

Forest Home Improvement Association

Annual Meeting

October 30, 2024, Minutes

In attendance: Jon Miller, Herb Engman, Connie Stirling-Engman, Tim Agnew, Jeff Holden, Michael Bend, Valerie P. Hans, Ari Lavine, Charlie Trautmann, Bruce Brittain, Doug Brittain, David Kuckuk, Ruth Mahr, Tom Campanella, Sally Grubb, Bill and Caroline Arms

At 7:05 pm, President Charlie Trautmann called the meeting to order. Neighbors went around the circle and introduced themselves.

Next, at 7:20 pm, Sally Grubb gave a presentation about the election. Sally is the President of the League of Women Voters of Tompkins County. She mentioned the New York State Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which is a proposed amendment to the New York State Constitution. Sally described the amendment and the protections that it provides and that it will be voted on in the November election. Sally concluded at 7:30 pm.

At 7:30 pm, Charlie gave his President's Report (see https://www.fhia.org/wp-content/uploads/Minutes/FHIA_2023-24_PresidentAnnualReport_2024-10-30.pdf). Bruce Brittain brought up the matter of golf course development and the fact that it is no longer for sale. The potential sale for subdivision development was an issue recently, but isn't at this time.

At 7:35 pm, Treasurer Valerie Hans gave the Treasurer's Report (see https://www.fhia.org/wp-content/uploads/Minutes/FHIA_2023-2024_TreasurerAnnualReport_2024-10-30.pdf). Valerie emphasized the need for more, easier ways to pay dues. She said that she has applied for a Venmo account, which should be active soon. Those present started a discussion about how it is difficult to know when dues have to be paid. People said they couldn't remember if it was time to pay again. Discussion included making dues voluntary, sending out an e-mail reminder, and raising the suggested household amount. Valerie stated that expenditures exceeded the dues revenue the past two years, so maybe we do need to increase dues. A motion was made to raise dues to \$45.00 and Charlie took a vote. Raising the dues as approved.

Next, Valerie brought up the CD investment we have, which is a FH legal defense fund, and that it is reaching maturity. Valerie wondered about other ways to invest the money that might yield a better result. David Kuckuk suggested a high yield savings account. Herb Engman mentioned that CFCU is currently offering 6-month CDs at 6%.

At 7:45 pm, Herb Engman (as immediate past president), presented the state of officers for 2024-25. There were no additional nominations from the floor. Herb took a vote of those present and the slate was approved:

President – Charlie Trautmann
Vice-President – Ari Lavine
Treasurer – Valerie Hans
Secretary – Connie Stirling-Engman

At 7:50 pm, Rod Howe, Supervisor of the Town of Ithaca, opened discussion about issues affecting FH and how the Town of Ithaca is working on them. First, he said that a street light next to the Arms property will be relocated across the street. He said staff are just waiting for the relocation crew to become available and it will be moved soon. Rod said that in 2025 taxes will increase. A 25' length limit sign at the intersection of Warren Rd. and FHD was installed. The average number of pedestrians per day using the FH Walkway is 34. Additional public works updates – pump station finished, landscaping is complete and everyone remarked on how attractive it looks. Historic Preservation – future ordinance and MOU of understanding with City of Ithaca is delayed for time being – Rod said City has too much going on but this matter will be picked up later. On this topic, Bill Arms emphasized that residents should know the pros and cons of legislation and whether it regulates or protects residents' homes. David Kuckuk mentioned a tax break for home improvement through another historic program, 20% of the cost of painting, for example. Safe Streets for All – Rod says he wants to look at a planning grant first. Many people strongly mentioned the need for sidewalks or quality footpaths in FH, especially along Warren Rd. Rod repeated that he wants to look at a comprehensive planning grant first that would involve a lot more road work in addition to sidewalks. People again mentioned safety issues about walking in FH.

Tom Campanella talked about the grant from the Pomeroy Foundation that allowed a memorial to Pearl Buck, a Nobel Prize winner, to be placed next to the FH Chapel. Tom said the post is up and maybe we should mount the historical sign around the time of the holiday party.

Ruth Mahr contributed to the conversation about Safe Streets for All, by asking if we might create a log to record traffic violations. Caroline said violations are so common and frequent that it would be impossible to keep track.

At 8:10 pm, Rod closed his session and left.

At 8:10 pm, Charlie updated everyone about the results of the Community Listening Process. He said he received 76 responses to the survey. Charlie added that a few projects will be selected and then we'll start to look for funding. He said the planning effort is to facilitate the process of selecting some of these ideas and making them happen.

Valerie Hans thanked Charlie and Herb for their efforts at forming groups/generating ideas for projects. Charlie said that all the ideas generated – not going to be just the group of five – everyone's input will be needed. Charlie said Rod's team – ToI department heads – wants a group of FHomers to meet with them regularly to discuss the projects, such as walkways.– Rod sees this as very comprehensive and will build on 2007 FH Traffic Calming Plan. Charlie added that Rod said he'll meet with us in early 2025. Charlie said Rod is in favor of a temporary overlay on the road – several people opposed this approach, especially Bruce and Doug Brittain, saying that that was simply a kick the can down the road approach.

At 8:40 pm, Charlie took a vote concerning the FHIA annual contribution to the FH Chapel and whether we should increase the amount. Everyone agreed that we are fortunate to be able to use the chapel meeting room and want to show our appreciation and support for the Chapel. But those present voted to keep our contribution the same for now, at \$300.00 annually, and re-visit the possibility of an increase next year.

Next, Bruce Brittain brought up the matter of the Cradit Farm Rd. traffic circle plan falling through and said it appears that the Town Board overrode the Planning Board. Bruce suggested that Rod defers to what staff wants and what Cornell wants and didn't demonstrate strong leadership on this matter, since a traffic circle would have greatly reduced the amount of traffic passing through FH. Bruce said this is the first time this has happened in town history. Many people agreed with Bruce's opinion. Tom Campanella added that the traffic circle would have been transformative and said he still doesn't understand why the project was killed. Herb Engman said that if different representation is needed at the Town, we need to get going soon to bring about a change. Bill Arms suggested that we stop dwelling on history and said Cradit Farm, too, is very congested and has problems. Herb Engman again stated that Cornell traffic and pedestrians – many of them students – pass through FH regularly, yet there is never any money for improvement and safety while Cornell has beautiful sidewalks, a bike lane and new pavement on Cradit Farm. Doug Brittain said that FH used to have a sidewalk committee. Ari said you can't tax Cornell but you can sidewalk district improvement them – implying that a sidewalk improvement district can force a contribution.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm

Submitted by Connie Stirling-Engman