

Town of Exeter

**TREE COMMITTEE**

*DRAFT MINUTES FOR JANUARY 13,2026*

**I. PRELIMINARIES:**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Eileen Flockhart (Chairwoman), Steve Jones, Niko Papakonstantis (Selectboard Representative), Gwen English

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Kristen Murphy, Jay Perkins, Kirk Scamman

**II. CALL TO ORDER:**

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

**III. OLD BUSINESS:**

Steve Jones moved to accept the minutes from November 18, 2025, with one minor change/amendment. Motion seconded by Eileen.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS:**

Kristen notified the committee about upcoming tree work to be done by the Utility company along scenic roads in Exeter. Per NH RSA231:157, prior to cutting any trees 15" (or greater) in diameter (measured at 4' dbh) along a scenic road, there needs to be a review by the Planning Board. A map and memo will go to the Board for the public hearing. Kristen has been communicating with Ben Richardson at UNITIL about this. Eileen noted that there are a lot of trees on Pickpocket Road that are dead or in need of trimming. DPW has looked at these trees but would rather have UNITIL do the surveying and work because of the expense involved. Kristen will plan on being at that Planning Board meeting.

*(Jay Perkins arrived at approximately 8:40)*

Kristen indicated that the Arbor Day application is in the works and waiting to be blessed!

Eileen has communicated with Joe Pace about Exeter's 250 celebration and Joe mentioned trees that have been taken down or pruned on the AIM site. He is open to having a tree/trees planted. The committee proposed several types of trees

including a Liberty Elm, Pin Oak or White Oak, Japanese Maple, Sweet Gum and Sugar Maple. Eileen posed that we should defer to someone at Stratham Circle Nursery who is more knowledgeable about trees, and the site, before a decision is made. It was noted that the tree(s) should be set well into the site where still visible, and away from the overhead power lines. Eileen suggested that David Wilson from the nursery be involved in the discussion with the 250 Committee. (Niko is on that committee). Eileen encouraged committee members to take a look at the AIM grounds.

Earlier in the meeting Steve mentioned that he has a lot of Liberty Elm saplings at his home that could be replanted elsewhere in Town. We discussed the possibility of having the Town involved in planting the urban forest using some of these saplings. We could identify a corridor in Town where trees could be planted and see if property owners would plant/adopt a tree. Jay indicated that it is 50/50 whether a transplanted will survive. Discussion about this will continue in the future.

Eileen reminded the committee that the Liberty Elms at the Library still need to be moved. Kirk was adamant that this be made a priority and that the earlier they're moved, the better. Late March or early April! We talked about planting one or both trees at Raynes Farm, on the rise behind the barn. It was noted that we are still in a drought (Steve said we're currently in a Level 1 drought) and that Exeter still has a water restriction in place. If the drought continues this will impact future plantings.

Kristen informed us that we have been awarded the PREP Grant and that the title of our application is *Exeter's Heat ReLeaf*. It is a \$25,000.00 grant for the planting of approximately 28 street trees at \$800.00 each. We are to partnership with two elementary schools and hold four public events. Each school will have an 11"x17" sign describing the benefit of trees. There will be smaller 6"x6" street signs focusing on the topic of heat mitigation. A larger sign is also proposed, perhaps at Gilman Park. Money will be available for outreach. All swag should talk about heat relief. This is a two-year project, with a lot of work to be done regarding planting locations for trees. Kristen would like to target Front Street, even though there is no obligation to plant them clustered. Kristen was applauded by the committee members for her hard work on this grant!

Eileen has spoken with Sarah DeWitt, Exeter Elementary PTO member who is very interested in getting involved with tree committee projects. Eileen would love to bring her into the fold and also reach out to A.J Dupere and community forester Liz

McKinley and also Keith Schmitt and Katie Pupino with the Green Team at Lincoln Street School.

Steve expressed his desire to see trees planted in areas along Front Street where there currently are no trees and would love to address Portsmouth Avenue locations after that roadway goes through future construction projects.

In the future it would be good to plant appropriately selected trees under utility lines, showing that it is possible to do that without impacting the lines.

Jay would like to take into consideration animal habitat and nesting wildlife when trees are being cut or pruned. Steve volunteered that mid-summer might be a good time of year for such projects.

Kristen said that the Growth Award application has been given to Eileen. For Tree City, there is a requirement for \$2.00 per capita...we have \$8.00 so have exceeded that minimum requirement.

Eileen brought up the possibility of developing a tree mitigation fund, in addition to Greg Bisson's current program where individuals can donate money to plant a tree in memory of a loved one. We should explore other communities to see if there are examples of tree mitigation funds. Kristen reminded us that trees being cut for a development can be labeled as a 'timber harvest', thereby skirting other ordinances aimed at saving trees. Steve said that there are several formulas that could be used for creating an ordinance, such as a canopy percentage formula. Kristen noted that the ordinances in NH aimed at protecting the tree canopy are few and far between. Niko and other committee members support looking into this and possibly seeking legal counsel for advice. Eileen proposed that we can also change the narrative and encourage everyone to consider the benefits of trees for our wildlife, health, and support the protection of trees because they protect us...adults and children!

Kristen remembered that the \$25,000 grant did include Peter Waltz's presentation at Lincoln Street School, and the trees given to the students. She would like to beef up this program. Eileen would like to see the kids get more involved and make it a more interactive experience. Gwen told the group about the Robinson Fund grant given to a teacher at EHS for media work and thought that this might be a way to involve the High School kids and the work being done at LSS. Eileen said that we can get Bob Glowacky involved as well. She will chat with LSS student council members and try to bridge the gap between the PREP Grant-Kristen and the schools!

Eileen is still hoping to have an event (perhaps in May) for the Birch Tree in Swasey park and will follow up on that.

*(Jay Perkins and Kirk Scammon left at approximately 9:30 to attend another meeting.)*

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on January 14, 2026