

FHIA Meeting Minutes: October 22, 2018

Location: Forest Home Chapel Basement

Present: Michael Bend (outgoing President), Ari Lavine, Ellen Lane, Doug Brittain, Bill Arms, Lars Washburn, Jonathan Miller, Bruce Brittain, Ruth Mahr, Caroline Arms (new President), Heather Beasley (new officer), Nannette Blakely, Linda Copman, Rohit Verma, Amita Verma (new Vice-President), Bill Goodman (Town Supervisor), Jeff Holden, Valerie Hans

I. First agenda item: Election of new officers (Michael Bend presiding)

The following slate of officer's was elected unanimously:

- President – Caroline Arms
- Vice President – Amita Verma
- Secretary – Connie Stirling-Engman
- Treasurer – Heather Beasley

II. Report from Bill Goodman (Town Supervisor)

He identified 5 items to discuss:

1. Town budget
 - o Tax rate went down a little, but water and sewer fees went up
 - o \$125 for water benefit assessment and \$25 for sewer benefit assessment, up to \$150 and \$45 respectively
 - o For \$190K, total tax rate up about \$6
 - o Lot of serious maintenance needed to upgrade sewer treatment system, and doing study to determine what else needs to happen
 - o Growth in Varna and East Hill development so Thurston Ave. intersector may likely need big upgrade
2. Short term rentals
 - o Ad hoc committee for town to regulate due to complaints with short term rentals (Air BNB, etc.)
 - o Current restrictions for un-hosted rentals (owner not on premises) – limited to 29 days in calendar year – allow for special weekend rentals like Grassroots, homecoming, etc. – prevent people from buying houses just for short term rental purpose
 - o Not regulating currently hosted rentals
 - o Question: *What about long-term rentals?*
 - Anything over 30 days, need to get operating permit from the rental registry – in the process of implementing this – deadline for applying for these permits – this includes now single family homes and double family homes. Sabbatical rentals would qualify for this as well.

- Question: Does the town keep track of these and has the definition of family changed?
 - Town is checking on occupancy numbers. Concern about long term rental properties in FH. After January 1, if someone hasn't applied and town finds out, they will be fined. Town has informed Ithaca Board of Realtors and all other groups associated with real estate transactions. Follow-up comment that according to law you can have up to 3 unrelated people living in the same home and meet occupancy requirements.
- 3. FH walkway – path from Warren Rd down the hill to FH.
 - In the budget to develop plans for this. RFP is a bit delayed but soon. \$100K to spend on the work itself.
 - Question: *How does FHIA give feedback and participate in the process?*
 - Public input during public board meetings after the engineering firms have some plans to look at.
 - Question: *Will the RFP include communication with affected property owners?*
 - Will need to be in detailed discussions because the project will require coordination with property owners. Storm water management is part of what needs to be figured out. Goal is to make the path safer and easy to maintain.
 - Comment: We would like to have opportunity to talk about changes at the bottom of the walkway to make it safer. People have observed lots of unsafe activity, crossing the street, where to stop.
- 4. FH sidewalk – John Foote sidewalk at 228 Forest Home Drive
 - There is a committee that has been discussing for past year where to make sidewalks. Considering initiating FH sidewalk district and start to implement town's plan for comprehensive sidewalk plans. Districts can be created for different infrastructure improvements (such as the existing lighting districts). Bill said the goal is to get CU to pay more for town projects by getting them to pay user fees, so in the process of figuring out which CU parcels could be added to create FH sidewalk district such that CU would be paying about half of the costs.
 - Question: *Is this temporary or permanent?*
 - Goal is longer term with hopes of eventually getting sidewalks stretching between the two bridges. Sure we can charge for construction but not so sure about charging the non-profit for maintenance.
 - Question/comment: *CU students coming down the hill – huge impact of all the new beds on north campus. What is going to be done?*
 - Comment: The sidewalk district can take on debt.
 - BG replied that they are checking on financing. Reality check – if we spend \$100K on sidewalk just using parcels that are part of lighting district, typical home charged about \$720. Depending on how much we want to do, this could become an annual addition to taxes.

5. FH Drive –
 - Only real update is to mention that the Town can decide to stop maintaining the stretch of road between Judd Falls and McIntyre Place – decision is probably a year or two off. Town board probably is not going to spend over a million dollars to fix the road.
6. Other concerns raised: North Campus development
 - County is involved in negotiations on roads that are county roads.
 - Lots of concern about capacity and new traffic demands that are expected with new students. Traffic saturation problems.
 - BG suggests we email city planning board. The planning board has been hearing a lot about energy concerns and use of gas. He suggests we get into the planning board's consciousness for the city planning board to pay attention.
 - Concern that CU has not acted on Cradit Farm Drive plan to redirect traffic that way.
 - FHIA will find out when the next Ithaca planning Board meeting is. Gary Stewart from CU will come when we want. Tomorrow night, projected to be addressed at 7:30pm on the agenda for North Campus expansion. Interest in getting an association letter to send to the planning board.

III. Treasurer's Report (Caroline Arms)

- See Caroline's annual report (to be posted on website) for more details

IV. Update on new FHIA website (Bill Arms and Jeff Holden)

- The update can be found on the website. Summary of rationale for change:
 - Useable and easy to post to
 - Looks good on small devices
 - Updated and fresh new look
 - Fhia.org
 - Capabilities to set up community forums if we'd like to do something like that in the future
- Comment: In favor of listserv and some way to exchange information and make posts to one another

V. Speakers' series

- Chapel has started a speakers' series. For example, last talk was fascinating about the way contemporary art is dealing with environmental degradation.
- Next is Steve Shiffren from the law school – perhaps about the first amendment.
- Perhaps we cooperate with the chapel's series.

- Spread the word to see if anyone in the neighborhood would like to give a talk or participate.
- Alternative ideas discussed – social club and organizing monthly gatherings for range of purposes. Lindsey Lavine and Ruth Mahr are going to volunteer to take the lead organizing.

VI. Holiday party 2018

- Dec. 15 holiday party, hosted by Caroline & Bill Arms

VII. Holiday service project

- Suggested as a way to contribute back to the community.
- Ideas floated as possibilities included:
 - Cornell has elves project.
 - Loaves and fishes serving and prepping food.
 - Could partner with chapel and activities they organize.
- Amita will email people to get ideas.

Many thanks to our wonderful community and organization...and to Michael Bend for serving as President so aptly!