

TREE COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES FOR AUGUST 12, 2025

I. PRELIMINARIES:

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

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Kirk Scamman, Kristen Murphy

GUESTS PRESENT: Chris Moultroup (UNITIL's Forestry Management Operations) Ben Richard (UNITIL's Forestry Supervisor), Laura Brodeur (UNITIL's Storm Resiliency Program)

II. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Flockhart called the meeting to order at 8:30AM

III. OLD BUSINESS:

Minutes from June 10, 2025, approved without changes. Motion to approve by Steve Jones, seconded by Sally Ward.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

Kirk noted that trimming and cutting is taking place on Tremont, School, and Front Street, and also on Kingston Road.

Guests were introduced and they detailed their individual roles at UNITIL before continuing to explain the process of identifying trees needing to be removed or trimmed to insure reliability of the electrical grid. A list is created after driving or walking to survey the lines. White ribbons are tied around trees indicating tree removal, orange ribbons indicate leader removal. Landowners are then notified: door cards are left, and follow-up calls are also made to landowners. Ms. Brodeur noted that in particular cases they do offer trees to landowners during this program. (They have a limited number of trees to give to landowners for replacing trees that have been cut.) There was a question about trees on Pickpocket Road, and they offered to look at the schedule to see when that work will be undertaken. (He will contact Kristen). Kristen feels it is important to let the public know that there is a

process in place for all this work that is being done. She also noted that Jay Perkins does a great job talking with landowners about trees that landowners are concerned about.

Chris and Laura will look at the trees on Park Street and are aware that there are several of interest including an Ash and a Maple. Once they finalize their list, they will forward it to Kristen and Eileen. The list will also go to DPW for Kirk to review, and if there are trees over 20" dbh UNITIL understands that they will need to return to the Tree Committee.

Kirk advised the UNITIL staff to contact the Swasey Parkway trustees who meet every third Wednesday of every month at 5:00 in the Nowak Room.

After wrapping up our discussion with UNITIL, Eileen reviewed the Sweet Gum tree replacement at Lincoln Street School. A site has been chosen and Dig Safe has already approved the groundwork. It is understood that the school committee will be responsible for the cost of replacing the tree. Keith Schmitt will hopefully play a role in the planting of the tree, as will Brian Sands (SAU 16 Director of Facilities) who has replaced Rusty Lyster.

Gwen noted the dead Maple tree on the Lincoln Street School grounds, near the raised garden beds by the Robinson Seminary monument.

Sally Oxnard noticed that there is no tree diaper on the Sugar Maple on Front Street, and Sally Ward expressed her concern about all the trees we have planted and felt that they should have tree diapers, unless they're surrounded by a grate. The Ironwood and Japanese Tree Lilac on Lincoln Street are in trouble. Both need water and the Ironwood has no tree diaper.

Kirk informed the committee members that DPW has not watered any trees, and that their water tank is not functioning yet. They have staffing issues, but he will talk with Jeff Beck, head of maintenance, to see if they can bump this project up on the schedule. Kristen suggested that we put out a list of trees that need help and call for tree stewards to assist us. Deb expressed concern about the two new trees by the Recreation Dept. and the sole tree on Glennerin Lane. We should notify Kristen when we see a troubled tree! The Elm in Summer Street triangle also need water. Gwen has looked closely at the trees in Brickyard Park and the Liberty Elms have seen a lot of insect damage. The other young trees at that site have many leafless (possibly dead) branches.

The committee discussed briefly the trees to be marked at Swasey and Town House Common. Gwen walked Swasey Parkway with Dave Short to verify the trees that we would like to label and gave Dave a list of the trees in Town House Common. He subsequently verified those. Gwen will provide updates to Sally Ward, and that will be shared with Kristen, Steve and Eileen before going to the committee members.

A Dogwood and a Lilac are being held for us at Stratham Circle to replace the two Elms at the Library. Greg has indicated that he really doesn't want the Elms in front of the Recreation Building, so if they're not going there, we need to find another site and have Dig Safe approve that. Brickyard Park and Main Street School were suggested as possible locations.

Sally Oxnard visited the dentist's office on Portsmouth Avenue, and they would love to have a tree on site, but Kirk is concerned about underground lines etc. We'd need to call Dig Safe and look closely at Exeter Maps to show us where the sewer lines, water lines, and storm drains are located. Dig Safe would be looking for NON-municipal features such as Comcast, gas, electricity.

Kristen reminded the group that we have a list of potential sites for placing new trees, and we can add the dentist's site to that list. Kirk feels that if UNITIL takes down a tree (or trees) in the park, we should insist that they plant a 3" tree (perhaps a Maple) to replace it/them. If UNITIL provides trees, we can plant them. He also feels that we should hold off on planting anything on Portsmouth Avenue until there is a re-design of that roadway. We should keep our eye on upcoming projects that *will* need trees. (Such a School Street)

Kristen has someone who has volunteered to do tree inventory work and progress is being made, though slower than hoped.

Eileen would like to begin preparing an update for the Selectboard. Niko noted that there are three SB meetings in September and two in October. We should discuss this further at our next meeting, and Niko will review the October schedule to see if there is an opening for us on the schedule then.

Eileen would like us to be involved in a celebration for the Birch tree on Swasey Parkway and hopes individuals can contribute pictures of the tree to share.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 10:00AM – **Next Meeting: September 9**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on 8/13/2025

