

Forest Home Improvement Association
Annual Meeting
October 24, 2013, 7:00 pm
Forest Home Chapel

MINUTES

1. Welcome and introductions

Participants: The officers: David Gross, Pres., Bill Arms, VP, Claudia Fuchs, Secy., Montana Petersen, Treas. Others: Bruce Brittain, Linda Copman, Rebecca Dolch (FH Chapel), Barb Chambers, Cindy Bowman, Art Bloom, Elizabeth Sanders, Trevor Pinch, Nancy and Charlie Trautmann, Ari, Lindsay and Adrian Levine, Pete Loucks, Ellen Lane, Michael Bend.

David welcomed the group with full introductions and invited their involvement in FHIA by attending meetings and volunteering. The Board unanimously approved September's meeting minutes. David noted that all minutes are available online, including notes from smaller meetings and our summary of the Ithaca Comprehensive Plan as it relates to Forest Home.

2. Treasurer's Report

Montana reported that expenses were less than previous years and it was a great year for households contributing to the FHIA. Revenue from dues was \$980 and expenditures were \$434.70 (plus a \$100 deposit to the Town of Ithaca, which has since been refunded). The association has no debts and ends the year with comfortable balances in its General Accounts and Legal Defense Fund.

3. Social/Civic Activities Summary

Bill reported that the social activities yield the maximum pleasure for the minimum effort. He thanked Bruce for his fabulous spring historical walk. He also referenced the success of the Holiday Party, Spring Clean (organized by Claudia) and the Fall Party in the new Forest Home Park.

A discussion followed concerning FHIA's expanding role in the neighborhood and the possible need for insurance coverage. For example, the Town of Ithaca requires that if we have an event in the Park with over 25 participants, we need to have an event insurance policy that identifies the Town as secondary insured. David looked into the insurance costs at Wood Insurance and learned that for us to have one day coverage at the Park would cost approximately \$200. For this year, we concluded that insurance would not be needed, assuming that we would not likely have more than the 25 at any given period. In fact, the turnout was certainly close to that number.

So, what are our long-term needs? Ari felt we don't need liability protection for ourselves since all we could lose is our small amount of FHIA funds. However, it may be necessary to have this for future events (as required by the Town) in addition to our own insurance coverage as volunteers assess walkway needs, bridge repairs, conduct clean-ups, etc. David inquired at

Wood Agency and learned that for \$328 annually, FHIA could have a general insurance policy to protect us for all our activities. The next officer group will further assess this need.

4. Administrative Update

Claudia updated us on the directory, which will be distributed in print and not digitally. The street captains are re-canvassing their areas to double-check the directory that was assembled in Fall 2012. Crest Lane is still in need of a street captain. McEntyre is as well, and Cindy Bowman volunteered. The list-serv was updated & new neighbors added.

5. Project and Advocacy Items Update (David et al)

INTRO: The past year has been a busy one for your FHIA Officers. Our agenda at any given point is derived from longstanding work done by previous officers; ongoing discussions with the Town of Ithaca, Tompkins County and Cornell officials; and ideas generated from informal neighborhood discussion or at our bi-monthly open meetings. We are of course a neighborhood of divergent opinion about any given topic and all your officers can attempt to do is have an open process and advance a direction that best fits the prevailing thought.

TOWN/COUNTY

1) Forest Home Park (Montana);

Forest Home Park has been a major project this year. Cornell owns the park and leased it to the town last year. FHIA's Park Committee has been working hard to design future use of the space. Cornell Plantations staff (Irene Lekstutis and Krissy Boys) prepared a landscape plantings map with a list of native plants suited for the space. This is seen as a template and will be used as a guideline for plant groupings. Neighbors have been hard at work this year clearing brush/invasives, mulching around trees, and spreading topsoil in conjunction with the Town's Parks Department.

The Town has also provided two picnic tables. Caroline and Bill Arms donated a bench which will be installed in the next month. Cornell is designing a stone bench with a Hasbrouck Memorial plaque for installation on the park property. FHIA has signed up for the Town of Ithaca's Adopt-A-Park program to help maintain the Small Park. This entails a minimum of 2 cleanups annually. The Town was also awarded a \$5,000 Community Beautification Grant from the Cornell Cooperative Extension to use for new plantings.

FHIA will continue to coordinate with the Rich Schoch, Town's Park Manager, to control invasive plants, spread mulch, and choose planting areas. We would like to start with specimen trees and shrubs along the areas where invasives were removed by the stream and select areas along the road followed by one or two small perennial beds around the benches. We also met recently with Chris Wien, Acting Director of the Plantations, to assess opening up a few areas along the creek bank to improve views of Fall Creek.

2) Upstream bridge (David and Bruce);

Bruce updated us on upstream bridge revitalization project. The state has still withheld their approval (as of 10/24). The window of opportunity for working this year is closing fast. They may have to pick up the bridge and move it somewhere—still trying to figure out where. The other option (and the one that the USB working group was expecting) was to support the old bridge on cribbing while the abutments get replaced. They must have the preliminary work done by March because the DEC won't let them work in the creek in the summer. Bruce will write up the details for us to share on our list serv. One impact of concern to Forest Home Chapel is where to park cars during the Sunday services. Any local neighbors with available parking space are encouraged to contact Rebecca Dolch or Sally Grubb at the Chapel.

3) Walkways (David and Bruce);

Town officials worked with Bruce and Doug (Brittain) as well as FHIA officials this past spring to develop a proposal for walkway funding in Forest Home. The highest priority was to install a quality walkway between the bridges as well as up to Judd Falls Road. An application was made but Bruce has heard recently that no Federal highway grants are expected to come to Tompkins County at all for this type of funding. The good news is that at least the walkways have been identified as a high priority in the County. All is not lost and other funding will be sought.

4) FHD Speed Limits (David);

Some months ago, runners wrote a letter to the Town asking that the 45 MPH speed limit along FHD toward Varna be reduced. FHIA subsequently joined in the speed reduction request. The change has now occurred and new signage is up for 35 MPH. Nancy T. indicated that the residents along that road had pressed for this change in the past as well.

5) Large Vehicle Issue (David and Claudia);

FHIA has concluded that one of our biggest safety challenges in Forest Home is large trucks, TCAT buses, and charter buses trying to navigate through our narrow roads, steep turns, hills and one lane bridges.

Our multifaceted approach to address the large vehicle safety problem has a number of elements including:

Reduce the number of large trucks and charter buses going through Forest Home by strengthening existing regulations and postings. We have had since 1988 a 5-Ton Vehicle Weight Limit Ordinance (Town Code 250-8) on Forest Home Dr., Judd Falls Road, and McIntyre Place; permitting only local deliveries on those particular streets. Improve signage and strengthen enforcement have been sought. Positive consultation with County Sheriff, campus police, and Cayuga Heights police has occurred and the Town is aware of our request to improve signage.

Encourage Cornell to provide Forest Home-friendly routing information for routine delivery trucks, construction site vehicles, and for campus venue transports. In addition, we have asked them to limit their own campus vehicles going through Forest Home where practical.

Implement the long proposed “T” intersection at Pleasant Grove Road and Forest Home Drive near Hasbrouck Graduate Housing. Pleasant Grove Road would then flow directly into Cradit Farm Road on to Thurston Ave. Bridge, the primary gateway entrance to the core campus from the north. The topic has been discussed extensively with Cornell, Town, and County officials as well as ITCTC (Ithaca Tompkins County Transportation Council) including site visits. The hope is that this project will be in the 2015 ITCTC Plan.

Assessed if GPS routing information systems prevent charter buses and trucks from entering Forest Home in violation of the 5 Ton Weight Ordinance. Garman Corporation GPS staff has indicated that our ordinance is in the national GPS database used by trucks and large vehicles which should help us if the vehicles have proper GPS equipment.

Reduce the number of TCAT buses (currently estimated to be 80+ each weekday) going through Forest Home by rerouting some of them directly to the core campus using Cradit Farm Road. We have sought to have some of the four routes and 80+ TCAT buses a weekday, rerouted down Cradit Farm Road. Little progress has been made but many stakeholders are now aware of our concerns and the discussion continues. Elected officials, Herb Engman (Town) and Peter Stein (County) have both shown an interest in our concerns. We also seek to improve actual TCAT bus service for Forest Home which is currently nonexistent unless residents wave down buses at intersections. Bus drivers are not permitted to drop you off at stops without formal facility. We have sought to have route 41 as our official bus line.

CORNELL:

1) Botanical Garden Planning;

The Plantations is planning for the redesign of the Botanical Garden and a full exclosure fence is still under discussion. We should stay involved to make input on the design and location.

2) Deer management

FHIA Board Members acknowledge that deer are a serious problem (landscape damage, deer ticks, etc.) and that there are limited ways of controlling the deer population; none desirable to everybody.

The Cornell program (that we have supported for years) welcomes expanding the program to include a specific Forest Home component. Interested Forest Home property owners who have suitable locations could play an active role in the bow hunting component of the broader program. Formal permission is needed by those landowners in addition to adjacent residents within specified distances.

We are willing to put out the information and proactively introduce the Cornell deer management specialists to property owners who have ideal locations for the program. The discussion would proceed only in those instances where property owners wish to make their land available as active control sites.

3) Energy Sustainability Project:

Michael B. updated us about the discussion to launch a student project to assess the opportunity for a sustainability project (hydropower, etc.) along Fall Creek utilizing a portion of Forest Home Park. A proposal was written up and shared with specific class for the students to assess as an opportunity. As least for this semester, none of the students chose this project. We had hoped that the students would have given us a menu of ideas to explore. The professor is still excited about it and other people can be brought in as well in the future. Not all is lost (but it is for this semester).

6. Open Discussion To Explore 2013-14 Agenda:

Develop a better sense of who is now in the neighborhood to improve our communication, outreach and involvement.

Work out whether we should be insuring the association.

Finish up the directory.

See if we can improve the design of the Hasbrouck bench.

Work with the county/town to improve the locations (and perhaps design) of the 5-ton limit signs particularly the one that is halfway down Pleasant Grove Road hill instead of before Cradit Farm Rd.

Stay in touch with the Plantations regarding the redesign of the Botanical Gardens to make input on fencing, lighting, traffic management, etc.

Initiate a Lyme Disease Work Group to understand what we can do on a neighborhood level. We need to bring Cornell in on this as well including the Plantations and Gannett Clinic.

Explore a role for Forest Home in support of the countywide effort to bring down the price for photovoltaic panels (Varna seems to have succeeded in this effort).

7. Announcement of Nominated Officers for election (ALL ENTHUSIASTICALLY CONFIRMED):

Claudia Fuchs as President

Bill Arms as Vice President

Secretary TBD

Montana Petersen as Treasurer

8. Closing remarks by incoming President Claudia Fuchs

Claudia was a bit overwhelmed by the opportunity but promised enthusiasm and good humor in fulfilling her duties. She welcomed help from any and all.

9. Adjourn