

Town of Exeter
EXETER TREE COMMITTEE
DRAFT MINUTES 11/14/2023

I. PRELIMINARIES:

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Eileen Flockhart (Chairwoman), Steve Jones, Deb Twombly, Sally Ward, Niko Papakonstantis (Selectboard Representative), Gwen English

STAFF PRESENT: Kristen Murphy, Kirk Scamman

II. CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order at 8:35AM

III. OLD BUSINESS:

Minutes from October 10, 2023 were approved without any changes. (Steve Jones moved to approve the minutes, Sally Ward seconded the motion.)

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

Eileen reported that the last two Elms have been planted. One is in the cul-de-sac on Glenerin Lane (off Jady Hill) and the other is at the Exeter Skate Park. Tree diapers are on but no mulch has been put around these new trees yet.

Work is being done to get tree articles written and submitted to the Exeter Newsletter.

It was decided that individuals from the Tree Committee would check the trees periodically to make sure that they are doing well. The list is as follows:

Eileen: Park Street Common and Exeter Library

Gwen: Brickyard

Deb: Rec Park and Jady Hill

Sally: Gilman Park, Lincoln Street and Triangle

Steve: Swasey Parkway and Exeter Skate Park

There is uncertainty about what the action plan is for replacement trees at Gilman Park. We will need to follow up on this with Greg Bisson. (Eileen will contact him.) It is important that we find trees that can withstand the wet conditions there, *and* we need to collar new plantings to prevent animals from chewing the bark and killing the saplings.

Eileen reminded the committee members that a list of volunteer hours and financial contributions need to be submitted before the end of December. She needs to compile this information and submit a package to Tree City USA. Kristen reminded Eileen that this can be done electronically now, and is happy to work on that with Eileen. Eileen would also like to work on the Growth Award, and feels confident that we've done enough this year to receive that award again. Niko reminded her not to overlook the work we've done to develop a budget for the Tree Committee.

There was a brief discussion about checking street trees and examining the health of those trees before they cause property damage. In the course of that discussion, it was noted that a few of the new plantings on Lincoln Street have died, including one or two of the golden rain trees.

Kristen reminded us that when we're feeling defeated in the face of property owners and developers cutting down trees, we need to remind ourselves that we're doing everything we can to raise awareness about the value of trees, and that in the state of NH the focus is on property rights so our hands are tied when it comes to restricting cutting.

We need to start thinking about what we want to plant in the future, and where we'd like those plantings to be. Sally thought that we should perhaps consider conifers. It was proposed that we could have the public weigh in on this, and give suggestions about where new trees could be planted. Steve felt that we should mirror trees that are native to this area, though hemlocks should be avoided due to the woolly adelgids, and beech trees due to diseases that are now impacting them. Kirk indicated that white pine trees are not good planted alone, and arborvitae will be eaten by deer. Steve concurred, saying that pine trees are better in forests! Kristen offered that cedars and junipers could be considered. For a healthy environment, we should do plantings that result in vegetation of varying heights.

Niko reminded the committee that the tree budget is a line item, and feels is unlikely that it will be scrutinized at the deliberative session. In the discussion about the deliberative session and voting, the idea arose of putting an information table at the polls. That worked well for the Energy Committee last year.

Eileen indicated that in the future we will need to prune the 'Herbies', and will have to ask Jay and Greg about this. (Steve said that they were pruned prior to planting). Kevin Breen indicated that he could do some pruning - we just need to identify what trees need to be worked on. Currently Parks and Recreation is responsible for park trees, and DPW for street trees. Steve wondered what we are aiming toward with particular trees. Height? Shape? He also asked if we could pin Kevin down and pay him to do some of the work. Kristen responded that we need to ask Jay first to see what funds are available to pay for an arborist's work.

Eileen brought up the Tree Inventory project and asked Kristen to explain how this would work. We would need to pay a contractor/consultant to set the ArcGIS system up for Exeter. The dashboard would tell us what we need. Survey 123 is a free app we could train volunteers to use, for example, in neighborhoods. One would walk along a street and submit tree information to feed the database. Dover NH does not have a Tree Committee and uses their Conservation Commission for their inventory work. We could look to Dover to see how this all works.

The subject of street trees was raised again, and Kirk told the committee that tree wells can cost \$5,000-\$6,000 each, then the cost of the trees would be added to that. It is an expensive proposition.

Deb has participated in several webinars through Urban Forestry Today.org and briefed the committee on a recent one on tree risk. (Urban Trees and the Law: Case Studies)
She noted that one takeaway from this presentation is that it is important to have plans in place that show we (the Town) have a standard of care for trees in Exeter.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45

NEXT MEETING: January 9, 8:30AM

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on November 17, 2023