

Town of Exeter  
EXETER TREE COMMITTEE  
MINUTES FOR 3/20/2024

**I. PRELIMINARIES:**

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

STAFF PRESENT: Greg Bisson, Jay Perkins, Kirk Scamman

**II. CALL TO ORDER:**

Meeting was called to order at 8:35AM

**III. OLD BUSINESS:**

Minutes from 2/13/2024 were unanimously approved with one minor change. Motion to approve was made by Steve Jones, seconded by Deb Twombly.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS:**

Jay Perkins summarized the approved budget. The original request for tree maintenance was for \$20,000. \$35,000 was added to that to establish a Tree Committee budget. On top of that is \$50,000 approved by the Selectboard for the Tree Committee equipment request. (Tree chipper and water tanker) \$10,000 will be dedicated for the tree inventory, \$5,000 for eight trees.

Trees will get planted when public works employees are working and have time to do this work. Mark and Russ are the two main tree planning men on staff and with Greg's help will plant trees and install tree diapers. (It was noted that the large tree diapers cost \$40.00 each). Eileen commented that we need a teamwork system to make this work! (i.e. Public Works and Parks and Recreation)

Eileen feels that we need to look at different trees to plant, steering away from maples for the moment and plant natives that should tolerate warming trends.

Deb feels it is important to get the public vested in this endeavor, to care for the newly planted trees.

Eileen reminds us that this tree planting needs to happen on public spaces.

Sara Sankowich informs us that UNITIL is giving away 'energy saving trees' (for shade etc.) to UNITIL customers. Trees are approximately 3' tall. Notices about this will go into this month's billings. They allow two trees per address, though condominium units may be an exception. Tree types include Linden, Buttonbush, Tulip Poplar, Witch-Hazel, River Birch, White Fringetrees.

If demand exceeds supply, they will likely have a waiting list.

Sally reminded the group that we also have our list of tree types to plant.

The Green Team at Lincoln Street School would like to have another tree to plant. They also have a monarch pollinator garden in the works.

Eileen initiated another discussion about other locations to plant trees.

1. Exeter Public Library. The slope may be too steep but we could check
2. Front Street across from 80 High Street where a maple is dying
3. There are two trees on Water Street that were decapitated (down from the bookstore) that weren't appropriate for the spot. They already have gratings. The concern is that there could be water, gas or electric lines going through there. Unitil and the Town have maps. Unitil won't share them but the Town maps are on line. Unfortunately there isn't one map that is shared by all. Trees can be removed and stumps can be ground, but it isn't easy.
4. Some suggestion about replacing the lilacs near the river at the Library. Kristen will have more information about this.
5. Sally asked about the status of the African American pocket garden at Swasey. Greg responded that it will be by the flagpole, and there will be an event/celebration the first weekend in May.
6. We can keep in mind the Pairpoint park (the 'missing tooth') on Water Street. A committee will be formed to formulate a plan for this. At some point there may be a desire to plant a tree or two on this site.
7. Steve confirmed that there are two little elms by the condenser at the Library.
8. On Lincoln Street there are two trees that aren't going to survive. Kevin Breen has done an assessment and will look at those again. They'll eventually need to be replaced.
9. Jay commented that he has had limited success getting landowners to commit to taking care of newly planted trees.
10. Steve has looked at the trees at Swasey and noticed that the champion River Birch is in tough shape. We should put this on our 'watch list'. Jay feels that it has more life left to it though.
11. Greg noted that a tree was taken out and needs to be replaced at the dinosaur playground on Front Street.
12. Erika wonders if we can plant another tree or two on Park Street Common. There is a maple tree there that is struggling, but Jay is doing his best to keep it alive!

Sally Ward expressed concerns about the newly planted trees at Swasey and wonders if they were damaged during the January storms from flooding. We need to keep these conditions in mind when doing future plantings. Jay offered that we can put gypsum around the newly planted trees in the springtime because it acts as a balancing element.

Sally Oxnard summarized her visit with students and their science teacher John Brough at Exeter High School. They talked about the poor survival rate and poor health of trees on the campus which was caused in large part because of the unfavorable conditions of the soil when they were planted. (Heavily compacted soil etc.) She reported that Mr. Brough and his students were very receptive, and excited about the possibility of planting new trees. They will work on creating a list of trees they'd like to plant, and what can be done to ensure their survival.

Sally Ward has looked at newly planted trees at the new school on Epping Road and felt that they were planted appropriately. No mulch volcanoes. The same was said about the trees at the new PEA development on High Street.

A brief update on connections at SST (Anne DeMarco) and Eileen would still like to develop a relationship with teachers and students at the middle school, even though there are students there who are not Exeter residents.

Eileen wanted to brainstorm and come up with ideas for the promotion of tree information. Bob Glowacky is great about putting together videos that tell a story. We should tap into his talents. We could have repeating TV stories. and/or videos on facebook. Bob has asked us to prioritize what we'd like to have him work on. We could produce a video on planting the elms, showing them being put into the ground, and then show the growth rate/what they'll look like in ten years or so. Kevin Breen will be contacted about a pruning 'workshop' as this would also make for a good information video. (He has reached out to Jay about doing this.)

Erika wondered if we have, or could put QR codes on trees to help people obtain more information. (Could be linked to a static website?) A tree could have more than one QR code depending upon what information we'd like to impart.

Another topic to consider could be the regeneration of vegetation/trees after a selective harvest. Eileen wondered where we could put this information and it was suggested that QR codes could be placed at trailheads. There was uncertainty about whether Riverwoods has used QR codes on their trails.

Sara reminded the group that we can't do everything, but we can combine what we're doing with materials that already exist. (For example, from the UNH

Cooperative Extension Service.) She cited work she has done to research Microforests, an area that UNH has studied, and indicated that there is a lot of work being done by others and that information can be found online.

Sally recounted a story about a woman and her daughter who she met at the polls on 3/12 who had taken on their own tree measuring project! There are people out there who are interested in trees! Eileen met a new Conservation Commission member who lives at Exeter Mills who is also interested in 'staying in the loop' with the Tree Committee work.

Eileen asked Steve if he would communicate with Kevin Breen about tree harvesting, and doing a trail walk that can be documented on video.

It is good to make videos as local as possible so they are more relatable to Exeter citizens. We can check with Bob Glowacky to see if we need to do more legwork before we do a video. She said that the videos we already have are not really teaching videos, they are somewhat chaotic. (Especially those done with school children!)

*Kirk and Jay left at approximately 9:30AM*

*Greg left at 9:45*

*Erika left at 9:50*

We were reminded about the Kingston Plains Seminar on April 11<sup>th</sup> from 10:00AM to 1:00PM.

It is a Tree Inventory Workshop being held through UNH Cooperative Extension NH Division of Forests and Lands. Deb, Steve, and Sally Oxnard are planning to attend.

Meeting adjourned at 9:55AM.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, APRIL 9, 2024 AT 8:30AM  
in the Wheelwright Room, Exeter Town Office

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on 3/20/2024

