

Town of Exeter

TREE COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES FOR 4/8/2025

I. PRELIMINARIES:

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

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Greg Bisson, Kristen Murphy, Kirk Scamman

II. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Flockhart called the meeting to order at 8:35AM

III. OLD BUSINESS: Minutes from 3/04/2025 were approved as written. Motion to approve by Steve Jones, seconded by Deb Twombly.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

Today's guest, Liz McKinley, New Hampshire Community Forester, updated us on the Arbor Day Program and the Growth Award plaque. Since our group formed six years ago, we've accomplished a lot and still have much to do to increase our tree canopy. Eileen briefly updated the group on the events of voting day, March 11, during which a Tree Committee table was set up in the entranceway to the polls. There was interest among voters for participating in the tree inventory. Deb wondered if we should prepare handouts for events like this that might include information on how to plant a tree, and how to do a tree inventory and who to contact for additional information. Sally Ward responded that handouts were available. Liz McKinley noted that Tree City Bulletins are available through Arbor Day. Someone else suggested that we get some Trees Rock bumper stickers. Sally Ward suggested that we have something on 'how to plant a tree' on the website.

Kirk noted that we need to remind people to call Dig Safe before digging! Sara informed us that UNITIL has Dig Safe key chains as well as goodie bags containing tree pencils, pest ID cards, and other items. She could provide us with those.

Kristen still has the temporary tattoo sheets.

Kristen also noted that the Alewife Festival is scheduled for May 10, and Steve commented that we need to move quickly to get prepared for this! Eileen thinks we should set training times (for training individuals for the tree inventory) and perhaps we could get Bob Glowacky to film the training. Timing for training should be after leaf out. Liz volunteered her assistance with this. Kristen feels we should schedule the training by the Alewife festival.

The next topic of discussion was tree planting and Sally Ward, who is also on the Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee, has been working with Kristen on plantings by the Raynes barn. They are hoping to plant an Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry Tree by the viewing benches, and she has contacted Dave Short to see if he has one, or if he can get one for this site. The planting would be in conjunction with the completion of work on the barn – Sometime between September 1 and late fall.

Eileen asked Greg Bisson about the timing for planting playground trees, and he hopes it will be in three or four weeks. (It will be after the egg roll which was to be on the 14th of this month.

The Herbie Elms at the library may not get moved until fall if we choose to put them at the new Rec building. We can't put new trees at the library until the elms have been relocated.

We are still on track to plant eight trees this year. Kirk noted that no trees have been evaluated yet, so we don't know what needs to be replaced.

Sally Ward indicated that Front Street, by Rockingham Feed, needs trees.

Someone offered that Portsmouth Ave needs trees too, but that stretch of roadway will be undergoing some work in 2027 or 2028 so we should hold off on planting there until the work is done. Kirk indicated that Union and School Street area may need plantings but that won't happen this year.

Sara suggested that we could consider removing a parking spot here or there and secure that spot for a tree planting. That would be a particularly good idea in a spot where we are trying to manage runoff.

Steve noticed that the trees on Holland Way have been hit hard by foraging deer.

Kirk brought up pipe/water and sewer projects on West Side Drive and the possibility of putting plantings/tree boxes there. There is federal funding for water quality projects and tree plantings would get funding from the project budget. Sally wondered if we would have an opportunity to approve the trees planted. If so, we could make sure that we don't end up with Bradford Pears!

Peter Waltz will be packaging saplings for the fourth graders at Lincoln Street School on May 2 or 3rd and will appreciate having volunteers there to help with that. Steve offered his assistance, and others will likely help as well. It shouldn't take more than an hour or two.

The next topic was tree labeling. According to Kirk, there is plenty of granite available for the markers, and the granite can be cut to any height we request. Greg can buy the tags for the labels. We'll continue to focus on putting markers in areas that are 'most walked', such as Brickyard Park, Town House Common and Swasey.

Sally Oxnard and Sara went to Linden Street and identified properties where owners may request trees from UNITIL. They spoke with one property owner, have pulled addresses and sent emails to others. Door cards can be dropped off as well. Each property can claim two trees. It was noted that the Ash tree is still standing.

There was a brief discussion about repurposing the wood from trees that have been cut down, and while it is a great idea, it is also hard to find a good use for that wood. Sara knew a gentleman in Stratham who would take some of the wood from UNITIL, but he eventually had more wood than he knew what to do with! Some could go to Concord to be split up for firewood and given to individuals as fuel assistance but transporting it can be a big expense.

She notes that it would be great to find a way to keep the carbon sequestered. (And Ash shouldn't be distributed because of the ash borers.)

Sally Oxnard had contacted John Brough at EHS about the micro forests and nothing has happened yet at the High School. She will reach out to him again.

Steve noted that the soil there is packed down and not ideal for growing, but deep down the soil would be OK. Growing sites would need to be excavated.

Friday, April 25 is Arbor Day. Liz reminds us that we don't have to have a celebration ON Arbor Day!

Eileen would like to have a 'do' and 'don't' image for planting trees, with images that are simple and clear enough for kids to understand! She likes UNITIL's NO VOLCANO image! Friday, June 6 is National Donut Day, and we talked about combining that with proper tree planting and mulching! A fun idea!

Kristen asked if anyone would be willing to work with her on the website. Eileen volunteered.

Sara informed the group that UNITIL's Storm Resiliency program is coming up again and it involves a high-level assessment of trees along the power lines. In doing this, they identify and mark trees that are deemed risky and either try to improve the health of those trees or remove them if they are too diseased or damaged. There will be a period of time for comment. She will provide us with a map of the target area.

Liz wanted us to be aware of two upcoming events:

Discover Wild New Hampshire, a free family friendly event to be held at Fish and Game Headquarters at 11 Hazen Drive in Concord on 4/19 between 10:00 and 3:00. AND

NH Farm, Forest and Gardens Expo on May 2nd and 3rd at the Deerfield Fairgrounds between 9:00-5:00

Deb informed the group that plans are still going forward with the planting plans at FUUSE.

Eileen Flockhart, Kristen Murphy and Tree Committee members will do a brief presentation at the upcoming Selectboard meeting on Monday, April 14, providing the Selectboard with updated information on the progress the Tree Committee has made.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45AM

NEXT MEETING: MAY 13, 2025, AT 8:30AM

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on 4/11/2025