

White Township Stewardship Committee
Regular meeting
6:30 p.m. Thursday, April 21, 2022
Minutes approved

Chairperson Barb Hauge called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Committee: Chairperson Barb Hauge present; Vice Chairperson David Dahlheimer present; Secretary Sierra Davis present; Jeff Geesey present; Matt Klunk present.

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

(Eight guests reported their attendance on the sign-in sheet; about six others also were present; about seven logged in on GoToMeeting.)

Public Comment on agenda items

- Rick Ritenour, Lower Burrell, commented on the March 31 meeting, the Friends of White's Woods survey and the uses of White's Woods.
- Sara King, White Township, commented on the Pennsylvania Office of Open Records, the conduct of business by public agencies and the management of White's Woods.

Minutes

On a motion by Mr. Geesey seconded by Ms. Davis, the committee approved the minutes of the March 31 meeting as presented.

Mission of the Committee

Ms. Hauge recited the mission of the committee.

Chairperson Overview

Ms. Hauge commented on the purpose of open discussion to form a stewardship plan, the acceptance of all ideas, the recognition of emotions and the committee's goal of working with all of the public.

Discussion/New topics, speakers

Finding Common Ground:

Mr. Dahlheimer commended the township supervisors and staff for establishing the Stewardship Committee, commended Mr. Shaffer and the staff for applying for grants for projects in township parks, commented on the other township recreation facilities, and commented on the "natural succession" of White's Woods.

Mr. Geesey in a prepared statement complimented the work done by Friends of White's Woods in providing the committee with documents for the preparation of a draft stewardship plan.

White Township Stewardship Committee
Regular meeting
6:30 p.m. Thursday, April 21, 2022
Minutes, Page 2

Discussion/New topics, speakers

Finding Common Ground, continued:

Ms. Hauge commented on the common ground in the goals of the committee members: the desire for a healthy native understory, native wildflowers, educational signage, comfortable trails and interesting educational programs throughout the year.

Possible liability caused by trees

In the context of his profession as a safety and risk consultant in the insurance industry, Mr. Klunk presented a list of hazards, risks and liability issues assumed by White Township as the owner of the White's Woods property. Discussion followed.

Discussions on definitions from last meeting

Ms. Davis discussed the assignment to create position papers of the committee's consensus views of "timbering" and "stewardship." Discussion followed, including use of Google Docs and concerns for compliance with the Sunshine Act.

Mr. Dahlheimer moved that the committee "arrange a group phone call or group contact with the Freedom of Information commission." (The Pennsylvania Office of Open Records was clarified as the authority for this issue.) Ms. Davis seconded the motion. Discussion concerned the role of the township solicitor.

Mr. Geesey moved to amend the motion to have the solicitor always attend committee meetings and answer questions on Sunshine Act compliance. Discussion followed. No second was offered.

Mr. Dahlheimer moved to amend the original motion "that we initiate contact with the Office of Open Records and find out how they would be able to respond to the question ... of what we have to do to qualify to stay legal while we continue the process of clarifying definitions." Discussion followed. Ms. Davis seconded the amended motion. Discussion followed. The committee approved the amendment 4-1 (Mr. Geesey opposed).

The committee then unanimously approved the amended motion.

Ms. Davis and Mr. Dahlheimer agreed to contact the Office of Open Records. Discussion followed.

Stewardship Plans

Mr. Dahlheimer summarized a list of DCNR-approved stewardship plans for other public parks and identified their common elements. The plans have been posted on the township website.

Township regulations for leashing dogs in parks

Mr. Shaffer reported that White Township Ordinance No. requires dogs to be leashed and under control when on township property.

Motion for Day/Time walk with Mike Wolf

Ms. Hauge moved to establish a day and time for members of the committee to meet with professional forester Mike Wolf, of Appalachian Forest Consultants, to discuss White's Woods.

White Township Stewardship Committee
Regular meeting
6:30 p.m. Thursday, April 21, 2022
Minutes, Page 3

Motion for Day/Time walk with Mike Wolf, continued:

Extensive discussion concerned the procedure that led to this agenda item. Mr. Geesey seconded the motion. Further discussion followed concerning procedure. The committee unanimously approved the motion.

Mr. Geesey requested the use of the Doodle Calendar online app for comparing possible dates. Discussion ensued. The consensus of the committee was to meet at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, May 21, with Mr. Wolf.

Recommendations for additional speakers for Stewardship Subcommittee

Mr. Dahlheimer spoke on the credentials of the other experts whose names appear on the list he submitted March 31. Mr. Dahlheimer moved “that we consider Dr. Sara Keubbing ... Dr. Marion Holmes ... Dr. Joan Maloof ...” Discussion followed. Ms. Hauge reviewed the March 31 list of experts and requested other recommendations from the committee. Mr. Geesey recommended Calvin Norman. Discussion followed. Mr. Dahlheimer recommended Dr. Margot Wilkinson Kaye and Dr. Alyson Fearon. Ms. Hauge recommended Dave Cole and Dr. Ellen Yerger. Mr. Dahlheimer restated his motion “to prioritize four people that we should consider inviting.” Discussion followed concerning prioritization procedures. Ms. Hauge is to compile a list of all recommended experts.

The meeting was recessed from 8:05 to 8:09 p.m.

Discussion of the list of experts continued. Mr. Shaffer recommended Janine Fleegle. Mr. Dahlheimer restated the motion “to prioritize four names above others.” Discussion continued concerning committee members availabilities to meet with experts.

Discussion/Review:

- Community engagement assistance from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Eberly College of Business, IUP Planning Department and others including Penn State Extension Discussion concerned clarification of the university departments, various approaches to research and community engagement, and protocols for presentations and requests for proposals to the committee.

Mr. Dahlheimer moved that the committee accept a community-research proposal by Dr. Susan Boser. Detailed discussion of the proposal followed. No second was offered.

Discussion concerned whether university researchers should make proposals to the township board of supervisors. The issue was delayed to the May 19 meeting.

- Indiana County Parks & Trails information on carbon capture

Mr. Ryan reported a summary of a conversation between Mr. Anderson and Ed Patterson of Indiana County Parks & Trails. He reported that Parks & Trails is investigating a carbon sequestration program for the Blacklick Valley Natural Area and has made no decision.

White Township Stewardship Committee
Regular meeting
6:30 p.m. Thursday, April 21, 2022
Minutes, Page 4

Discussion/Review, continued:

- Committee meeting schedule

The committee would meet 6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 19, and at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, May 21, with Mike Wolf.

Public comment on non-agenda items

- Tom Miller, of Indiana, commented on allegations of wrongdoing in White's Woods.
- Will Radell, of White Township, commented on the motivations of the committee process.
- Jessica Jopp, of Indiana, commented on the committee's process of writing a definition of "stewardship." Discussion followed.
- Sara King, of White Township, commented on the Sunshine Act, the county's study of carbon sequestration, and on activity in White's Woods. Discussion followed.
- Ms. King amplified her comment on the purpose of the committee.
- Mr. Miller commented on the committee's public deliberations.
- Rick Ritenour, of Lower Burrell, commented on the work of the committee.

Announcements

Ms. Hauge reported that Indiana County Planning, Indiana Borough and White Township would jointly conduct a community engagement event concerning Active Transportation planning in the Indiana area from 4 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 26.

Members' comments for the good of the order

Mr. Dahlheimer discussed his appreciation for the committee's work.

Ms. Davis presented a list of action items to be addressed before or during the May 19 meeting:

- Ms. Davis and Mr. Dahheimer are to contact Pennsylvania Office of Open Records for guidance on composing/drafting documents between meetings.
- Ms. Davis would set up the prioritization of a list of potential expert speakers.
- Ms. Hauge would write and share summaries of the speakers to be considered.

Next meeting

6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 19, 2022, at White Township municipal building

Future Agenda Items:

Draft a definition of stewardship

Discussion of draft survey

Mission and Vision statement

Mr. Geesey suggested that members could use Google Docs to share input on mission and vision statement.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Geesey seconded by Ms. Davis, the meeting was adjourned at 8:59 p.m.