

Town of Exeter

TREE COMMITTEE

FINAL MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 17, 2026

I. PRELIMINARIES:

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

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Kirk Scamman, Greg Bisson

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 January 13, 2026 as written. Eileen seconded the motion. Motion passed

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

Kristen gave a brief review of Unutil's application to the Planning Board seeking approval to cut trees and remove hazardous trees on Scenic Roads in Exeter. Pursuant to RSA 231:158, a public utility is required to receive Planning Board approval (following a duly-noticed public hearing) before commencing any cutting or trimming. She noted that this Scenic Road designation is stricter than the Tree Committee's requirements, so it will not be necessary for us to approve the proposed work on our Scenic Roads, and that any work done outside of the Scenic Roads would come to us. She suggested that we amend our Town's Tree Ordinance to clarify RSA 231:158. This would require public hearings.

Kirk informed the group that a tree service working with Unutil was attempting to begin tree cutting work in Town without getting prior approval. They will need to come to a future Tree Committee meeting so that this can be put on our agenda, thus notifying the public. We will need more information about the proposed work, including: where trees are located, size and type of trees, who owns the trees, health of trees. Kristen wants to make sure that they're in the Towns ROW, and that they give Kirk plenty of time to look at the trees before they meet with us. Hopefully that meeting will occur on March 17.

Eileen does not yet have any updates from the American Independence Museum about possible tree planting(s) there for the 250 Celebration, and will wait to get more information from Joe Pace. Given that AIM is on private property, (and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization) it will not be possible for us to buy a tree, or trees, for this event, nor would it be appropriate for DPW to prepare the ground for planting(s). Steve suggests that there are likely individuals wishing to donate funds to the purchase trees, and are also volunteers who would be happy to help dig hole(s) for trees. According to Kristen, Karen Prior met with the Conservation Commission on behalf of AIM and talked about multiple plantings, including fruit trees. We need to determine soil conditions at Raynes Farm if an Elm is planted there, as apparently some locations mentioned are very rocky. Gwen questioned where the proposed 'pumpkin patch' would be located and Kirk responded that it is in a swale near the barn and is typically a wet area...'not good for planting pumpkins'! If a Liberty Elm is planted on the Raynes property, it should be planted in April so as to avoid planting in the heat of the summer. He's hoping that our drought level will improve with the current snow melt, if it melts slowly.

Kristen gave us an update on the PREP grant and indicated that she still needs to present the grant to the Selectboard. She would also like early coordination with the Green Team at LSS so she'll have an opportunity to discuss with them her 'vision'. Eileen has spoken again with Sarah DeWitt, president of the Elementary School PTA and was told by Sarah that she'd still like to be involved with Tree Committee activities. Eileen hopes to get younger children involved and plans on talking with Julia Lanter (director of Exeter Library) about possible programs. Eileen would like to connect with more children than those at LSS.

Kristen needs additional outreach events for the grant and indicated that Julia reached out to her about the NSF (National Science Foundation) that has programs and resources. Kristen will let us know before she presents to the Selectboard members so that we'll have an opportunity to be at the meeting to support her. She also informed us that there are strict RSA guidelines about accepting grants.

Eileen would like to begin discussions about future plantings. With the grant, we'll have 28 trees for which to find planting locations. Kristen will work with Linda Burbank (GIS professional) to develop overlays of utilities as we start this planning. Until we have a list of trees that can be planted safely under utility lines. More discussions ensued about the need for street trees on Front Street, particularly near Enna's and Rockingham Feed. Steve would like to see a large tree that 'makes a statement' in the future roundabout.

Greg is hesitant to put new plantings in front of the site on 10 Hampton Road, but said that there is a tiny playground there that has no trees, no shade. Steve questioned whether the south side of the building could use shade. Kristen likes this idea, particularly since the PREP grant's intent is *heat relief!*

Eileen is looking at a possible mid-May celebration for the white birch tree in Swasey Parkway. Kirk indicated that a weekend celebration would be better than one during the work week. Gwen suggested that we reach out to Rose Bryant and other artists to see if they would like to be there with easels and paints to do paintings of the trees.

Eileen informed us about legislation that is in the works in Concord. HB 1303 She will keep us apprised as this goes forward.

Eileen wondered if it would be worthwhile to have a table at the polls on March 10th when citizens vote. She could get pencils, handouts etc. and have activities for everyone. Perhaps the Green Team would like to get involved if they have the day off from school. Steve will ask his wife, Kate Miller (Exeter's Town Moderator) about getting permission to set up a table. Kristen may be able to help.

Lastly, we should give thought to 'swag' for the PREP grant activities. Gwen will talk with Sarah Koff about doing a logo.

Meeting ended at 9:30AM

NEXT MEETING: MARCH 17th AT 8:30AM

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on 2/17/2026