



Graham Appearance Commission Meeting Agenda

March 2nd, 2026

6:00pm Graham
City Hall

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Invocation
4. Approval of minutes from the January, 2026 meeting
5. **Items of Discussion**

Arbor Day:

- 5a. Follow-Up on Art Contest and Prize Contacts
- 5b. Tree Planting Ceremony Schedule
- 5c. Other Matters (if any)

Future Business:

- 5d. Future Project Plans

6. City Council Updates
7. Staff Updates
8. Adjournment



MINUTES

Graham Appearance Commission Meeting

February 12th, 2026

City Hall Council Chambers

In Attendance:

Chair Zipporah Clark- Baldwin, Vice Chair Cheryl Ray, Bernadette Konzelmann and Emily O'Dell.

Staff: Jonathan Buckley, Cameron West, Brandy McCandless and Kalie Gorham.

- **Meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Chair Clark-Baldwin, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, and a moment of silence.**
- **Approval of the January, 2026 Meeting Minutes**
 - Mrs. Konzelmann moved to approve the minutes as presented, Mrs. O'Dell seconded. All voted aye.
- **Business Beautification Grant**
 - Chair Clark-Baldwin introduced the application for 202 N Main Street. Adam Miller spoke on behalf of the submittal and presented updated quotes.
 - Mrs. Konzelmann moved to approve the submittal at its specific funding amount. Seconded by Chair Clark-Baldwin. All in favor.
- **Arbor Day**
 - Chair Clark-Baldwin moved to change the Arbor Day discussion to first on the New Business items and called Brandy McCandless to the floor. All in favor.
 - The Commission agreed to reach out to local organizations for Arbor Day Art Contest submittals. The Commission also agreed to add Pre-K to the eligible age groups, move the submittal date to late March and manage prize logistics. Brandy McCandless agreed to reach out to local schools.
 - The Commission agreed to manage the prize logistics for the Kindness Rock Hunt.
 - Mrs. McCandless proposed the Commission be involved with a children's activity after the Tree Planting Ceremony and a decision be made on the Ceremony schedule at the March 2nd meeting.
 - Chair Clark-Baldwin inquired about moving the date for the Tree Planting Ceremony to increase public engagement. Mrs. McCandless recommended keeping the Planting Ceremony on Arbor Day.
- **Local Business Involvement**
 - Chair Clark-Baldwin called Renee Russell to the floor.
 - Renee Russell proposed implementing wayfinding signs and a new themed decoration contest for local businesses downtown.
 - The Commission agreed to follow-up and schedule time after the April 6th Meeting

to establish a plan and present to City Council.

- **Appearance Award Programs**
 - Jonathan Buckley called Kalie Gorham to the floor.
 - Mrs. Gorham proposed changing the Residential Appearance Award submittals to self-nominations only and reducing the submission schedule to twice per year.
 - The Commission agreed with self-submittals, a rolling submission for June and December and outreach strategies to improve engagement.
 - Jonathan Buckley inquired about including the Business Appearance Award on the rolling submission schedule. The Commission agreed to this.
- **2026 Calendar Planning**
 - The Commission briefly discussed developing goals for 2026. Vice Chair Ray called Mayor Chelsea Dickey to the floor.
 - Mayor Dickey proposed the Commission contact and organize projects with the New Leaf Society and present any project proposals to City Council with details on funding.
 - Chair Clark-Baldwin agreed to provide a report and coordinate with staff and City Council on future projects.
- **Council**
 - Mayor Dickey provided no other updates.
- **Staff**
 - Cameron West and Jonathan Buckley provided no other updates.
- **Meeting adjourned**
 - Chair Clark-Baldwin motioned for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Vice Chair Ray. All members voted aye. Meeting adjourned at 7:24pm

Minutes Submitted by Jonathan Buckley

February 13th, 2026

DRAFT - 2026 Arbor Day April Event Calendar & Social Media Posts (TENTATIVE SCHEDULE as of 02/12/2026)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
During the month of March, promote Arbor Day activities coming up in April. Post facts and videos associated with trees and Arbor day.				MARCH 26 EVENT: Park Pop-Up - Plant Bingo	MARCH 27	MARCH 28
MARCH 29	MARCH 30	MARCH 31 TOPIC: Arbor Day in Graham Month	1	2 EVENT: All Arbor Day Activities	3 GOOD FRIDAY CITY CLOSED	4 TOPIC: Tree Scavenger Hunt / ecoEXPLORE
5	6 ABSS SPRING BREAK (04/06 - 04/10) Park Pop-Up Appearance Commission Meeting 6-7pm	7 TOPIC: GRPD Tree Donation	8	9 EVENT: Tree Planting Ceremony	10	11
12	13	14 TOPIC: Champion Tree at SGP & City Hall	15	16 EVENT: All Arbor Day Activities	17	18 Leaves, Light & Lenses: Phone Photography in the Parks
19 EASTER NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK (19-25) Volunteer Opportunities / Boards	20	21 TOPIC: City of Graham Website Resources	22 EARTH DAY	23 EVENT: Tree Planting Ceremony	24 ARBOR DAY Tree Planting Ceremony	25 RAIN DATE: Leaves, Light & Lenses: Phone Photography in the Parks
26	27	28 TOPIC: Arbor Day in Graham Highlights	29	30	MAY 1	MAY 2

Additional Advertising

Cost for Flyer Distribution:

PeachJar Emails for Alamance-Burlington School System Flyer Distribution: (2024 prices) approx. \$25.00 per school (ABSS has 28 schools/options - I usually send flyers to schools in and around Graham)

8.5x5.5 (half sheet) flyers: approx. .36 each (ex. River Mill Academy's 650 students *in stacks of 25 for classroom distribution = \$234.00)

CITYgram - will request to have Arbor Day information included for the upcoming CITYgram as space allows (April-September 2026)

About Arbor Day in Graham (on City of Graham website)

The City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board advocates the planting and preservation of trees on public rights-of-way and public properties, and we work to educate residents on the importance of trees in all areas of our community. The Board serves as an advisory board to the City Council as it relates to the planting, growth, and protection of trees and native plants within the City. Graham has also been recognized as a Tree City USA community for four decades, with 2026 being our 45th year!

Join the City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board during the month of April to celebrate Graham's trees and Arbor Day with engaging programs and activities to spark your curiosity and enhance your knowledge about trees! Keep an eye on the Graham Recreation & Parks Facebook page for special Arbor Day activities. Learn more about Tree City USA at www.arborday.org/programs/treecityusa. #ArborDayInGraham

Are you planting a tree in Graham?

Share your pictures of planting a tree on social media with #ArborDayInGraham! We would love to share all of the trees being planted around Graham for Arbor Day!

"One of my students told me that every time she learns the name of a plant, she feels as if she is meeting someone new. Giving a name to something is a way of knowing it." - Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*

What is Tree City USA?

The Tree City USA program has been greening up cities and towns across America since 1976. It is a nationwide movement that provides the framework necessary for communities to manage and expand their public trees.

More than 3,400 communities have made the commitment to becoming a Tree City USA. They have achieved Tree City USA status by meeting four core standards of sound urban forestry management: maintaining a tree board or department, having a community tree ordinance, spending at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry and celebrating Arbor Day.

Recap of Activities from 2025: (see the "Arbor Day in Graham" webpage for details of each event at <https://www.cityofgraham.com/arbor-day-in-graham/>)

- Arbor Day Art Contest (Entries Accepted: March 17 – April 6, 2025) - 4 pieces of art submitted (4 of the 4 prizes distributed)
- Arbor Day Kindness Rock Hunt in Downtown Graham (Dates: April 1 – 30, 2025, or while prizes last) - 5 rocks, 5 prizes (3 of the 5 prizes distributed) - all rocks were found, but not all submitted for prizes
- Going Bonkers for Botany at South Graham Park (Date: Tuesday, April 21, 2025) - 2 registered (no one attended)
- Arbor Day in Graham's Tree Planting Ceremony at the Graham Recreation Center (Date: Friday, April 25, 2025 • Times: 10:00am - 11:00am • Location: Graham Recreation Center)
- Tree Resources were available on the "Arbor Day in Graham" website and shared on social media throughout the month

Arbor Day Events

Chill & Thrill: Park Pop-Up (THEME: Tree-mendous Bingo)

Date: Monday, April 6, 2026

Time: 10:00am – 12:00noon

For All Ages

Cost: Free

Location: Graham Regional Park • 1575 North Jim Minor Road, Haw River, NC 27258

About: Graham Recreation & Parks is rolling into Graham Regional Park this spring and summer with our Park & Play Mobile Recreation Van! Stop by for sweet treats, upbeat music, yard games, and tons of fun themed activities for all ages.

As a special addition, we're hosting Tree-mendous Bingo in celebration of Arbor Day in Graham in April! Bring a blanket, relax on the grass, and enjoy a classic game of Bingo while learning fun facts about trees, plus you'll have a chance to win a tree sapling to take home. Tree saplings generously donated by New Leaf Society.

Don't miss out on the fun – see you there! Follow us on Facebook for program updates and any weather-related changes. For more information about the Park Pop-Ups, please visit

<https://www.cityofgraham.com/grpd-park-and-play-mobile-recreation/>.

Leaves, Light & Lenses: Smartphone Photography in the Parks

Date: Saturday, April 18, 2026

Time: 9:00am - 12:00pm

Ages: 18+ & up

Cost: \$20 per person (register online at

<https://www.elarsonphoto.com/form/leaves-light-lenses-smartphone-photography-in-the-parks-city-of-graham>)

Location: Bill Cooke Park • 1010 Townbranch Road, Graham, NC 27253 (meet at Shelter 2)

About: Graham Recreation & Parks invites nature enthusiasts to join us this April for a hands-on smartphone photography workshop as part of Arbor Day in Graham. Participants will learn simple tools and techniques and explore useful apps for capturing high-quality photos of trees, plants, and natural landscapes using their smartphones. This program encourages outdoor exploration while highlighting one of Graham's newest ecoEXPLORE locations, helping participants document nature, sharpen observation skills, and build a deeper connection to the city's natural spaces. No photography experience is required; just bring your fully-charged smartphone and curiosity. The class will be led by Elizabeth Larson of [Elizabeth Larson Photography](#). For more information, visit:

<https://www.cityofgraham.com/arbor-day-in-graham/>.

Rain date: Saturday, April 25, 2026

Minimum: 4

Maximum: 15

Elizabeth Larson: (434) 242-1272

Arbor Day Art Contest (Tree Board)

Entries Accepted: March 17 - April 6, 2025 • 2026: _____

Submit the Completed Art: by April 6, 2025 • 2026: _____

Age Groups: Elementary, Middle, High School Students, & Adults

Cost: Free

Drop-Off Locations & Times: (during operational hours)

- Graham Recreation Center • 311 College Street, Graham, NC 27253
- Email to: arbordayingraham@gmail.com

About: The City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board invites the community to show off their creativity and create art for Arbor Day (theme: All About Trees)! Art categories can include painting, drawing, photography, poetry, etc. Entries can be submitted by **email** (arbordayingraham@gmail.com) or dropped off at the Graham Recreation Center (during operational hours) beginning March ____ and will be due no later than April ____.

Participants must live in Alamance County and include the artist's name, age (if a minor, please include the parent/guardian's name), phone number, email, and city on the back of the submission. One submission per person is allowed. The City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board will choose one winner in each age group at their April ____ meeting. Following the Arbor Day Art Contest, all artwork will be on display on the Arbor Day in Graham webpage. Special thanks to the City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board and local businesses for donating prizes for the contest.

2024 Poem Contest Prizes:

Elementary - City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board - book

Middle - City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board - flower magnet paint kit

High - City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board - puzzle

2025 Art Contest Prizes:

Elementary - 4 movie tickets to Graham Cinema, \$20 Suttons - Karter Watson, 8 years old (2nd grade), South Graham Elementary Student (keli.watson19@gmail.com)

1st Adult - \$50 64 Harvard - Rebecca Pennington "Seasons" (rebfine.pa@gmail.com)

2nd Adult - \$25 64 Harvard, \$10 for Verdict - Lydia Apelgren "Alamo Tree" (lydiaapelgren@gmail.com)

3rd Adult - \$25 64 Harvard, \$10 for Passion - Elizabeth Witherow "Tree Lined Streets" (monarchmorpho@gmail.com)

Arbor Day Kindness Rock Hunt in Downtown Graham (Tree Board)

Dates: April 1 – 30, 2025, or while prizes last (one prize awarded per rock) • 2026: _____

For All Ages

Cost: Free

Location: Downtown Graham

About: Ready, set, go! The City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board invites you to find one of the five Arbor Day themed rocks hidden in Downtown Graham. Each lucky rock finder will need to take a picture with their special rock and send an **email** (to arbordayingraham@gmail.com) with the photo to, to be eligible for a prize, while prizes last. One winner per household. Special thanks to the City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board and local businesses for donating prizes for the Kindness Rock Hunt.

2024 Prizes: (distributed in this order)

1. Maricle Metals - dog garden gnome
2. Graham Soda Shop - \$20 gift certificate
3. Graham Cinema - movie passes
4. Things Above - cards, books, bracelets
5. City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board - rain gauge

2025 Prizes: floral, rose*

(distributed in this order)

1. \$45 Court Square Florist - Jesse Griffin (jessedanielgriffin@gmail.com) - baseball
2. \$25 Sandy and Co - Laura Heil (mrsLauraheil@gmail.com) - i love you
3. \$25 Gelah Couture - Samantha Dunn (segreen13@gmail.com) - dots
4. \$25 Broom Closet - no winner
5. \$20 Suttons - no winner

**"swag bags" and sapling for repeated find*

Saplings for extra finds:

Ashley Murray (ashley.skovira@gmail.com) - i love you

Nicholas James (unedsomenick@aol.com) - dots

True Spain (truespain@icloud.com) - dots

Buffaloe Lanes Mebane - 3 of each: \$50 & \$25 gift cards - carried over to 2026

2026 Recommendations:

- Larger rocks (size = palm of hand)
- Painted with specific tree leaves
- Each rock wrapped with twine and a laminated card about the leaf/tree and how to claim prize
- Turn in rock to claim the prize
- Hide 6 rocks
- 6 prizes to downtown businesses

Arbor Day in Graham's Tree Planting Ceremony (GRPD & Tree Board)

Date: Friday, April 24, 2026

Times: 10:00am - 11:00am, Tree Planting Ceremony will begin promptly at 10:00am

Ages: For All Ages

Cost: Free

Location: Bill Cooke Park • 1010 Townbranch Road, Graham, NC 27253 (located by the playground, Shelter 1, & Field #3)

(Rain Location: City Hall)

In Memory/Honor of:

About: The City of Graham is excited to celebrate Arbor Day, a tree planter's holiday, with you with a ceremonial tree planting. The City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board, in collaboration with Graham Recreation & Parks and the City of Graham Public Works departments, is pleased to announce our upcoming Arbor Day Tree Planting Ceremony. Join us to celebrate the City of Graham Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA recognition and Arbor Day. Special thanks to the Graham City Council, City of Graham Appearance Commission & Tree Board, and N.C. Forest Service, for being a part of the tree planting event. Can't make it out for the Tree Planting Ceremony? You can also watch it following the event on the [City of Graham's YouTube Channel](#).

Needs:

- Tree Board - invites the City Council in the past to attend the event.
- Tree Board - To be planned at the April ____ meeting • Brandy needs roles & FINAL ceremony schedule by ____
- Brandy - Park & Play Mobile Recreation Van reserved (confirmed)(schedule for public, schedule for board, flag, rolling wireless speaker, one microphone, & podium provided by GRPD)
- Recording the event on City of Graham YouTube channel (will bring tablet and audio attachments)
- Tree Board - confirm the family will be attending...speaking?
- Tim - NC Forest Service will be attending, obtaining the tree
- Brandy - Library Collaboration: Alamance County Public Library coming out to the ceremony with a booth - Graham Public Library will be at the Arbor Day in Graham's Tree Planting Ceremony event to share information about the ecoEXPLORE LoanSpot bookbags, the Seed Library, books about trees, & other opportunities. (tentative)

Contacts:

The Voices One Celebration Choir • Dr. Ken Beverly (336) 639-0018

Members: 15-20 (possibly 40)

Songs: "Plant Conservation Trees" by John Denver AND "The Star-Spangled Banner"

[\(email event map\)](#)

2026 Arbor Day in Graham Tree Planting Ceremony Schedule - Brandy needs FINAL schedule by _____

(reminder: no electricity/generators - rolling wireless speaker, one microphone, & podium provided by GRPD)

- Invocation by _____
- Present the Flag & Welcome Remarks (Pledge of Allegiance)
 - Mayor
- Tree City USA / Arbor Day Proclamation
 - Mayor
 - N.C. Forest Service (Gene Johnson)
- About Arbor Day in Graham (_____)
 - Arbor Day history (_____)
 - Importance of wise stewardship & contribution of trees (_____)
- Tree Planting - In Honor & Memory of _____
 - Remembering _____
 - Type of Tree: _____ (Brandy will supply tree summary for Zipporah to read)
 - **Music** ("Plant Conservation Trees" by John Denver) • Performed by: The Voices One Celebration Choir
 - Planted by City of Graham Public Works (Public Works - plant the tree while the music is playing)
- Recognize the Sponsors (_____)
 - Raffle Drawing for Participants (_____)
- Retire the flag
 - **Music** ("The Star-Spangled Banner") • Performed by: The Voices One Celebration Choir

Hosted by City of Graham Appearance Commission / Tree Board: Zipporah Clark-Baldwin (Chair), Cheryl Ray (Vice-Chair), Bernadette Konzelmann, Clell Britt, Emily O'Dell, Mayor Chelsea Dickey (City Council Liaison), Cameron West & Jonathan Buckley (City Staff Liaisons). In collaboration with the City of Graham Recreation & Parks and Public Works Departments. Special thanks to the Graham City Council and the N.C. Forest Service.

Special thanks to our generous sponsors:

Tree Resources for the City of Graham Website

See, Plant, Grow – Plant a Tree with Tim Covington, Property Maintenance Superintendent

Are you wanting to make a difference? Have you considered planting a tree? “Trees add value to your home, regulate the temperature of your neighborhood, and provide food for wildlife.” – Arbor Day Foundation. The City of Graham Public Works provides tips on planting trees with Property Maintenance Superintendent, Tim Covington. [Arbor Day In Graham Plants a Tree with Tim Covington](#)

Taking a Look Back at 2021: Arbor Day in Graham at Bill Cooke Park with Rett Davis

As the City of Graham celebrated 40 years as an Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA community in 2021, New Leaf Society President, Rett Davis, took us through Bill Cooke Park with a lesson on the importance of trees to our community. The drone footage was provided by Titania Productions. [Arbor Day In Graham at Bill Cooke Park with Rett Davis](#)

Additional Resources

[A Tree Can Be](#)

[Benefits of Planting Trees & Tree Facts](#)

[Champion Tree of Alamance County](#)

[How to Plant Containerized Trees](#)

[Landscaping for Wildlife with Native Plants](#)

[Stop Crepe Murder with NC State Extension](#)

[Tree Planting: Introduction with NC State Extension](#)

[Tree Pruning: Introduction with NC State Extension](#)

Local Resources

Alamance County Cooperative Extension

Have tree, landscaping, and gardening questions? The Alamance County Extension Master GardenerSM Volunteers (EMGVs) Info Line is open for questions! Call and speak to a Master Gardener on the Info Line at (336) 570-6740 or [email \(askanemgee@gmail.com\)](mailto:askanemgee@gmail.com) to ask your tree, landscaping, and gardening questions.

Donate a Tree to a Graham Park (GRPD)

Donating a tree is a great gift for the hard-to-buy-for person, or for someone who “has everything”. It is a great way to remember and honor someone who has passed away since it is a “living memorial”. Tree donation is a wonderful way to mark the birth of a child, celebrate an anniversary, to simply say “I love you”. It makes a great class project, a unique way for your club or group to make a contribution to the community or something to do for yourself. Whatever the reason, trees are vital to the well-being of our environment. They clean the air and keep the atmosphere in check. They give us shade, attract wildlife, and beautifully mark the seasons. Each donated tree will be marked with a 2” X 6” high-grade stainless steel tree marker with your personalized message. Each tree can be inscribed with up to 5 lines, with a maximum of 35 characters per line.

Cost: \$150 per tree, includes a high-grade stainless steel tree marker featuring a maximum of 5 lines with up to 35 characters per line including spaces and hyphens (Message Space: 2” X 6”) • For more information or to print an order form, please visit the "Friends of Graham Recreation & Parks Community Volunteer Board" at <https://www.cityofgraham.com/grpd-get-involved/>.

For more information about Graham Recreation & Parks Arbor Day events, please call (336) 513-5510 or [email](#) Brandy McCandless, Marketing Supervisor.

**Appearance/Tree board
Commission Calendar**

January

Ideas/goals for new year

February

- Arbor Day Planning/Discussion
 - Renee Russell – Business Owner Involvement
 - Appearance Award Advertising & Plan
-

March

- Arbor Day – Follow Up
-

April

- Arbor Day - Finalize Plans
 - Creek Week Cleanup (Spring)
-

May

- Wayfinding Signs Plan - Renee Russell
 - Appearance Award Follow-Up
-

June

- Appearance Award Nominations (Summer)
-

July

August

- Downtown Decorations – Inventory & Spreadsheet
-

September

- Establish Beautification Grant Advertising Plan
 - Downtown Decorations – Plan
-

October

- Creek Week Cleanup (Fall)
 - Downtown Decorations - Scheduling
-

November

- Business Beautification Grants Hearing
-

December

- Downtown Window Decorations
 - Appearance Award Nominations (Winter)
-

Potential Meeting Dates 2026

*February 2nd
March 2nd
April 6th
May 4th
June 1st
July 6th
August 3rd
September 7th
October 5th
November 2nd
December 7th*

Months with No Meetings: July

Carry over ideas from 2025:

-
-