

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

MINUTES

**8:00 a.m. – Wednesday, September 9, 2020
Remote Meeting via Zoom Conference Call**

Members Present: Richard Adams, Vice-Chairman; Peter Rice, Director of Public Works; City Arborist Chuck Baxter; A. J. Dupere, Patricia Bagley, Michael Griffin, and Dennis Souto

Members Excused: Peter J. Loughlin, Chairman; Dan Umbro

Also Present: David Desfosses and Ryan Flynn of the Public Works Department, City Environmental Planner Peter Britz, and Parks and Greenery Foreman Corin Hallowell.

Chairman Peter Loughlin was absent, and Vice-Chairman Adams assumed the role of Acting-Chair and called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

1. Acceptance of Minutes of the August 12, 2020 Meeting

The August 12, 2020 minutes were accepted as amended.

2. Presentation Regarding Banfield Road Sidewalk Project by David Desfosses and Ryan Flynn of the Public Works Department

Ryan Flynn presented the project to the Committee. He said it was a project dating back to 2016 that included the installation of a guard rail and widening of the roadway shoulders. He said several culverts were identified along Banfield Road that were a safety hazard due to issues of standing water and wetlands. He said they were determining how wide the road had to be to accommodate future sidewalks and multi-use paths. He said the guard rail would only be in areas that had adjacent wetlands. He said sidewalk and drainage easements and wetland permitting were acquired, and the current scope of the project was to widen shoulders and slopes to accommodate the sidewalk, which included removing trees and replacing six culverts. He said Banfield Road would be repaved at a later date. He said they received three easements for the project and would receive the other two easements in a few months. He said they wanted to install the roadway drainage before the sidewalk installation and that the entire project should be completed in the spring of 2021. He noted that the sidewalk installation will not take place until a later time, as it has not been budgeted.

Mr. Griffin asked if the elevation of the culverts would reduce or compromise the water volume levels in all the standing water conditions. Mr. Flynn said all the culverts would

remain the same but the capacity of the pipes would be increased to handle high flow and wet weather conditions better. He said it would not drain any wetlands. Acting-Chair Adams asked if it was necessary to remove all the requested trees since the sidewalk will not be installed at this time. Mr. Flynn said it was necessary because some of the trees were within the wetland buffer, and the shoulder had to be built for people to walk on. Mr. Griffin asked if the contract encompassed Heritage Road to Ocean Road and included Peverly Hill Road. Mr. Flynn said it was limited to Heritage Road to Ocean Road, but there was one culvert where the road would be widened.

Acting-Chair Adams said the proposal was analogous to a situation a few months prior where the project was already a done deal and whatever the Committee decided was inconsequential. He asked if there was any point to the Committee voting on the removal of the trees. Mr. Rice explained that the project took four years to pull together, so things that were typically done as a normal course of construction were not done because the wetland permits took a long time to acquire. He said the project was safety-driven and the trees have to be removed to widen the road and the future sidewalk. He wanted to ensure that the Committee was at least aware that the trees would be removed and was comfortable with the Committee not voting, noting that municipal work on municipal properties didn't always have to conform to requirements associated with land boards, especially with safety concern situations. The members of the Committee agreed that there was no need for a vote.

3. Tree Removal Requests

- 875 Banfield Rd - 2 eastern red cedars;
- Between 886 and 901 Banfield Rd -1 red oak, 2 American elm, 15 red maples;
- In wetland area between 901 and 969 Banfield Rd - 6 red maples; and
- Between 1047 and 1051 Banfield Rd – 3 red oaks, 1 red maple, 1 American Elm.

Note: These trees were part of the Banfield Road Sidewalk Project and were addressed then).

4. Discussion of the Paul McEachern Park on the North Mill Pond

Mr. Rice stated that Environmental Planner Peter Britz and Parks and Greenery Foreman Corin Hallowell were present. He said Mr. Hallowell was working with Jon Wyckoff, the representative of the North Mill Pond Advocacy Group. Mr. Rice stated that the green space was named for Paul McEachern and would have passive recreation with a few picnic tables. He said Mr. Wyckoff and his group had a larger vision for the area and wanted to install some amenities, but Mr. Rice said they would have to be done in a consistent manner with other shoreland parks. He reviewed a sketch that showed granite benches along the shore and a fish sculpture that kids could climb on. He said the Advocacy Group wanted to expand the proposed park to adjacent City property to place some benches along the water. He said there would be a new sign commemorating Mr. McEachern along the roadway. He said the plans wouldn't impact

any trees but the group also wanted to add high-bush blueberries along the property line, open up an entry to allow canoe and kayak loading along the shoreline, and plant and maintain other greenery. Mr. Hallowell noted that the five benches were all donated and were simple granite block bases with a slab on top. Mr. Rice said it was a collaborative effort in which the City would provide some labor and preparation of the spots where the sign, benches, and sculpture would go. Mr. Britz said some of the work proposed on City property and at the edge of the North Mill Pond was scheduled to go before the Conservation Committee later that day and that they could have some concerns that could change the plan, but in general the concept of the benches, getting people to the water passively, and a park was a good thing. He said there was a previous salt marsh restoration project where some material was removed with the help of the Public Works Department, and it could be of concern if the proposed kayak and canoe entry area interfered with that.

Mr. Griffin asked if parking was available in the park, and Mr. Rice said there would only be parking on the edge of the roadway. Ms. Bagley asked if the adjacent condominium owners were in support of the park. Mr. Rice said he hadn't heard from them but had heard from a resident who lived across the street who was concerned about people parking along the road. He said that was why it was important to give citizens an opportunity to speak about the project before it was done.

5. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

6. New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 14, 2020

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Committee Recording Secretary