

Town of Exeter

TREE COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES FOR MARCH 17, 2026

I. PRELIMINARIES:

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

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

II. CALL TO ORDER:

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

III. OLD BUSINESS: Sally moved to accept the minutes, as written, from February 17, and Gwen seconded the motion. Motion passed.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

Eileen began with a discussion about the relocation of the two Liberty Elms currently planted at the library. This needs to be done on or around April 1, and in coordination with the planting of the dogwood and lilac in their place at the library. Before planting takes place at the library, Kristen will confirm this plan with the library director, Julia Lanter. Kristen will meet with Kirk on site at Raynes farm to choose a planting site. Kirk noted that Dig Safe will need to approve digging at that site. Steve asked about the staking of the transplanted Elms, noting that they are taller now and will likely need solid stakes. Kirk indicated that those will be available from DPW. Gwen and Steve will provide the plastic pipe pieces for rodent control. The planting of a serviceberry at Raynes is on hold, and there will be a follow-up discussion about that. Eileen will also chat with Stratham Circle nursery about the serviceberry that is on hold for us there.

Kristen noted that there is a celebration at Raynes farm with the Conservation Commission on Saturday, April 25th.

Eileen briefed the committee on her visit with the Green Team at Lincoln Street School and told us about a grass growing competition that students participated in over the winter. They also talked about the PREP Grant and upcoming plans to plant trees. Keith Schmitt noted that a beloved cafeteria worker at the school recently died and wondered if a tree could be planted in her honor. The children expressed

an interest in an apple tree. We will consider planting sites and will offer suggestions for four or five tree types/species that could be appropriate. The students can decide what tree most appeals to them.

Kristen reviewed the specifics of the PREP grant, noting that it is a \$25,000 grant. 28 trees will be planted over a two-year period. Three educational signs are proposed with one going on Town property, one at Lincoln Street School and one at Main Street School. There will also be smaller signs highlighting the benefits of trees that can go near the newly planted trees. She hopes to find some 'swag' that can be handed out at local events such as Arbor Day festivities and the Alewife Festival. Kristen presented the PREP grant to the Selectboard members and their support was unanimous.

Kirk noted that there is \$20,000 in the budget for trees, and that the money includes the cost of planting and needed supplies. Steve asked if we should order a stack of tree diapers. The committee agreed that this would be a good idea as it is cheaper to buy them in bulk.

The School Street/Union Street area project meeting was last night and it is still going forward. Eight or nine trees are proposed to be planted in that area after the construction is done. (Probably in the fall). The trees are paid for in the bond for this project.

Gwen mentioned the Complete Streets project which is still evolving. The planting of trees throughout town will be a key component of future projects, and she feels that it would be important to have a Tree Committee member involved as plans are developed. Steve is eager to participate in this. Kristen noted that it is unclear if there will be a formal citizens committee.

Jeffery Toomey, a resident on Powder Mill Road, joined the discussion and shared concerns about the marking and cutting of trees on his road without being properly notified by the utility or their contractors. He expressed concern that there is a communication issue here as it relates to private property rights... this is also a designated Scenic Road which comes with its own regulations on cutting. He also noted that they have not been provided with 2"-3" caliper replacement trees.

Kirk noted that Ben Richards from UNITIL had hoped to attend our meeting today but due to wind damage last night he had other obligations. Kristen confirmed that

the town did follow the proper process for scenic tree trimming and the project was noticed and went to the Planning board for approval.

Eileen feels that we should have a discussion with Sara Sankowich about improving overall communication and educating the public. There should also be a discussion about Ben's recent explanation to the Planning Board about 'process' and how that isn't being followed. Sally feels that a process should be mapped out, and we need to know how this is enforced. Kirk feels that Ben (or Sara) from Unutil needs to be the contact person.

We briefly discussed the 250th Celebration and wondered where the oldest tree in Town might be located, and if we could find one that might be 250 years old! Kristen felt that there is probably one in Henderson Swasey. Bob Glowacky thinks this would be an interesting story for the 250th Celebration! Gwen will reach out to Kevin Martin for assistance on finding the oldest tree!

Upcoming important dates were reviewed. The celebration of the Birch Tree in Swasey Parkway is proposed for **May 16**. Sally Ward commented that the parkway is a mess right now because of the syphon project. She was assured that the parkway will be restored to its previous condition upon completion of the work. Kristen wondered how this event will be advertised, and will the Swasey Park Trustees do this? Should we consider a painting or sketching project on the site? Gwen will talk with Rose Bryant about this. If this is held mid-day, people could bring a picnic lunch and relax in the park.

Lastly, should we have a rain date?

The Alewife Festival is proposed for **May 9** from 10:00-1:00. Eileen is looking for volunteers to be at our table. She would love to collect some tree books to give away to people who visit the table. Other tree related items could also be handed out to interested visitors. Sally may have some books from her brother-in-law that would be appropriate.

According to Kristen, the Conservation Commission is hosting an "Art in the Barn" event! A Picture's Worth is donating 6"x6" canvases for this event.

On **May 5**, Peter Waltz will do his annual presentation to the students at Lincoln Street School. He would appreciate some help from us on **May 2nd or 3rd**, when it is time to package up each frasier fir sapling.

Steve motioned that we grant approval for Unitil to cut down six ash trees on Cross Road. Sally seconded the motion, and all voted in favor of this motion.

Note: Kirk has inspected these trees, and they are indeed on Town property, and they do need to be cut down. Kirk will also stipulate that Ben Richards come to our next meeting on April 14th.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45AM

NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON APRIL 14, 2026, at 8:30AM

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on March 18, 2026