

CAC Working for You

By Amry Cox, CAC member

Did you ever wonder what the Community Appearance Commission (CAC) does in Pine Knoll Shores? Generally, commissions are appointed bodies that provide independent oversight. In Pine Knoll Shores, the CAC was established as the second volunteer entity (after the Planning Board) to help with citizen oversight of town development while maintaining a keen interest in protecting our maritime forest. "The Story of Pine Knoll Shores," published by the town and available at town hall, states that the town "established a community appearance commission to review building plans and make recommendations regarding the effect they would have on the appearance of the town." Indeed, all aspects of the town's appearance were the concern of CAC.

This was the vision in the mid-'70s, and the role of the CAC has grown and evolved over the decades. The Planning Board always was the main oversight group for building plans in accordance with town ordinances and requirements—and remains active in that role today. Plus, community homeowner associations play a complimentary role in the review and oversight of plans and compliance with restricted covenants and other appearance rules.

The Community Appearance Commission reviews and conducts site visits for minor landscape plans, major landscape plans, tree preservation plans and tree removal permits. After review and consultation, the request/plan is either approved, approved with conditions, or denied by the CAC. All tree removal permit requests are reviewed within a day or two of receipt, and CAC volunteers are at town hall multiple times a week as they prepare for site visits. Major landscape plans and new development plans are reviewed at the monthly CAC meeting, which is the third Wednesday of every month, after the members conduct a walk-through of the proposed plan for the site with the town building inspector.

In particular, the volunteers of the CAC dedicate their time to ensure that any proposed addition/remodel, new construction or development will make effective use of existing terrain and environment, preserve to the extent possible the maritime forest and vegetation indigenous to our barrier island, and are compatible with the town programs and policies. Our town owes its unique history and distinctive natural environment to the commitment by both the town and its volunteers to valuing and preserving what works well here.

Lois Jean O'Keefe embodies the spirit of the CAC. One of the longest serving members and chair for many years, she "never can remember not being on the Community Appearance Commission." The O'Keefes have lived here 40 years, and she simply loves this group and all the work they do for the town. "It's a lot of hard work, but it is a very cohesive group that runs very smoothly. There is a good process in place, and it works," she says.

The town of Pine Knoll Shores loves its trees, and most people who move here are attracted because of the uniqueness of the trees and maritime forest on a barrier island. Some folks also refer to the CAC as the "tree people." From before the town of Pine Knoll Shores was established, permits were required to remove any tree larger than three inches in diameter. One of the responsibilities of the Community Appearance Commission is to review and approve or deny tree removal permits. As Lois Jean would say, if there is a good reason to save the tree, we would rather that the homeowner save the tree—if it's healthy, not in the way of construction, not a problem with the septic system, etc. On the other hand, if the tree is diseased or within the footprint of new construction or an addition, then the permit is approved.

The first project for consideration for 2019: Year of the Tree was actually because of one of the last tree removal permits of 2018. The new tree will be a live oak, appropriate because it is one of our native trees of special concern (as noted in "Building and Landscaping in Pine Knoll Shores," also available at town hall).

Although many people over the decades have volunteered their time and energy to the CAC, currently an arborist, master gardener, geologist, retired military

members and a general contractor are part of the contingent that continues the legacy of watching out for the environment and the maritime forest and are part of the legacy that Alice Hoffman left on Isle of the Pines and Pine Knoll Shores.

Winter Bees

By Amanda Goble

What do bees do in the winter? Chances are you have never asked yourself this question. But for anyone who loves the sweet taste of honey, or the many fruits and vegetables brought to the table by the efforts of pollinating bees, the answer is important—and surprising.

Many insects simply don't survive the winter. They perish when cold temperatures arrive, but their eggs or a few founding adults survive to replenish the species in the spring. We humans love this trait when it applies to mosquitos and no-see-ums, but what about beneficial bugs like honey bees? Fortunately for us, the gentle honey bee has a strategy for winter survival, and it is surprisingly like our own: stay snug at home with family and lots of delicious food.

A colony of honey bees is made up of a queen bee and her children; by wintertime, there are very few or no males (drones) in the hive. The worker bees, all sisters, have spent their lives caring for each other and collecting food: pollen and nectar from flowers. The nectar is transformed into thick, sweet honey by the bees, and this is their main food source when no flowers are in bloom. Like a gardener who cans or freezes the summer harvest, bees prepare for the cold long before Old Man Winter comes calling. On warmer days, you might see honey bees, well into fall and winter, gathering last-minute nectar before frost claims the plants.

When the cold does come, the honey bees initiate their winter survival strategy: snuggling against the cold. Like a family gathered in a warm living room on a snowy winter night, all the sisters come inside when temperatures drop. They form a "winter cluster," a tight ball of fuzzy golden honey bees safe and snug in the middle of the hive, with the queen protected in the center. In a large and healthy hive, this cluster of bees can be the size of a basketball.

The cluster of bees slowly moves across the honeycomb, eating stored honey as they go. The sisters take turns braving the cold on the outermost edges so that all the bees can spend some time in the warm interior of the family cluster. In Carteret County at this time of year, the bees are beginning to raise young to prepare for spring. These incredible insects keep the nursery at the cluster's center a toasty 95 degrees, day and night, by vibrating their wing muscles to create heat. If all goes well, the hive will go back to business as usual—taking care of their sisters, foraging for food, maintaining the home—with the arrival of spring.

If that is how bees survive the winter, what about beekeepers? North Carolina has many beekeepers, and there is a good chance that you know someone with a hive (or several) in the backyard. This is the season when beekeepers enjoy some time indoors. As with gardening, this is the time of year for planning prior to the hustle and bustle of spring. Most of us spent the summer and fall caring for the bees and managing the honey harvest, and winter offers a time to relax. However, as with everyone who keeps animals, we worry about the creatures in our care. On warmer days, we may check on our bees to make sure that they are healthy and safe, occasionally feeding or giving medicine if the bees need a helping hand. And, just like you, we (and our honeybees) eagerly await the passing of the cold temperatures and arrival of bright, green springtime.

If you have an interest in pollinators, honey or beekeeping, consider joining the Crystal Coast Beekeepers Association (CCBA), Carteret County's beekeeping organization. The CCBA welcomes everyone and aims to provide help to fellow beekeepers, instruction, and mentoring and education for the community.

CCBA meets the second Monday of every month at the Morehead City Parks and Recreation Department. The next meeting will be Monday, February 11, at 7 p.m. All are welcome; come see what the buzz is about.

Amanda Goble is a North Carolina Certified Beekeeper and active member of the Crystal Coast Beekeeping Association and Eastern Apicultural Society. She keeps backyard bees for fresh local honey, natural beeswax, and the joy of caring for a large family of fuzzy, buzzing, golden girls.