



To: **Mayor Bill Saffo and Wilmington City Council Members**

CC: **Penny Spicer-Sidbury, City Clerk**

From: **Sherry O’Daniell, Chair
Wilmington Tree Commission**

Date: **March 19, 2019**

Subject: **Annual Report to City Council - Wilmington Tree Commission, 2018 Activities**

- **Membership:**

- **Commissioners (as of 12/31/18):**

Sherry O’Daniell – Chair	Connie Parker – Vice Chair
*Kathryn Graham – Secretary	Blair Walton
Margee Herring	#Jud Watson
*Joe Pawlik	#Jim Gregory
Anthony Snider	Jack Dunn

- *ended term July 2018
 - #joined EOY

- **Ex officio (as of 12/31/18):**

- Aaron Reese – Forestry Management Supervisor, Community Services
 - Ricky Midgette – Tree Crew Supervisor, Community Services
 - Megan Upchurch - City Planner, Planning, Development and Transportation
 - Dawn Coleman – Administrative Support Specialist, Community Services

- **The Wilmington Tree Commission’s mission:**

The Wilmington Tree Commission consists of citizens of Wilmington, NC who serve voluntarily in an advisory and quasi-judicial capacity to the city council and mayor of Wilmington, NC. The mission of the Wilmington Tree Commission is to *Promote, Protect and Enhance our Urban Forest.*

- **2018 WTC Programs** – The Wilmington Tree Commission has three established programs: Tree Awards, Heritage Trees, and Trees Forever.

Tree Awards 2018 were presented on May 15th to a non-profit, historical foundation, two business entities, private citizens, a church and a landscape design company.

- **Bellamy Mansion Museum** was awarded because of their preservation of a heritage magnolia trees on their property that dated back 150 years.
- **Cape Fear Garden Club** was awarded because of their works within the city of Wilmington that has contributed to the enhancement and preservation of our urban trees and forest.
- **Halpern Enterprises, Inc.** was awarded because of their work in preserving numerous large oak trees as well as relocation of what can be referred to as the ‘Ogden Oak’, a 72” live oak that rested on the shoulder of the 7000 block of Market Street.
- **Joni & Todd King**, residents of Wilmington were awarded because of their preservation of a Triple Magnolia Tree at 619 Orange Street.
- **Basilica Shrine of St. Mary** was awarded because of their preservation of “The Boundary Oak” named as such because it used to be the boundary of Wilmington.
- **Sandy & Andy Wood**, owners of Habitats Gardens (landscape Design Company) were awarded because of the accessible natural garden environment they designed and created at “The Pines II” an office park located at 1844 Sir Tyler Drive.
- **TD Bank, N.A.** was awarded because of its contributions to the expansion and enhancement of Wilmington’s urban canopy. A TD Green Streets grant supported the purchase of fifty trees, a water trailer for irrigation, training for neighborhood tree keepers and two community events. Later in the year, additional trees were added to Wilmington’s trees canopy with help from another TD Tree Days grant. This grant supported the purchase of 40 trees planted by over 70 volunteers, including regional TD Bank employees.

The **Trees Forever Program** is a self-sustaining way to add trees to our cityscape. The Wilmington Tree Commission actively promoted the Trees Forever Program through Wilmington’s communications department and the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees Facebook page. The Residents of Old Wilmington donated one thousand dollars to Trees Forever and the trees will be planted near McRae Street. In 2019 the **Trees Forever Program** will be taken over by the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees (ACFT). The ACFT will work with the Wilmington Forestry Management department in coordinating proper tree and location.

The **Heritage Tree Recognition**

Students from the Environmental Studies Department at the University of North Carolina Wilmington are assisting the Wilmington Tree Commission’s heritage program. Recognition of Heritage trees is especially important with the increase in population and development of Wilmington.

● **2018 WTC Initiatives and Public outreach and events**

- The Wilmington Tree Commission (WTC) celebrated the Nations **Arbor Day celebration** on Friday, April 27th at Winter Park Elementary with the planting of a Cathedral Live Oak tree, donated by New Hanover County Arboretum and transplanted by Bill Akers, of Akers Tree Movers. Students gave members of the Wilmington Tree Commission a painting of a tree that the students created. In addition, the students performed for attendees of Winter Park’s Arbor Day celebration. The Mayor Bill Saffo, Paul Slovik, principal of Winter Park Elementary, Sherry O’Daniell, chair of (WTC) and Bill Akers, of Akers Tree Movers, talked to the students about the importance of trees in our lives.
- To increase and enhance outreach and educational activities, for the sixth straight year the Tree Commission participated in an **Earth Day** observance at Hugh MacRae Park on Saturday, April 21st. The commission handed out long-leaf pine seedlings, supplied by Whitfield Farms. Many of the trees were distributed to homeowners in new subdivision with yards barren of trees. Visitors to the WTC’s table were

given educational materials about proper planting techniques and selecting a proper tree. Tree stickers and an owl puppet that “loves” trees were a huge hit with the younger participants. Members of the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees were contributing partners with cost of educational material and public interaction. The Wilmington Tree Commission also participated in **Bellamy Family Day** on Sunday, April 22nd alongside the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees. Between the Earth Day event and Bellamy Family 250 long-leaf pine seedlings were distributed.

- The Wilmington Tree Commission participated at the **Fire in the Pines** held at Halyburton Park, on Saturday, October 13. Young participants became “tree warriors” with the making of tree headbands. Educational materials about the importance of organized burns and expanding both the urban and Longleaf forests were distributed. Members of the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees (ACFT) were contributing partners with cost of educational material and public interaction. As this event was held post-“Hurricane Florence”, the ACFT distributed brochures “Effects of Hurricanes on Trees”, and “Trees and Public Health” created by the ACFT’s intern, Jacob Irvin. The public was of course more engaged in what trees are best to replace trees destroyed and damaged from Hurricane Florence.
- Several members of the WTC helped the ACFT at the 2018 **Star News Media Conscience Fair**. This was a great opportunity for the commission to interact with the community the importance of trees and receive concerns.
- **Trees of Recognition** –The Tree Commission recognized significant trees with signs located at **Cape Fear Garden Club’s Azalea Festival Garden Tour** sites. Laminated information sheets with information on the tree species were attached to the signs. Green tags that stated the monetary savings and total value of the trees adorned the trees.
- **December 12 Planting** – On December 12, 2018 members of the Commission, supported by city staff, continued the tradition begun on 12/12/12 with the planting of twelve trees at Greenfield Lake. The trees used for planting were ones that members of the WTC had potted as saplings five years ago and were cared for in the city nursery. A significant number of trees at Greenfield Lake were lost due to Hurricane Florence.
- The City of Wilmington’s website located at www.wilmingtonnc.gov (Wilmington Tree Commission) has a vast amount of information for the public to learn more about the WTC and the forestry management department. On site the video “**All about Trees**” featuring Aaron Reese, Forestry Management Supervisor, is available. It is an informative video that communicates to the public the responsibilities of the forestry management team. Additional information pertaining to the Commission’s programs: Tree Awards, Heritage Trees and Trees Forever are available to the public on the website in addition to the WTC’s newsletter, goals and objectives. Links to the “**Street Tree Policy**”, approved by the Tree Commission June 20 and the **Urban Tree Canopy Program**, federal study that looks at how urban trees can be used to improve the quality of our local waterways can be found at site.
- The “**Street Tree Policy**” which was written (April 2017) by Joe Pawlik with input from members of the tree commission was presented to Amy Beatty, Community Services Director of Parks and Recreation by the commission in February 2018. Ms. Beatty presented proposed policy to the city council in April 2018 and stated that a tree inventory, a tree maintenance budget that would include expenses for fertilizer, a three crewmember team and tree maintenance equipment would be needed to bring this proposed policy forward.
- The Wilmington Tree Commission has been working with Megan Upchurch, City Planner, Planning, Development and Transportation in having our proposal titled “**Wilmington’s Tree Protection**

Ordinance” considered in regards to the city's “Comprehensive Plan” for long-term growth and development. North Carolina’s forest service template was a basis for our proposal.

- **City Awards:** In April 2018, the City of Wilmington was named a **Tree City USA** for the 15th consecutive year.
- **City Council Liaison:** A letter submitted to the Mayor and Council members was submitted in support of the Wilmington 2018-2019 budget recommendation that the Wilmington Tree Management Division’s financial request be approved. The requested amount is to manage, preserve and enhance Wilmington’s urban forest and trees.
- **Maintenance:** The “Street Tree Policy” and the “Wilmington Tree Protection Ordinance” both address the need to invest in the maintenance of Wilmington’s trees and urban forest. Trees are a part of Wilmington’s infrastructure that surpasses the return on investment (ROI) to other infrastructures within the city. Studies have shown that a street tree has a 50% higher ROI to the city than a parking space and that for \$1 spent on tree planting and maintenance, urban trees deliver \$5.82 in benefits. When cost/benefit analyses have been conducted in other cities, they show that a native canopy tree reduces the urban heat index, filters and manages stormwater runoff, provides wildlife habitats and reduces airborne pollutants. These benefits surpass the cost of pruning and maintaining a large native canopy tree over the life of the tree. A city with streets lined with stately native canopy trees as oppose to “Crepe Myrtle” is more aesthetically appealing.
- **Reforestation:** The funding of the expansion and enhancement of Wilmington’s urban forest is reliant on variable funding mechanisms which are inefficient in keeping pace with a rapidly growing city and aging trees. Besides increasing our urban forestry budget, solutions such as breaking down municipal silos to facilitate cost/benefits among various departments could be explored. Wilmington’s trees and urban forest benefit a range of municipal departments such as stormwater management and public health but the costs are burdened by “Parks and Recreation (Trees). Cost can be mitigated in various ways, for example the health department might want to make tree planting part of its air quality plans.
- **Prioritization of Green Infrastructure:**
 - Defined by the EPA, green infrastructure uses plants, soils, and nature itself to manage stormwater and create healthier urban environments. Green infrastructure practices can be used to reduce the need for expensive gray infrastructure—pipes, storage facilities, and treatment systems.
 - The Wilmington Tree Commission views green infrastructure, specifically incorporating trees into development and redevelopment, as an essential tool in attaining our mission. The Urban Tree Canopy Program, Street Tree Policy and the Tree Protection policy are all instrumental in prioritizing green infrastructure. Commission members have expanded their knowledge of using trees in green infrastructure through educational opportunities offered by the North Carolina Forest Service, Arbor Day Foundation, NACD (National Association of Conservation Districts), North Carolina Urban Forest Council and others.
 - **Site Plan Review:** Because our mission is to “Promote, Protect and Enhance our Urban Forest”, development and redevelopment projects that impact trees are of special concern to the commission. The WTC has reached out to developers and the DOT for solutions that protect and enhance our urban forest/trees and have been met with positive solution on several occasions.

“It takes a village”

- The **Alliance for Cape Fear Trees (ACFT)**, a program of the non-profit Renaissance Wilmington Foundation, promotes and supports trees in the Cape Fear area and has been valuable in helping the WTC in working on its mission: "To promote, protect and enhance our urban forest". Many current and past Wilmington Tree Commission (WTC) members are members of the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees. The

ACFT has contributed immensely in helping the WTC expand our urban forest and reach out to the community in ways not possible without their partnership.

- Several members of the WTC participated in various tree plantings orchestrated by the ACFT listed below:
 - Bald cypress trees between the CFCC dock and the Hilton hotel using grant money from the Cape Fear Garden Club.
 - Bald cypress trees at the end of Nunn Street using a grant from Keith and Sylvia Kochler through their family trust.

- **Hurricane Florence**

Hurricane Florence made landfall at 7:15 a.m. on Friday, September 14. The city estimates 600 tree removals and 1,000 damaged as a result of this storm, a huge loss of our tree canopy which doesn't include the hundreds of trees lost on private and county property. The record rainfall prior to Hurricane Florence saturating the ground and creating shallow roots and rainfall from Florence caused many trees to uproot. Trees that weren't maintained and pruned properly were more likely to break and cause damage to homes and powerlines. Post-Hurricane Florence the Wilmington Tree Commission has worked with local certified arborists, the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees, the local North Carolina extension service, North Carolina Forest Service and Wilmington's forest management department in obtaining information that will aid in minimizing damage from future storms. We have advised the public that planting trees in proper place, planting a grove of trees whose root systems will support each other, planting native trees and proper maintenance will aid though not guarantee in combating the city's next storm. It is the tree commission's hope that the city will be an example and increase the budget for tree maintenance, incorporate trees as green infrastructure in managing stormwater runoff, plant more native trees and support the Wilmington Tree Commission in their efforts to work on our mission to "Promote, Protect and Enhance our Urban Forest" by supporting the "Street Tree Policy" and "Tree Protection Ordinance"

Regular Meetings: scheduled on the 3rd Wednesday of each month (excluding July and December), 8:30 am at CresCom Bank Building, 115 N 3rd St, 5th floor conference room

Sincerely,

Sherry O'Daniell, Chair

Wilmington Tree Commission

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