

Town of Exeter  
EXETER TREE COMMITTEE  
DRAFT MINUTES FOR 4/09/2024

**I. PRELIMINARIES:**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Eileen Flockhart (Chairwoman), Steve Jones, Sally Ward, Gwen English

STAFF PRESENT: Greg Bisson, Kristen Murphy, Jay Perkins, Kirk Scamman

**II. CALL TO ORDER:**

Meeting was called to order at 8:35AM.

**III. OLD BUSINESS:**

Minutes from 3/20/24 were approved with one minor change. (Eliminating the word 'operating' from the first paragraph under IV. NEW BUSINESS.)

**IV. NEW BUSINESS:**

There was a brief discussion about budget when it was noted that either Jay or Kristen can request expenditures if funds are needed for miscellaneous costs. (Outreach, supplies etc.)

Two replacement trees will be needed at Gilman Park, and one at the purple dinosaur playground. The thought is to put red maples at Gilman (because of the soil and water conditions there), and a pin oak at the playground. The playground tree that needs to be replaced is by the gate, but a new tree can go anywhere, just NOT where the stormwater treatment work will be done.

These two planting projects should be coordinated so both happen at the same time. Eileen feels this would be a perfect opportunity to video the planting process from start to finish, beginning with selecting trees, preparing the site, planting the trees, and applying mulch, tree diapers and protective collars to the trunks. She will communicate with Bob Glowacky and hopefully he will be able to work with Jay and Kirk's schedules and successfully do the filming of these important planting steps. Eileen and Greg pointed out that we can get a discount on these trees, and that the two Gilman Park trees will come out of Greg's budget, the purple playground tree will come out of the Tree Committee's budget. Provided that this can all be appropriately coordinated, scheduled and filmed, Bob can pull things together and get it edited and put on Bob's Town of Exeter E-Newsletter.

There was a large ash tree taken down in Swasey Parkway, and it would be nice to replace that. Such a plan would need to be approved by the Parkway trustees. They receive \$10,000 per year for maintenance, and receive funds for rental fees, so they likely have enough funds in their budget to purchase and plant trees. Was noted that the Swasey Parkway trustees are also working on a master plan.

Other possible future tree planting sites are Park Street Common and Brickyard Park. Jay felt that trees are also needed on Water Street by the Salt Cave. Opening up the sidewalk, planting shade loving trees, and installing tree grates is definitely a possibility, and the addition of trees would enhance the appearance of Water Street. The two elm trees on the other side of Water Street, near Hemp Connection and Top Drawer, have been severely trimmed and their survival is in question. If and when they do die, their removal will be difficult (taking down the tree and hydro excavating the root systems) and time consuming, but not impossible. Eileen feels that this would be a good time to alert store owners and building owners that we have staff members who are educated on trees and that it is **our** responsibility to care for these street trees. Jay intends to send the parties involved a letter indicating they will be responsible for removal/replacement if the trees do not survive. If those parties have concerns and/or questions, they can reach out to Town staff and/or the Tree Committee.

Sally pointed out that areas near the Railroad crossing on Front Street desperately need trees. Kirk noted that the Town has a 5' sidewalk plow and 5' sidewalks (for ADA compliance) so we would need to plant trees without changing those needs. Steve added that we'd plant trees in paved areas, not sidewalks. (And not under power lines) Jay reiterated that it is important that the trees be 'adopted' and that there is a commitment to water and care for the new trees.

Kristen updated the committee members on progress with the tree inventory. She reached out to Rob Pruyne, a GIS specialist at the Rockingham Planning Commission, and he will contact the Strafford Regional Planning Commission for more information about work that they have done on tree inventories. Kristen would like to know what data they collected and compare it with what we would like to have. She'd like to make it as easy as possible for the public and Public Works to put in data. Current inventories can be challenging, such as the need to calculate heights of trees. We need to simplify the process. Jay likes i-Tree but Kristen says it doesn't easily connect to ArcGIS. Once Kristen gathers more information, she will discuss it with Kirk and Jay.

Sally suggested that this spring we also should plan what additional trees we plan to tag and develop an inventory of locations for future planting.

Steve volunteered to look at existing conditions in places where we would like to plant trees, and Kristen added that it would be good to have Public Works along to look at utilities and overheads.

Sally, Steve and Deb Twombly will try to attend the Tree Inventory workshop on Thursday, April 11, weather permitting.

Eileen is still looking into the Riverwoods Forestry Management walk plan, and with Kevin Breen and the Riverwoods horticulturalist, Patty, is trying to schedule an event. The Riverwoods Trail Committee is apparently planning a walk, so perhaps we can join them. If not, we could do a separate walk.

Kirk suggested that we do the Gilman Park and purple playground project on April 22/Earth Day! This idea was embraced by the committee members! DPW can dig on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Greg can get the water bags, Kirk/DPW can provide mulch, transport and the digging, Steve can provide the wrap for the bottom of the saplings, and Bob can hopefully do the video work.

Since it is school vacation week, perhaps we can get kids there as well. Perhaps Kristen can put something up about this on the Conservation Commission website to engage families.

Kirk will see if pin oaks are available and if not, he'll let Eileen know. Kristen will notify Niko about this Earth Day event.

Given the time, Eileen would like to bump the discussion about EHS to the next meeting. Steve gave us handouts from John Brough's class about tree planting suggestions for the school grounds.

The Alewife Festival is from 10:00-1:00 on May 11<sup>th</sup> and thus far the following items will be used at the Tree Committee's table.

- \*Little tree
- \*Erika's crayon leaves
- \*Pencils
- \*Books
- \*Photos
- \*Treats

We should have a meeting prior to the 11<sup>th</sup> to get organized.

Brief update was provided about the status of the Pairpoint Park. The Town is still accepting applications for the planning committee. They expect to have nine volunteers in addition to Greg Bisson and Dave Sharples (Town Staff). A decision on the composition of the group will likely be made by the end of April or the beginning of May.

Kristen informed the group that there will be a Town-wide cleanup effort and supplies (gloves, safety vests and bags) can be picked up at the Department of Public works on Newfields Road. Kristen will have supplies at the Town Hall on April 20. She noted that the SST students will be cleaning up the Morisette property, the date has yet to be determined.

Kristen also indicated that in April and May all are invited to participate in an alewife count from the bridge. They need enough volunteers to support counting in 10 minute intervals, nine times a day, seven days a week!

Steve and Sally Ward will get together to discuss conditions of tree locations.

**Next Meeting: MAY 7, 2024 at 8:30AM in the Wheelwright Room.**

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on 4/12/2024