

Town of Exeter

TREE COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES FOR JUNE 9, 2026

I. PRELIMINARIES:

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

STAFF PRESENT: Kristen Murphy, Kirk Scamman, Paul Cohen (Town Manager)

II. CALL TO ORDER:

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

III. OLD BUSINESS:

Sally Oxnard moved to approve the minutes from May 12, 2026, as presented.

Sally Ward seconded the motion. Motion passed.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

It was pointed out that the tree on Lincoln Street is dead, but replacing the tree will have to wait until fall when weather conditions are better for new plantings. Kirk notes that we can't officially use the water pump for watering trees, though water can be drawn out of the river into the water tank.

Eileen gave the committee a review of the event on May 16th at Swasey Parkway which was held to celebrate the white birch tree. There wasn't a huge turnout, but it went smoothly. Bill Mensching and Jackie Rockel, two local artists, were there to present their artwork featuring the birch. Drawings done that day were displayed on a line that was hung for that purpose. Bob Moore was there with his guitar. Dave Short provided a microphone and an amp. John from A Picture's Worth provided Eileen with matboard and Exeter TV sent Emmett, a staff member, to take pictures/video.

Eileen has also been in touch with the Green Team at Lincoln Street School. Peter Waltz did his presentation and distributed the seedlings to the students. The school paid for the memorial tree (Kwanzan Cherry) for Ms. Jessie Schur and it was planted in front of the school. The kids painted bricks and left messages by the tree for Ms. Jessie. Family members were present to celebrate her and the planting of the tree.

Eileen feels it would be important over the next few months to focus on the drought and what can be done to help our trees. Deb pointed out that this is a

groundwater and evaporation issue. Kirk feels we should invite Steve Dalton from the Water Department to talk with us about the drought conditions. Information from those conversations could be posted on Exeter TV etc. Kirk did note that we're at a Level 2 drought now. Level 1= Moderate. Level 2 = Severe. Level 3 = Extreme. Level 4 = Exceptional. Kirk also mentioned the USDA office in Epping. They could be a good resource. Another thought relating to droughts involved rain barrels for collecting storm water. DPW has barrels (available with a donation to St. Vincent de Paul) and DPW will drill the holes to accommodate the parts which are available at Arjays. Perhaps we could get Exeter TV to film the process of constructing a rain barrel, and we could put this video out to the public. Kristen will speak with Bob Glowacky. Eileen and Gwen will be willing to work on this project.

Kirk went on to say that they have now planted nine trees. They are located on the Parkway, Lincoln Street, Gilman Park, and the new Parks and Recreation site. All have tree diapers to keep them watered. He noted that Mark Schultz planted them and did a great job. He'll work on creating a list of trees to plant in October.

Kristen reported that Linda Burbank (GIS professional) has worked on the creation of a list identifying where utilities are located. Kirk feels that he can plant five to six trees a day after Dig Safe has approved sites. Sally wondered if perhaps the Academy would be open to having trees planted along Front Street in front of the Academy building. Sally Ward mentioned the need of a tree at Lincoln and Front Street.

Kirk informed us that we lost three trees in recent storms. One on Gill Street, one on Harvard and Dartmouth, and another on Park Street. Sara said that we had strange wind patterns that caused so much damage. Winds were untypical and circular making it very hard on trees.

Steve Jones said that all the Liberty Elms are growing beautifully.

Eileen would like to create a document with information (including photos) of the birch tree at Swasey Parkway, and she wondered if it could be given to Barbara Rimkunas at Exeter's Historical Society. Kristen thought that the trustees of the Parkway should have this as well. Gwen asked if we are continuing to keep a record of the trees we've planted, and whether photos are also being taken of them.

Kristen would like to have photos of the plantings at Lincoln Street School for the Grant report. She noted that the Grant just funds public trees. She also indicated that an educational event with the school(s) will be held in the fall.

Gwen will contact Brian Sands (Facility manager for SAU 16) and invite him to our July 14th meeting. We would like to explore the possibility of planting more trees on/near the playgrounds which can be “devastatingly hot”. We realize that safety issues are important, and we can work around those concerns.

Beth Cadorette, the new principal at Main Street School is excited about trees, so we will look forward to conversations with her.

Planting of new trees at the library is on hold at the moment.

Sara reminded us that we should tie in the topic of trees during this year of 250 celebrations.

NEXT MEETING: JULY 14, 2026, at 8:30AM

Meeting adjourned at 9:30AM

*Eileen noted after the meeting that the Chinese Elm has been planted on Park Street. It has been staked, mulched and also has a water bag.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on 6/09/2026

