



## Minutes

### Wilmington Tree Commission Regular Meeting

9:30 – 11:00 AM, February 25, 2026

#### Attendance:

Tom Boland, Chair – present  
Bridget Callahan, Vice Chair – present  
Jeanne Fisher – present  
Rhonda Waterhouse – present  
Alana Seaman - present  
Cathey Luna – present  
Catherine Cardamone – present

#### Ex-Officio:

Sally Thigpen – Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation  
Haley Hopkins – Staff Liaison, Planning and Development

1. Call to order at 9:33 AM. Note presence of quorum, 6/9.
2. Review and approve minutes from January 28, 2026 (VOTE)  
*Motion by Rhonda Waterhouse, Second by Cate Cardamone. No discussion. All in favor, 5/9.*
3. **Heritage Tree Awards** – Update
  - a. Two applications to review – scheduling site visits in mid-March
  - b. *No update.*
  - c. Heritage Tree Health Status Update Project  
*Interested in reviewing the health of all Heritage Trees as an update to the list of trees and the map of Heritage Trees. The existing list is to be divided amongst commissioners for review.*
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: Review potential stakeholders and identify priority contacts.  
*The Commission discussed presentations and potential programming with local economic development and business groups regarding green infrastructure and the role of trees on commercial properties. Tom Boland shared a list of relevant organizations and contacts.*
  - 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: Review the Land Development Code, Code and Canopy (ACFT), and benchmark city codes. Develop native tree preference lists for urban areas, low soil quality, and for above/under utilities to be potentially folded into the Technical Standards.

*A presentation on urban forest management and tree preservation in the Land Development Code is to be given by the Parks and Recreation and Planning and*

*Development staff at the City Council Planning Conference on February 27<sup>th</sup>. There is interest from the Commission in receiving the same or similar presentation.*

**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: Continuing tracking events and volunteer hours. Set next target for data collection.

*No updates.*

5. Isabelle Shepherd - Update on activities of the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees
  - a. *Tree Distributions – Distributed over 2,800 trees at DC Virgo focused on Northside residents on February 14<sup>th</sup> funded by Landfall Foundation and The Endowment. Another giveaway is scheduled for March 14 at the Leland Cultural Arts Center funded by the Arbor Day Foundation and Enterprise Mobility. In total, ACFT will be distributing 5,300 trees this year.*
  - b. *Tree Plantings – Planted 51 trees on the DC Virgo campus the previous weekend. Planting planned for the following weekend at DREAMs Center for Arts Education.*
  - c. *Advocacy – Attended a Tree Ordinance Workshop in Greensboro, NC*
6. New Business
  - Native Tree Lists – Additional list development  
*Haley Hopkins shared updated online version of existing Native Tree Lists, developed to comply with online accessibility standards. Cate Cardamone shared she has completed a list of native trees for screening.*
  - Upcoming Events:
    - NC Arbor Day – March 20, 2026
      - *Pursuing a celebratory planting and educational program with the MLK Community Center’s afterschool program.*
    - National Arbor Day – April 24, 2026
      - *Interest in celebratory planting at a school with education component*
    - Earth Day Festival – April 18, 2026
      - *Signed up as an exhibitor.*
    - Additional events of interest to the Commission
7. *Chair, Tom Boland, opened the floor for an attending member of the public. Joshua Shields shared concern over the recent approval for specimen tree removal by the Board of Adjustment for a site located at 1009 South 13<sup>th</sup> Street. The Commission discussed concerns and interest in learning more about the process for Board of Adjustment applications and decisions.*

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

- a) Adjourn – 10:47 AM