

MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
August 11, 2021

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

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Deborah Chag, a nominee to the Committee who is waiting final approval.

Chairman Loughlin called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the July 14, 2021 Meeting

The July 14 minutes were approved.

2. Tree Removal Requests

There were no tree removal requests.

3. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Baxter said there were no updates from Eversource but that they would let him know ahead of time before doing any work and that he would keep the committee apprised. He said there would not be any tree debris left behind. Mr. Dupere said he was meeting with Scott Richardson of Eversource at the end of the week to work on the schedule and would keep the committee posted.

Mr. Griffin said the plantings had taken place at Plaza 400. Vice-Chair Adams said the two dawn redwoods seemed to be inappropriate for that space, given their rapid growth to very large size. Mr. Griffin said the redwoods were closer to the Bank of America building, where there were no overhead utilities and there was more space for them to develop.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Baxter said there were issues with right-of-ways and sidewalks, noting that a particular privately-owned shrub had taken over a sidewalk in the last few years on Woodbury Avenue. He said the Legal Department had been notified and that they would send a letter to

the homeowner to have the shrubs pruned. He said the right-of-way was blocked and it would be impactful, and that there could be a liability issue.

Mr. Rice said they only had a certain amount of time to take action and that the City would be held liable if someone were hurt. He said bringing the issue to the committee and speaking about it publicly would help people understand that it wasn't something that was taken lightly. He said the property owner wasn't willing to do more than what had been done and that the issue could stir some controversy if it got traction with the newspaper. Mr. Baxter noted that there were other locations of trees or shrubs blocking right-of-ways that hadn't been brought to the City's attention. Mr. Rice said they planned to do an outreach effort by doing a press release and posting something on the City's website as well as letting the City Council know so that they were aware of the issue. Vice-Chair Adams said there was a similar issue on Wibird Street a few years back and the shrub took over the sidewalk almost completely. He thought the City cut the shrub back but wasn't sure. Mr. Rice said the City had a legal right to do it. Ms. Chag brought up another shrub on the corner of Cabot and Middle Streets that had grown into the bumpout. Mr. Rice said the City wasn't doing any weeding because it wasn't in the budget, but people were encouraged to take care of their green strips and do their own weeding.

Mr. Baxter gave an update on planting and said that trees that didn't make it would be replaced the following season so that he could put together an order of trees all at once. He said the tree planting in general had been very successful. He said half of the zelcovas didn't make it and the other half were leafing out by July 4. He said over 100 trees were planted and eight or so were struggling, and he planned to do a presentation in the fall.

Mr. Baxter explained the difference between bare root trees and ball and burlap trees.

Mr. Souto suggested that the commission could get hold of Eversource's database and pull out the City tree failures that caused outages in order to get a better idea of how many outages there were. He said Eversource could also make their schedule for removing trees available to the committee so that anyone could see a particular tree when it was coming down. Mr. Rice said the City's resources were very limited to do such a thing. Mr. Baxter said Eversource didn't distinguish between City trees and privately-owned trees but let the City know when there was a big job, like Little Harbor Road. Mr. Dupere said it might be hazardous for people to go see a tree when it was being taken down. Mr. Souto suggested getting someone from the forest service to work with a GSP system so they could determine whether a tree was public or private and separate the data to present a clear picture to the committee of the actual outages occurring. Mr. Baxter said the GPS system would have to be overlapped. Mr. Dupere said Eversource based everything on pole numbers. Mr. Souto said he would get in touch with Scott Richardson of Eversource.

The right-of-way issue was further discussed.

Mr. Baxter said the 30 red pines on Peirce Island started to have die back last year and would be removed. Ms. Chag suggested planting big trees in that space.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 8, 2021

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault

Trees and Public Greenery Committee Minutes Taker