

White Township Stewardship Committee

Regular (inaugural) meeting

Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022 at Meeting Room 3, S&T Bank Arena, 495 East Pike

Meeting minutes, as amended and approved Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

On a motion by David Dahlheimer, seconded by Jeff Geesey, the committee affirmed the nomination of Barb Hauge by the White Township board of supervisors as chairperson of the committee.

Chairperson Hauge presiding.

Roll Call: Chairperson Barb Hauge, present; members David Dahlheimer, present; Sierra Davis, present; Matt Klunk, present; Jeff Geesey, present.

(Township Manager Chris Anderson, Recreation Director Ryan Shaffer, PR/Communications Specialist Chauncey Ross as recording secretary, and four area residents also were present)

At the suggestion of Mr. Shaffer, those seated at the table introduced themselves and discussed their interest and roles with the committee: Mr. Anderson, Mr. Shaffer, Ms. Hauge, Mr. Dahlheimer, Ms. Davis, Mr. Klunk, Mr. Geesey, Mr. Ross. Mr. Anderson offered additional comments.

Appoint Vice Chairperson and Secretary: Members presented their interests and willingness to serve in leadership roles. Discussion concerned the responsibilities of the vice chairperson and secretary, and the logistics of selecting a meeting place. On a motion by Mr. Geesey, seconded by Mr. Klunk, the members elected Mr. Dahlheimer as vice chairperson and Ms. Davis as secretary.

Establishing Meeting Dates, Times, and Location:

- On a motion by Mr. Geesey, seconded by Mr. Dahlheimer, the members established the meeting schedule of 6:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month.
- Discussion concerned selecting a meeting site that would accommodate both in-person and remote attendance of the public. On a motion by Mr. Dahlheimer, seconded by Mr. Geesey, the members approved the White Township municipal office meeting room as the meeting place.

Guests and Public Comment:

- Sara King, of White Township, a representative of Friends of White's Woods, presented two bound publications (*White's Woods Nature Center: Current Value & Future Care* and *White's Woods Nature Center: Current Value & Future Care Appendices*) to each member of the committee and called attention to some of the contents: the management and stewardship of White's Woods, the role of public comment, an inventory of plants found in White's Woods and the history of White's Woods. Mr. Dahlheimer added comment. Ms. Hauge requested additional copies for township staff use.

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Guests and Public Comment (continued):

● Mr. Geesey suggested that the staff provide a guest sign-in list and a public comment sign-up sheet at each meeting and recommended setting a time limit on comment. Discussion followed. On a motion by Mr. Geesey seconded by Ms. Davis, the members directed that a guest sign-in list and public comment sign-up sheet be provided, that speakers observe a limit of 3 minutes and that the chairperson may waive the limit for productive comments.

New Business

Orientation and Discussion: The committee members, with some input of staff and the public, discussed the fundamental and guiding principles for the committee's work, including:

- The reading of the mission statement and timeline of 18 months as established by township staff and the board of supervisors;
- The understanding and adherence to the state's Project 70 Act principles, requirements, obligations and latitudes established in 1968 when White Township was awarded funding for the purchase of White's Woods;
- The distribution of Project 70 information by email to the members;
- The availability of multiple articles and reports on forest stewardship assembled over the past two years by the staff;
- The committee's goals in three six-month periods;
- The consideration of the White Township deer management plan;
- The White Township Comprehensive Plan recommendations on recreation:
- The history of Indiana Area Recreation and Parks Department;
- The history of White Township Recreation Complex and the ice center building;
- The history of Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources grant funding of White Township recreation assets;
- The management of White's Woods by White Township Recreation and the board of supervisors, and the influence of citizen input;
- The committee's mission to determine stewardship of several White Township properties in addition to White's Woods;
- The mission to produce a document for approval of the board of supervisors and submission to Pa. DCNR for review and approval;
- The proposed addition of more land to Kennedy-King Park;
- The identification of other stakeholders in park expansion proposal and building consensus with them to advance on a project;
- The value and scheduling of site visits by the committee;
- The DCNR comments on the stewardship plan produced in 2020 by Millstone Land Management, especially the repetition of comments on four main topics in the plan;

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New Business; Orientation and Discussion (continued):

- A request to inquire whether DCNR can provide a “blueprint” or template for acceptable stewardship of recreation land;
- Recommendations to study previous township proposals for care of White’s Woods and third-party reviews and reports (such as those by Penn State Extension and forester Mike Wolf);
- The determination of elements of the Millstone plan to retain in forming a final stewardship plan, and the weight of an analysis of the summary of DCNR comments on the plan;
- The committee’s option to solicit opinions and guidance from forestry professionals;
- A reference to contents of Friends of White’s Woods documents;
- The options to consult other municipalities, such as Murrysville, and study the stewardship plans implemented in other areas with approval of DCNR;
- The possible opportunities to seek DCNR grant assistance to develop a plan;
- A request for the DCNR Project 70 guidelines;
- A review of the timeline of events proposed in the Millstone plan and which planned activities have been undertaken (such as Blosser Lot and Caretaker House projects);
- The importance of community engagement in establishing plans and results of past community outreach efforts (such as a survey cited in Millstone plan), and a suggestion to seek guidance from others to successfully solicit public input;
- Documents to be reviewed before the next meeting;
- An announcement of a webinar “Preserving Town-Owned Forests” organized by Friends of Whites Woods to be presented at 4 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 27, on a Zoom program at a link to be provided upon request;
- A recommendation that documents presented to the committee should be provided to the recording secretary and maintained in the official record of the group’s work;
- A motion by Mr. Geesey, “Because of the work of the committee, this is our first event, we need to have an executive session just among the committee before any private, er, public sessions are engaged. Not to be clandestine, but to be able to discuss things and vet them as a committee before we present to the public.” Mr. Geesey rescinded the motion after a suggestion that it should be reviewed by a solicitor; and
- A summarized request for members to review the DCNR response to the Millstone plan, Milt Lady’s response to DCNR, reports by Mike Wolf and Penn State Extension and the state Project 70 guidelines before the next meeting.

The committee took no formal action related to Orientation and Discussion

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Guests and Public Comment:

- Jessica Jopp, of Indiana, commented on the availability of a recording of the meeting. Discussion followed.
- Ms. King commented on the stewardship plans enacted in Murrysville for the care of two local parks and the Project 70 guidelines

For the Good of the Order:

- Ms. Davis summarized a list of action items for the next meeting including: staff to locate Project 70 communications, contact DCNR for plan recommendations; Ms. Hauge to seek community outreach guidance; and she, as board secretary, to develop public guest sign-in sheet.
- Mr. Klunk suggested that committee members could consult with their business or other associates and connections for ideas related to township park stewardship. Discussion followed.
- Mr. Dahlheimer commented on the DCNR request for the township to produce a timely plan for stewardship of White's Woods

Adjournment: On a motion by Mr. Geesey seconded by Ms. Davis, the committee adjourned the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

Submitted,

Chauncey Ross
recording secretary