

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

**MINUTES**

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, January 14, 2015  
Portsmouth City Hall**

**Members Present:** Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Dick Adams, Vice-Chairman; Todd Croteau, Public Works General Foreman; Leslie Stevens, A. J. Dupere, Peter Rice, Director of Public Works

**Members Excused:** Dennis Suoto

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

**1. Minutes of the December 10, 2014 Meeting**

*The minutes of the December 10, 2014 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.*

**2. Tree Removal Requests**

There were no tree removal requests.

**3. Update on Proposed Landscape Improvements for the Market Street Extension Gateway**

Mr. Josh Tompkins and Mr. Todd Richardson, both of Richardson and Associates, were present to speak to the proposal. Mr. Tompkins told the Committee that they had made selections for plantings and other improvements on the Rt. 95 corridor that included street trees and shrubs that were durable, low-maintenance, and tolerant of pollutants. He noted that one selection, the Silver Linden, was a proven street tree. They had also selected 4" Calipers. Mr. Tompkins said that they wanted to plant things correctly so that proper scale would be achieved at maturity when they grew to 60-70 feet. There was a run of Silver Maples in one area, and then Red Oaks in another area.

Ms. Stevens asked where the trees would be located, and Mr. Tompkins pointed out the areas, saying that the Red Oaks would start at one point and continue to the park, and there would be another species of tree after the park. Ms. Stevens asked about acorns. Mr. Tompkins noted that some litter was associated with acorns. Mr. Rice thought that the oaks should be reconsidered due to issues with the pedestrian and bike lanes and squirrels. Chairman Loughlin said he wouldn't be that quick to reconsider oaks because he thought they were hardy. Mr. Rice felt that it would be fine if the oaks were dispersed but felt there were a lot of oaks on both sides of the street and thought the Committee would want more diversity. Chairman Loughlin said there was a lot about Red Oaks that the Committee liked, and he didn't want to dismiss them. He also didn't consider acorns litter. Mr. Richardson said they could make a few switches and consider species that would work appropriately with the stature of other trees. If the Board wanted to increase the diversity of the trees, they would comply. Mr. Rice suggested relocating the oaks where pedestrians and bikers wouldn't be and also suggested that the trees not be in the median.

Vice-Chair Adams noted that the Committee had resisted big stretches of the same species and thought the Silver Lindens were a big stretch of trees. He questioned what would happen if the trees became blighted. Mr. Tompkins said that in the past, people had considered form and shape when selecting trees for continuity reasons, and there was built-in insurance regarding insects and blights. He said they could come up with some alternatives. Vice-Chair Adams mentioned an instance on Richards Avenue when all the trees died and the street was bare for a long time. Chairman Loughlin mentioned that the Silver Maples on Aldrich Road were beautiful for a while but then deteriorated, and he thought that the downtown area had a good mix of tolerant street trees like lindens, elms, sycamores and honey locusts. Mr. Tompkins said they could come up with a balance of diversity. Mr. Richardson asked the Committee if that was a good direction to move in and was told that it was, so he said he would have two-to-four species identified by the next meeting.

Ms. Stevens asked where certain trees on the list would be located. Mr. Tompkins replied that they supported street trees and most of them were in the parks. A clump of Red Cedars and Red Maples would be approved by DOT at one spot, like an exclamation point. Other locations would be the park, the biomedian, and the pocket park. Ms. Stevens asked if the trees would be planted in grasses, and Mr. Tompkins agreed that they would. He noted the River Birch and a mix of deciduous trees along the corridor with some evergreens, and he also proposed bands of shrub planting that were tough hardy native trees. In the park and pocket park, there would be a mix of trees with mostly large masses of shrubs that would be appropriate for the parks.

Ms. Stevens asked about parking at the bigger park. Mr. Desfosses said there would be parking on Michael Soucy Drive, with no vehicle access other than emergency vehicles, and there would also be four parking spaces at the adjacent church. Mr. Rice said the City had property across the street and had an agreement with the CCC lot, and both lots were available for public parking. The intent was to have a place that people could walk and bike to, and not a driving destination. Mr. Rice said the City could create more parking if necessary.

Mr. Tompkins stated that a species selection, evergreen shrubs, deciduous trees, and other opportunities for grasses were combined to make up a series of textural qualities in the parks. There was also a heavy dose of ornamental grasses. Mr. Richardson said the goal of fewer species and larger masses had to do with visual and maintenance issues, but the park would be viewed primarily by cars driving so, so they had responded to that aspect as well.

Ms. Nancy Carmer, the Economic Development Manager for Portsmouth, discussed view sheds to river front and thought it was a big element of why the park was designed the way it was. Mr. Rice suggested that the Committee review the package and annotate the drawings so they could all weigh in on selections. He realized that there was an artistic license that Richardson and Associates wanted to keep, but there was also the Committee's function of knowing about certain issues. Chairman Loughlin said the Committee would bid on 40 street trees to replace missing trees, so in terms of variety and costs, they would have current information on what the Committee had allocated at different locations. Mr. Richardson asked the Committee if they would have time to review the package outside of the meetings to do a follow-up so that they could keep the level of detail across the whole corridor. Mr. Rice said he preferred to keep the 30,000-foot overview and review it. Chairman Loughlin said they weren't trying to micromanage projects, but over the last ten years they had come up with what they felt worked best. Mr. Rice reminded them that there was also a budget associated

with the project and that some things were more aspirational than achievable, so by reviewing it, the Committee could help with value engineering and get the costs down. They might have to phase implementation of the plans, but if they cut back on the number of trees and added diversity, it could reduce the cost. Mr. Desfosses said it had to be looked at carefully, due to winter maintenance and other factors, and thought it would be helpful to review it again. He noted that the first round was being done near the Sheraton and discussed the zones where the work would take place. Ms. Stevens thought that the park at Harborcorp might be interesting to see and that it would be nice to have continuity. Mr. Desfosses said the two areas would be close to one another but not directly adjacent.

Ms. Carmer talked about the Japanese Cherry trees at the Gateway and said they were thinking of combining a few areas because money was projected in the capital plan. Mr. Tompkins thought it could be a combination of different-sized trees. Vice-Chair Adams stated that correct planting techniques were essential and should be stipulated because they couldn't be taken for granted. Mr. Tompkins said that their drawing set included specifications and ongoing management.

Ms. Debbie Chag asked if the Committee had an 'Adopt-a-Spot' program. She also said her group was interested in pollinators, a big initiative in the country. Mr. Rice said they'd like to explore the Adopt-a-Spot possibility, but it was a staffing challenge. However, he thought it could be done in a few parks and suggested that Ms. Chag contact Donna Woodward, the Outreach Coordinator.

Mr. Desfosses asked if they could get responses in a week or two so they could all come up with a plan that would work. Mr. Rice said the first phase would be Exit 7 through Albacore Way and asked Mr. Desfosses to focus on that. He added that it would not include the park. Ms. Stevens asked about the ground cover in the island, and Mr. Tompkins replied that it was a series of plants. Mr. Croteau asked if there would be a maintenance plan for the City to tend it. Mr. Tompkins said it would be part of the warranty for the initial year, and then the City would take it over. Ms. Carmer said the City needed to know what the cost was to maintain it for one year so that they could budget for it.

Ms. Stevens asked how the plantings in the median across from Crossroads would fare because she had heard that they would be garbage-strewn. She asked how the project's area would be maintained. Mr. Croteau said the corridor was mowed once every three weeks and felt there would be significant impact with the new project.

Chairman Loughlin told the project team that the Committee would get back to them before the next meeting. Ms. Carmer asked if there were other issues the Committee wanted to give guidance on. Mr. Rice mentioned the monoculture issue, and Ms. Carmer asked about the ratio. Mr. Dupere said they had discussed 20% maximum on a major species, e.g. 300 trees, 90 of which were birches. It was a big area, and if the birches were infected, it would pose a problem. He further discussed breaking it down to a 15-20% makeup of species.

Mr. Richardson stated they understood the diversity issue. Chairman Loughlin brought up acorns again and said he rode his bike through them, but Mr. Croteau said the acorns could present a challenge for visually-impaired pedestrians. Mr. Tompkins stated that Red Oaks didn't have to be included and would select a species with no hazards relating to walking and biking.

Mr. Richardson asked the Committee if they could come to a consensus in feedback. Chairman Loughlin suggested that a subcommittee meet prior to the next meeting, at which point they would review it, and then they would report back to the project team in two months. Mr. Rice suggested that they forward notes from the next meeting to the project team for review before their return in March.

**4. Suggestions for Sagamore Creek Bridge Approach Plantings**

Mr. Dave McNamara of Fay, Spofford and Thorndike (FST) stated that the bridge was up and running but getting final details. Some landscaping had to be replaced. He talked about landscaping areas for the four quadrants of the bridge and said they needed feedback on the species. He showed where the plantings were located, saying the Virginia Rose was supposed to be planted, but due to a concern that it would trod upon, the Rugosa Rose was planted in its place. He discussed putting in Serviceberry instead of Virginia Rose to match what had been disturbed. They had cleaned out some shrubs, trees and utility lines and worked with the property owner. Mr. Rice asked if it was on private property, and Mr. McNamara said most of it was. Quadrant B would be filled in with a mix of White Pine, Cherry, Red Oak and smaller shrubs. They further discussed the Red Oak and the White Pine. Ms. Stevens asked about the tree that had been stripped, and Mr. McNamara told her that it would be removed and that the owner had requested that it be taken down. They could plant some low-lying shrubs in its place. Ms. Stevens asked if the White Pine near the road could be switched out with other trees. Mr. Desfosses said there were concerns about the high wind environment knocking down trees. Mr. Rice suggested that they put in something that would grow wild and be maintenance-free.

Mr. McNamara noted that there was more room on the east side to clear than the west side. Mr. Dupere asked whether the material was taken off site, and Mr. McNamara agreed. Chairman Loughlin thought there were no strong objections to what was proposed except for the White Pine replacement.

**5. Status of Request for Bids on Spring 2015 Tree Planting List**

Mr. Croteau stated that the package would most likely be ready in a few weeks and that he would email it to everyone so that it could get approved at the next meeting or sooner; Chairman Loughlin noted that the list of trees that Vice-Chair Adams created was available; and Mr. Dupere stated that unknown blight, tree-specific bugs and uniform looks of trees were issues.

**6. Update on Progress of Tree Maintenance in Langdon Park**

Mr. Croteau told the Committee that work had been done on tagged trees and that he would check on it. Vice-Chair Adams said that he, Mr. Suoto, and Ms. Stevens had spent a lot of time on it and that there was still a lot of work to do.

**7. Miscellaneous:**

- a) Discussion of City Policy on Planting Trees on Private Property Where No Public Planting Strip Exists

Chairman Loughlin mentioned South Street, where a few trees were taken down and the only place to plant was on the other side of the wall. Mr. Rice said they could deal with it on a case-by-case basis

and do a Letter of Agreement, i.e., contact the property owner and have a Letter of Agreement stating that the City would install the tree and then it would become the property owner's private tree.

b) Planning Board Action Regarding Site Plan Obligations of Subsequent Purchasers of Property

Chairman Loughlin stated that at the last Planning Board meeting, a site plan review regulation amendment drafted by the Director Rick Taintor was approved stating that the plan would indicate that the landscaping on the plan was a condition of approval and could not be changed by subsequent owners without approval from the Planning Board.

c) City Policy on Downtown Holiday Tree Lights

Mr. Rice said they had 'stayed low' and had received good feedback from residents. Ms. Stevens asked if the storeowners were happy, and Mr. Rice said there had been no complaints. He noted that there were several things they had to do the following year from an infrastructure standpoint but until then, they couldn't expand more than what was reasonable.

d) Request for Tree at 26 Park Street

Chairman Loughlin asked if the Committee had a letter pertaining to it. Vice-Chair Adams replied that the owner had asked why the tree, which was a Flame Maple, was removed and whether it was due to a water pipe. Mr. Rice asked when the tree had been removed, and Chairman Loughlin told him it was the previous summer when new granite curbing was put in. He asked Vice-Chair Adams to add the Flame Maple to his list, and Vice-Chair Adams agreed to do so. Ms. Stevens talked about green space, and Mr. Rice said they should see how much money was in the budget for it.

e) Suggestion for Removal of Remaining Tree in Front of Clum Property at 15 Wibird Street

Chairman Loughlin questioned whether there was money in the budget for replacement trees on Wibird Street. He thought a second tree should be removed so that two new trees could be planted. It was an important gateway, and he suggested that the Committee find out if there was money to replace trees in that neighborhood by the next meeting or put in on their list if there wasn't.

**8. Old Business**

There was no old business.

**9. New Business**

Mr. Dupere told the Committee that Asplundh's contract with PSNH had ended and Lewis from Maine had taken it over, adding that a lot of aggressive pruning would be done. Mr. Croteau said they had done due diligence and gotten feedback. Mr. Rice asked if a whole tree could be taken down rather than leaving trees with holes. Mr. Dupere replied that PSNH could direct Lewis to take the tree out. Chairman Loughlin said they wouldn't want to take the trees in Lafayette Park down and asked if there were any thoughts on the Market Street gateway. Vice-Chair Adams asked if the Committee could send their recommendations to Chairman Loughlin so he could forward them, and Chairman Loughlin

agreed. Mr. Dupere wanted to go out to the site and suggested that a few of the Committee members choose a date and go with him. He discussed locations where trees could be viewed.

**10. Next Meeting – Wednesday, February 11, 2015**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault  
Recording Secretary