



Minutes

Wilmington Tree Commission Regular Meeting

9:30 – 11:00 AM, January 28, 2026

Attendance:

Tom Boland, Chair – present

Bridget Callahan, Vice Chair – present

Catherine Cardamone – present

Jeanne Fisher – present

Terri Parham – present

Alana Seaman – present

Ex-Officio:

Sally Thigpen – Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation

Haley Hopkins – Staff Liaison, Planning and Development

1. Call to order 9:32 A.M. Note presence of quorum, 6/9.
2. Review and approve minutes from December 18, 2025 (VOTE)
Motion by Jeanne Fisher, Second by Terri Parham. No Discussion. All in favor, 6/9.
3. **Heritage Tree Awards** – Update
 - a. Two applications to review
Scheduling site visits in mid-February.
 - b. Heritage Tree Health Status Update Project
No discussion.
4. Strategic Plan Updates
 - a. **Community Education to the Public**

Goal: Give presentations to three professional organizations that influence new community members on the value of trees and maintaining the tree canopy in Wilmington within 1-2 years.

Follow-Up Items: Investigate local nurseries to be included in the pursuit of this goal and identify target professional organizations.

There is interest in formalizing a list of target organizations. Ideas include the WMPO, Chamber of Commerce, and nurseries. The Alliance for Cape Fear Trees is sharing their list of stakeholders as a starting point for contacts.

The Alliance for Cape Fear Trees is interested in presentation support from the Wilmington Tree Commission.
 - b. **Tree Ordinance and Enforcement**

Goal: Analyze current tree ordinance and recommend an amendment to the Land Development Code to increase tree retention in all new development within 2 years.

Follow-Up Items: Define next steps following City and Alliance for Cape Fear Trees presentations.

Commissioners discussed paths for driving this forward. The focus at this time is intently reviewing Code and Canopy, the Land Development Code's tree preservation section, and the tree planting list in the Technical Standards Manual. Additionally, the Commission is interested in benchmarking other cities tree preservation standards. Sally Thigpen will be sharing the list of acceptable trees included in the Technical Standards Manual. Haley Hopkins recommended working more closely with the Planning and

Development Department in this effort as any amendments to the Land Development Code would be assessed by Planning and Development.

c. Partnerships and Collaboration

Goal: Create a spreadsheet and score card with statistics regarding number of volunteers, volunteer hours, trees distributed and use to provide updates to the public, determine the impact of work completed, and evaluate current practices within 2 years.
Follow-Up Items: Combining information on volunteer hours and events attended.
Volunteer hours and events attended have been collected. No further updates.

5. Isabelle Shepherd - Update on activities of the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees

- a. *Tree Plantings – Recently planted 98 trees in the Northside Neighborhood, including 14 trees at Portia Hines Park. A planting is planned for GLOW Academy, 65 trees, and is being rescheduled due to the winter weather.*
- b. *Tree Distributions – A Tree Giveaway is planned for February 14th at D.C. Virgo.*
- c. *Advocacy – Actively working to determine the top five priorities from Code and Canopy with interest in meeting with the city’s Planning and Development Department to discuss said priorities.*

6. New Business

- Native Tree Lists – Additional list development
Cate Cardamone is working on a list of shrubs. She has provided her list of screening trees to Haley Hopkins, which has been reviewed and edited. In connection with revising tree preservation standards, there is interest in creating lists of trees most suitable for urban environments, lower soil quality, and under/above utilities. Lists to be folded into the preservation standards should be less graphic and more technical.
- Upcoming Events:
 - o NC Arbor Day (March 20, 2026) and National Arbor Day (April 24, 2026)
 - *Interest in celebratory planting at a school with education component While a planting is preferred for both events, an educational program with a local school or after school program is an option of interest. The MLK Community Center is interested in partnering with the Commission on an after school educational event again this year. A planting location has yet to be further explored, but there is interest in a planting at Williston Middle.*
 - o Earth Day Festival – April 18, 2026
 - *Exhibitor applications open Commission will attend and request a vendor table.*
 - o Additional events of interest to the Commission
Terri Parham investigated potential for pop-up at Airlie Gardens. They are not interested in having the Commission pop-up but suggested connecting the Arboretum.
There is interest in finding a way to participate in the Azalea Festival Garden Tours, potentially using brief handouts, volunteering, or tabling.

Next Meeting is February 25, 2026, at 9:30 AM, 929 N. Front St., 1st Floor Azalea Room (154H).

- a) Adjourn – 10:35 A.M.