

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

**MINUTES**

**8:00 a.m. – Wednesday, January 8, 2020  
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; City Arborist Chuck Baxter; A. J. Dupere, Dennis Souto, Patricia Bagley, Dan Umbro, and Michael Griffin

**Members Excused:** None.

**Also Present:** City Manager Karen Conard; Land Use Compliance Agent Vincent Hayes

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Chairman Loughlin called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. He introduced the Committee members to the new City Manager, Karen Conard.

**1. Acceptance of Minutes of the December 11, 2019 Meeting**

*The December 11, 2019 minutes were accepted as presented.*

Note: The Committee then addressed Item 5, Plaza 800 Street Trees

**2. Tree Removal Requests**

There were no tree removal requests.

**3. Discussion of the Tree Fund**

Mr. Rice said there was currently no money in the Tree Fund. He said if anyone knew of someone who would like to contribute, a check could be sent to the City in the name of the Tree Fund and would be accepted by the Tree Fund’s trustee. Methods of soliciting funds were addressed. Mr. Rice said that the Committee should not solicit funds directly from citizens in the name of the Committee. Ms. Conard said she would discuss the matter internally with Mr. Rice to come up with a creative way of letting citizens know that there was an opportunity to contribute. Ms. Bagley suggested making landscapers aware that there was a tree fund. Various methods of contributing were also discussed, such as challenging donors to be the first one to contribute. Mr. Dupere said he would speak with the Portsmouth Garden Club about their grants program and as a way to use public relations. Mr. Rice recommended that potential donors be made aware of what the contributions would be spent on so that people didn’t think the money was going into a ‘black hole’. Tree benches, Arbor Day activities, and Adopt-a-Spot were also suggested.

#### **4. Further Discussion of 2020 Planting Sites**

Mr. Baxter distributed a list of the 2020 tree planting sites. He said he submitted an order for 93 trees and would focus on streets that needed to be reforested, like Elwyn Avenue and Kent Street as well as Madison Street and other streets branching off State Street. He said there were large swaths of open area where it made sense to plant 5-10 trees and also made sense for watering. He noted that 70-80 percent of the trees that the City bought were ball and burlap ones that were then taken apart so that they were bare root trees, which resulted in greater success. He said they were grouped by size, pointing out that large trees were 40-60 feet at mature height and small trees were suitable for planting under utility wires or in tight spaces. He said the tree species would be selected based on availability and that he would compile the list as soon as he heard back from the nursery. He explained the process that would be involved in planting the 93 trees, saying that the site would be prepped and that 3-4 crews would plant the trees in a week.

Chairman Loughlin said Madison Street needed trees and might have to use the Tree Grant program. He said Committee members could reach out to homeowners and business owners to tell them that the City would plant the tree and maintain it for two years and then the tree would be the property owners' responsibility. He noted that Portsmouth had been a Tree City for 18 years. Mr. Rice explained that the tree planting success rate was the result of the City's taking on more of the tree planting in-house.

Vice-Chair Adams said the majority of sites on the list seemed to be concentrated in one area, and he asked whether other areas, like Maple Haven, would be targeted in the future. Mr. Baxter said that 90 trees was the cutoff for 2020 but that Maple Haven was on the 2021 list, as well as the Bartlett and Dennett Streets area. He said it also made sense to saturate streets in need of trees all at once rather than do scattered plantings, and that it was easier to water and maintain a significant number of trees if they were in close proximity. Mr. Rice said the City also took potential streetscape improvements into consideration when planting trees. Ms. Conard asked whether private landowners ever offered to take on the responsibility of planting a tree, and Mr. Rice said it happened occasionally. It was further discussed.

#### **5. Plaza 800 Street Trees**

Plaza 800 owner Ellen Saas was present and said that she was considering a couple of landscaping bids and would welcome the Committee's suggestions of what tree species to use. Mr. Rice said the main issue was the private property landscaping that was part of the easement rights. He said the City gave compensation to Plaza 800 to pull up and prep the existing landscaping with the understanding that Plaza 800 would pay for the new landscaping. Mr. Rice offered to give Ms. Saas a list of street trees that would thrive in that environment, and Ms. Saas said she would submit her landscaping plans to the Committee. Mr. Baxter said there were 20 or so species to choose from.

Vice-Chair Adams asked how much compensation was given to the Plaza 800 owners by the City. Mr. Rice said the amount was based on the square footage of impact along the

sidewalk and that he didn't have the exact amount but could provide it. He said the City typically offered a service in lieu of a cash payment when there were impacts with property owners, and he further explained the process. He said whatever was given was compensation for land taken and not for tree purchase reimbursement.

**6. Old Business**

There was no old business.

**7. New Business**

Mr. Rice said that he and Mr. Baxter would attend the New Hampshire Organic Farmers Organization meeting in February to participate in a round table discussion on organic lawn management. He said it would be a good opportunity to converse with other communities and to showcase how well Portsmouth was doing.

**Next meeting: Wednesday, February 12, 2020**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Recording Secretary