

DRAFT MINUTES (3/2021) '3'

Town of Exeter
EXETER TREE COMMITTEE
March 10, 2021
Minutes

I. PRELIMINARIES:

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT BY ROLL CALL: Eileen Flockhart (Chairwoman), Gwen English, Greg Jordan (Rockingham County Forester), Sally Ward

STAFF PRESENT: Greg Bisson, Kristen Murphy, Jay Perkins, Exeter TV

- 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:

Minutes of February 11, 2021 unanimously approved with one correction. Kristen Murphy abstained from voting.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

Chair Flockhart announced that Lincoln Street School was accepted as a grantee for a \$1,100 pollinator grant. She also indicated that Natasha from Exeter TV is working on the video from the Tree Committee's 'walk and talk' on Swasey Parkway, and the video will soon be up on various sites, including YouTube and the Town website.

(Kevin Breen logged on at 8:37AM)

Sally Ward presented her findings on the city of Dover's Tree 'Ordinance'. (They don't call it an ordinance, but it is part of the town ordinances.) This included information on approvals needed to cut trees on public lands including ROW's, public parks etc. The regulations specify that there is an arborist, but they do not currently have such an individual on staff. The enforcement falls to a committee that is comparable to Public Works.

Dover is a Tree City USA city. There are maps of the trees on Dover's website.

Gwen English gave a brief overview of the information she gathered on ordinances from the city of Newburyport, MA, Durham, NH, Portsmouth, Keene and Nashua, NH.

Eileen Flockhart spoke with Charlie Baxter from Portsmouth, NH and gathered more information on their ordinances. Portsmouth has several arborists on staff. They do have a system of fines and a legal department for enforcement.

Eileen wonders if we could establish a simple ordinance that is written in stone, and then have a separate piece, the nuts and bolts, that goes into more detail. The specifics could be flexible and have the ability to be updated as needed.

The document should be positive vs. punitive.

Sally Ward concurs, and likes the idea of a two-pronged approach. The legal and the technical aspect of dealing with trees on public land - and then a series of documents that are informal and fluid, and offer guidance and advice about trees. These would not be legal but rather advisory and educational in nature. (Topics such as planting)

Kristen Murphy reviewed Dover's plans. These lean toward simple. They have guidelines on species, plantings etc. which are dynamic, but still connected to the ordinance. She likes the idea of having a tree ordinance in town that covers the entire town and can be enforced, vs. a zoning ordinance.

Greg Jordan feels we should focus on public trees, and should stay away from logging issues which can result in challenges.

Sara Sankowich arrives at 9:03AM, and Greg Jordan departs.

Kristen Murphy continues her discussion on Dover's accomplishments which could be a great model for the Town of Exeter, and she likes the approach of having the regulatory and the management side. Dover has worked extensively on a tree inventory using the Survey 123 phone app for volunteers in conjunction with a street tree inventory form. That information goes into the city's GIS system. Dover corroborated with the Strafford Regional Planning Commission who prepared the documents for the city of Dover.

She noted that Jay Perkins did tree work with an intern, and this could build on that and continue the effort for the Town of Exeter.

Dover's documents focus on: Role and value of trees. Tree Inventory. Tree selection. Tree management. Tree installation. Tree maintenance. Implementation. Prioritization. Management needs. They also focus on what it will take to implement the plan. (Budget/costs)

Their system is able to pull up all regulations that speak to trees, and put that information into one place. Lastly, they have a list of species of approved trees, and where certain trees are (or could be) located. This could be a great reference for us. Dover's document was just released and approved by Dover's Planning Board. Their Conservation Commission also reviewed it.

(Note that this plan helps Dover with their MS4 permitting.)

Kristen feels that the review of Dover's list of approved trees would be a worthwhile exercise

for Exeter's Tree Committee members.

Jay Perkins noted that planting native trees should be a priority, and wonders if such trees will be available at local nurseries. Is there a way to get Exeter's trees on GIS? He would like to provide details and instructions for contractors. He indicated that the DPW website does have regs regarding excavation and construction. (Jay's goals are to layer iTree onto GIS, and update the Town's standards and specifications for construction.)

Eileen questioned Dover's time frame for completing their survey, and wondered if we might enlist the help of Dover's volunteers to get us started. Strafford RPC was an asset, and perhaps we can talk with our RPC. Kristen believes Rob (from Rockingham RPC) could help us with Survey 123.

Jay Perkins departed at 9:27AM

Kristen Murphy will ask about apps for tree identification in Dover. Picture This? Leafsnap?

Job #1 should be to pull together an ordinance to present to the Selectboard. We should pare our thoughts down to the basics, perhaps doing a fine tuning of the original ordinance that we developed. A May target day for completing this work?

There was a discussion about the influence our tree list will have on local nurseries and a suggestion that a conversation with nurseries would be helpful to them, and us. Dave Short would be helpful.

Sara suggested that our tree information list could include details such as: "Looking for color", "size", "pollinators", "wildlife habitat" and other categories would be helpful!

Another discussion ensued about methods for the committee members to access, edit, and critique documents without members sending out a ton of emails. Perhaps using Google DOCS?

Sally Ward suggested that between now and the next meeting everyone should review other ordinances and see what we might want to incorporate/borrow from those. Are there ingredients we might want to add to our current ordinance? After our next in the meeting we should consider forming a subcommittee to put together all the thoughts.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 7th, 2021 at 8:30AM

Kristen Murphy noted that the Annual Rain Barrel sale is now being held, until April 11th. Barrels are \$79.00 and will be delivered on April 17th. See the Conservation Commission website for more information.

A question was posed about the ailing tree by our Tree City sign, and Eileen indicated that Dave Short (Stratham Circle Nursery) may be willing to replace it if it is dead.

Meeting adjourned at 9:53AM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English