

Norfolk Tree Commission: 2020 Annual Report

Two verbs that come to mind to describe the work of the Norfolk Tree Commission in 2020 are reimagining and adapting which lends this report to a narrative of the accomplishments this year. These actions evolved among the Norfolk Tree Commissioners as we worked to continue to meet on a monthly basis to assure that Arbor Day 2020 could be a reality for the citizens of our city as we continued our commitment to tree stewardship, increasing Norfolk's urban tree canopy, and aligning our work with the Green Infrastructure Plan (2018).

The winter of 2020 was highlighted by the annual fruit and nut tree adoption, Jamn Jamz, facilitated by The Friends of Norfolk's Environment and Keep Norfolk Beautiful. The Norfolk Tree Commission supports this community stewardship event and joins FONE in the January business meeting to align efforts for volunteering and promoting the event. February and March meetings at the Lambert's Point Recreation Center focused on open commissioner seats, spring planting events and Arbor Day 2020.

Once Governor Northam announced the response to the Covid 19 pandemic on March 13th, the spring provided opportunities for members of the Norfolk Tree Commission to explore the Recreation, Parks and Open Spaces in Norfolk including the groves that were planted in the fall of 2019 by the grant funding of Sun Trust bank and facilitated by the Friends of Norfolk's Environment. Members of the commission met at the Maritime Forest, Lindenwood and Little Creek Elementary Schools, Barraud, Plum Point and Poplar Hall Parks and the Elizabeth River Trail. Steven Traylor, Norfolk City Arborist joined NTC efforts as it offered the opportunity to evaluate the growth of the newly planted trees, identify unique and significant tree species and experience areas of the city for the first time by commissioners.

Northside and Lafayette Parks were considered over the summer as locations for Arbor Day 2020 boasting large areas for social distancing among other C-19 protocols. The community event would take place at a distribution scope manageable by the NTC in partnership with Norfolk Master Gardeners. Woodcraft and Richard Dooling continued to be sponsors so that the awards ceremony could take place to recognize the following in the respective categories: Nichole Knudson, Volunteer; Pender & Coward Law Firm, Project; Cynthia Shurling, Leadership of the year. Steve Dolly and Harriette Frost were welcomed as new commissioners. Members of the commission partnered with FONE to earn an urban orchard grant through the Virginia Department of Forestry Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program titled "Lindenwood Learning Orchard".

Several meetings in September took place at Lafayette Park in partnership with the Norfolk Master Gardeners to conceptualize the distribution of trees to be adopted at Arbor Day by Norfolk citizens. The City of Norfolk's support of Arbor Day 2020 lead to the safe distribution of nearly 400 trees due to the staging of the distribution area at Shelter #2 at Lafayette Park which followed a flow model created by a 2019 commissioner Mike Ruszkowski which was safe and minimized person to person contact. The City Arborist read the Arbor Day proclamation and the

awards ceremony took place at the start of the tree distribution. Zipcode data was collected representing citizens who adopted trees to guide future efforts of community outreach. The debrief of Arbor Day took place in November along the Elizabeth River Trail in Chelsea. The planting of the urban orchard took place on November 14th as a community planting event including Lindenwood Elementary School and community stakeholders abiding with C-19 protocols. This allowed children to be present to participate and community leaders to be engaged. It was possible to have a face to face meeting in December at the Lambert's Point Recreation Center. The Norfolk Tree Commission partnered with other stakeholders of Norfolk's Green Infrastructure Plan (2018) to evaluate the growth of the trees and plants that were installed in areas across the city in fall of 2019 facilitated by FONE. These observations in the field helped us learn from the successes and failures to improve the methods of installation of upcoming groves and planting efforts in the future.

Respectfully Shared,
Betty Baucom, Chairperson

Commissioners: Allissa Bunner, Steve Dolly, Harriette Frost, Marie Gray, Joshua Harford, Todd Herbert, Marcus Jones, Mike Ruszkowski