

Forest Home Improvement Association

Annual Meeting

Forest Home Chapel

Oct. 22, 2025

Present: Connie Stirling-Engman, Herb Engman, Charlie Trautman, Nancy Trautman, Rod Howe (virtual), Valerie Hans, Michael Bend, Ari Lavine, Caroline Arms, Bill Arms, Doug Brittain, Bruce Brittain, Ruth Mahr, Wayne Stokes, Kristi Stokes, John Foote, Jeff Holden, Linda Barrington, Pete Loucks

Meeting started at 7:10 PM.

For agenda see (https://www.fhia.org/wp-content/uploads/Minutes/FHIA_2025_Annual_Meeting_Agenda_2025-10-22.pdf)

Charlie Trautman gave the President's Report (see https://www.fhia.org/wp-content/uploads/Minutes/FHIA_2024-25_PresidentAnnualReport_2025-10-22.pdf). He said there was a lot of activity this year. Charlie credited Herb Engman with organizing the spring road team and cleanup, Connie Stirling-Engman for maintaining the flower boxes, Ari Lavine and his family for hosting the holiday party, and remarked that the annual picnic was a success. Charlie also thanked Cindy Bowman for her expertise with food ordering, delivery and table setup.

Charlie mentioned that next up will be infrastructure planning and noted that we now have two newly painted crosswalks.

There are places on the downstream bridge that will need attention soon. These are on historic iron sections and are not a safety issue.

Next, Caroline Arms brought our attention to the redistricting of our electoral districts that caused Forest Home to be split. Caroline spoke about the new district lines.

The new Planning Committee was introduced, which includes Ari Lavine, Ruth Mahr, Robin Blakeley-Armitage and Jennifer Loucks.

Next, Valerie Hans talked about the Treasurer's report (see https://www.fhia.org/wp-content/uploads/Minutes/FHIA_2024-2025_TreasurerAnnualReport_2025-10-22.pdf) and handed out copies. Valerie said that using Venmo has greatly facilitated dues collection. She added that people are eager to use Venmo and some people even paid for two years, since they thought they might have missed

paying a previous year. Valerie said there has been a substantial increase in the balance in our account. Valerie said there is a CD available that offers a higher interest rate.

We discussed the FHIA annual contribution to FH Chapel and that we are one year behind. Valerie said she'll send two years' contribution, which is \$300.00 x 2.

There was discussion about going back to Alternatives. Ari suggested a money market account at Alternatives.

Charlie mentioned that we're looking for a Treasurer and said to see him if anyone is interested.

As previous President, Herb presented the slate of officers. It is his job to deliver a slate of officers up for election. The slate is: VP Jennifer Loucks, Secretary Connie Stirling-Engman, Treasurer Valerie Hans (until replacement found), President Charlie Trautmann.

Ari complimented Jennifer Loucks on her work on the infrastructure committee.

Herb moved that we convene a special meeting of officers if a candidate for Treasurer is found. The motion was seconded and approved.

Ithaca Town Supervisor Rod Howe invited people to look at the upcoming budget on the Town of Ithaca website (see copy of summary at https://www.fhia.org/wp-content/uploads/Minutes/TownOfIthacaBudget2026Summary_small.pdf). He talked about what drives the budget and said much of it is salaries.

Bill Arms asked if the town is being affected by cuts to Cornell from the federal government. Rod said they're waiting to see and may begin to feel it in small roundabout ways now. Rod said signage is improved and praised his staff.

Caroline mentioned a small yellow sign about a public hearing for a sign for Cornell. Caroline said a better sign might help redirect traffic at the bottom of the Pleasant Grove hill.

Herb asked about the status of Freese Rd. bridge. Rod said that CJ Randall and Public Works say it could be two years away and it is frustrating.

Rod Howe talked about Historic Preservation and said there will be a vote in Nov. at a public hearing about a joint IOPC. Rod remarked that plenty of education and outreach is necessary before a public hearing. He said he wants to make sure folks have a look at the ordinance.

Wayne Stokes asked who to send photos to of 18 wheelers headed into Forest Home. Caroline added that she still sees about one a month. Bill said there is now a surveillance camera on the bridge to record violations of the **No Trucks** signage. Many neighbors agreed that we need more discussion about what type of GPS truckers actually use.

Charlie raised the issue of what the Infrastructure Task Force is working on, and said it is planning. The plan started last fall with a survey, comment box via email produced a set of priorities approved by officers.

Charlie explained where we are and where we're going. He added that the Town received \$50,000 from the Park Foundation, with some county and Cornell participation, in a collaborative effort. Charlie said there will be a public document that will be available on the internet. Town of Ithaca will do a study –to address streets, lighting, paths, bicycling paths, sewer issues – a comprehensive plan to move forward. It will be done by a consultant group. We're not going to "re-do" the 2007 Comprehensive Plan – we're going to update it and build on it. The first opportunity will be on Monday – a proposal will go out on Mon. Oct. 28 – our FHIA Infrastructure group will get a copy. This will be a first step, the "qualifications" step.

Rod hopes for eight firms to submit bids.

Charlie believes we'll have more clout with the Town if we consolidate our comments as a unified voice. Once the RFQ comments go in, we'll have a chance to participate in the selection of a consultant.

Herb said that it is very important for any consultant to make site visits to Forest Home. The specialists must come and look at unique features of Forest Home. Herb added that federal highway standards won't work here because of the topography.

Bruce Brittain said we already have a good plan and we're skating on thin ice, the community must have a look at the RFQ before it is put out for bidding. Ari Lavine agreed. Ari also said the RFQ cites as a foundational document the 2007 study.

Charlie – the intention of the Infrastructure Task Force was to send RFQ out to the community first, and it didn't happen because of various reasons. We could have lost two months because of scheduling, but everyone will have a chance to comment. This is not the final scope of work. Doug Brittain said he is wary of giving Cornell too much influence over the plan. Ari said we need active transportation planning.

Nancy Trautman raised the question of how long will we have to wait to see results? What is the timeline?

Rod said planning done in 2027, then we'll have to go after money for implementation. He added that this is a multi-year project. The scope is Forest Home. Doug said when roads get striped can we ask for a width of 9 – 10 feet instead of 10 – 11 feet? Rod said he'll talk to Joe Slater.

Herb moved that we write a check to Forest Home Chapel and \$300.00 was approved. John Foote asked Charlie when the RFQ is released, will we receive a copy for comments? Rod said strong community involvement comes later when firms are chosen.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.