

# The Hawk Eye

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## [More disrespect from White Township supervisors](#)

Posted on [September 16, 2022](#) by [David Loomis](#)



A student chalks a sidewalk in the Oak Grove at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1995 during the first of three efforts to log White's Woods. Photo by Tom Turify.

By Sara King

WHITE TOWNSHIP – Two items on Wednesday's [agenda](#) of the White Township Board of Supervisors drew attention – one item concerning [bow hunting in White's Woods](#), the other concerning [pickleball](#).

Discussion of the shared public-private cost of a \$1,294.92 wind screen at the township's pickleball courts in Chevy Chase inspired several supervisors to toss what appeared to be thinly veiled insults at [Friends of White's Woods](#), the public forest's advocacy group.

“I think it's great when a group in our community like that offers to improve something that they use, and they offer to do the legwork and contribute,” township supervisor Sandi Gillette said, directly referring to the pickleball club.

Board chairman George Lenz added that he liked community organizations that “work with the township, not against the township.”

Given the recent [context](#) and [history](#) of township supervisors’ disparaging remarks, the digs weren’t really a surprise.



Friends of White’s Woods yard sign, Indiana, Pa. June 28, 2020. Photo by David Loomis

I KNOW MANY civic groups in our region work hard, often in concert with local municipalities, to improve our community. Friends of White’s Woods is one them. Surely, it is among those at the top of the list in terms of hours and effort — and [contributions that required considerable FWW expense.](#)

We work hard to help inform the regional community about all sorts of environmental issues – and have received environmental awards in [2021](#) and [2022](#) largely for these efforts.

We have cast a [wide net](#) in drawing experts on forestry, invasive species, climate, wildlife, natural succession, eco-tourism and other issues to conduct seminars and events. We hope such efforts enrich our community, and we thank township staff and elected officials for attending many of them.

But time spent in natural areas is no less valuable than dollars spent on tourism. Such time is an important contributor to physical health, mental health and social bonding. FWW is happy for the opportunity to alert more people to the value of spending time in nature. The vitality of our citizens is surely as important as the vitality of our economy.

HOWEVER, FWW also has contributed financially to the community. Last year, FWW used a \$3,000 grant to fund an extensive invasive and native-plant species [report](#) by Dr. Sara Kuebbing (now on the faculty at the Yale School of the Environment) and Dr. Marion Holmes (University of Pittsburgh Invasive Plant Laboratory), which we have shared with the White Township Stewardship Committee.

In 2020, FWW hired a forester to assess the health of White's Woods, and we have shared his reports with the township, as well.

This year we've commissioned a White's Woods tree-species inventory, along with an inventory of old-growth trees within the woods. Thanks to FWW, we have an 80-plus-year-old forest that can become old-growth. Thanks to our so-far-protected forest, our region has more carbon sequestration, better air quality, significant stormwater mitigation, regional temperature mediation, and a heavily shaded place to be in our ever-hotter summers.

BUT IT HAS NOT always been easy to work collaboratively with the township when:



\* The township took action to begin a 2020 timbering project in secret, despite the long-standing public interests of FWW and the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

\* FWW's repeated offers to collaborate, articulated in a series of nine letters beginning in April, 2020, have received no written or verbal response.

\* FWW's approaches at Board of Supervisor meetings are often rebuffed, if not ridiculed. Our questions are often ignored.

\* FWW has received no positive recognition from the township — for webinars, research, events in the woods — any of the items listed above.

\*The township has even denied FWW the opportunity to post White's Woods events on the new kiosk at the 12<sup>th</sup> Street entrance to the woods.

FWW may be the “loyal opposition” sometimes, but we work as hard as anyone to play a constructive role in our municipality and in our region.

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*Sara King, of White Township, is president of Friends of White's Woods. She is an emeritus professor of psychology at Saint Francis University.*

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