

Town of Exeter

TREE COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES FOR OCTOBER 14, 2025

I. PRELIMINARIES:

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

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Greg Bisson, Kristen Murphy

II. CALL TO ORDER:

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

III. OLD BUSINESS:

Minutes from September 9, 2025, were approved without changes

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

Eileen reviewed some points made at the 9/29 Selectboard meeting including some thoughts Julie Gilman offered regarding Exeter's 250th Celebration. They included planting a Liberty Elm, a presentation about the Mast Tree Riots, and perhaps having a walking tour with a talk about champion trees. The celebrations will be held throughout the year, but the main focus will be on and two weeks leading up to July 4, 2026. Perhaps Barbara Rimkunas could assist us with the Mast Tree Riot portion. Gwen suggested that we consider planting a Liberty Elm on or near the American Independence Museum site. Eileen will ask Joe Pace about this.

Eileen would like to invite the new SAU 16 facilities manager Brian Sands to attend our November meeting. A brief discussion ensued about planting trees at the High School, and although the site needs trees, it was noted that the soil there is very poor, and it would require extensive groundwork to make the conditions right for healthy tree growth.

Kristen gave the committee an update on the \$25,000 Climate Impact Grant with PREP (Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership) which is due at the end of October. She indicated that the grant needs to include a strong outreach and education

component which she feels we can do with the posting of information signage particularly at the schools and in Town. We can also include planned Tree City events in the grant application. If we receive the grant, we could plant 25-27 street trees within areas in Town that have a high urban index, such as Front Street, and also along major walking corridors. Planting additional trees at schools is a consideration as well. PREP's decision on the grant recipients will be made known by the end of December. There is a two-year window for working on grant projects. Sally Ward offered to review the grant with Kristen before it is submitted.

Tree labels have been ordered and paid for. (The cost was \$205.00) Eileen would like to get the markers into the ground for an Arbor Day event so as soon as labels are in our hands, we'll see if it is possible to do that.

Sally Oxnard would like to know what the Arbor Day Foundation says about plantings this year, and if the drought has had an impact on that.

According to Eileen, tree planting at Lincoln Street School was on hold largely due to budget year issues, and planting was postponed until the end of September. Now with the drought it is on hold again. We'll put this on the agenda for next year.

The Tree City application is due before the end of December and Eileen will work on this with Kristen.

Sally Ward proposed an Arbor Day event – we could walk up Lincoln Street and prune trees, focusing on things growing up from the ground. Kristen will ask Kirk Scammon about this and will let us know what his thoughts are.

The group talked about other possible project areas and Sally Oxnard noted that perhaps we could get involved when the train station gets renovated. She noted that the area by Rockingham feed could use trees and says a lot of trees have been removed in that area.

An event highlighting the European White Birch on Swasey Parkway was discussed. Eileen would like to put out a request to the public for photographs of the tree over the years. She has spoken with Exeter resident Steve Jenkins who gave her some history of the tree, noting that there is a connection between the Baptist Church and Swasey Parkway. We will attempt to get more information on this, with the hope of determining exactly when the Birch was planted as it doesn't seem to be on the

original landscape plan. Doug Eastman and Jay Perkins might know more, and Sally Oxnard will reach out to Florence Ruffner to see if she might have obtained any information on this when purchasing the church.

Eileen has some photographs, and she received one from Mark Damsel. Those, and others, can be given to Kristen who will post them on the website.

In May, 2026 we can do some sort of celebration for the Swasey Parkway Birch!

Meeting was adjourned at 9:35AM

NEXT MEETING WILL BE ON **NOVEMBER 18** at 8:30 AM in the Wheelwright Room.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English 10/15/2025