

**Forest Home Improvement Association
Annual Meeting
October 27, 2015, 7:30 pm
Forest Home Chapel**

1. Welcome and introductions

Another year has passed and here we are again at the annual meeting of the Forest Home Improvement Association. For me, being part of the association means getting to think about how to bring out all the nuances and the texture of what it is to be a neighborhood: we watch out for each other, we try to make the experience of living near each other a source of pleasure, we think of our neighborhood as a place and as an idea, and we try to promote our neighborhood's cause in relation to the bigger world that surrounds it.

This year we have brought to the attention of the association members things ranging from tiny (skunks) to cosmic (the blood moon). We have worried whether we were going to be blown off the face of the planet, no less. And we have submitted to feline attacks both tiny (four little black cats) and huge (TCAT).

The four little black cats, by the way, seemed to me a very good example of what I get to see while manning the list serve. To some people they were sweet little furry things in need of love, while to others they were bloodthirsty assassins. The truth this time doesn't lie somewhere in the middle but encompasses both extreme ends of the continuum!

2. Engaged Cornell (Basil Safi)

Basil Safi is head of Engaged Cornell, a 10-year program bringing together students, faculty and the community in initiatives meant to give students a chance to become active citizens and to tackle critical challenges by participating in hands-on practical experiences beyond the borders of the campus. Engage Cornell works to bring together the players on that team: the communities with ideas or needs, the right faculty members to help develop the plan of what to do, the students who will do the research and the work.

The initiative is just beginning, and Basil explained their first steps and how they are spreading the word.

Jon Miller presented the idea of the project for micro-hydro generation on the creek and explained that two separate groups of students had done feasibility studies that had been encouraging. The problem of how to get started is difficult because of questions of who owns the creek, who owns the shore, who would own the energy

produced, but precisely that varied nature might make it an excellent project for Engaged Cornell: it would require people able to take on the legal questions, the engineering challenge, the diplomatic concerns of relations between town and gown, etc.

Bruce Brittain mentioned that the dendrochronology project of figuring out how old the houses are in Forest Home could also be a good candidate.

3. Treasurer's report (Cindy Bowman)

We will attach the report. The most important feature is that we have not added to our coffers this year because did not remind people that they need to pay their dues. We started to remind at the meeting itself and will continue more assiduously.

--insurance question (Montana Petersen)

Our parties in the park present a special problem: if more than 25 people gather, the Town of Ithaca requires that the FHIA is insured for that day. This requirement generates a lot of questions: is it worth spending "only" \$253 for one day, or \$384 for the whole year? It is a lot of money. What alternatives do we have? Could we appear as a rider on the Chapel's insurance for the day of a party? Rod will ask some questions at a Town meeting to understand better exactly what we need to be insured against. We will ask a lawyer about the ramifications of holding an annual liability policy.

4. Park report

--The Hasbrouck bench is now in place, with a nice view over the creek and with the plaque commemorating Charles Hasbrouck attached. The plaque had originally been placed on the original bench, north of the downstream bridge.

--Plans for the coming year: keep the plants alive that we have planted; become Plantations volunteers, so we can weed outside the confines of our park; continue to clean the park twice a year as sponsors of Adopt a Park.

--Sustainability award

Linda Copman had the great idea of nominating our park for an award from Sustainable Tompkins. We took first place out of more than 200 nominees! Linda's nomination letter was so great that I am just repeating it here:

Last year FHIA officially adopted a community park from the Town of Ithaca. With a \$5,000 Community Beautification Grant, FHIA purchased shrubs, trees, and professional tree pruning along the waterway to create a nice view from the park. In one day community members came together to plant, mulch, water, and surround with deer

fences 37 shrubs. Caroline and Bill Arms' bench was also installed, and the Hasbrouck bench was sited under the pine trees. The new park provides a beautiful site to sit and enjoy the view, to gather with family and friends, and to host neighborhood picnics. With a little \$ and a lot of love, FHIA has created a lasting legacy for the public to enjoy.

5. Infrastructure

--Forest Home closure at Thurston Avenue bridge

We were all of course eager to know more about why Forest Home Drive has been closed near the Thurston Avenue bridge. Addisu Gebre, bridge engineer of the City of Ithaca Engineering Department, wrote to explain:

The city would like to like to address the erosion problem (at 3 locations) near the corner of E Ave and Forest Home Drive and the collapsed masonry wall on the north Fall Creek side. So currently the city is investigating the unknown source of water causing the slope failure and the appropriate repair plan.

We were all eager of course to hear when it would open again, but Gebre's answer didn't hold out a lot of hope that we would know anytime soon:

The city is currently working with a local consultant (Elwyn and Palmer Consulting Engineers) to develop a Draft Scope of Work to investigate the source of water. As a result, I need to have the document to give any update on the project.

--NYSEG "emergency" repair (Bruce Brittain)

Bruce was the first to notice that the little bridge that bears the gas pipeline and that runs next to and just a little below the downstream bridge was falling apart: the truss structure that held it up had all but disintegrated. He notified NYSEG and did everything he could to make them schedule an emergency repair. The repair was delayed endlessly, and Bruce taught the neighborhood what to watch out for (signs that the bridge might actually give way) and what to sniff around for (the smell of gas). The repair was at last done at the very end of October. Sadly getting one repair out of the way brought news of perhaps the next one necessary: the people who did the repair had a dim view of the strength of the walkway on the downstream bridge.

--the wall at the curve between the two bridges (Bruce Brittain). The wall has been crumbling for some time. Finally the Town has asked for bids to fix it, and received one bid. The consultant asking for bids was not told that the wall has to stay at the height that it is now, with the walkway on top of it, and that it is in a historical district. The bad news is that the plan is not likely to reflect our desires, in other words, but the good news is that we are in a very good position to reject it. John Foote, whose house is right there, will simply refuse to let them build a wall that is not of our liking.

Rod will let us know when the proposal comes back from the public works committee and exactly what it entails.

--the droopy phone line near the upstream bridge (apparently there is another one along Forest Home Drive near Beebe Lake as well). Bruce recounted that the poles holding the lines had to be moved when the truss was removed from the upstream bridge. NYSEG has put their lines back, but the cable and phone lines are still drooping. Bruce says they are aware, and the work will be done soon.

--another activity to complete the renovation of the upstream bridge: a team of Forest Homers will be assembled in the spring to help Suzanne Shipe replant her garden that was at the foot of the upstream bridge.

6. Neighborhood sustainability efforts

--food scrap recycling program

We spread the word that there is a new food-scrap recycling program that allows you to take food scraps there, including ones that you wouldn't put in your own compost heap, like bones and compostable paper products). They give you a caddy and bags, and you bring the scraps behind the stone building at the community corners on Sunday until 3PM. Let the FHIA know if you need more information.

--Jon Miller spoke of three initiatives having to do with renewable energy that Forest Home could support:

1. Community-shared solar: NY State has made it possible for a group of people to own shares in a solar farm and receive credit for the energy it produces. It's just like having a system on your roof, except it's off in a field somewhere. Several companies are expected to offer different arrangements starting next spring. Renovus Solar is the first off the mark; it plans to build its own solar farm and is conducting community meetings to attract investors. <http://renovussolar.com/community-solar>

2. After two years of working to reduce the barriers to installing home solar panels, the nonprofit group Solar Tompkins has turned its attention to heating and cooling, which account for an average of about 75 percent of home energy use. The idea is to encourage home sealing and insulation in combination with air-source or ground-source heat pumps. With low gas prices, heat pumps tend to make the most sense for people currently heating with oil, propane or electric or who plan to replace their gas furnace soon. <http://www.solartompkins.org/2015-heatsmart-program.html>

3. Forest Home Micro-hydro: Forest Home was built on waterpower, and two feasibility studies by Cornell students have identified the waterfall above the downstream bridge as a suitable site for micro-hydro (very small-scale hydroelectric

generation). The Tompkins County Energy Roadmap, launched last week, includes micro-hydro among its renewable energy priorities, and micro-hydro is also encouraged under the State's "Reforming the Energy Vision" initiative. FHIA has no legal right to do anything with the waterfall, but we could encourage the Town and Cornell to develop the site (with our input of course). (See more discussion of this topic in the section of this report devoted to Engage Cornell.)

7. Cornell University

We had a great meeting in February in which Cornell sent us several people who addressed different aspects of Forest Home's relationship to the great institution on the hill.

--East Hill Plaza

Leslie Schill, a Cornell planner, explained their plans for East Hill Village at the East Hill Plaza.

--they intend to make, over the next ten years, a walkable, compact mixed-use development. They envision it as village-like.

--they would want local business. They don't want big box stores, they don't want to compete with downtown either.

--the Plaza itself would be kept intact (they have long-term tenants there)

--they would partner with a third-party developer but Cornell would be a close stakeholder. They are still weighing the pros and cons of letting someone else develop it versus developing it themselves.

--they are going to build housing there

--there are 40 acres of developable space, but they probably won't get completely developed.

--they listened to everybody's ideas for making it a neighbor we would like to have (bike paths, local businesses, making sure the P and C remains, demonstration project of local organic farming, etc) and assured us the plan is embryonic and we would have a voice.

--TCAT and Forest Home

Bridgette Barry is Cornell's new transportation director (in charge of all transportation, bikes, parking, car pool etc.)

She seemed to want to make sure we knew that nobody has any power over TCAT.

Cornell cannot determine its routes.

TCAT considers route changes three times a year.

She is on the TCAT board but made sure we understood she was powerless.

She would consider having a meeting with us.

She wants to do a circulation study.

We started working on a plan to pin her down to specifics, but it fell between the chairs of people traveling.

--Cradit Farm Road

Gary Stewart reported that Cradit Farm Road is unlikely to ever be the principal entrance to campus, but it will become an important entrance.

We will also be helped by the fact that Cornell is working with consultants from Philadelphia about electronic information and way finding. "The idea is to not help people find their way to where they shouldn't be." The principal entrances to Cornell will be through the East, not through Forest Home.

They are working with the county way-finding plan, which will address a concern Bill Arms brought up: we need to make a clearly established route from the airport to central campus that does not involve Forest Home.

--Public safety

Cornell police watches out for us generally.

Their jurisdiction includes anywhere that Cornell is operating for educational purposes, on roads that run through campus or are contiguous. All of Forest Home falls under that umbrella.

--If you have problems call 255 1111 and they will get you to the right agency

--In general we are under the jurisdiction of the sheriff.

--Deer management program update

Bernd Blosssey, in charge of Cornell's deer management program, updates us on this year's activities:

We will proceed as in the past season. That means nuisance tags and hopefully another successful season. We took 37 deer last winter and our camera surveys show that we have reduced the Cornell deer population in the core campus area, which includes much of FH, by 50%. We are down to 47 deer but that is still far too many left. And the deer are coming in from the city and town of Ithaca and repopulate campus. We took 37 deer and lowered the campus population by 11 - that tells you something. So we try to work with town and city to get help from their side.

Our monitoring shows better oak seedling survival but we have not been able to do much more than that with the reduced funding we have from the university. We are working with the administration to get a more solid foundation for the deer program, which will run out of money in 2 years.

We have heard many reports of reduced deer sightings and re-appearance of plants. It would be good to hear from your residents.

Speaking of deer, last year we promised to provide the e-mail address of the office at Cornell where you can send ticks to test whether they are carriers of Lyme disease: Ahdc.vet.cornell.edu \$100 for up to five ticks (ouch)

8. Social life

We had a lot of good parties this year, including a spring potluck as well.

Cindy has brought us to a whole new level.

My favorite moments: Bruce's elegiac life history of Charles Hasbrouck and the little slice of light it shed on the man who must have stood where we were standing then, getting the same pleasure from the light on the creek that we were.

Sofia's hula dance dedicated to the nurturing of the land. What could be more appropriate for a park dedication?

9. Tell us what should be you would like to see the FHIA address next year

--Getting to know the giant that surrounds us: organizing field trips to the Cornell Orchards, the filter plant, the new vet building at the top of Caldwell Rd, etc.

--the sidewalk on Warren Road

--possible redesign of the Forest Home Walkway

--further meetings with Bridgette Barry, transportation director at Cornell, about TCAT routes through Forest Home

9. A grateful moment

We had people to thank:

Claudia—fellow officers, the neighbors' kindness

Linda—Keerthana Manoharan, a boarder of hers who got TCAT to give Forest Home a bus stop

Montana—the chapel, whose members brought her food during her difficult pregnancy

**10. Nomination and election of new officers, ritual passing of the gavel
(Michael Bend)**

A new board was enthusiastically and unanimously voted in:

President: Montana Petersen

Vice President: Cindy Bowman

Secretary: Connie Stirling-Engman

Treasurer: Jennifer Loucks

11. Good night!