

# MINUTES OF THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

City of Somersworth-City Hall

June 8, 2021 - 6:00 P.M.

Committee members present: Sarah Eckstein, Chair, City Councilor Crystal Paradis, Wendy Berkley, and Michael Bobinsky, Doug Watson. Absent: Lilac Snowden-Hallowell (pending appointment)

**1. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES.** Sarah Eckstein proposed changes to the minutes of the May 27, 2021 meeting. Crystal Paradis moved to accept the changes of these minutes; Mike Bobinsky seconded the motion. Motion was unanimously approved.

**2. REVIEW DRAFT SOLAR ORDINANCE.** Michelle Mears is still working on her draft of Solar Ordinance, so the Committee is looking forward to reviewing once the draft is ready.

**3. NEW BUSINESS: ASSESSMENT of THE COMMUNITY POWER COALITION.** Sarah Eckstein had attended 2 webinars hosted by the NH Community Power Coalition and summarized what she learned about Community Power programs. Community Power enables New Hampshire cities/towns/counties to take control of their electricity supply. By leveraging the buying power on behalf of a community, it can create competitive, stable and green electricity choices for residents and businesses. Meanwhile, the existing utility would continue to manage billing and maintenance. New Hampshire's Community Power law (SB 286; RSA 53-E) became effective October 1, 2019. Several benefits of implementing community power programs are reducing the cost of energy, the flexibility for multiple counties and municipalities to join together to implement Community Power programs, communities can choose renewable sources over incumbent energy and overall, have greater flexibility in energy contracting than regulated utilities. Sarah shared several resources with Community Members on where they can go to seek out more information on Community Power programs: [www.communitypowernh.org](http://www.communitypowernh.org). Committee members such as Crystal, Mike and Wendy were interested in speaking with other NH cities and towns that have participated and already gone through the process. The Committee would like to better understand what were some of the downfalls they experienced while trying to implement community power programs, their level of success in working with a contractor that helped negotiate their power purchase agreement, etc. Crystal mentioned one of the City Councilors of Portsmouth had expressed previous interest in collaborating with other cities and towns implementing community power programs.

**4. NEW BUSINESS: ADOPT-A-SPOT.** Sarah Eckstein was approached by Maggie Roberge, Chair of the Cemetery Committee to see if Committee Members would be interested in participating in the Adopt-A-Spot program. Due to the lack of time and resources, the Sustainability Committee members collectively could not fully commit to maintaining a spot but would like to help promote the program in the City's Newsletter and partner with others to get the word out on social media. Sarah Eckstein mentioned she would inquire with the Conservation Commission to see if they were interested in participating in the Adopt-A-Spot program. This program is to promote the city's beautification, the Public Works Department solicits, non-profits, and residents to participate in this program. Mike Bobinsky mentioned anyone participating in this program needs to fill out a volunteer form that can be found on the Public

Work's website. Mike also mentioned he would follow up with Maggie separately on specific spots she was looking for community members to adopt.

#### **5. OLD BUSINESS: DISCUSS ANY FOLLOW UP ACTIONS on PESTICIDE/HERBICIDE REDUCTION:**

Mike Bobinsky provided details in a Memorandum on what chemicals and which open spaces the Department of Public Works is managing. In addition, what efforts have been made to address weed abatement and turf management referencing a service area map. Mike had expressed the delicate balance that is carefully played in serving the needs of users, their health and aesthetics all within budget. The Department of Public Works have experimented with herbicide alternatives on weed abatement for mainly secondary streets but there are future opportunities to implement these practices on primary streets which Mike will consider. Mike was not able to gather similar detail on how the School Department treats their grounds and athletic fields but hopes to share this information at an upcoming meeting.

#### **Follow-ups for future meetings:**

- Crystal to bring background information about the Bee City USA program.

- Wendy to prepare a short article on promoting the community garden and Adopt-A-Spot program for the July City Manager Newsletter edition.

Wendy to speak with either or both Renee Dodge/Caitlyn Carrington in the high school to incorporate the Sustainability Committee logo design as part of their fall curriculum.

- Mike to consider expanding more experimental organic land management practices on primary streets next year

- Mike to follow up with Somersworth School District on how they treat their grounds and athletic fields.

- Sarah to work with John Tedesco to schedule a hydro plant tour

- Sarah to follow up with the Town of Exeter on their participation in the community power program. In addition, get the name of the City Councilor of Portsmouth that expressed initial interest in community power programming.

- Sarah to follow up with Michelle Mears to obtain a working draft of proposed amendments to the City's zoning ordinance as it relates to solar panels.

- Sarah to follow up with Scott Orzechowski as to when we can push and promote the low-flow showerhead pilot.

Next meeting will be held in-person on Thursday, August 19 at 6pm.

Wendy Berkeley moved and Doug Watson seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 pm.

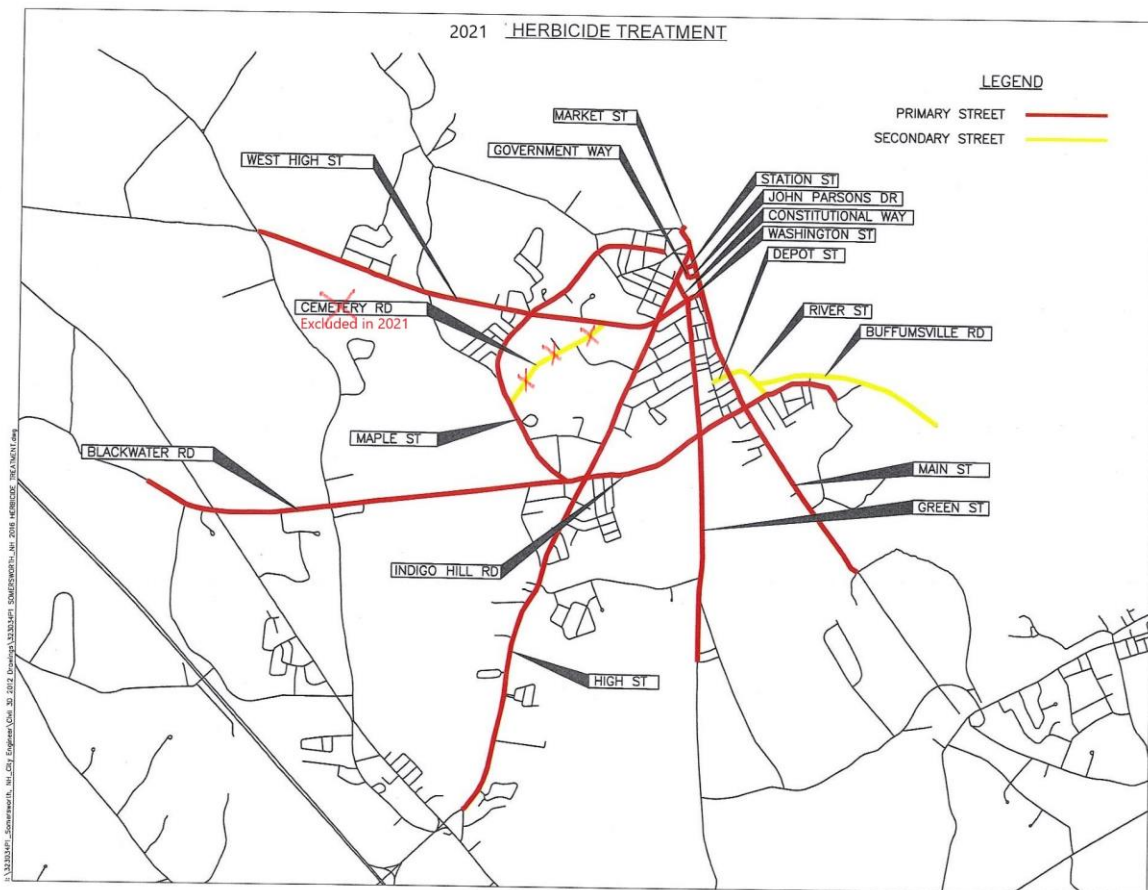
**Submitted and prepared by:** Sarah Eckstein

June 21, 2021

### City of Somersworth – Sidewalk/Curbing weed control program

The Department of Public Works has contracted with a State of NH licensed vendor, Municipal Pest Management, to apply a weed abatement herbicide to control unwanted weeds and vegetation along sidewalks and curbing right of way on designated streets. This is an annual program in order to maintain the integrity of our streets and sidewalks. Applicators will follow State permit regulations and use safety and best practices during their work beginning on Tuesday, June 22 along the right of ways shown on the attached map.

Please contact the Public Works Office at 692-4266 with any questions.



Date: June 8, 2021

To: Sustainability Committee

From: Michael J. Bobinsky, Director of Public Works and Utilities

Cc:

Re: Fertilizer and weed abatement material used on City property

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The City limits its use of fertilizer and weed control application to Noble Pines Park for the past several years. We recently selected Hillside Landscaping to be the applicator as staff was impressed with their focus on first evaluating the soil conditions and then recommending/applying fertilizer that best controls grubs, weeds and maintains a strong turf base. This is particularly important for the Noble Pines Baseball Field which host numerous baseball games, tournaments and special events. Staff invited Hillside Landscaping to apply the same level of turf management to the newly installed sod at the Veterans Memorial at Stein Park.

There are 5 rounds of applications that occur from early spring to late fall early winter. Early applications are a crabgrass control/lime application; then mid spring is a grub control application, iron is applied in later June, root turf food is made in late fall, and then a special winter fertilizer is applied in late fall early winter.

In addition, the City uses a weed abatement applicator to control the growth of weeds in sidewalk and raised traffic island edges and other open spaces as needed. This is important to avoid sidewalk damage and premature sidewalk surface failure. Staff has been using the contractor, Municipal Pest Management Services Inc for the past several years. The primary herbicide used is Rodeo. This product has no odor, does not stain pavement, is water based and does not accumulate in the environment. This product kills the roots as well as the above parts of the weed.

In addition, we have asked our contractor to use an organic herbicide to help us compare product types and effectiveness. This year the product will be Finalsán. Also, our contractor will be offering a trial application of a special pavement crack filler at the intersection of High St at Blackwater Road to demonstrate an alternative to weed prevention.

As noted, the City uses very little fertilizer applications at its parks and open spaces.