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StarNews

WILMINGTON, N.C.

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2026 | STARNEWSONLINE.COM

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Tree stewards and volunteers from several organizations took part in tree plantings at the GLOW Academy in Wilmington on Feb. 7. PROVIDED BY ALLIANCE FOR CAPE FEAR TREES

Leland's \$50M plan adds tax cut and new jobs

Savanna Tenenoff
Wilmington StarNews
USA TODAY NETWORK

With a balanced budget proposed to meet evolving demands of continuous growth, Leland officials are tasked with voting on the final cuts determining where millions of dollars in anticipated revenue will be spent.

Leland staff proposed a \$50 million balanced town budget for fiscal year 2026-2027 with property tax reduction and funding new positions, updated equipment, a lobbyist and more. If approved, the budget will be in effect July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027.

Town council members were formally presented the proposal on Feb. 19, ahead of many Brunswick County

See **BUDGET**, Page 2A

NC objects to harbor deepening project

Gareth McGrath
USA TODAY NETWORK

North Carolina regulators have objected to plans by the Army Corps of Engineers to deepen the Cape Fear River shipping channel that serves the Port of Wilmington.

Reasons listed by the state for its objection to the corps' preliminary green light for the work included future impacts from sea-level rise, contamination from "forever chemicals," effects on wetlands and marine habitats, and a lack of mitigation proposals to environmental degradation tied to the deepening.

"The (Army Corps) has not fully demonstrated how these adverse impacts will be avoided, minimized or mitigated," Tancred Miller, head of the

See **HARBOR**, Page 3A

Wilmington's trees are disappearing

Who's saving them?

Bob Liepa
Wilmington StarNews
USA TODAY NETWORK

With a two-person staff and a healthy dose of passion, a nonprofit organization rooted in Wilmington is looking out for the best interests of the area's green infrastructure.

Since its founding in 2015, the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees (ACFT) has made its mission to preserve, protect and plant trees across the lower Cape Fear region.

"We are speaking for the trees at the tables where decisions are made," ACFT Executive Director Isabelle Shepherd said. "I think that our advocacy work has raised the profile of the dire need to

preserve and protect the tree canopy that we have remaining. So, I see our work as being proactive in terms of trying to save trees, but also in some ways reactive in trying to replant the trees that we have lost."

What the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees does

The ACFT participates in tree giveaway events, works collaboratively with local governments and provides education about trees.

According to the ACFT website, the organization has planted a total of 3,517 trees and donated another 19,806. By the end of this planting season, which runs from October through March, the ACFT will have distributed just under

See **TREES**, Page 2A



The Alliance for Cape Fear Trees participates in events such as this tree planting at the GLOW Academy in Wilmington on Feb. 7.

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