Minutes
Wilmington Tree Commission Special Meeting

9:30 – 11:00 AM, August 26, 2026

Members in attendance:

- Tom Boland, Chair – present
- Bridget Callahan– present
- Terri Parham– absent excused
- Jeanne Fisher– absent excused
- Rhonda Waterhouse– Remote
- Ben Rigby – present
- Susie Rivadeneyra– present
- Lloyd Singleton – present
- Robin Morgan– present
- Cathey Luna - absent
- Catherine Cardamone- (former member)

Staff in attendance:

- Mary Vigue - Deputy City Manager
- Haley Hopkins - Planning and Development
- Sally Thigpen, Dina Ricardo, Ben Misleh, Aaron Reese - Asset and Property Management
- Dylan Lee - Communications
- Kim Gordon, Robie Baker, Justin Carter, Aaron Beckner, Ryan FitzGibbon, Linda Painter(remote) - Design Construction MGMT

ACFT

- Isabelle Shepherd, Laura McCabe

1. Call to order; note presence of quorum.
   Chair Tom Boland called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. and noted that a quorum was present.
2. *Introduction*
   All members introduced themselves and shared why they applied to be on the Wilmington Tree Commission to get to know new members.
3. Review and approve minutes of July 22, 2026 (VOTE)
   There being no discussion in the minutes, Bridget Callhan made a motion to approve, seconded by Robin Morgan, and the motion carried 6-0. No opposition.
4. Presentation by Design and Construction Department on Pirate Cove Drainage Improvement Project
   The presentation took place, and Susie had questions regarding the embankment, replacement species, removing magnolias process, considerations and pollution treatments.
   Robin asked about the warranty. There was an exchange between the Members and Planning regarding how to manage the potential impact on the neighborhood through social media.

Bridget proposed a neighborhood walkthrough so residents can have a better understanding of the project. Isabel shared information about letting residents know about ACFT's free tree programs.

5. **Heritage Tree Awards** – Update
    a. City Council award presentation - September 1, 2026
    b. One new application
    Discussion on clarification about program for Robin.
    A site visit for measuring the tree was scheduled 3 p.m. on Monday 08/31/26.
    Tom printed the list and there are 75 since 2012, an audit on the list was decided. The goal is to determine what is old or no longer correct. Discussion on how to address this is ongoing. Some information was shared on how the public becomes aware of the program.

6. 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 information learned during presentation on Board of Adjustment processes.
        i. Committee approved to further advance this goal.
        ii. *Tree Ordinance Review Committee meeting to follow regular meeting, on August 26, 2026.*
    c. Partnerships and Collaboration
    Goal: Create a spreadsheet and score card with statistics regarding number of volunteers, volunteer hours, trees distributed and used 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.
7. Staff Reports
    a. Aaron Reese – Asset and Property Management, Urban Forestry
    Aaron Reese addressed the recent meeting regarding tree removal on South Live Oak Parkway. Communications protocol about Tree projects.
    Sally shared Tree Page on city Website about tree maintenance scheduled over the next month for the public.
    b. Haley Hopkins – Planning and Development Haley Hopkins *shared that the tree review application was approved by the BOA. The event took place downtown on August 30 at Riverfront Park, where some trees were donated, followed by a movie night.*

8. Update on activities of the Alliance for Cape Fear Tree. All events can be found here: Events | Alliance for Cape Fear Trees.
   Isabelle shared that the NCF grant will be used to plant trees.
9. Upcoming Events:
   a. Native Plant Festival – September 2, 2026
      Lloyd Singleton informed the committee that the Native Plant Festival will take place September 16–20 this year. September 16–18 will feature a speaker series, September 19 will be a native plant shopping day at local nurseries, and September 20 will feature native plant garden tours.
      Members were informed that WTC will be a speaker on September 18. The presentation will be limited to two slides and five minutes, beginning at 6:30. Bridget and Robin were identified as speakers.
   b. The Great NC Tree Conference – September
      The Great NC Tree Conference will be in October this year, Oct. 8-9, 2026.
      Tom Boland shares that city will pay and 2 can go.
   c. Fire in the Pines – October
      Fire in the Pines will occur on Oct. 10, 2026, and the Commission will be signing up to participate. Share location and info about the event- Halyburton Park
   d. Tree Fest – January 2027
      January 15-16, 2027, from 11am-4pm at the Independence Mall by JC Penny.
   e. Additional events of interest to the Commission
      The Commission made note of a NC Arbor Day Celebration in March and a National Arbor Day Celebration in April with interest in beginning to plan events at local schools.
10. New Business

    a) Review proposed By-laws updates

       Presentation on the updates was shown on the screen by Sally, will be brought to next meeting for discussion.

Next Meeting is September 23, 2026, at 9:30 AM, 929 N. Front St., 1st Floor Azalea Room (154H).

    a) Adjourn –
       There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11: 12a.m with a motion by Lloyd Singleton and a 2nd by Ben Rigby