked Peirce Island but would check out Haven and Langdon Parks. Member of the public Martha McGovern asked if the lilac on Hanover Street could be moved to a different location.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved that the tree be removed and relocated to Peirce Island in a location identified by a stake so that the Committee could confirm that it was acceptable. Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Millpond Substation Site

Ms. Cathleen Lewis, the Community Relations representative from Eversource, stated that she and her team had a draft proposal for ideas on upgrading the landscape improvements at the site but wasn't sure whether or not they were on the agenda. Mr. Rice said the Committee would add it to the agenda. Chairman Loughlin noted that he had sent a copy of the plan to the Committee members the day before.

Ms. Lewis introduced the landscape architect Matthew Robinson of Landworks, the substation project manager Patrick Pinault, and the engineer Matthew Moreau

Mr. Robinson gave an overview of the project, saying they did a new plan that recaptured 15 feet of pavement in the entrance and brought it back to greenery, and that they also added greenery to the middle section. Red dogwoods and river birch were added in the wetland. He said they would evaluate the plant material and fill-in on the top of existing plants. He said that 50% of the trees could be saved and the others replaced, and he noted that they provided more diversity by planting a variety of deciduous trees and shrubs with the remaining evergreens in the front. He said a meadow mix would be used by the gate that could be driven over and plowed over and that they would possibly fill in the hedgerow. He also said they would maintain it the first year.

Vice-Chair Adams noted that the red dogwood grew significantly. Mr. Robinson said they did well in a 30-50 foot range and that the top of the trees would be separate from one another.

Mr. Rice asked that the Committee let the project team know whether they were comfortable with the plan so that the team could plan accordingly. Ms. Stevens thanked the team for incorporating the Committee's previous comments, saying that it looked nice.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Adams moved that the Committee endorse the plan, and Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

10. New Business

Ms. Walker stated that the tree at the corner of Dennett and Stark Street had a utility pole going up the middle of it and said the neighbors were concerned about the tree's safety. She said she wasn't sure whether it was on City land. Mr. Hallowell said he was pretty sure it was on private land.

11. Next Meeting – Wednesday, June 8, 2016

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Recording Secretary