

**MINUTES of the
City of Portsmouth
Trees and Public Greenery Committee Meeting
September 13 2023**

Members Present: Chairman Peter Loughlin; Director of Public Works Peter Rice; Assistant Mayor Joanna Kelley; Members Patricia Bagley, Michael Griffin, A. J. Dupere, and Dennis Souto

Members Excused: Vice-Chair Richard Adams; Deborah Chag; City Arborist Maxwell Wiater

Also Present: Bob Gormady of Lewis Tree Service, Bob Bernier of Eversource

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

1. Acceptance of the Minutes of the August 9 meeting.

*The minutes were unanimously **approved** as presented.*

2. Tree Removal Requests

Note: The Tree Removal Requests were not reviewed in sequence.

Plains Field outfield (near Islington St): 5 ash, all in various stages of decline, removal recommended by City. This area will be planted next spring.

Mr. Dupere said the trees were 25 years old or less. Mr. Souto said he didn't see any evidence of emerald ash borers (EAB) in the trees, and it was further discussed. Mr. Dupere said if Mr. Wiater saw EAB holes in the trees, the trees would fail eventually. Mr. Souto said the first and third tree starting from the south end looked good to him, and Ms. Bagley agreed. The Commission discussed whether the healthier trees should remain.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Dupere recommended removing the worst trees first and leaving the healthier ones to be removed at Mr. Wiater's discretion. Mr. Souto seconded. The motion **passed** unanimously, 7-0.*

Plains Field near playground (for Eversource): 2 black locust, 2 pin oak, 1 Norway maple, 1 Red maple. All trees indicated are in direct conflict with the utility lines and removal is recommended. New trees will be planted for every removed tree. The planting selections will be more suitable for the site in the immediate area, and several large shade trees will be planted in more open space at Plains Field in the spring.

Bob Gormady of Lewis Tree Service was present and said he was heading up the project for Eversource. He explained that they wanted to remove a few trees because they were

in direct conflict with the utility lines. He said Mr. Wiater recommended doing so because it was a good time to remove those tree species and put in more compatible ones. Ms. Bagley said she saw the pin oaks and that they didn't seem to be a problem. It was further discussed. Mr. Rice asked if Eversource was willing to work with City Staff to replant a few trees in that location. Bob Bernier of Eversource was present and said he did not have a firm replanting plan but would discuss it with the City. Assistant Mayor Kelley said she would like to see one. Mr. Bernier said he would talk to Mr. Wiater and come up with something. Mr. Dupere noted that figuring out the support needs in Plains Field was also important because the place got crowded with people and vehicles.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto recommended removing the trees, seconded by Mr. Dupere. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

Peverly Hill Rd from Sage Ln to Moffat St (for Eversource): 2 Black locust, 1 Silver maple, 2 Red maple, 1 elm, 1 white oak. All trees along this section of Peverly Hill Rd are in direct conflict with the utility lines and removal is recommended. It is worth mentioning a few thoughts related to this site: the grade changed within the last couple years and material was added to build up the roadside, with some of these trees more impacted than others. This has implications for water runoff and excess material at the base of trees, which is reminiscent of the tree failure at Hislop Park this spring.

Mr. Gormady said the property was abutted by the Green Company and that he wanted permission to remove several trees along the wood line that poked out past the marking. Mr. Rice asked if the trees were on the west side of Peverly Hill Rd, and Mr. Gormady agreed. Mr. Rice said that was also the area where a multi-use path would be put and would likely be related to that requirement. It was further discussed.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Ms. Kelley recommended removing the trees, seconded by Mr. Souto. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

777 Middle Rd (for Eversource): 1 Red oak, 1 Black cherry. The two trees are in direct conflict with the utility lines and removal is recommended. The cherry is in poor condition, and the large oak is showing signs of stress—the canopy is thin and there are many dead limbs throughout.

Mr. Gormady said the oak had been there a long time and wasn't in good shape and the cherry tree next to it was declining.

Mike Keevan of 802 Middle Road said he lived directly across the street from the oak tree and that he had been calling the City about it for years. He said the tree's massive limbs seemed to go horizontal instead of vertical, and there was a hole in the main part of the trunk that racoons went in and out of. He said it was a safety issue because the limbs went over his and his neighbor's utility wires and there were several walkers, joggers, and vehicles in that area and a strong wind could snap the limbs.

Chairman Loughlin asked for a motion. *Mr. Souto recommended removing the trees, seconded by Ms. Bagley. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.*

Update on 216 Woodbury Ave

From May's Trees and Greenery Committee meeting, a London plane tree was approved for removal to facilitate a sidewalk installation project. At that time, no replacement tree was selected. It has been decided to plant a **serviceberry** due to the existence of overhead utility lines.

Note: this request was noted but not addressed because of the update.

3. Update of Tree Planting for the City's 400th and 401st

Mr. Rice said Mr. Wiater was excited about continuing the Tree Giveaway Program and that he would work with Mr. Dupere to see what would happen next year. He said Mr. Wiater also wanted to continue robust planting to get 100 trees or more from the City and get some of the trees into Plains Field and the skateboard park.

4. Old Business

Request for City Badges: Mr. Rice said he reviewed the City's policy for badges. He said a form was generated and he was in the process of ensuring that it was fully vetted. He said the form included the rules and responsibilities of the person wearing the badge and representing the City and so on. He said he saw no issues with it but wanted to review it once more before making it public.

Update on South Street Cemetery: Mr. Rice said he signed two purchase orders for the contract, one from the Brackett Road side and one from the South Street side, and that the City had an agreement with the property owner off Brackett Road that would allow the City to access the back side of the cemetery. He said there should be some action taken in the next few weeks.

5. New Business

There was no new business.

At this point in the meeting, citizen Lauren Krans called in via Zoom with questions about the Plains Field tree removals (page 1). She asked why the trees were a nuisance now but weren't before. Mr. Dupere said the rules and regulations of Eversource and other power companies were changed in the last few years regarding clearance around power lines. He said new poles were going up higher around the City that had more features and belonged to different power companies. He explained why the trees were all in poor health and needed to be removed. Ms. Krans asked if a tree would be planted for each one removed. Mr. Dupere said there was no plan to do so yet because there were a lot of uses around that property. Mr. Rice said the desire was to provide shade trees that

would not impinge on power lines. Ms. Krans asked if the City could communicate with the park's abutters about future plans regarding the trees in the park. Mr. Rice said Mr. Wiater would coordinate it. Chairman Loughlin said Mr. Wiater sent him some material stating that new trees will be planted for every removed tree, the planting selections will be made more suitable for the site in the immediate area, and several large shade trees will be planted in more open spaces in the Plains Field in the spring. He said he would tell Mr. Wiater to contact Ms. Krans.

Next meeting: Wednesday, October 11, 2023

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joann Breault
Trees and Greenery Committee Minute Taker

DRAFT