

# CAC Update

By Amry Cox

Each New Year presents an opportunity to look back in review before you begin looking ahead. As the town approaches its 50th anniversary in 2024 (yes, that really is planning ahead), we are reminded that the founding vision was a small community on a barrier island, sheltered by the maritime forest. Over the decades, we are still that community—still sheltered and still on our island. Trends have come and gone, but our heritage trees have remained standing sentinels and weathered hurricanes and nor'easters. Some of the understory trees have matured and joined the ranks of specimen trees.

In the past couple of years, we have lost many trees to wind, storms and pine bark beetles. Sometimes people move in and want more view or more sun or just less trees. This is one of our realities today. The Community Appearance Commission (CAC) tries to balance nature, town requirements (ordinances and zoning) and personal preferences. If a deck, driveway or septic field could be slightly moved in order to save a 100-year-old tree, the CAC will probably raise that issue with the property owner during a tree permit or building permit review.

Last year the town of Pine Knoll Shores and a generous benefactor underwrote some of the cost of buying and planting 175 larger native species (live oak, eastern red cedar, wax myrtle, sweet bay magnolia and willow oak) for 62 families. To celebrate Arbor Day 2019, the town offered 1,000 one-gallon trees free to any town resident (limit five trees) in an effort to start the next generation of heritage trees. Live oaks can live for hundreds of years, so if you plant a live oak you are really planting for the future. Pines can live 50 to 80 years, so those can be trees for your grandchildren's children. Indigenous, ornamental and understory trees are just as important as the overstory trees for shade, diversity and wildlife habitat. We need all kinds and heights of trees that are capable of surviving our barrier island conditions—so keep planting, folks.

Looking ahead with clear vision beyond 2020, more effort to plant new native trees and preserve existing mature trees is still needed. Disease, natural damage and manmade destruction will occur. An estimated 3,000 or more trees have been lost in the past two years. What is needed is a concentrated effort to replace and regenerate our tree canopy at an equal rate so we remain a small community under the maritime forest on our barrier island that we love so well.

If you want to know more about the Community Appearance Commission or just have questions, simply attend a monthly meeting at 9 a.m. on the third Wednesday of every month at town hall. You can also talk to any one of the 10 appointed commission members: Steve Felch (chair), Lois Jean O'Keefe (vice chair), Amry Cox, Martha Edwards, Mary MacDonald, Bob Preto, Paul Pylko, Frank Sanchez, Suzanne Wheatcraft and Clare Winslow.



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