

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

MINUTES

**7:30 AM – Wednesday, June 8, 2016
Portsmouth City Hall**

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

Members Excused: Vice-Chairman Richard Adams

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

**1. Minutes of the April 13, 2016 Meeting
Minutes of the May 11, 2016 Meeting**

*The motion to approve the April 13 and May 11, 2016 meeting minutes was **approved** by unanimous vote, with one minor edit on the April 13 minutes.*

2. Tree Removal Requests:

273 Austin Street (corner of Union). Requested by DPW.

Mr. Hallowell said the homeowner was having an issue with squirrels and that the trees were impossible to prune because they were too close to the house. He said there was nothing wrong with the trees, except that they couldn't be pruned further. Mr. Rice verified that the squirrel nuisance was the only problem. Chairman Loughlin said he had mixed feelings about removing trees because they weren't perfect and didn't want the Committee to set a precedent for removing trees just for convenience. He suggested that the Committee not recommend removal but instead monitor the trees during the coming year.

Mr. Rice recused himself from the vote.

Ms. Walker moved that the Committee not recommend removal and instead monitor the trees during the coming year. Ms. Stevens seconded. The motion was approved.

111 Elwyn Avenue. Requested by DPW.

It was noted that the address was not 111 Elwyn but something in the 30's range.

Chairman Loughlin noted that the homeowner had mixed feelings about its removal because it still had some life in it. Mr. Hallowell said the tree had a 40% crown dieback and was in steady decline, and he recommended removing it. Mr. Souto agreed.

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

105 Essex Avenue. Requested by Eversource.

Citizens Sheila Reardon of 105 Essex Avenue and her neighbor Jessie Carle were present. Ms. Reardon told the Committee that the tree sat between her home and Jessie's home and said the tree's removal would have adverse effects on her home's value. She said the grandiose tree shaded her house and yard beautifully. She also submitted a document signed by 10 neighbors who were in support. Chairman Loughlin read the letter and the signatures to the Committee.

Bob Bernier of Eversource said he looked at the tree and spoke to his engineering department personnel, who decided that it wouldn't be necessary to remove the tree. He then discussed the voltage conversion project and emphasized that the poles would be 15 feet higher.

Mr. Rice asked him whether he considered placing the poles on the opposite side of the street, and Mr. Bernier said he would have to look into it and that it would require a license.

Chairman Loughlin stated that the request for removal would be removed.

111 Essex Avenue. Requested by Eversource.

Mr. Hallowell said the tree was not a City one and that the homeowner would deal with Eversource.

161 & 169 Essex Avenue. Requested by Eversource

Mr. Dupere asked how close the new pole would go to the current location, and Mr. Bernier said it would be as close as possible. Mr. Hallowell said the trees were not in great shape. Mr. Bernier said the homeowners consented to have the trees removed. Mr. Souto said he wasn't sure about removing both trees, and it was further discussed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Walker moved that both trees be removed, and Mr. Souto seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Mr. Dupere asked whether there were more trees posted on Essex Avenue. Mr. Hallowell said there was one at 245 Essex Avenue and others that had been topped that would be on the next agenda. They summarized that four trees were already approved for removal at 245 Essex Avenue.

303 Thaxter Road. Requested by DPW.

Mr. Hallowell said that 40% of the crown was dead and that he recommended removal.

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

1483 Islington Street. Requested by Eversource. (Note: this was added to the agenda).

Chairman Loughlin said the white ash looked good except for its center. Mr. Hollowell said it was a healthy tree but was in the way of the Eversource progress, and if the pole went up another 15 feet, it would wipe out half of the crown. Chairman Loughlin said there had to be a balance. Mr. Bernier said they would use the Hendrix configuration, which Mr. Rice further explained. Mr. Rice also suggested that Eversource contribute to the City's tree replacement fund.

Mr. Souto noted that the only reason to consider removing the 105 Essex Avenue tree was because Eversource requested it, yet the tree only needed pruning. He said there seemed to be more trees that Eversource had to deal with on Islington Street. Mr. Bernier said the project was in two parts.

Mr. Rice said Eversource was redoing all the circuits around the City, but the licenses that the City granted didn't include tree trimming, and he felt they should consider that trees required to be removed be replaced in kind. He noted that the City in the past had not asked for compensation for loss of trees and that the infrastructure of trees provided a benefit to the City. Mr. Dupere said Eversource was required to lift their poles taller, which would change the look of the trees. Mr. Rice said the City was avoiding planting tall trees under power lines and further explained that it was a national infrastructure issue that had to be addressed, but felt that it was within the City's right to ask Eversource for some adjustment for removing the trees.

Chairman Loughlin recommended that Mr. Bernier bring a drawing indicating where the pole lines would be and why the additional area of clearance was necessary. Mr. Bernier agreed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Walker moved that the request be continued to the July meeting so that Mr. Bernier could present a Photoshop document showing the wire locations. Mr. Souto seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

3. Chestnut Street Improvements

Chairman Loughlin said they would address Item #4, since both items related to the same thing.

4. Music Hall/City Public-Private Partnership

At this point, Mr. Dupere left the meeting.

Ben Auger, Chairman of the Facilities Committee, introduced the architect Terence Parker and the Director of the Music Hall, Patricia Lynch. Mr. Auger stated that, as part of the Chestnut Street improvements, they wanted to plant trees and shrubs. He said they would meet with the Historic District Commission and had already met with the City Council, Artspeak, and Traffic and Safety. He showed a plan view of the improvements.

Mr. Parker explained the site orientation on the diagram and indicated where the new planters would be. He emphasized that the space would be expanded to give it more of a pedestrian feel and explained how pedestrian safety would be increased. He discussed how the proposed columnar trees would look and said they wanted to plant viburnum, which would flower in May and had berries.

Mr. Croteau asked whether it would be on private or public property. Mr. Rice clarified whether the plants would be located on the City sidewalk or Mr. McNabb's property. Mr. Parker said he believed it would be on City property but would check on it.

Ms. Stevens noted that it was dark in the area and asked whether the trees and shrubs would get enough sun. Mr. Parker said they would be on the southeast corner and would get plenty of sun.

Mr. Rice asked whether fruit was associated with the tree, and Mr. Parker said no. Mr. Rice said the viburnum shrub had fruit, which would attract vermin, and asked whether there were viburnum plants that didn't bear fruit. Mr. Parker said he would look into it. Chairman Loughlin thought the fruit would be dropped into the planters rather than onto the sidewalks.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Stevens moved that the Committee support the proposal so that the City Council could be aware that the Committee supported it. Mr. Rice seconded the motion, with the stipulation that the project would investigate the non-fruity shrub.*

The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

5. Haven Park – Impacts of Ongoing Construction

Ryan Flynn, Public Works Construction Project Coordinator, gave the history of the project. He noted that the contractor started removing the planters around the existing trees, and that he and Mr. Hallowell had agreed that there were no trees that needed to be removed. He said the trees were impacted from the construction and that burlap and composted wood chips were installed around the tree bases to cushion the impact of the equipment. He said they finished the planters and tweaked some designs. Mr. Flynn showed the layout and planting plan.

Mr. Hallowell said they were doing what they could to help the trees along, and that he and Mr. Dupere thought there was too high of a volume of plantings planned for within the planting boxes, so they recommended that they plant in the new soil rather than in the existing root mass and that there be a reduction in planting because the trees were already stressed.

Ms. Stevens asked whether wood chips would be placed on top, and Mr. Hallowell agreed. Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Rice moved that Mr. Hallowell and Mr. Flynn be allowed the flexibility to adjust the planting appropriately. Mr. Souto seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

Chairman Loughlin said he appreciated the work that had been done to save the trees and was disappointed that the contractor didn't treat the trees with the respect they deserved. Mr. Hallowell suggested that the Committee have future specific directives about the process to save trees. He said the contractor removed all the railroad ties all at once, leaving the root balls exposed for days when they should have been removed one at a time. He said a plan would have helped. Chairman Loughlin agreed and said the Committee would be aware of it next time.

6. Update on City Tree Planting Program

Mr. Croteau said they had an issue securing the trees, but they were starting to plant that day. He said he looked at the stock and noted five trees that the City rejected because they were not quality trees. He said the plantings should be completed by the following week.

Chairman Loughlin asked whether stakes were being put out, and Mr. Croteau agreed. He also noted that there was another issue of staking a tree to be planted but citizens not wanting the trees, and that they would work it out. He said he had a few extra trees. Ms. Walker said Burkitt Street needed a tree and that she would look into it.

7. Update on Pierce Island Wastewater Treatment Tree Removals

Chairman Loughlin said the Committee would look at the removals when the trees were posted. Mr. Rice said there were a lot of concerns from residents about the elm tree the Committee had previously discussed because the limbs were dropping in areas that people sat. He said it was a safety issue and wanted the tree removed as soon as possible and stockpiled. Ms. Stevens said she would look into it.

8. Old Business

Chairman Loughlin said Mr. Umbro had requests from neighbors about tree removals. He said he sent one to Mr. Croteau and suggested that Mr. Umbro send the other request to Mr. Croteau.

Chairman Loughlin said he also forwarded a request from Ed Valena of 67 Crescent Street about his stump removal and would add it to the list. Mr. Croteau said he would forward a request for a tree planting on Madison Street to Chairman Loughlin.

Mr. Hallowell noted that the Hendrix system used by Eversource was not as wide as the traditional system and that Eversource shouldn't prune the trees so much that they declined. Ms. Walker noted that there were dual electric poles all over the City. Mr. Rice said Public Works had an inventory of the poles and were following up on it.

9. New Business

There was no new business.

10. Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 13, 2016

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joann Breault
Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the July 13, 2016 Trees & Public Greenery Committee Meeting.