

White Township Stewardship Committee
Regular meeting
6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022
Meeting minutes final

Chairperson Barb Hauge called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led those in attendance in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Committee: Chairperson Barb Hauge present; Vice Chairperson David Dahlheimer present at 6:38 p.m.; Secretary Sierra Davis present; Jeff Geesey excused; Matt Klunk present online.

Staff (non-voting): Township Manager Chris Anderson present; Recreation Director Ryan Shaffer present; Recording Secretary Chauncey Ross present.

(Five reported their in-person attendance on the sign-in sheet; six logged in on GoToMeeting.)

Public Comment on agenda items

- Carolyn Trimarchi, Indiana, commented on the subject of natural succession of forests and circulated several photographs, which she retained.
- Richard Ritenour, Lower Burrell, commented on the provisions of Project 70.
- Sara King, White Township, commented on the Millstone Land Management plan made in 2020 for White's Woods, public response to the plan in 2020, and the carbon sequestration concept. She provided handouts (hard copy of information submitted earlier by email): some for all members of the committee, a separate one for the chairperson.
- Susan Dahlheimer, White Township, circulated a promotional flyer for a webinar to be presented by Friends of White's Woods on Thursday, Feb. 24.
- Tom Miller, Indiana, commented on Project 70, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the democratic process.
- Committee member Mr. Dahlheimer asked to distribute handouts and agreed to wait until conversation turned to the topic of the papers.

(None of those who virtually attended the meeting gave comment.)

Review of Pennsylvania Sunshine Act

- Mr. Anderson reported that the committee conducts advertised public meetings and that in the spirit of transparency, the township would provide the committee's documents on a stewardship committee page on the township website. The committee may request and the township would advertise for additional meetings if needed.
- Mr. Dahlheimer commented on Sunshine Act matters and provided handouts related to the Open Meetings Law.
- Mr. Anderson also provided a handout to the committee members.

White Township Stewardship Committee
Regular meeting
6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022
Meeting minutes final, Page 2

Review of Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, continued:

- Further discussion concerned a request on Jan. 20 by committee member Jeff Geesey for the committee to conduct executive session meetings; the rationale for conducting executive sessions; and Mr. Geesey's later comments to township staff that he intended to say "work sessions." Mr. Dahlheimer requested that the topic of executive sessions be included on the March 17 meeting agenda.

Minutes

The members proposed amendments (deletion of a line, changes/insertion of words) to the draft minutes as presented. On a motion by Mr. Dahlheimer seconded by Ms. Davis, the committee approved the amended minutes of the Thursday, Jan. 20 meeting of the committee.

Discussion/Review:

The committee members, with some input of staff and the public, discussed the committee's work, including:

- A proposal to meet the task of writing a stewardship plan by extracting the good things from the documents under study, to vet them in a public way and to not engage in counterproductive discussion of bad items in the documents.
- A proposal to review and evaluate each plan for the merits making each worthy of discussion or being set aside because of problems making them unfeasible; the consideration of past public comments and professional reviews of past plans; how or whether to judge the credibility of comments.
- Whether the need for a stewardship plan was required or recommended, and whether originally by Project 70 or more recently by DCNR.
- The township's history of applications for recreation and parks grants from DCNR, the evaluation of assets and activities, and priorities for improvements.
- The purpose of the township comprehensive plan committee's 2-22-22 public outreach session.
- The importance of current public input; the need to provide information to White's Woods users who do not have internet access.

On a motion by Mr. Dahlheimer seconded by Ms. Davis, the committee voted to recommend that the township supervisors approve the installation of a kiosk or mailbox at the entrance of White's Woods to dispense stewardship committee minutes and to solicit input from park users." This is an effort to improve two-way communication between the committee and the public.

White Township Stewardship Committee

Regular meeting

6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022

Meeting minutes final, page 3

Discussion/Review, continued:

Ms. Hauge asked to table until the March 17 meeting the discussion of the plans that appeared on the agenda.

Ms. Hauge also explained that the township board of supervisors had directed on Feb. 9 that the committee's mission would be "revised to place White's Woods as the top priority. The panel is being asked to first complete the three phases of the project and produce a stewardship plan that will oversee and protect White's Woods using best practices and expert recommendations. The panel then would study and complete a stewardship plan for White Township Recreation Complex, Kennedy-King Park, Getty Heights Park, Fourth Ward Park and the White Township Municipal Center in what remains of the 18-month timeline for the committee. The board of supervisors retains the authority to extend the committee's mission if necessary."

The committee members, with some input of staff and the public, continued discussion of the committee's work, including:

- Examples of stewardship plans for Project 70 properties in other communities, including plans submitted to the township by the DCNR Bureau of Forestry office in Ebensburg; plans for Murrysville parks available on the municipality's website; and plans located but not yet submitted by Friends of White's Woods.
- Information from Penn State Extension concerning community engagement assistance opportunities; the costs to secure John Turack as a consultant for community engagement; information on the "One Community, Many Generations" webinar instruction series; the Indiana County board of commissioners' recent efforts to secure local community engagement assistance; a suggestion to seek volunteer assistance from Indiana University of Pennsylvania including Eberly College of Business and Information Technology.
- The comprehensive plan steering committee's scheduled community outreach program on 2-22-22 and the role of consultant Denny Puko; the benefits and drawbacks of pursuing in-kind services for community engagement; issues of scheduling consultation service as an academic project at IUP; the need for flexibility of the suggested "road map" of the three six-month phases for the committee's work.
- A suggestion to schedule work sessions of the committee between the regularly scheduled monthly meetings; a suggestion to find ways to prioritize and eliminate redundancies and look in an expedited and structured way at the plans; the possibility of holding additional meetings or work sessions in order to maintain momentum; the provisions of the Sunshine Act related to public access and public comment at additional meetings.
- A series of online webinars "The Woods in Your Backyard" concerning woodlands on private properties and the role of stewardship plans recommended for homeowners.
- A letter from Sara King and a package of public comment documents forwarded by email to the chairperson.

White Township Stewardship Committee

Regular meeting

6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022

Meeting minutes final, page 4

Discussion/Review, continued:

- The implementation guide, priorities, partnerships and funding sources identified in an active transportation plan with contributions by Ms. Hauge as part of a community consultant team, presented as a possible format for consideration by the committee.
- The exploration of opportunities to secure grants from state, local and foundation sources; the eligibility of the committee/township to apply for DCNR aid for planning, acquisition, development and rehabilitation of parks; the availability of property adjacent to White's Woods; the availability of grant money for creation of stewardship plans; comparison of the committee's timeline with the grant procurement process schedule.
- The consideration of carbon capture or carbon sequestration programs relevant to White's Woods; information presented earlier to the township concerning carbon capture funds; the need to vet the concept through the committee's community engagement process.

A motion by Mr. Dahlheimer to request from the township board of supervisors the latest information received concerning carbon sequestration and the rationale for the supervisors' decision on the issue, and to present the information on carbon capture opportunities to the public, died for lack of a second.

- The committee discussed further consideration of obtaining carbon-capture information from Indiana County Parks and Trails. Mr. Anderson will follow up on this.

Evaluation of the 18-month mission

Ms. Hauge said the evaluation had been discussed earlier.

Public comment on non-agenda items

- Ms. Hauge offered a motion to eliminate the second public comment period; Mr. Anderson recommended that public comment should be accepted. The board did not act on the motion.
- Mr. Miller, Indiana, commented on Pa. DCNR and stewardship plans.
- Mr. Dahlheimer requested clarification of the agenda. Ms. Hauge said the evaluation of the 18-month mission had been discussed earlier. Mr. Dahlheimer commented further on the timeline.
- Mr. Dahlheimer commented and recommended the presentation of experts on several topics. Discussion followed. Ms. Hauge requested him to submit a list.
- Ms. Hauge invited further comment on the 18-month mission. No other comment was offered.

Announcements

- Mr. Dahlheimer mentioned a webinar sponsored by Friends of White's Woods.
- On behalf of Indiana County Decathlon, Ms. Hauge presented information about a scavenger hunt bingo game scheduled in April in White's Woods and an intro to disc golf program scheduled in April at White Township Recreation Complex.

White Township Stewardship Committee

Regular meeting

6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022

Meeting minutes final, page 5

Members' comments for the good of the order

Ms. Davis presented a summary of action items discussed during the meeting:

- Mr. Anderson and Mr. Shaffer to forward links to Murrysville park stewardship plans.
- Mr. Dahlheimer to provide stewardship plans for Project 70 parks.
- Mr. Shaffer to contact IUP ECOB for information.
- The staff to report on the possibility of additional meetings.
- Ms. Hauge to forward case studies, a statement and list of public comment by email to members.
- All to explore grant opportunities to cite for consideration when implementing parts of the plan.
- Mr. Anderson to obtain information on carbon capture from the county parks office.
- Mr. Dahlheimer offered to obtain information on community engagement assistance. Ms. Hauge will follow up on community engagement assistance from IUP's Planning Department.

Next meeting

6:30 p.m. Thursday, March 17, at White Township municipal building, 950 Indian Springs Road.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Dahlheimer seconded by Ms. Davis, the committee adjourned at 9:22 p.m.