

Special FHIA Meeting on Forest Home Traffic Calming Plan Update.

Forest Home Chapel

Dec. 18, 2025, 5:45 pm

Present: Connie Stirling-Engman, Herb Engman, Charlie Trautmann, Nancy Trautmann, Sally Grubb, Kris Merschrod, Mike Blakely-Armitage, Jon Miller, Jonathan Latham, Valerie Hans, Teresa Craighead, Ellen Lane, Bill Arms, Caroline Arms, Barb Chambers, Nancy Fuchs, Wayne Stokes, Kristi Stokes, Ruth Mahr, Jennifer Loucks, Shami Chatterjee, Kyllikki Inman, Mary Howard, J. Loehr, Cindy Bowman, John Bowman, Andy Galloway, Tom Campanella, Michael Bend, Lars Washburn, Laure Stroock, Julie Goddard, Rod Howe, Dara Anissi, Nanette Blakely, Bruce Brittain, Doug Brittain, David Kuckuk, Jenni Anissi Kivisild, C.J. Randall

On Zoom: Robin Blakeley-Armitage, Pete Loucks, Linda Barrington, Matt Petti

AGENDA

5:45 pm Dinner served, with slide show of images from Forest Home

6:30 pm Introductions

6:40 pm Background to the current planning project (C Trautmann and J Loucks)

7:00 pm Presentation by CJ Randall, Town of Ithaca Director of Planning

7:20 pm Questions & answers, CJ Randall

8:30 pm Adjournment

The meeting started at 6:35PM with a **review of the background and purpose of the Forest Home Traffic Calming Plan Update.** (Slides available at <https://www.fhia.org/wp-content/uploads/Streets/SteeringComm2025-12-18.pdf>)

FHIA President Charlie Trautmann recapped why we are all here: **To improve quality of life in Forest Home by 1) reducing the impacts of traffic, 2) improving safety for vulnerable road users, and 3) enhancing the beauty of our streetscape.** He asked that we focus on process, not solutions.

Charlie defined **vulnerable road users** as people walking, bicycling, and using mobility aids and strollers.

At 6:45 pm FHIA VP Jennifer Loucks continued the review presentation, including the following key points:

- Our three goals emerged from FH's participatory community-wide planning study (2024). The study concluded that the FHIA would need to work in **partnership** with key stakeholders to achieve its goals.
- The Town of Ithaca has convened a **Steering Committee** with five FHIA representatives to develop an up-to-date plan to address FH's goals. The Steering Committee meets regularly, and the Town has secured funding to hire a consulting firm for an initial conceptual phase. The FHIA Board and a FH Advisory Group are also involved in this phase.
- Several recommendations from the 2007 FH Traffic Calming Plan have already been implemented, but **the Town will not be able to secure new funding for a 19-year-old plan**. Conditions, costs, and technology have changed since 2007, pointing to the need for a fresh look.
- A **consultant** will bring the community engagement expertise, technical skills, time, and other resources to the initial conceptual phase that FH and the Town cannot provide.

6:55 pm. Charlie presented the **timeline of the initial conceptual phase** of the FH Traffic Calming Plan Update: from hiring a consultant, developing and launching a community engagement plan, inventorying the assets in the community and identifying issues, and reviewing existing data and collecting new data in 2026, to developing concepts and identifying and reviewing recommendations and drafting a final report in 2027. Charlie reminded us that **we are only in the first phase of a longer-term project. Subsequent phases would include an engineering and design phase, fundraising, and eventually construction.**

7:00 pm. Charlie introduced **C.J. Randall, Town of Ithaca Director of Planning**. C.J. presented her philosophy about transportation. (See <https://www.fhia.org/wp-content/uploads/Streets/CJ-FHIA.pdf>) She said she became aware of how transportation impacts communities from seeing people displaced by the construction of new expressways. But she noted that currently, **the transportation planning paradigm is shifting away from 'moving lots of thru-traffic quickly'**, and that funding opportunities are starting to follow. She said **good plans that articulate a vision and do it well "tee us up" for funding**.

C.J.'s planning heroes have been champions of shared space, and she quoted the planner Janette Sadik-Khan: *"Decisions to make changes in transportation are not a zero-sum game between moving traffic and creating public space."*

She stressed that **in the initial conceptual phase of the FH Traffic Calming Plan Update we're just trying to understand the problem**. Later we'd fit the problem analysis together with the vision of the FH community and the Town writ large, and turn it into a plan for implementation that can get funded.

She emphasized the importance of "**meaningful public involvement**" in this process, which is a technical concept in the transportation planning field and described in the DOT manual:

<https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022->

<https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022-10/Promising%20Practices%20for%20Meaningful%20Public%20Involvement%20in%20Transportation%20Decision%20making.pdf>

. She also elaborated on **active transportation** – i.e., ways to move other than motor vehicles, which

includes pedestrians, bikes, scooters and other means of non-motorized moving—and said she'd be looking for consulting firms with expertise in both these domains.

7:15PM – C.J. finished her presentation and began the **Q & A session**. See <https://www.fhia.org/streets-meetings/> for links to the video/audio of the session. Main points from the Q & A are summarized below.

Defining the “problem” is where we’re at

- In response to multiple concerns expressed about the solutions that might eventually be implemented to address FH's traffic, safety, and beautification priorities, C.J. reminded the meeting that in this initial conceptual phase, the focus is on developing a detailed understanding of FH's traffic and safety challenges. A consultant(s) with community engagement, transportation planning, and landscape architecture expertise will be able to help us do this. C.J. recognized that the community had a lot of questions about the scale and scope of different potential solutions, and the trade-offs, but that until we define the problem, it's hard to address these concerns.

Defining and prioritizing community engagement

- C.J. confirmed that community engagement is essential to the project, and that the consultant(s) hired to work on the initial conceptual phase would be expected to meet and walk with residents in FH, and listen to residents, using various tools (in-person, online, interactive maps, going out with clipboards and surveying all road users, etc.) to collect information and gather community input.
- Once potential solutions to FH's challenges have been identified, there's an expectation in the community that the consultant would meet with the FHIA to hear members' opinions about which solutions should be implemented.
- C.J. noted that the public engagement plan developed by the consultant in the initial phase would reflect the extent of public engagement that the FH community and Town both think is important.

Balancing community needs with commuter needs

- FHIA members raised concerns about the project prioritizing commuter traffic over community needs, primarily because of the language used in the Town's Request for Qualifications from consultants.
- C.J. emphasized that the project would focus on vulnerable road users (pedestrians, bicyclists, people using mobility aids, strollers), and that these vulnerable road users' needs would be prioritized over motorists' needs in planning. This also reflects a paradigm shift in favor of active transportation (non-motorized transportation) in the transportation planning field.

Active transportation and traffic calming

- C.J. said the project would aim to implement active transportation and traffic calming in tandem, viewing them as complementary rather than opposing strategies.

Creating “shared space” for road users on narrow streets with high-volume traffic

- C.J. acknowledged this challenge in FH and said the consultant(s) hired for the initial conceptual phase would have specific expertise in identifying potential solutions for this kind of environment.

Exploring bold solutions

- There are obvious challenges to getting communities to support bold strategies for addressing traffic and safety concerns, but this is a good time to consider them because of new opportunities and sources of funding available.

Streetscape and neighborhood beautification in the project

- C.J. confirmed that the Town is seeking consultants with demonstrated landscape architecture expertise to work on the initial conceptual phase.

Collaboration with neighboring towns

- C.J. is in touch with the Town of Dryden Planner and acknowledged that FH traffic is affected by what happens outside the community.

Clarifying project goals in writing

- There's a desire in the FH community for clear, written goals that reflect community priorities, especially to avoid misinterpretation of terms like 'level of service' and 'access management' in project documents.

Decision-making power and community influence

- There's also a desire for assurances of meaningful influence over the selection of a consultant for this initial conceptual phase, and over the consultant's Scope of Work, and final recommendations, with some seeking written guarantees.
- The Town has convened a Steering Committee to oversee the project, with representatives from the Town, FHIA, County, and Cornell University. C.J. noted that the FHIA exerts influence on the project through its representatives to the Steering Committee.
- C.J. will share the names of the consulting firms shortlisted to work on the initial conceptual phase and invites the community to provide feedback on the consultants through the Steering Committee FHIA representatives, before a final hiring decision is made.
- C.J. confirmed that once a consultant is hired, the Steering Committee provides input into the consultant's final Scope of Work. The framework for how decisions get made during this phase

will be developed with the FHIA representatives and other members of the Steering Committee, and defined in key documents such as the public engagement plan and project charter.

Stakeholder involvement

- Much of the high-volume of traffic in FH is associated with Cornell University, and concerns were raised about their stake in this project and the numerous other project stakeholders (Town, County, public safety, public utility, etc.), in relation to the FHIA's stake in this project and influence over project outcomes.
- C.J. envisions that the Steering Committee would make key project decisions, in advisement with the broader stakeholder group, and repeated that FH community exerts influence through its FHIA representatives to the Steering Committee.

"I don't chase projects."

- C.J. said that she had understood that the FH community had a strong appetite and desire to take a fresh look at our traffic, safety, and beautification priorities, and the solutions recommended in the 2007 FH Traffic Calming Plan. She encouraged the community to communicate their concerns about the initial conceptual phase and their feedback through the FHIA representatives on the Steering Committee.

After the Q & A, Charlie reminded everyone to send any additional questions to the FHIA representatives on the Steering Committee.

[Note: The new email for directly contacting the FHIA reps on the Steering Committee is Streets2027@gmail.com]

The meeting adjourned at 8:15PM.