

Town of Exeter
EXETER TREE COMMITTEE
DRAFT MINUTES FOR 8/13/2024

I. PRELIMINARIES:

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Eileen Flockhart (Chairwoman), Steve Jones, Sally Oxnard, Niko Papakonstantis (Select Board representative), Deb Twombly, Gwen English

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Kristen Murphy, Kirk Scamman

II. CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order at 8:30AM in the Wheelwright Room

III. OLD BUSINESS:

Minutes from 6/11/2024 were approved. Deb Twombly motioned to approve, Sally Oxnard seconded the motion.

IV. NEW BUSINESS:

Kristen introduced the committee members to Dakota Bailey, Rockingham Planning Commission's GIS Coordinator who, with help from the Strafford Regional Planning Commission, has been working with Kristen to develop an app for Exeter's Street Tree Inventory. Dakota and Kristen spent approximately forty-five minutes explaining the app, and with the help of a power point presentation, showed us how to connect it to our phones. They will make a video available to us, as well as a hard copy with instructions.

Kristen feels that it will take approximately fifteen minutes for first time users to complete a survey on one tree, and expects that subsequent surveys will only take five to ten minutes. Jay Perkins and Kirk Scamman can then review the data collected by committee members and members of the public to determine what trees need care. Data can also be used by Kristen and Tree Committee members.

It was noted that empty sites, as well as existing trees can be documented.

Kristen spoke of Dover, NH's tree inventory and explained that citizens signed up to survey certain streets, and that it took approximately two months to complete the survey for a designated area of town. Unfortunately, the data from our existing street tree inventory cannot be transferred to this new program, so we will have to do a new survey, starting from scratch.

Between today's meeting and our next meeting in September, Eileen would like us to try out the app to see how it works. Once we have the kinks worked out, we can recruit 'citizen scientists' and do a training walk with them. For the moment, only street trees and park trees will be included in the inventory. (Kristen feels we probably should not include school property right now.)

Rockingham Planning Commission will work with us until we are ready to take it over.

Dakota left the meeting at 9:20AM

Eileen did a quick review of recent and future plantings and reminded the committee that we have/had \$5,000 available for the purchase and planting of eight trees. The two trees recently planted at Lincoln Street School were paid for using grant monies, though we helped with the preparation of the sites and the mulch. Unfortunately, the Herbie Elms that we planted at the Library need to be moved to a new location, probably in the fall, due to concerns from Library staff about the trees as they get bigger. They would likely welcome something smaller, and fuller, by the bench.

The elm at the skate park needs to be re-staked, as do two trees at Swasey Park.

It is felt that the Water Street locations are a priority for new plantings in September. Mountain Ash would be one possibility, but we agreed to reach out to Dave Short for suggestions. Kristen and Gwen will work on this and will tag trees so they'll be available when it's time to plant.

At our next meeting we will need to decide where to plant the elms that are currently at the Library.

Dr. James Breeling attended our meeting and expressed his concerns about the beech trees and the beech leaf disease which has made its way from Ohio to our woodlands. He has done considerable research on the subject and informed the group that the disease is caused by a microscopic roundworm, and that the roundworm may very well be carrying a pathogen that eventually kills the trees. He alerted us to a significant beech tree in Gillman Park that is flanked by two large pine trees that will come down if the beech dies. He also indicated that Henderson Swasey is pretty devastated and suggested that the Town should consider not doing any forestry work there. (2025 would have been the next cut)

We will have someone at DPW look at the Gilman Park beech tree. Kristen noted that the Conservation Commission has put a pause on harvesting out of concerns for creating more issues with invasives.

We agreed to place a table at the polls on September 10. Kristen volunteered to be there to review the GIS plan.

Niko suggested putting together a five-minute clip on the weekly report. This could be coordinated with Bob Glowacky.

At the next meeting, we should also go over what details we'd like to present to the Select Board members. We will aim to present at their September 16th meeting. Niko will try to get us on first. Confirmation of our intent to attend the meeting on 9/16 should be decided by the 12th, and we should notify the Town Manager that we will be at that meeting.

NEXT MEETING: SEPTEMBER 10 at 8:30AM in the Wheelwright Room
(Same day as the State Primary Election)

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on 8/15/2024