

# Township supervisors receive update on White's Woods stewardship plan

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Tom Peel / Indiana Gazette

White Township supervisors invited Stewardship Committee chairperson Barb Hauge to the supervisors meeting Wednesday to discuss the township's stewardship plan for White's Woods.

When the Stewardship Committee was established in late August 2021, supervisors gave the committee an 18-month time frame to develop a stewardship plan for White's Woods, according to Hauge.

“(For) the first six months, we were to have research and fact-finding,” Hauge said. “The second six months was to be community engagement, and then the last six months was to write the stewardship plan.”

Hauge said although the fact-finding/information-gathering phase has been delayed, the committee is steadily moving toward the project's community engagement phase.

“We're looking forward to engaging with the public,” Hauge said. “I think that's the most important part, to find out what the public wants to do with White's Woods, how they want it to be cared for and any improvements that they might be interested in having in the woods.”

The committee plans to set up a table at the Northern Appalachian Folk Festival for public engagement. The table will have a map of White's Woods with which the public can interact by “putting a sticker on what they like about White's Woods or possibly offering things they'd like, things they'd like to change (or) things they'd like to keep or update,” according to Hauge.

Hauge said that community members have expressed deep concerns over the prospect of timbering in White's Woods during committee meetings and there is a lack of trust between supervisors and residents who want to preserve the woods.

“One of the things that creates a lot of tension at the meetings and in speaking is the idea of timbering,” Hauge said, “and that word seems to create a lot of anxiety with the members of the public.”

Board member Gail McCauley emphasized that timbering was never part of the township's stewardship plan for White's Woods and still isn't.

“It was never, ever a timbering plan,” McCauley said. “It was never that. It never has been. I’m the one who brought it up in 2007, and it was always, always for dead, diseased or crowding trees. Never was it to be timbering. Unfortunately, that was a term that was used but never by the supervisors.”

Board vice chairperson Rich Gallo agreed with McCauley, stating that timbering “is not our intention” and never was.

Also Wednesday, supervisors unanimously approved accepting a \$9,704 quote from BR Electric and Audio Visual, of Indiana, to replace the S&T Arena’s original sound system.

Township recreation director Ryan Shaffer said much of the building’s technology and infrastructure are from when the arena was originally built. He said the sound system was from the mid-90s and in need of an upgrade.

“You know, we’ve rebuilt speakers, re-run speaker wires and made minor adjustments over the years,” Shaffer said, “(but) we’ve been chasing our tail recently with more and more issues. ... With the growth of hockey we’ve seen recently and the growth of the figure skating programs, I really do think it’s a good upgrade to get some better and more reliable sound quality.”

In other items, township manager Chris Anderson said he had a meeting with PennDOT to plan an emergency pipe repair near the intersection between Rustic Lodge and Indiana Springs roads, just west of Timber Springs Drive.

“There was a collapse in our sanitary sewer line, the old terracotta pipe,” Anderson said. “It’s about 14 feet deep.”

Anderson said repairing the pipe will be no easy task and will require a significant amount of work and coordination.

“This isn’t an easy fix,” Anderson said. “Right now, we have crews around the clock that are doing bypass pumping into the main intersector. ... We’re working on our traffic control plan and preparing to do this work next week.

“This is going to be a sizeable project. It’s going to be about a 20-foot section of pipe that needs replaced.”

Anderson said the township, as well as Indiana County’s Council of Governments, have not had any luck removing debris or resolving the issue. The township has narrowed down three contractors to complete the job.

“It’s going to be a contracted job due to the fact of how deep it is,” Anderson said. “There’s going to need to be shoring in place. There’s going to be a traffic control plan, flaggers. ... It will be an emergency repair, so we have to act on this pretty quickly.”

Supervisors made a number of other announcements during Wednesday’s meeting, including:

- A 125-horsepower, 1,048-pound electric motor at Cherry Run Lane's sanitary sewer pump station broke down last week. The township was able to purchase and receive a new motor in less than a week.

- The township's Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, through a Pennsylvania Department of Health grant, completed a draft for White Township's Complete Streets Policy. The draft was placed on the township's website for public comment, and the supervisors will host an open forum for public input during their second meeting in August.