

FOREST HOME IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION – OPEN OFFICERS MEETING

Meeting Minutes: September 18, 2013

Forest Home Chapel dining room

In attendance:

Current officers: David Gross, President; Bill Arms, Vice President; Claudia Fuchs, Secretary; Montana Petersen, Treasurer

Forest Home residents: Bruce Brittain, Jonathan Lunine, Ed and Marianne Oyer, Michael Bend, Kylikki Inman, Herb Engman

Visiting dignitaries: John Gutenberger, community relations at Cornell; Dave Cutter, landscape architect in the planning office, Cornell

Agenda:

1. Approved May and July minutes

2. FHIA Budget and Finances:

*in the fiscal year to date, \$980 in dues have come in

*expenses amount to approximately \$520 not including the cost of the fall party

*our balance is around \$2200

*our reserve is around \$2000

3. Charles Hasbrouck Memorial planning at Forest Home Park

*Dave Cutter, landscape architect in the planning office at Cornell, said he has been working on “gorge destinations” in the Fall Creek Gorge with the aim of providing safe places from which people can enjoy the beauty of the gorge.

*He has worked on four sites so far: two on the upper rim, and two down at the base.

*He has been promoting the continuity of the gorge through the design and choice of materials in these sites.

*The Forest Home Park should fit into this atmosphere of continuity as it is also a safe place to enjoy the natural beauty and cultural history of the gorge.

*Dave showed a proposed design for the Hasbrouck bench (a bench commemorating Hasbrouck’s large gift to Cornell of land to put to use for women students). It will feature the plaque that was on the original bench (on the slope near the river across the street from Bill Arms’ house). His design featured a large stone slab with the plaque attached to the side—monolithic and very simple.

*Bruce pointed out that the upstream bridge will be dismantled and maybe Dave could find a large stone to use for the bench. He should get in touch with John Lampman, Project Manager, if interested.

*Caroline and Bill Arms will also donate a bench. He suggested that we decide on the position of the Hasbrouck bench sooner, rather than later, and we can then place other elements once we know where the larger bench will be.

4. Other park considerations

*The town's lease does not include the bank of the creek, which still belongs to the Plantations. FHIA will have a conversation with the Plantations to see if they can help us with further clean up there.

*It would be nice to have an interpretive panel. Herb pointed out that they do not come cheaply but they could help.

*The alternative energy committee asked a couple of Cornell engineering professors to organize some student design projects to make suggestions about some demonstration projects that could be put in the park. One professor suggested it might be a possible project for his students. Michael therefore requests that we don't make any huge positioning decisions until we hear from the professors.

*A swing set or slide would have to be cleared through the Town board.

Next step: more volunteer work on pulling out garlic mustard and uprooting the thinner honeysuckle that has now been made accessible because of the Town's huge effort in pulling out large swathes of honeysuckle. Volunteer work on spreading mulch over soil left bare from our uprooting efforts (the Town will give us the mulch). Beginning of some planting probably not until the spring.

5. Cornell's Deer Program

Bernd Blossey, Professor of Natural Resources, and the deer program coordinator, and Jay Boulanger, Extension Associate, Natural Resources, deer program manager, explained that if you are serious about conservation, you have to deal with the deer. They are a huge threat by virtue of their numbers.

Ecological threat:

*Cornell campus has approximately 100 deer on 1100 acres. There should only be five. In the Adirondacks, there are 5-8 deer per square mile, but even at such low concentration, they keep the forests from regenerating (because deer eat everything new and growing). A tremendous ecologically devastating force, in other words.

*Lyme disease too is a large worry. Incidences of it in Ithaca are up 1000 fold since 2007. Studies (which are controversial) show that incidences of Lyme disease decline when the deer population declines.

What Cornell has done?

*The university originally dedicated \$100,000/year for five years for sterilization, and now has cut the budget to \$30,000 a year. For sterilizations to work, you need to sterilize at least six females a year in a territory the size of the Cornell campus.

*They are therefore working on expanding the deer hunting program.

How the deer hunting program works elsewhere:

*In the Village of Lansing, they have actively hunted deer with bow and crossbow by enlisting homeowners to allow hunts on their land.

*They have harvested 65 deer for each of the last three years and seemed to have made a dent in the population to the point that they are seeing growth of new plants they hadn't seen in a long time

How such a program could work in Forest Home?

*They would first identify any properties that offer the required 500 ft minimum of discharge distance.

*For others, they would need permission of the neighbors for anyone who doesn't have enough discharge distance.

*They would want information about where the deer go so that they could place stands efficiently.

Deer forum:

*The program's success isn't easily measured. They need an area-wide approach to have more success, rather than each community operating independently.

* Cornell's deer program is inviting municipalities in Tompkins County to come up with a collective desire to do deer management together so that the results will be more measurable.

FHIA's response:

*We are willing to use our annual meeting as a way to tell FH residents about the program and inform them of the opportunity to possibly participate directly in the program (depending of course on their property location, neighbor support, etc.). We don't anticipate that there will ever be consensus in the community about deer management. We will make it available but it will be up to the individual homeowners to assess if they think they would like to make their land available as an active control location.

5. Other brief updates

*Should we consider insurance that costs \$380 a year? The question came up when it seemed we needed insurance for our fall party in the park.

*The repair to the upstream bridge: there had been a recent very well-attended meeting organized by the County. Nothing happening right this minute. Bruce will continue to monitor.

*Walkway funding: the application has been made but we won't hear anything until January or February. If successful, the town will hire a designer, and Forest Home will be involved in the detailed planning.

*2015 ITCTC regional plan: No movement yet. We are still hoping that Cornell, the County, and the Town will propose funding the redesign of the Cradit Farm Road/Pleasant Grove Road turn off, which will lessen the traffic to Forest Home. Bruce feels that the upstream bridge closing will already encourage traffic to use Cradit Farm Road.

*We may be seeing some decrease in large vehicle traffic through our neighborhood as a result of our outreach to Cornell, the Town, and the County.

6. Administrative topics

*Street captains are in the process of gathering updates to the directory. When they are done, it will be distributed as a print document.

*The nominating committee for new officers has been activated.

7. Adjourn, after some songs of praise to our energetic, determined president, graced with vision for both detail and the big picture.