

DRAFT

Town of Exeter
EXETER TREE COMMITTEE
February 11, 2021
Virtual Meeting
Draft Minutes

I. PRELIMINARIES:

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT BY ROLL CALL: Eileen Flockhart (Chairwoman), Gwen English, Greg Jordan, Sara Sankowich, Deborah Twombly, Sally Ward

STAFF PRESENT: Greg Bisson, Kristen Murphy, Exeter TV (Host)

- II. CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Flockhart called the meeting to order at 8:30AM and read out loud the meeting preamble which indicated that an emergency exists and the provisions of RSA 91-A:2 III (b) are being invoked. As federal, state and local officials have determined gatherings of ten or more people pose a substantial risk to the community and the meeting imperative to the continued operation of Town and government and services which are vital to public, health, safety and confidence. This meeting will be conducted without a quorum physically present in the same location and welcome members of the public accessing the meeting remotely.

III. OLD BUSINESS:

Approve minutes of January 6, 2021. All in favor. Sally Ward abstained.

IV. NEW BUSINESSES:

Chair Flockhart gave a summary of her presentation on 1/25/21 to the Selectboard members which included explaining the meaning and value of a tree ordinance and what such an ordinance can do for the Town of Exeter. She informed the Board that we still have work to do, and some issues to sort out.

Eileen indicated to the committee members that when we have a draft of the ordinance, it would be wise to have it legally vetted.

A discussion followed Kristen Murphy's question: "Is this going to be a Town Ordinance or a zoning ordinance?" She explained that a Town Ordinance is a Town policy, and that a zoning ordinance applies Town-wide code enforcement. It should be a two-pronged approach, with portions of the ordinance in both. Maybe we should start with a Town ordinance and establish what the Town wants to see. A Town ordinance would be approved by the Selectboard.

Greg Bisson has concerns about enforcing a Town ordinance. If it is a zoning ordinance, code enforcement can get involved. (Town ordinance is enforced by police.)

Sara Sankowich indicated that there are measures in place, statewide, for enforcement. This is an education campaign.

Greg Jordan noted that in forestry, there are forestry laws. He'd rather have a point person vs. code enforcement.

Eileen brought up Portsmouth and other tree cities, and wonders what their approach is to ordinances. Knowing the experiences of other towns would be helpful. We could do some research and find out what kind of ordinances other towns have, and how they enforce them. Sally is willing to contact Durham, NH. Gwen will look into Newburyport, MA. Kristen is happy to set up a spreadsheet and administer that. Those who do the research can send the information to her.

Kevin Breen will lead a tree walk on Swasey Parkway on Friday, February 26 at 4:00. Due to Covid concerns, this will be limited to 8-10 people, and all must be masked. Weather permitting, we would like to video this event and broadcast it on Exeter TV.

Greg Bisson and Sara brought up the idea of self-guided tours, and Greg indicated that Keene NH does this. He will get more information for us. Kristen Murphy proposed the idea of an arboretum-style scavenger hunt revolving around tree facts. It would be a fun way to get people interested in and educated about trees.

Greg Bisson indicated that they will be planting seven or eight new trees at Gilman Park in between new sections of fencing, between the parking area and the field. They are open to suggestions about the type of tree(s) that would do well there. With the use of tree diapers, they should stay well watered.

Kristen Murphy told the committee about the completion of a business district street tree plan (draft form) in Dover, NH funded through a coastal grant. It's part of a larger stormwater management program and climate resiliency (in terms of lowering urban heat temperatures). Strafford Regional Planning Commission was part of the planning of this, and they created a form which enabled volunteers to choose a street and do a street survey themselves. Kind of a citizen's science version of a street survey. She could send us a link to the presentation that they gave. Their street tree plan had things that we could pull from: Species list. Planting techniques. Training protocol. Policies. Management. Etc. SRPC developed training protocol and provided a list of apps for our region for tree identification. It would take some coordination to implement this in Exeter, but it might reduce our need for an intern to do a tree inventory in Town. Perhaps with the help of Rockingham Planning Commission, we could get something like this set up for the Town of Exeter.

Eileen indicated that it is unlikely that UNH could provide us with an intern for this summer.

Next meeting will be March 10 at 8:30AM

ADJOURN 9:45AM

Respectfully submitted by Gwen English on 2/21/2021