



Minutes
Wilmington Tree Commission Special Meeting
July 22, 2026, 9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

Members in attendance:

- Tom Boland, Chair – present
- Ben Rigby – present
- Cathey Luna – present
- Jeanne Fisher – present
- Lloyd Singleton – present
- Robin Morgan – present
- Terri Parham – present

Staff in attendance:

- Mary Vigue, Deputy City Manager
- Gina Essey, City Attorney's Office
- Linda Painter, Planning and Development
- Haley Hopkins, Planning and Development
- Dina Ricardo, Asset and Property Management
- Aaron Reese, Asset and Property Management

1. Call to order; note presence of quorum.

Chair Tom Boland called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. and noted that a quorum was present.

2. Introductions

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 from May 27, 2026 (VOTE)

There being no discussion on the minutes, Terri Parham moved to approve, seconded by Jeanne Fisher, and the motion carried 6-0, with one member abstaining.

4. Heritage Tree Awards – Update

a. City Council award presentation - September 1, 2026

b. One new application

A site visit for measuring the tree will be scheduled.

c. Heritage Tree Health Status Update Project

Tom Boland shared the intention of this project is to update the Heritage Tree list and map with the health status of each awarded tree. He will be sending out a list of all trees to be divided amongst Commissioners for review.

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 opportunities for presentations to the economic development and business community on green infrastructure and tree-planting enhancements.

No updates.

b. Tree Ordinance and Enforcement

Goal: Analyze the 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. Discuss and appoint a committee to further advance this goal.

Chair Tom Boland requested volunteers to form a Tree Ordinance Review Committee to collaborate with subject matter experts and staff to recommend amendments to the Land Development Code to improve tree preservation in new development. Ben Rigby, Robin Morgan, Terri Parham, Jeanne Fisher, Cathey Luna, and Tom Boland volunteered and were appointed. The Tree Ordinance Review Committee's meeting schedule will be the fourth Wednesday of every month following the regular Wilmington Tree Commission meeting. The first meeting will be 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 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. Aaron Reese – Asset and Property Management, Urban Forestry

Aaron Reese addressed the recent online conversations regarding tree removal on South Live Oak Parkway and confirmed the trees to be removed are Laurel Oaks in poor health and there is a plan for replanting. Additionally, several street trees will be removed on S. 3rd St. near Presbyterian Church. Lastly, staff has finalized a planting plan for the fall and will be sharing it with the Commission.

b. Haley Hopkins – Planning and Development

Haley Hopkins shared Planning and Development's excitement to be involved with the Tree Ordinance Review Committee and notified the Commission of a request to increase the disturbance in the critical root zone (CRZ) for a specimen tree at 308 Hooker Rd appearing before the Board of Adjustment on August 20, 2026.

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

- a. The organization's staff has expanded by one position to add dedicated personnel to running the Tree Stewards program.*
- b. The watering truck has been named the "Thirst Responder" and is working well for the tree stewards.*
- c. The Alliance will be looking for more volunteers to help with larger plantings this season.*

8. Upcoming Events:

a. Native Plant Festival – September

Lloyd Singleton shared the Native Plant Festival will take place Sept. 16-20 this year with Sept. 16-18 being a speaker series, Sept. 19 being a native plant shopping day at local

nurseries, and Sept. 20 being native plant garden tours. Tom Boland and Robin Morgan are interested in tabling during the speaker series.

b. The Great NC Tree Conference – September

The Great NC Tree Conference will be in October this year, Oct. 8-9, 2026.

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.

d. Tree Fest – January

Dates for 2027 Tree Fest have not yet been released.

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.

9. New Business

a. 2026 Annual Report (VOTE)

Lloyd Singleton requests the report be revised in section 4, Advocacy, Events, Education, and Outreach to state the annual Tree Fest event is held by an Ad Hoc Committee in cooperation with NC Cooperative Extension and New Hanover County Arboretum.

With no further discussion, Tom Boland made a motion to approve with the recommended revision, seconded by Ben Rigby, and the motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

Next Meeting is on August 26, 2026, at 9:30 a.m., at 929 N. Front St., 1st Floor, Azalea Room (154H).

a) Adjourn –

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:13 a.m.