

**Trees and Public Greenery Committee  
City of Portsmouth**

**MINUTES**

**7:30 a.m. – Wednesday, January 9, 2019  
Portsmouth City Hall, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, City Manager’s Conference Room**

**Members Present:** Peter J. Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice-Chairman; Peter Rice, Director of Public Works; A. J. Dupere, Dennis Souto; Joan Walker, Dan Umbro, Michael Griffin

**Members Excused:** Corin Hallowell, City Arborist

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

**1. Acceptance of Minutes of the December 12, 2018 Meeting**

*It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to **approve** the December 12, 2018 minutes.*

**2. Tree Removal Requests:**

**End of Whidden Street - Norway Maple – DPW Request**

The City Project Manager Dave Desfosses was present to speak to the request and explained that the tree was located on top of a sewer line that needed to be replaced.

The citizen Robin Lurie-Meyerkopf of 53 Whidden Street asked whether the tree could be saved. Mr. Desfosses said the tree would have to be replanted or replaced as far away from the sewer as possible. Chairman Loughlin also noted that the tree could be placed on the other side of the property line using the Tree Grant Program. Mr. Rice said if the City tried to save the tree by cutting through the roots, the tree would die and become a safety issue. Ms. Lurie-Meyerkopf said she would work with the Committee.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved to **recommend removal** of the tree and **replant** one at a more appropriate site at the end of Whidden Street. Ms. Walker seconded. The motion **passed** by unanimous vote.*

**3. Rock Street Park Rehabilitation Project – Discussion of Possible Tree Removals**

Elise Annunziata of the Community Development Program and Dave Desfosses were present to speak to the request. Ms. Annunziata stated that the program did improvements to HUD properties in the City, which included Rock Street Park. She said the park was a very dark and unkempt area and that they wanted to clean it up and also do some landscaping. She presented two handouts to the Committee, noting that the Program wanted to remove 19 trees and plant 37

trees. She said that most of the trees to be removed were large canopy trees and that the park would be opened up and given a more secure, airy atmosphere. Mr. Desfosses suggested that the Committee members look at the park and note which trees were requested to keep or remove. He said that most of the activity would be concentrated in the middle of the park, with new plantings on the edges to soften the park yet. He added that the fencing would be redone and lights would be added, and that new play equipment would be installed and the basketball court rehabbed.

Mr. Dupere asked if any evergreens would be planted. Mr. Desfosses said they would not plant any screening vegetation and just wanted to open the park up. It was further discussed.

*Mr. Desfosses said he would return to the February 13 meeting with a full plan for the Committee to review.*

#### **4. Follow-up Discussion about DPW Request for Lois Street Tree Removals**

Mr. Rice stated that there were ongoing discussions and that DPW was trying to resolve their rights to maintain the sewer lines by removing the trees. He said that, if the issue was resolved, he would post the trees and have the Committee review them.

#### **5. Construction Damage to Red Maple due to Residential Building Project at Corner of Thornton Street Before Monteith Street**

Mr. Rice said it was a DPW request and that he would defer the issue to Mr. Hallowell.

*The issue was **tabled** to the February 13 meeting.*

#### **6. Tree Protection Zones – Working Document to be used with Building Permits, Construction Projects, and Land Use Permitting**

Mr. Rice stated that Mr. Hallowell was working with the Building Inspection Department to clarify their permits.

#### **7. Old Business**

There was no old business.

#### **8. New Business**

##### Tree near North Church

North Church members Paul Kelly, John Weinberg, and Gene Jones were present to speak to the request. Mr. Kelly said they were concerned about the tree near the northeast corner of the church because it was heaving the sidewalk and posed an unsafe condition for pedestrians and church members. He recalled that when the steeple was restored in 2006, there were issues with the tree roots going into the foundation. He recommended removing the tree because it was very

close to the walkway and he feared that it would cause more problems as it got bigger. He said that a parishioner fell and hurt his knee.

Mr. Rice said he looked at the area with Mr. Hollowell and thought the area could be made safer by leveling the pavement around the tree and placing a rubberized surface so that people could walk over it without tripping. He said it would be an interim measure until the Market Square renovation was completed in 2023. He asked that any damage to the church be documented and submitted to him or that any root damage to the bricks be photographed. He said that removing the large, healthy tree would be a concern and recommended that the City address the safety issue by maintaining the tree without damaging the church. He said that, otherwise, the City would look into it further and that the tree would probably have to be removed if it was found to be causing damage to the church. It was further discussed. Mr. Jones said he didn't think the rubberized surface would rectify the situation. Mr. Rice said he didn't believe the damage was being caused by the roots heaving, but that they could level the pavement.

Chairman Loughin recommended posting the tree for removal and discussing it at the February 13 meeting. Vice-Chair Adams said it seemed like it was a citywide issue, and he referenced trees at another location that had heaved the sidewalk dramatically. He asked at which point the Committee would agree that those trees should be cut down. Chairman Loughlin said that the trees would be dealt with on a case-to-case basis. Vice-Chair Adams said the Committee was focused on whether or not the North Church tree was a hazard to the building. Mr. Rice said if a City tree was impacting the church's property and causing a hazard, the tree would most likely be removed. He said that typically the sidewalk would be repaved.

*It was decided to **continue** the item to the February 13 meeting.*

### Salt on City Streets

Vice-Chair Adams asked if something could be done to lessen the lavish use of salt on City streets, noting that huge amounts of salt were deposited at the slightest sign of icing. Mr. Griffin asked whether the dose or rate of salt could be varied. Mr. Rice explained that the salting equipment had variable speed drives that were impacted by the salt itself and that it took a certain level of experience by the truck drivers to know how much salt was warranted. He said DPW was aware of the issue and was researching other levels of equipment calibration. He noted that they tried to use brine solution instead of full rock salt but that it was difficult to judge when and how much brine to apply when there were back-and-forth rain, snow, and ice conditions. He said there would be more scrutiny in the next few years and more impetus for the City to use less salt on the roads. It was further discussed. Mr. Rice concluded that salt was a problematic product but that alternatives were much more expensive and some raised environmental issues.

### Process for Reporting a Tree's Condition

Mr. Griffin said a citizen asked him what the process was for reporting a tree condition. Mr. Rice said the citizen should contact DPW or simply email Mr. Hollowell, who would investigate it. Mr. Griffin said the particular tree that the citizen was concerned about was across from 15 Denise Street and that he thought it was a red oak. Mr. Rice said he would look into it.

*Action Item: Mr. Rice will follow-up with Mr. Hallowell regarding the tree across from 15 Denise Street.*

#### Tree Damage near South Cemetery and Sagamore Avenue

Chairman Loughlin stated that someone who was driving under the influence did a lot of damage to a tree at the corner of the South Cemetery and Sagamore Avenue. He asked whether the City should file an insurance claim against the driver. Mr. Rice said it could be done if there was a police report and agreed that the driver's insurance company should pay for the damage.

#### Tree Maintenance Mandate

Vice-Chair Adams asked whether there was a mechanism in place to ensure that plantings mandated by the City in site plan approvals had actually taken place, both initially and throughout subsequent changes in ownership. He cited the example of the unauthorized removals of the white birches at White Birch Plaza on Lafayette Road some years ago, trees that were never replaced despite a City directive to do so. Mr. Rice said that the Planning Department normally researched the site approval and followed up. Chairman Loughlin said a notice was usually recorded with the deed. It was further discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
Recording Secretary