

Keeping Up With the Clerk

By Charles Rocci
Pine Knoll Shores Town Clerk

March is the time to plant trees

Did you know that March provides the best climate to plant a tree in North Carolina? That is why the state recognizes its Arbor Day as the first Friday following March 15. This year the town, in partnership with the Community Appearance Commission and the Arbor Day Foundation, is excited to announce that the town will be giving away 250 trees, with a mix of live oak, wax myrtle, and sweet bay, along with a 20-pound bag of potting soil on Friday, March 18, at town hall from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. This will be a first-come, first-served event. If you would like to know how to get involved with supporting this event, or have any questions, please reach out to me at clerk@townofpks.com, or stop by town hall.

Pine Knoll Shores has always been unique in its mission to preserve the Bogue Banks maritime forest. Our community members have worked diligently to preserve the natural canopy since the town was chartered in 1973, and now we must continue this mission by preserving our current canopy and introducing new growth for the forest to continue to flourish and protect us from the harsh coastal climate for many years to come.

Pine Knoll Shores has been successful in this effort in large part because of our partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation. The Arbor Day Foundation has recognized Pine Knoll Shores as a Tree City for the past 22 years, and we hope to continue that honor for a 23rd year. A requirement to maintain Tree City status is to hold an Arbor Day ceremony for the community. This will be an event associated with the town's upcoming tree giveaway. To give a brief history of North Carolina Arbor Day, I have included highlights of this unique day, written by former Town Clerk Sarah Williams:

In 1967, the state legislature ratified a bill stating: "... it is desirable that the planting of seedlings and flowering shrubs be encouraged to promote the beautification and conservation of the vast and varied natural resources of North Carolina and ... the designation of a particular week in each year as Arbor Week would encourage and draw public attention to a concerted effort by North Carolinians to beautify and conserve the State's resources by the planting of young trees and shrubs."

National Arbor Day is the last Friday in April, but in North Carolina it is designated as the first Friday following March 15. ... According to the NC Forest Service's website, the first Arbor Day was in Nebraska. J. Sterling Morton and his wife moved there from Detroit and went to work planting shrubs, flowers and trees around their property. Mr. Sterling was a journalist and became the editor of Nebraska's first newspaper, which provided him with a forum to spread agricultural awareness and his fondness for nature. The public shared his enthusiasm, and they missed the trees from the places they had left. They understood the importance of trees and recognized their ability, among other things, to act as windbreaks, provide shade, and keep soil in place. Morton became secretary of the Nebraska Territory,

which provided another opportunity to stress the value of trees. On March 12, 1874, Nebraska's Governor Robert W. Furnas proclaimed Arbor Day to be observed on April 10, 1874. Many states celebrate the last Friday in April, but other regions celebrate at different times to capitalize on tree planting. This is why North Carolina celebrates in March.

Source: ncforests.service.gov/Urban/history_of_arbor_day.htm

Tacks in the Road

(Continued from page 5)

5. Will sidewalks add to our resiliency as a community? The increase in impervious surface and decrease in natural vegetation will not. Native vegetation may not grow back in the right of way between the sidewalk and the road. The increased water runoff will contribute to problematic storm water runoff and flooding. The removal of vegetation to accommodate sidewalks may endanger the maritime forest canopy incrementally.

CP: Vegetation grows back rapidly here on the island. There isn't much vegetation in the right of way, where the sidewalk would be located, to begin with. Replanting is an option. Storm water along Highway 58 is largely accommodated by the large existing swales along the road put in place when the road was constructed 50 years ago. When it comes to a tradeoff between vegetation and pedestrian safety, elected officials have to be responsible and choose pedestrian safety.

6. Does a sidewalk improve pedestrian safety? Will a sidewalk on the (north/south) side of Highway 58 make it safer for people living on the (north/south) side of the road to cross safely to the beach? Wouldn't additional crosswalks, especially located proximate to public and private beach accesses, make things safer? For the amount of east-west pedestrian traffic along the highway, is the current well-maintained shoulder adequate?

CP: Sidewalks do improve pedestrian safety. They are needed to allow residents to safely reach crosswalks. Additional crosswalks (e.g., at Arborvitae and at Pine Knoll Boulevard) are also a part of the plan.

There will be more on this later, I promise you. Thank you for now. I can be reached by cell phone at 252-622-2338 or email at mayor@townofpks.com. Please be safe and continue to take personal precautions with the virus.

This Month's Puzzle Solutions

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