

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, August 12, 2015
Portsmouth City Hall**

Members Present: Peter Loughlin, Chairman, Richard Adams, Vice-Chairman; A. J. Dupere, Peter Rice, Director of Public Works, Todd Croteau, Public Works General Foreman; and Dennis Souto

Members Excused: Leslie Stevens

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

1. Minutes of the July 8, 2015 Meeting.

*Vice-Chair Adams moved to approve the July 8, 2015 minutes, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was **approved** by unanimous vote.*

2. Tree Removal Requests (all requested by Department of Public Works):

307 Wibird Street (not on the agenda)

Ms. April Wienands of 307 Wibird Street told the Committee that the City recommended the removal of a diseased mountain ash tree on her property, and she requested that the replacement tree not be a heavy shade tree so that it wouldn't affect existing plantings. She had an existing crab apple and asked that a tree similar in size be placed to the left of it.

Chairman Loughlin stated that the tree removal request would be on the September agenda and that the replanting of perhaps a honey locust would be slated for spring.

253 Colonial Drive

Mr. Souto stated that the tree was dying and should be removed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Adams moved that the tree be removed, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was **approved** by unanimous vote.*

34 Hillside Drive

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto moved that the tree be removed, and Vice-Chair Adams seconded. The motion was **approved** by unanimous vote.*

628 Broad Street

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Vice-Chair Adams moved that the tree be removed, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was **approved** by unanimous vote.*

3. Request for Review of Proposed Plantings for Tuscan Kitchen Restaurant (formerly Jerry Lewis Cinema).

Mr. Colin Dinsmore, the lead designer from Ambit Engineering and representing the Tuscan Kitchen, stated that they wanted to plant a few Zelkova serrata along Ledgewood Avenue, but that the property line ran off the street a bit and the school owned a sliver of land with an easement to access it. Mr. Rice said he believed the City Council had accepted Ledgewood Avenue as a City Street and that the project was still going through TAC and had not gone to the Planning Board, so things could change. He also noted that the developer had made some requests that would involve the Trees and Greenery Committee as well, so he suggested that the Committee discuss species rather than locations. He was concerned about two honey locusts at the bottom of the property line because in the past few years, honey locusts had a poor record. Chairman Loughlin noted that there was a hodgepodge of trees on one side of the street that would create discontinuity, and he suggested that something be put in that would be more in keeping with the other side of the street. Mr. Croteau said the trees would have a better survival rate if they were moved back from the edge of the street. Mr. Dinsmore also noted that there would be a plaza space in front of the building and that the Department of Transportation might be involved. Chairman Loughlin went through a brief history of the first plaza and said that it was great to see the transformation and progress by having Tuscan Kitchen there.

The Committee discussed drainage catch basins and whether or not the trees would be street trees. Mr. Croteau said the City would have to maintain the sidewalk and would need space to store snow away from the edge of the street, so if the trees were pulled back 5-6 feet more, it would allow additional space. Mr. Rice asked what the sidewalk material would be, and Mr. Dinsmore said it would be concrete. Chairman Loughlin stated that 7 feet was enough to be back off the sidewalk. Vice-Chair Adams noted that he needed more information in order to make an informed decision, so Chairman Loughlin suggested continuing the request to the September meeting. Mr. Croteau asked whether arborvitae shrubs were proposed, and Mr. Dinsmore agreed, saying that it would be better than a screening fence and that the City preferred it. He said the dumpster would be relocated but would require another variance due to the 20-ft spacing required, and he noted that his client did not want to eliminate any parking by putting the dumpster in a certain location.

It was decided that the request would be addressed at the September 9, 2015 meeting.

4. Discussion of City Policy for Park Maintenance (Wild v. Groomed).

Vice-Chair Adams told the Committee that the City Arborist Mr. Corin Hallowell needed guidance and felt that Junkins, Langdon and Haven Parks should have brush species removed. He said the west side had a lot of poorly maintained trees, and Mr. Hallowell thought the Committee should decide whether they wanted a manicured or wild look. Vice-Chair Adams said he preferred that it be manicured

because the three parks were jewels of the City. He also noted that there was a lot of forsythia with roots that would need to be dug out as well as other issues and felt that it was a question of Public Works' willingness to fund it. Mr. Rice said it was up to the City Council and whether or not Public Works had the manpower to do it. He said he preferred that Mr. Hallowell weed back some of the undergrowth instead of hiring a contractor, and that he also preferred that the parks be wild rather than manicured. His big concern was safety because some of the trees had dead limbs, but if the Committee wanted to pursue it, he could get the undergrowth done first. Vice-Chair Adams remarked that Mr. Hallowell thought the growth could be cut down to ground level, but Mr. Croteau said that a mower had to be able to go over it every week. Chairman Loughlin suggested using a brush hog for the first few months, but Mr. Croteau said there would be root and stem issues.

Mr. Rice asked whether the end goal was education or enhanced esthetics and whether a path would have to be put in for people to access the park, and he felt that it was a nice public space as it was. He said he could use ten more employees but the Council wouldn't support it, so they had to work within their limits. Vice-Chair Adams said that it was inadequately recognized how important trees were in the City. Mr. Rice disagreed, saying he thought there was deep support and that Mr. Hallowell was going a great job, and he wanted to create a program that would grow organically, but there were budgetary and resource issues. Chairman Loughlin said the Committee members were advocates for trees and greenery, and if they were not maximizing, they were not doing their job. He knew that great progress had been made, but he would have to look at the area to see whether it would be better changed or not. Vice-Chair Adams said that the Committee needed to make a decision, and Chairman Loughlin said he would put the matter on the September agenda.

The Committee also discussed the causeway. Mr. Croteau said he wasn't sure how far back they could go to maintain it. Chairman Loughlin said he thought it could be done but would check with Mr. Peter Britz of the Planning Department. DES regulations, different rules once species were identified as to how they would be removed, and invasive issues were also discussed.

Mr. Dupere recommended that the Committee look at the situation and make a decision.

5. Discussion of Planting Guidelines Suggested by City Tree Specialist Corin Hallowell, ISA Certified Arborist #NE-7090A.

Chairman Loughlin told the Committee that Mr. Hallowell had submitted suggestions on planting guidelines. He asked whether the Committee had restricted the process so that it would make it difficult to get bidders at some point. Mr. Dupere said he requested that the bidding process be opened up to bidders in Maine and Massachusetts as well as New Hampshire arborists. Mr. Rice asked whether they could require that they be supervised by certified arborists, and Mr. Dupere agreed, noting that someone on site would be responsible for standards being followed. Mr. Rice asked what would happen if they were already comfortable with a firm, and Mr. Dupere said it could be put in Clause D that it was previously approved by the City. Mr. Rice thought it would give them more confidence in the quality of work. Mr. Croteau said that standards were written into a contract and that there had to be someone to monitor the person, even if he was certified. Mr. Dupere felt that having Mr. Hallowell on the project for the duration of the contract was a good thing, especially with a low-bid contractor. Mr. Rice said they could consider a qualifications selection process to weed out the

riffraff because a prequalification list included certifications and experience, and they would get a pool of contractors to bid. Mr. Dupere said he wanted to see a prequalified or pre-bid meeting in the fall for the next spring. Chairman Loughlin thought that Mr. Hallowell was their best protection, and if they could make their specifications tight enough, it might solve their problems. A pre-bid would require advertising, and one bidder might decide he couldn't do the project. Mr. Rice thought it would be a good opportunity to review their expectations and then follow up on the agenda as to who attended and what happened, and it would become part of the bid process, but he wasn't opposed to a pre-bid process to see how it would work.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved that Mr. Hallowell and Mr. Croteau incorporate the intent into the next bid and try it for a year. Vice-Chair Adams seconded. The motion was **approved** by unanimous vote.*

6. **Article on the Value of Street Trees by Michael Behrendt.**

Chairman Loughlin recommended the article to the Committee.

7. **Old Business.**

Mr. Dupere stated that he wanted to dig up a few black gums that were failing and that he had to work with a contractor. He wanted to cut the trees apart to see whether they had a fungal disease.

Mr. Rice asked whether the trees on Junkins Avenue at the Parrott Avenue Parking Lot were posted and/or voted on. Mr. Croteau said they had already removed some trees. Mr. Rice said they wanted to redo the parking lot and put in a sidewalk down Parrott Avenue, which would involve taking some trees out, some of which were already stressed. He said he would return with a plan.

Mr. Croteau stated that one of the two cherry trees on 50 Willard Street, which was part of the sewer construction project, had its roots damaged by the contractor. He was holding the contractor responsible for replacing it in kind.

Mr. Dupere said that Mr. Hallowell was removing a large ash tree at 36 Marston Street and that a red maple at 57 Marston Street was in poor condition.

8. **New Business**

Mr. David Moore from the Community Development Department said he wanted to update the Committee on the efforts to get the Haven School Playground project underway. He had gone to three public meetings with Richardson Associates, where they developed a plan using feedback from residents, and there was a desire to keep as many trees as possible. They originally considered removing two trees to lighten up the park, but now that they had real costs, they wanted to retain other trees. They also considered using timbers, but due to the expense and budget constraints, they were now reconsidering what to do with the existing trees. They wanted to keep three or four trees and then

plant the next-generation ones, which would allow them to grade and bank the remaining minor elevations. They would create a more purposeful planting on both sides of the walkway and create a new entry way as well. Mr. Moore said the timeline consisted of having the DPW do the demolition in the fall, explaining the project to the neighborhood residents prior to the September Trees and Greenery meeting, then getting the Committee's feedback and doing the demolition to give the contractor a clean slate for the spring.

Mr. Dupere stated that some species would not survive construction. Mr. Moore said they would probably be removed when they did the timbers. Mr. Dupere asked how much grade would be changed, and Mr. Moore replied that the highest would be three feet. Vice-Chair Adams asked Mr. Moore if he wanted a decision from the Committee before September, and Mr. Moore said he didn't because he had already spoken to the key neighbors and said they were in favor. Vice-Chair Adams asked if the trees to be removed would be marked, and Mr. Moore said they would. He showed the Committee the Existing Conditions Plan and pointed out the trees that would be retained or removed. Chairman Loughlin said it would be helpful for the Committee to meet on site. Mr. Dupere said that saving trees that were in poor condition on a playground were probably not worth saving, and that installing retaining walls, pits and timbers would mean taking them out if the tree failed, so he felt that starting over was the better option. Mr. Rice agreed, saying that he didn't want to create a maintenance issue in 30 years. The Committee discussed the benefit of posting the site walk as a public meeting so that when the trees were removed, the public would know about it.

It was decided to post the site walk and meet on Tuesday, August 18, at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Moore stated that he would ensure the meeting was posted.

9. Next Meeting – Wednesday, September 9, 2015.

The meeting was adjourned at 8: 55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Recording Secretary