

FHIA Meeting Minutes June 7, 2016 DRAFT

Location: Forest Home Park

Present: Officer Cindy Bowman, Treasurer Jennifer Laux, Ruth Mahr, Pete Laux, Bruce Brittain, Rod Howe, Ari & Lindsey Levine, Bob Mooney, President Montana Peterson, Chris Merschrod, Secretary Constance Engman.

First topic on the agenda was AirBnB short-term rentals. Following up on the incident at 414 (?) McIntyre Place on (date?) of an out-of-control party that was disruptive to neighbors, our group thought this topic was most important. Montana and Ari and others provided background and eye-witness accounts of the unsafe and disruptive behavior of a group of ten unrelated individuals who rented the house for a long weekend through Air BnB. Short-term rentals are in violation of the Town code, which is interpreted to allow an owner to rent once within a 30 day period. Apparently, the agent for this particular Air BnB property listed the property as available for unlimited short-term rentals, which is in violation of Town code. Cindy stated that Air BnB, being new, is less regulated than other bed and breakfasts.

Town Code Enforcement Officer Bruce Bates (not present, but had been contacted) states that shorter term rentals are for a room only, or a one bedroom apartment for a single person or a couple, and that the owner of the home must be present.

As a group, we discussed how we can define the problem. We wondered who is responsible in case of a problem such as fire, accident or personal injury. In the case of the incident on McIntyre Place, renters were obviously intoxicated, urinating off the roof of the house and very noisy. The owner of the house was not present during the weekend in question and the house has been put back on the market.

City Attorney Ari Levine asked how do local noise and zoning ordinances apply. He also asked if Air BnB should even be a business model for Forest Home. Jennifer added that the issue isn't just about that particular incident in that house, but it is about the neighborhood as a whole.

Rod suggested sending a memo to Town Supervisor Bill Goodman and Code Enforcement Office Bruce Bates spelling out our concerns - especially about unrelated people renting, which implies a hotel or business in the neighborhood - and ask them to come and give us an update on zoning ordinances. Rod, a member of the Town Board, said that the Board is aware of this issue and they're working on it. Jennifer said that even if we change zoning, how will it be enforced? Bruce Bates has stated in the past that he cannot simply walk into a residence without good reason, ask for ID and try to prove that people there aren't related or have no reason to be there. Bruce Bates (not present, but writer believes Rod or Ari spoke with him and shared this information) said that within a week of the incident, the realtor for the owners contacted the owners and informed them of the 30 day rule. The owners said they had already

entered into a contract with the renters. As noted earlier, the house has been put back on the market.

Group decided to act by:

Drafting a memo to town representatives that will be presented in October. Cindy said we should circulate it around the FH neighborhood first, so that all residents who are interested have a chance to be informed and/or get involved.

Ruth (?) said that the essential question is, "What is a community?" She said that we need to consider if commercial exploitation is becoming part of our neighborhood. She said that in her many years of being a resident in FH, she has seen short-term rentals increase and she is concerned about the quality of life in the neighborhood.

She said this is a typical pattern in college towns and the problem is getting worse, with many transient residents and properties that aren't well cared for and look neglected.

Bruce Brittain added that in FH, we have something special - so how do we hold onto it?

Next topic was a possible garage sale, that would help FH residents and students alike, with 10% of the proceeds being donated to the Forest Home Chapel.

Lindsey (last name?) and Cindy brought up the idea of a garage sale. Lindsey said that she contacted the town clerk and found out that if we classify the event as a "fundraiser", it wouldn't be considered a commercial activity, and we could therefore use the park or even someone's driveway. Lindsey said that we would have to close the lower end of Forest Home Drive, pay \$50.00 to put up a barricade. She said that we would have to request to have the yard sale as a group - the FHIA - and that she already brought it up at the 6/7/16 meeting. Montana said she already knows how to submit the proper form to Public Works and get approval. She said all we need to do is choose a date. Lindsey said she'll follow up.

Next, Jennifer Laux talked about the NY Tax Credit for owning a historic home. Jennifer, Keiko Hayashi (Jennifer's neighbor on Crest Lane) and Bruce Brittain will find out if we can expand the boundaries (to qualify for an historic district) so that more homes can be included. Then more homes will qualify for the tax credit. Each house must submit separate paperwork and the work must enhance the historic preservation aspect of the house, especially features that can be seen from the road and create an architectural impression of historic preservation.

Montana wondered if more homes in FH being included in a historic district could be considered supporting the TOI Comprehensive Plan, and said she'll look into this.

Montana filled everyone in on what happened on work day, with the park clean-up, Plantations employee Krissy Boys presentation and ideas for sustaining and developing the park, and good

suggestions for maintenance. These include laying down black fabric to kill off weeds, mulching, and replacing rotting wooden fence posts with plastic ones that are more durable. Krissy added that she has a collection of native seeds that are ideal for re-seeding and restoring the park. She said she'd be glad to provide seeds that will thrive in the park ecosystem. She said Plantations wants to be supportive of park development and that she'll be a resource for us.

Montana said she'll contact the Town to find out when they'll replace the rotting wooden fence posts with plastic ones, and when they'll deliver the black fabric, so we can plan to lay it down.

Next, Treasurer Jennifer Laux spoke about dues. She said that dues are up 24% from last year at this time, when they were only 9% of FHIA membership, which includes approximately 100 houses in FH area.

Montana shared what she presented at a recent Town public meeting, where she asked about the possibility of sidewalks and the status of the s-curve retaining wall on John Foote's property. Montana added that sidewalks are especially important for families and children who like to ride bikes, and for safety for everyone.

Bruce Brittain contributed to the S-curve conversation by saying that resident John Foote wants to resolve the issue. Bruce said that the Town Highway Superintendent keeps postponing a decision and the project is stalled. Bruce said the S-curve is not yet a crisis, but it needs to be repaired. The Town has put the project on hold.

President Montana Peterson recapped the latest update on FH Drive/thurston Ave. and stated that that area is essential to our neighborhood. Residents use it to walk to work and for recreation.

Montana said she is still working on a letter of support and asked if she should continue with it. She said she'll draft it and send it to the Town Board before sending it to the Town of Ithaca.

She restated that the FH walkway needs stabilization, both on the path itself and the rails and guideposts. The rails and guideposts are decaying and barely useful. She said many people who use the walkway enter the private yards of homes at the end of the walkway, because there are no longer guideposts there (? accurate?). Connie said the Town is going to put out an RFP about what needs to be done. She said she'll email Town Supervisor Bill Goodman and ask about the status of this. She said she'll emphasize that the path is a commuter route for pedestrians. Everyone present agreed that it needs improvement. Update: Connie Engman contacted Town Supervisor Bill Goodman about this matter and he replied on 7/14/16. Bill stated in his email:

Hi Connie, thanks for the heads up. Jim Weber has been out on vacation so I'll have to double check with him when he gets back, but I believe we had planned to do major work on that walkway this year.

*However, I think that project might have got bumped to next year because we recently lost half of our Engineering Dept., which was going to do the design work for the walkway renovations (Joe Slater took Wayne Sincebaugh's job and Creig left for a job in with Broome County). I'll see if there's any stopgap measure we can take until we do the major work next year. Hope you are staying cool and enjoying the summer, which seems to be flying by too quickly from my perspective,
Bill*

Next, we talked about the Lending Library. Chris said maybe he can build the little structure to house the books. Dani Novak is unable to follow-through (he previously said he could do it) because of back problems.

Next, Montana said she talked with Elizabeth Sanders about doing something for Liese Bronfenbrenner (previous longtime FH resident) along the lines of Randy Little's stories about growing up in FH.

Finally, Montana said that Nick (no last name), a reporter from the Ithaca Journal, contacted her about writing an article about housing in FH. She said he told her that he wants to get residents' impressions first, such as how they feel about duplexes and rentals and what's going on. He (or Montana, not clear?) wondered if there should be a moratorium on certain types of housing in FH.

Montana said, as of this writing, that she hasn't yet acted on this.

The meeting ended at 9:30 PM.