

Forest Home Improvement Association Officer's Meeting
June 15, 2011, 7:30 pm
Forest Home Chapel

Minutes

Officers in attendance: Jon Miller (president), Max Evjen (vice president), Beth Kelly (secretary), and Michael Bend (immediate past president). Community members in attendance: Bruce Brittain, Doug Brittain.

1. Approve Minutes from February & April Meeting

February minutes were approved by voice vote. April minutes were not ready for review by the time of the meeting. It was agreed that April minutes would be shared, edited as necessary and approved in the next few days, and that all previous minutes would be sent to webmaster Wendy Petti for posting in the next week.

[Note from 6/19: April minutes have now been approved via email and posted on the website; minutes from December and February have also been posted.]

2. Review Traffic Speed & Volume Count Results

Jon Miller shared 16 graphs that Town engineer Jim Weber had sent a few days earlier comparing traffic speed and volume counts made in April and May 2011 to similar counts taken in 2005. The graphs appear to show a decline in average speeds of 5 to 10 mph throughout the neighborhood, as well as much greater compliance with speed limits. For instance, in 2005 approximately 10 percent of vehicles were found to be under the speed limit on Judd Falls Road and Warren Road, while the 2011 count showed roughly 90 percent under the limit. On the 300 block of Forest Home Drive, the 2011 data were less dramatic, with about two-thirds of the vehicles traveling above the 25 mph speed limit (about 75 percent of vehicles were clocked at 30 mph or under, however). Virtually no vehicles were measured at speeds above 40 mph in 2011, compared to 5 to 10 percent of all vehicles in 2005.

Jon noted that the graphs contain no hard numbers, and that there are several issues to clarify with the Town about the data, including inconsistencies in the volume counts and concern about the placement of speed counters. (Measurements taken very close to speed tables will likely be lower than those between speed tables.) The graphs are not consistently presented (e.g., in some graphs vehicles traveling 1 to 30 mph are lumped together in one bar, while in other graphs the bars are presented in 5 mph increments) and on at least two days it appears that only a half a day of data were collected. Jon reported that he has asked Jim Weber for the raw data from 2005 and 2011 but Jim has not responded.

Bruce Brittain noted that Jim will be out of town for the next two weeks, and that Town planner Sue Ritter suggested Jon be in contact with Creig Hebdon, assistant engineer, to request the

data. Bruce presented graphs of evening peak hour traffic counts (4:30-5:30) that he and Doug Brittain had taken in 1974, 1988, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009 and 2011, which showed a small decline in volume since the speed tables were erected. (The Town's figures show a slight increase.)

[Note from 6/19: The graphs sent by the Town have been posted on the Traffic Calming page of fhia.org.]

3. Finalize Traffic Calming Phase I Follow-Up Survey

Background: It was agreed at the annual meeting in October 2010 that a survey would be sent out to residents this spring, after the speed tables and entrance features had been in use for a few months. The officers had been waiting for the results of the April/May traffic counts before distributing the surveys. An email had been sent to the community explaining this.

Discussion: Although the speed and volume data are not perfect, the officers agreed that the survey should be distributed by the FHIA street captains as soon as possible. It would be accompanied by a cover letter (to be composed by Jon and approved by the group by email) providing some background on Traffic Calming Phase I, briefly summarizing the Town's speed and volume comparisons, and providing a url for the graphs. Wording of both the letter and the survey was discussed in some detail. It was agreed that there will be one question regarding TCAT service through FH in addition to the questions about the new traffic calming features.

It was agreed that an e-mail will be sent out announcing the upcoming survey and distribution by the street captains.

4. Reports & Updates

Jon reported that he has asked the Town to elevate two storm grates on the 200 block of FH Drive by several inches to make the shoulder safer for pedestrians. Jim Weber responded by saying he could elevate one grate but not the other. (He said a pipe feeding one of the drains would interfere with an elevated grate.) Jon sent an email contesting this but has not heard back.

Jon reported that Abe Stroock of McIntyre Place, who has headed the Alternative Transportation Working Group, has been trying to contact residents on the 200 block to ask permission to do minor work along the lawn/shoulder interface. Abe still has to secure permission from two more property owners. The hope is that the community can form work parties to widen and level the walking surface where it is narrow and uneven. This may require some gravel, and in one place a railroad tie or other retaining device.

Jon reported that on May 17, Jon, Bruce, Doug and Teresa Craighead (of Fairway Drive) attended a Town of Ithaca Public Works Committee meeting at which the Forest Home

Walkway was discussed. The Walkway was improved over the winter with the repair of several wooden posts and a steel handrail. The FHIA has asked for additional improvements, including the extension of a rope rail at the top end of the steep bottom section. The Town engineer is reluctant to move forward with repairs on the Walkway, saying it is costly, dangerous for his workers, and potentially redundant with a planned future walkway along Warren Road. The FHIA contingent pressed the committee to authorize repairs and maintenance, saying the Walkway is of real importance to the community and to pedestrian commuters, and that the necessary safety improvements need not be expensive. Members of the Public Works Committee had difficulty visualizing the issues and decided to visit the site. No report has been made.

Jon reported that The Byway residents have gotten estimates of \$15,000.00 - \$20,000.00 for paving the first 125 feet of their road, which is badly degraded. There are still problems with cars parking along the street and blocking the road even after a "No Parking / Fire Lane" sign and two "Private Road / No Thru Traffic" signs were put up by residents.

Jon reported that the Town has agreed to take ownership of the grassy area near the downstream bridge from Cornell Plantations. The two parties are working out the details of the transfer. It is not clear how the Town plans to maintain the park. It was noted that the Plantations has stopped mowing around the wooden fence because a neighbor once complained that they were cutting wildflowers. The officers agreed to talk to Herb Engman about whether the Town plans to mow this area.

Recent FHIA events were briefly discussed. In general, attendance has been disappointing. The bird talk given by Rhiannon Crain in March and the public speaking workshop presented by Max Evjen and Megan Halpern (Redshift Productions) on June 11th were both very well received, but each had fewer than 10 participants. The neighborhood clean-up had fewer people this year than in the past. The history walk given by Bruce Brittain attracted about 15 people this year (compared to nearly 30 people last year); the music event held in May the past two years and organized by Beth Kelly has attracted around 30 people each year, including performers.

Officers discussed how to bring the numbers up for both one-time events and annual events. Announcements are always sent via e-mail at least a week prior to the event with reminders a few days ahead as well. If anyone has suggestions on future events, or on how to get more people involved, please contact FHIA at foresthomenews@gmail.com.

Michael Bend was going to give a talk on reading education, but will hold off with the summer months ahead.

It was noted that Ben Miller of The Byway will give a piano recital at the Forest Home Chapel on Saturday, June 25th at 3:00. Ben will be going off in the fall to McGill University, where he will be majoring in music (jazz piano performance).

6. Proposed FHIA Archivist

Bruce Brittain noted that there are many documents, photos and electronic files in the homes and computers of community members (particularly past and present FHIA officers) and that these are in need of being organized and stored in a unified location. Bruce has possession of many historical materials, including irreplaceable photographs, which he keeps at his home. He suggested that the FHIA consider the Chapel's offer to use a file cabinet in their office. It was noted that more recent documents (meeting minutes, agendas, letters, etc.) are stored on Google Docs. Discussion followed about the use of online storage for scanned and electronic materials, either as back-up or primary storage. It was agreed that collecting, vetting, organizing and storing documents is a major undertaking, and that it deserves further discussion.

7. Adjournment (9:40 pm)