

Town of Exeter

**TREE COMMITTEE**

DRAFT MINUTES FOR APRIL 14, 2026

**I. PRELIMINARIES:**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Eileen Flockhart (Chairwoman), Sally Oxnard, Sally Ward, Deb Twombly, Niko Papakonstantis (Selectboard representative), Gwen English  
STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Kristen Murphy, Greg Bisson, Kirk Scamman

**II. CALL TO ORDER:**

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

**III. OLD BUSINESS:**

Minutes from March 17, 2026, were approved. (Sally Ward questioned the 'Art in the Barn' event which will be at Raynes Farm sometime this fall on a date yet to be determined)

**IV. NEW BUSINESS:**

Guest speaker: Jonathan O'Hara, an SST student from Raymond High School, presented his report on the importance of carbon offsets/carbon credits that are intended to slow down climate change by eliminating some of the greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon credits can be achieved by buying acres of trees and preserving them, planting new trees or postponing lumber harvests. He stressed the impact climate change is having and will continue to have on his generation, and farmers across the planet.

Julia Lanter (Director, Exeter Public Library) spoke about the library's request for a pause on our planting of the pink dogwood and the lilac due to an unexpected offer from an anonymous individual who wishes to donate money to the library. That offer may result in the purchase of a large sign that can highlight Town events. If that happens, the sign would be positioned where we proposed planting trees. She went on to say that the library also needs to be cautious about plantings near the HVAC unit as falling leaves can cause issues with its operation. The plantings of shrubs under 3.5' would be an option.

The transplanted liberty elms at Raynes Farm should have tree diapers, and the current ones will likely work as they appear unharmed. Kirk indicated that DPW can

take the water truck there to make sure they are watered. Gwen will provide the materials to make tree collars for these and other newly planted trees.

Since we have reserved the lilac and dogwood at Stratham Circle for the Library site, a discussion ensued about where to plant these trees now. Greg will consider having them installed at the new Parks and Recreation building. Sally Oxnard felt that two additional lilacs would make for a better impact. Kirk noted that money is available for six to eight trees. Deb suggested that we should also consider redbuds which can grow in New England, and they have beautiful early flowers.

Kirk went on to say that School, Union and Kossuth streets will eventually be impacted by construction. Sally Oxnard volunteered to walk that area on Front Street to search for good planting sites. There was also a discussion about trees at Lincoln Street School. Redbuds were mentioned again, as were serviceberries and sweet gum trees. Eileen reminded the group that the students at LSS still want to plant a tree in memory of 'Miss Jesse'.

Greg indicated that there will be three autumn glory maples planted at Gilman Park. Also, the SST gardens in front of the Town Office will have shrubs instead of perennials, as the flowers struggle to survive there. This will be an SST project. There is also a serviceberry being held at Stratham Circle and the committee is considering planting that at Park Street Common. Pin oaks and tulip trees could also be considered for the park. (Deb offered that pin oaks don't start producing acorns until they are about 30 years old.)

Eileen went on to discuss upcoming important dates. *April 25* has been chosen for an Arbor Day Celebration and will be held at 11:00AM at Raynes Barn. A proclamation will be read, followed by a presentation on the 1734 Mast Tree Riot, a talk about Elm Tree History, and a scavenger hunt will be held. (Kristen will help with the scavenger hunt, and Sally Oxnard and Sally Ward can also be on hand to help. *May 16* (time to be determined) has been chosen for the celebration of the birch tree in Swasey Parkway. Eileen would like kids to feel welcomed at this event. We are hoping to have artists there for plein air painting, and we will have paper and drawing materials available for children who want to draw the birch tree. Eileen suggested having a clothesline hung to display the children's drawings. Gwen will try to provide an easel. Deb and Gwen will look for birch bark to provide for the event. It was also suggested that a food truck be invited to be on site!

*May 9* is the Alewife Festival and will be held between 10:00 and 1:00. Kristen will make the call on the location on the Monday prior to the event. Greg Bisson will make sure the committee has a table. UNITIL could be contacted to donate

giveaways. It was suggested that we have a notice at the table for the 5/16 event. We should also have a clipboard for people interested in the Tree Committee. Depending on the site location, Gwen can bring the three 'birch limbs'. Deb can bake cookies. Sally W. can bring tree books.

Niko will recognize the Tree Committee and the Tree City at the next Selectboard meeting on April 27. (This is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tree City)

On *May 2<sup>nd</sup>* (time to be determined) Peter Waltz will be preparing the seedlings for the Lincoln Street School students. Kristen and Eileen are looking for volunteers to help. Kristen has printed stickers to go into each bag, and Eileen has printed up instructions for the trees.

Kristen is still waiting for final papers for the PREP grant. She quickly reviewed the plans for signage and tree plantings.

Kirk will reach out to Ben Richards from UNITIL, and hopefully Ben will be able to attend our next meeting.

Gwen will stop by Stratham Circle nursery to inquire about tulip trees.

**NEXT MEETING: May 12 at 8:30AM**

Meeting adjourned at 9:55AM

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on 4/15/2026