



Minutes

Wilmington Tree Commission Regular Meeting

9:30 – 11:00 AM, April 22, 2026

Attendance:

Tom Boland, Chair – *present*

Bridget Callahan, Vice Chair – *present*

Alana Seaman – *present*

Terri Parham – *present*

Rhonda Waterhouse – *present*

Ex-Officio:

Sally Thigpen – Asset and Property Management

Haley Hopkins – Staff Liaison, Planning and Development

1. Call to order 9:35 AM. Quorum not present at start of meeting, but present at 9:40 AM.
2. Review and approve minutes from February 25, 2026 and March 25, 2026 (VOTE)
Motion to approve by Terri Parham, Second by Rhonda Waterhouse. No discussion. All in favor, 5/9.
3. Presentation – Wilmington Tree Ordinance Updates by the Planning and Development Department
Brief discussion of trees planted versus trees removed, net planting, the process of approval for specimen tree removal by the Board of Adjustment (BOA), and the importance of soil quality.
4. **Heritage Tree Awards** – Update
 - a. Review applications.
 - i. 5814 Masters Lane (VOTE)
Continued to next meeting, May 27, 2026.
 - ii. 2021 Corporate Drive (Olsen Park) (VOTE)
Continued to next meeting, May 27, 2026.
 - iii. 4418 Park Avenue (VOTE)
Continued to next meeting, May 27, 2026.
 - b. Heritage Tree Health Status Update Project
No updates
5. 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: Explore potential for presentations in the economic development and business community on green infrastructure and tree planting enhancements.
No updates.
 - 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.

No updates.

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.

6. Staff Reports

a. Sally Thigpen – Asset and Property Management

Reminder of tree removal projects at the New Hanover County Courthouse and at the Presbyterian Church on S. 3rd St.

b. Aaron Reese – Asset and Property Management, Urban Forestry

No update.

c. Haley Hopkins – Planning and Development

As Planning and Development crafts amendments to the Land Development Code in increase tree preservation in new development, plan to continue to check in with the Tree Commission.

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

a. Tree Stewards – Have purchased a watering truck to aid tree stewards.

b. Events and Advocacy – Tree Trivia at Outer Dunes Brewing on Thursday, April 23 at 7:00 PM; Family Fun Days at the Bellamy Mansion Museum on April 26, 2026, Mad Mole Earth Day Event tree giveaway on April 25, 2026.

c. Advocacy - Advocacy focus remains on reforming downzoning.

d. Recently launched a membership campaign for routine giving.

8. New Business

- Upcoming Events:

○ National Arbor Day – April 24, 2026

No event planned.

○ Native Plant Festival – September

Rhonda Waterhouse and Tom Boland connecting with organizer.

○ Fire in the Pines – October

○ Additional events of interest to the Commission

No other events discussed.

- Board of Adjustment Concerns and Recommendation – Interest in exploring how and where to recommend more variety in expertise of members appointed to the Board of Adjustment and more information on how the board works.

Next Meeting is May 27, 2026, at 9:30 AM, 929 N. Front St., 1st Floor Azalea Room (154H).

a) Adjourn – 10:57 AM