

DRAFT

EXETER TREE COMMITTEE Minutes from July 30, 2020

Members Present: Eileen Flockhart (chair), Deb Twombly, Sally Ward, Sara Sankowich, Gwen English, Greg Jordan (Rockingham County Forester with UNH)

Staff Present: Kristen Murphy (Natural Resource Planner) Bob Glowacky (Exeter TV)

Zoom meeting commenced at 8:30AM with Eileen Flockhart reading out loud the meeting preamble which indicated that an emergency exists and the provisions of RSA 91-A:2 III (b) are being invoked. Ms. Flockhart subsequently calling the roll.

Minutes of May 11th were unanimously approved with one change.

1. Eileen Flockhart summarized the Arbor Day/Lincoln Street School event:

- a. The event went well but we missed the kids.
- b. LSS involved their students in a writing project, and for 2-3 weeks the Water Street Bookstore had a 'tree window' in the children's section of the store where these projects were featured.
- c. Eileen recapped the event of May 21st for committee members who were not present for the celebration.
- d. The Tree Committee website features a video of the event.
- e. Due to Covid-19 restrictions on crowd size, we did not advertise the event in the newspaper. We did get press coverage and Exeter TV has run a clip of the whole thing. Natasha Stoppel (from Exeter TV) put the film together.
- f. We have fulfilled the Tree City USA "piece of the pie" by calling it an Arbor Day event. We now have plenty of press coverage and footage to submit the application to reapply for Tree City USA this year.
- g. Eileen thanks Exeter TV for their support, as well as Kristen Murphy and Bob Glowacky for helping to set up the website.

2. Follow up details.

- a. Sally Ward asked to be reminded of the timing for re-application for Arbor Day.
- b. Eileen responded that it would be sometime in December, she believes Dec. 31st. She will check with AJ or someone else in the office.
- c. Tree City USA gave us a flag and two good-sized signs. Jay Perkins has put in granite posts for the signs, one near the Town Hall, and another one in the island by Salem Street and Water Street as you come into Town. A flagpole is permanently installed on the island and the flag has been raised!
- d. An elm tree (next to the Tree City sign) which was planted 10 years ago isn't looking good. Jay Perkins has been giving it extra water, and Greg Bisson contributed a tree diaper to be used for this elm. It is hoped that the tree can be saved. Having a dying elm next to the Tree City sign doesn't project a good image!
Kristen Murphy wonders if Jay has sent in a sample to the diagnostic lab.

Greg Jordan worries that the tree might have Dutch elm disease. The previous elm did succumb to this. Greg is happy to help when the laboratory is reopened.

3. New Events

- a. Eileen detailed the convergence of three activities in the West Side neighborhood.
- b. Residents in this area want to plant trees in memory of three special neighbors who recently died. UNITIL has trees that did not survive and need replacing. The neighborhood and UNITIL are trying to come together and create something special for this neighborhood park. David Short from Stratham Hill Nursery will help (offering wholesale cost for the trees). Jay Perkins is willing to take out the old trees and plant new ones. Greg Bisson will provide tree diapers. This is a win-win situation! The planting would take place in mid to late September. UNITIL has offered to contribute \$200 for each tree that was distressed and dying, for a total of \$400. The neighborhood also is pitching in with donations and monies from a Go Fund Me plan. Jay Perkins is looking for some granite stones, and a local monument company may engrave these.
- c. Sally asked about 'the flyer' and whether Eileen had sent anything about this community event to the newspaper, adding that this is a great community story to highlight. This is a good "feel good" story. Eileen indicated that she will contact Alex LaCasse at the Newsletter. Kristen is happy to put the flyer on the facebook page. Good to share a story about what happens when community comes together, and that it doesn't need to be complicated.
- d. If there is more money left than expected, the neighborhood may put it into additional plantings at the Park.
- e. Bob offers to do a video if we want to put Exeter TV in touch with different people or groups to interview.
- f. Eileen recalls one of the memorial recipients, Joe O'Donnell, who lived on Walnut Street and was known as the 'cookie guy'.
- g. Sara points out that it is good to encourage other groups in Town to help beautify their own neighborhood area. It will help to encourage them to 'own their park' like the Park Street Common. Or they could put a fundraiser together, *or* be part of this committee! It was noted that the 'Dinosaur Park' just got redone, and that they have good shade trees (which were protected) and probably don't have room to add more.
- h. Eileen indicates that the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th week in September is the targeted time frame for the tree planting in the park.

4. Tree City Application and other goals

- a. Eileen leads this discussion by saying that the weakest part in the application is the tree ordinance. We need additional research. She watched the webinar that was suggested by Kevin Breen. Feels that we don't want to take ordinances from other towns, but should instead develop our own that work for the Town of Exeter.
- b. Included in our ordinance might be 1. How to take care of trees 2. Address jurisdictions where we don't have control, such as schools.
- c. Sara offered that we did meet requirement for the ordinance, but we should make sure that we make it more robust and meaningful to us. Also, she thinks we should

set some goals, and decide what we want our ordinance to do for us. We do have some boundaries and limitations, and one of the boundaries is private property. We can certainly encourage people to do certain things on their own private property, and we can give them information about the importance of trees and stormwater etc., but without some major changes, we wouldn't be able to limit activities on their own private property. Perhaps we should focus mostly on public areas and figure out what our goals are. Are they to protect existing trees and maintain them? Are they to increase canopy? What do we want our ordinance to do for us? Then we need to take a look at what we have, and see if there is any language that would support our goals.

- d. Kristen Murphy was thinking we were talking about a zoning ordinance, but now it sounds like a Town ordinance.
- e. Eileen says that she thinks it is, and that it goes beyond zoning. You would have a zoning ordinance that would pertain to new developments, but when you look at the big picture it could pertain to trees in parks and public places and how to plan, protect, and maintain them. (For example, trees on Water Street) The biggest issue with any kind of Town ordinance is that they don't have any teeth. Perhaps we can do some research and find information from other districts/states. She got some from a township in NJ that was great. They have a shade tree commission and one must appear before them before making any massive changes.
- f. Sara thinks we should think about what type of ordinance we want to start with.
- g. At a future meeting we should do a goal planning exercise and take a look at existing ordinances and then pick one to concentrate on. Perhaps everyone can take a look at a different ordinance and then bring it back to the group. Then we can try to vote on what we think our number one goal would be, and take a stab at working on one at a time as they are prioritized.
- h. Deb Twombly asked if the existing Town ordinance could be sent out to members.
- i. Eileen asks Greg if he is familiar with ordinances that would give us some guidance. Greg responds that there are a lot of resources (fact sheets and example ordinances) Portsmouth has, basically, a shade tree committee and people appear before them when they want to remove a tree that a city has control of. Of course it doesn't have anything to do with private trees. He can send some resources. We might also want to talk to AJ about this. Eileen thinks we would want to start within the public realm, as she can't imagine trying to do ordinances on private property trees.
- j. Sara offers that possibly a shade tree review committee is something to work towards if we feel like that's the way the Town wants to go. Feels we could come up with some great ordinances and goals, and should start with those first and figure out our priorities.
- k. Jay Perkins has been very proactive. He is knowledgeable, interested and helpful, so we have a huge asset there.
- l. We should do some research and reach out to the committee indicating that this is what you're going to work on, so we don't have two or three people working on the same thing. Also, what is the Tree Committee, USA looking for with our tree ordinance submission. What would they hope we would be able to accomplish.
- m. Kristen thinks that early on, there was a list from the Tree City USA of ordinance

requirements. It's a pretty succinct list of what it needs to include. She believes it is somewhere in her files.

- n. Eileen questioned Sara about Unitil's guidelines. Sara indicated that towns have different regulations, and they have to follow those. Sometimes they go before the Board of Selectment. Sometimes the Tree Warden. There is a lot of cooperation between the town and the utility. The best and most helpful thing is when there is a clear process and a clear person making a decision in a town, so that the utility knows who to present the material to. So she recommends that whatever we decide to do, we make it clear about the processes and the expectations, who's reviewing, and timeframes etc.
- o. We need to keep track of volunteer hours and dollars spent, and events held.
- p. Tree ordinance submission needs to be in by December, so we have August, September and October to work on this. It needs to be clear enough that someone can say, "Okay, I think I get what they are trying to do". The actual ordinance that we propose would then have to be adopted by the Selectboard. Knowing how busy they are, it would be ideal to have something ready for them in October. (It will take two readings before it can pass.)
- q. Greg thinks we could take the time we need to write it well, and not worry about just meeting the requirements from Tree City USA. We have already, so there is no need to rush on that account. Sara responded that we did get it, and we weren't just handed it, so we should take the time to make it what we want it to be to meet our goals. We shouldn't rush it through the Selectboard.
- r. Eileen will find the early ordinances from Tree City USA, and will send around some of the Portsmouth Tree Commission contacts.
- s. A good goal would be to update our tree inventory, perhaps with the help of an intern. Greg says he might be able to help with that process next summer. (With some students)

Meeting ended at 9:22AM

NEXT MEETING: AUGUST 27TH at 8:30 AM

Draft minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on 8/5/2020

