

TREES AND PUBLIC GREENERY COMMITTEE
City of Portsmouth

MINUTES

7:30 AM – Wednesday, September 14, 2016
Portsmouth City Hall

Members Present: Peter Loughlin, Chairman; Richard Adams, Vice-Chairman; Peter Rice, Department of Public Works; Todd Croteau, Public Works General Foreman; Leslie Stevens; A. J. Dupere; Joan Walker; and Dan Umbro. City Arborist Corin Hallowell was also present.

Members Excused: Dennis Souto

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

1. Minutes of the August 10, 2016 Meeting

The August 10, 2016 meeting minutes was approved by unanimous vote.

2. Tree Removal Requests:

38 Haven Road (requested by resident) -

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was a red maple that was in serious decline, with decay at the base.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Ms. Walker moved that the tree be removed, and Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

South & March Streets (Island at Intersection) (requested by resident) -

Mr. Rice said the intersection would remain in its current configuration for a long time. Ms. Stevens suggested that the tree remain until the spring, when a new tree could be planted. Mr. Hallowell said there were several requests for removal and that the tree had a wood decay fungus and was damaged from several years of bad weather. It was a small tree in an isolated area, so he felt that the decay wasn't extensive enough to create a hazard and that it was more of an esthetic issue. Mr. Rice said that the house at the intersection of South and Marcy was more of a sight-distance hazard than the tree and also noted that planting a garden bed instead of a tree in that location had been discussed. Ms. Stevens said she didn't see a reason for the tree to be removed immediately. Mr. Rice said he went by the tree every day and didn't see the esthetic issue. Mr. Hallowell said the tree could look a lot different in a few years after some maintenance.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Croteau moved that the tree not be removed and that Mr. Hallowell continue monitoring it. Vice-Chair Adams seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

7 Suzanne Drive (requested by resident) -

Mr. Croteau said that the tree looked healthy, and it was noted that it was just a dieback issue.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Vice-Chair Adams moved that the tree be spared and that the dieback at the top be pruned. Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

3. Discussion of Planting Materials for South Meeting House at 280 Marcy Street (PPMtv – continued from prior meeting)

Ms. Stevens asked whether the wall was being rebuilt, and the citizen Mr. Humphreys agreed. Mr. Croteau asked whether the wall would be terraced, and Mr. Humphreys said he didn't think it would. He said the plan was to remove the railroad ties and replace them with granite at about the same elevation. The granite would then be run down the Prescott side of the public parking areas and sloped. The slope would be grassed in and planted accordingly with the listed materials. The maintenance issues were discussed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Rice moved to approve the suggested plantings, and Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

391 Colonial Drive (not listed on the agenda).

The citizen Carol Edwards of 144 Spinnaker Way was present to represent the owner of 391 Colonial Drive. She said the owners had concerns about the linden tree in front of the home because they believed it was hazardous for the children who lived there. She said the tree was overgrown and 30 feet from the children's bedrooms and that the owner felt that the branches could fall at any time, especially during storms. She said the owners felt that the tree needed to be removed and were also concerned about the power lines.

Chairman Loughlin asked whether any of the Committee members had seen the tree recently, and Mr. Croteau replied that a few of them had and felt that the tree was perfectly healthy. Chairman Loughlin asked whether the linden was the prominent tree in the area and was told that it was. Chairman Loughlin then asked if there was a process to ascertain whether the tree was a hazard. Mr. Dupree noted that there was a system called the Risk Tree Assessment that could be done on the tree by a certified operator. Mr. Rice suggested that the City contract the process out rather than have Mr. Hallowell do a preliminary assessment so that there would be no bias. He felt that, since the tree was causing a lot of distress for the owners and some of the residents, it would be money well spent. He recommended that the Committee contact an independent contractor that the City worked with.

Chairman Loughlin said the Committee had similar requests for tree removals every week and took it very seriously because the greenery of the City and the concerns of residents were important. He said there would be an impartial study done and that the Committee would act if there was an issue.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Rice moved that the City hire a licensed arborist to do a certified tree risk assessment. Mr. Croteau seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

4. Suggested Trees for Borthwick Avenue – Eversource Request

Mr. Croteau said Eversource wanted species suggestions. Mr. Hollowell suggested that some of the Committee members go to the site and take a look. Mr. Croteau said they intended to plant in the fall.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Mr. Rice moved that the Subcommittee, consisting of Ms. Stevens and Mr. Dupere, go to the site. Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

5. Discussion of Tree Planting for 2017 Season

Chairman Loughlin noted that he didn't finish the tree planting list, but Vice-Chair Adams said Mr. Hollowell had compiled a lengthy list. Mr. Hollowell said he could add four or five more trees to the list and felt that it would be easier to converse with the residents while the trees were still green. He recommended that the Committee move on it as soon as possible.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. It was decided that the Committee members would meet on Friday, September 23, at 8:00 a.m. in the City Hall's lower parking lot to look at the proposed sites.

6. St. John's Church Parking Lot

Chairman Loughlin said he discovered that the church member's approved plan had a strip along Bow Street that would not accommodate trees, so he did some measurements and was able to gain a significant area for landscaping, a 24-ft aisle 20 feet in depth, that the church members agreed to. He proposed that the City donate two trees, that the Church pay for two trees, and that he personally donate a tree. He asked the Committee whether they would recommend donating two trees, noting that the planting strip was near a major entrance to the City and would make a significant difference. He said the church members would accept any kind of tree. Mr. Hollowell said the City would not maintain the trees but could suggest that the church members follow the City's planting and maintenance schedules.

Mr. Dupere said the church members suggested a pin oak, and the Committee discussed problems with pin oaks, noting that the Board of Health was adamant about not having fruit-bearing trees. The Committee then discussed more species. Chairman Loughlin said he would recommend Piscataqua as a tree contractor. Mr. Hollowell asked whether the Committee could review the recommended trees, and Chairman Loughlin agreed. Mr. Dupree advised that the contractor be ready to begin by the next meeting and suggested that there be a subcommittee to respond to the suggestions before then. It was decided that the subcommittee would consist of Mr. Hollowell and Chairman Loughlin.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. Ms. Walker moved that the City donate two trees for Bow Street, and Mr. Rice seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

7. Old Business

Chairman Loughlin said he had some requests for stump removals and asked what the status was. Mr. Hollowell said he emailed a list of 15-17 stump removals to their contractor and was in the process of

reviewing it. Mr. Croteau said the stumps would all be removed in the same time period. He observed that the City is in the process of acquiring its own stump grinder and thereafter grinding would be done by the City.

Vice-Chair Adams commented on the 391 Colonial Drive tree removal request, saying that he hoped the evaluation would show that the tree was fine. He noted a previous situation in York, Maine, where a fallen limb killed a child, causing the Town of York to cut down almost every tree in the area. Mr. Dupere said that particular limb was completely dead and that it should have been noticed beforehand. Mr. Hallowell said he was confident that a certified arborist would evaluate the 391 Colonial Drive tree as low-to-no risk. Mr. Rice said he agreed with Vice-Chair Adams' concern but that the Committee's approach was to document and support the decision. Mr. Hallowell offered to assess the tree on his own to see whether it matched the contractor's assessment, but Mr. Rice said he preferred to have an independent contractor do it. Chairman Loughlin agreed, noting that it wouldn't make much difference what the Committee members said in that case.

8. New Business

Mr. Dupere announced that they were hosting a tree identification workshop on Tuesday, September 20 and invited the Committee members to attend.

Mr. Rice said that the plantings in Goodwin Park had matured and the shrubs had taken over and created a habitat for some undesirables and was becoming a safety concern. He said a plan was being reviewed that would revise the park and clear the shrubs out, thereby creating better visibility. He said the intent was to clear the park out during the fall and plant the following spring, and if anything significant was done, he would bring it back to the Committee. Mr. Dupere noted that there were a few memorial plantings in the park, and the Committee discussed it.

Mr. Rice noted that there was a series of trees in the Paul Harvey area of Lafayette Park that Eversource pruned but were now out of shape. He said Eversource agreed to remove them and replant, and he thought the Committee should suggest that it was a good idea. Chairman Loughlin said he wanted to look at the issue more closely.

9. Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 12, 2016

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Recording Secretary