

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, February 14, 2018
Portsmouth City Hall**

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

Members Excused: Dennis Souto

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

1. Acceptance of Minutes of the January 10, 2018 Meeting

It was moved, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the January 10, 2018 minutes with one minor amendment.

2. Tree Removal Requests

315-335 Banfield Road

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was part of the Eversource project. He explained where the tree was located, noting that it was under the wires.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Walker moved to remove the tree, and Vice-Chair Adams seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

673 Middle Street

Mr. Hallowell said the linden had a large crack and was splitting open. He noted that it was only a matter of time before it failed.

The homeowner Tom Gruen was present to speak to the request and asked whether the tree could be trimmed and cabled for a few years. Mr. Hallowell explained how the tree would have to be braced in order to save it. Mr. Rice said the City typically didn't do that type of activity. The issue was further discussed. Mr. Dupere said the crack went down through the main stem and would continue to expand, eventually ripping the tree apart. Chairman Loughlin asked whether the tree could remain for a while and whether another tree could be planted to the left of the house. Mr. Hallowell said the crack was too large and that the only option was to remove the linden and plant another tree.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to remove the tree and plant another tree, and Ms. Stevens seconded.*

Vice-Chair Adams asked Mr. Hallowell what he thought would be a good replacement. Mr. Hallowell replied that there were viable trees that would work and said he would meet with Mr. Gruen to discuss species options. Mr. Gruen asked that a new tree be planted as soon as possible. Mr. Hallowell said he preferred to plant the replacement tree in 2019 but thought there was potential to plant a tree to the left in the spring. It was further discussed.

Action: Mr. Hallowell said he would meet with Mr. Gruen to discuss species options.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

729 Middle Street

Mr. Hallowell said the Norway maple was full of decay in the main stem and recommended removing and replacing the tree.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Dupere moved to remove the tree and replace it at some point. Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

238 Miller Avenue

Chairman Loughlin noted that the linden was actually on Lincoln Avenue. Mr. Hallowell said there was a lot of decay and that it was spreading down to the roots.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to remove the tree, and Ms. Walker seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

393 Union Street

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was a type of red maple and that the resident had savaged the tree in pruning it. He said the tree wouldn't live, due to all the cuts, and recommended that it be removed because if it were left in its present state, it would send the wrong message to the public. He noted that the resident had good intentions and thought he was containing the tree by pruning it. Vice-Chair Adams asked if the tree would have been okay if the resident hadn't pruned it. Mr. Hallowell said he hadn't seen the tree before it was pruned but didn't think it was a stellar specimen to begin with. He said it looked like 50% of the tree was removed by pruning. Chairman Loughlin asked whether the tree would survive in its present state. Mr. Hallowell said he thought it would likely decay because the central leaders were down. Mr. Dupere explained the process to restore the tree, noting that it was never done to red maples. Mr. Hallowell said he felt it wasn't worth the time to repair the tree and that it would take several years to shape it.

Vice-Chair Adams recommended that the tree be removed. He asked whether the Committee had a policy regarding people doing severe damage to City trees or removing them. Mr. Rice said it was damage to City property because the tree was in the right-of-way, and that Public Works usually let people know that. Mr. Hallowell said that leaving the tree in its state would be a giant beacon to the neighborhood that pruning trees was okay and the City would clean it up afterwards. He said the City would send a better message by removing the tree and replanting it, and if people asked about it, they would be told that the resident damaged the tree by pruning it too much. Chairman Loughlin said he preferred to leave the tree but would defer to Mr. Hallowell's recommendation.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved to remove the tree, and Vice-Chair Adams seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.*

3. Update on Spring 2018 Tree Planting

Mr. Hallowell told the Committee that he sent letters out to the residents and received a few responses. He said all the species were chosen and that he would work with homeowners who didn't like the choices. He said he would meet with Mr. Croteau about the March pre-bid and thought that the trees would be planted by the end of May.

Action: Mr. Hallowell said he would meet with Mr. Croteau regarding the March pre-bid.

4. Discussion of Protection of Trees within the City's Public Rights of Way During Construction

Chairman Loughlin told the Committee that Mr. Hallowell put together an excellent recommendation for protection of trees during construction and wrote a document for best practices for the industry. Chairman Loughlin said he tried to distill that document to a simpler one-page summary to hand out to contractors and homeowners and put on the City's website as part of the building permit process. He noted that it could also be part of site review condition or subdivision approval.

The Committee discussed it. Ms. Walker said she liked Chairman Loughlin's version but recommended additional wording stating that any pruning would be done by the City. She noted that residents in general were not aware that the City had a team to do pruning and were responsible for any tree in the City right-of-way. Mr. Rice said that a professional arborist hired by the homeowner would be acceptable versus the City doing it. Chairman Loughlin said the Committee could consider incorporating it into the document. Mr. Dupere referred to No. 3 on Chairman Loughlin's revised version and asked that options be given rather than allowing mulch to be placed in the logging nets because logging nets would not be used in that type of situation. He recommended wood chips or ground cover protection mats instead. Mr. Hallowell said that the use of hand tools could do a lot of damage because the roots couldn't be seen and suggested using an air spade to remove material from the roots. He also said that if people did trenching, they should see where the roots were and what could be done with materials.

Chairman Loughlin said these steps would raise the consciousness of homeowners and contractors in making them aware that they had to protect the trees. He said he would work the steps into the Tree Ordinance and recommend to the Planning Department that they add it to their subdivision site plan review regulations. He said he would also ask the Building Inspector how the steps could be brought to the attention of builders. Mr. Rice read a brief paragraph from the Ordinance, noting that it was straightforward. Mr. Dupere asked whether the document and policy could be cited in the one-page handout. Mr. Rice said he could get the Planning Board to refer to it as part of the Technical Advisory Committee and would make sure it was included. He said it would be incorporated into the contractors' approval notices or even the site plan.

Mr. Hallowell noted that private contractors were getting paid to prune City trees when the City could do it for free, and he asked whether it was appropriate for a private contractor to charge residents if the

homeowner was unaware that it could be done for free. He recommended that the homeowner be made aware but also noted that the Ordinance suggested that the homeowner should not work on City trees.

The Committee discussed how big projects would be handled by the City. Mr. Rice said the City had to go incrementally by reviewing when a building permit was issued and ensuring that trees were pruned by incorporating the City's standard practices to protect the trees. He suggested that he, Mr. Hallowell, and Mr. Croteau meet with the Planning Department and Building Inspector to formalize it.

Chairman Loughlin said he would rework the document by looking at the Tree Ordinance, after which Mr. Rice and his team could meet with the City and formalize the document in terms of an amendment to site review regulations.

5. Tree Maintenance Trust Fund

Chairman Loughlin noted that Mr. Souto had raised a question about funding procedures. He said he knew there was a procedure but didn't know what the Committee's role would be in asking that money come out of the trust fund for a particular purpose. Mr. Rice said that Public Works would recommend that the City Manager talk to the trustees, who would release the funds if deemed appropriate.

Chairman Loughlin said the City Attorney and some Committee members worked on the trust fund and the City Manager suggested that it go back to the City Council. He said he had brought the topic up while the City Manager was on sabbatical and that the City Manager upon his return had requested a new letter. Chairman Loughlin distributed copies of his new letter to the Committee members and read it. He said he would also attend the City Council meeting in case he was asked to speak to it. Chairman Loughlin asked whether the Committee wanted to go forward in seeing whether the City Council considered the funding procedure, and the Committee agreed.

6. Old Business

Vice-Chair Adams noted that the Ordinance called for an annual report to the City Council and asked whether one was done. Chairman Loughlin said he thought the Committee did one the previous year. Vice-Chair Adams said it was a good idea for the City to know that the Committee was alive and well.

7. New Business

Mr. Rice stated that Mr. Hallowell was promoted to the position of Parks, Trees, and Forestry Foreman III. (He noted that the title was presently Parks and Greenery Foreman III but that the forestry part would be incorporated into the title in the future). Mr. Hallowell was congratulated by the Committee.

8. Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 14, 2018

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Joann Breault
Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the March 21, 2018 Trees & Greenery Committee Meeting.