

MEETING OF THE POLAND FOREST BOARD
Tuesday, February 28, 2017
Poland Village Hall
Joint meeting of Forest Board and Village Council,
plus Public Forum on proposed Forest Management Plan

PRESENT: Forest Board: James Brammer, Bob Elias, Frank Krygowski, Joe Mazur, Beth Queen, Mark Thompson, Elinor Zedaker
Village Council etc.: Bill Dunnivant, Jay Macejko, Tim Sicafuse, Linda Srnec, Leah Wilson, Chris Yash

GUESTS: Rick Miller (forester) plus over 60 local citizens

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

The minutes of the January 24, 2017 meeting were approved.

Elinor stated that Mark Thompson would describe the genesis of the proposed Management Plan (hereafter, abbreviated MP), Rick Miller would comment on his MP, Village Council members would ask their questions, then the others who wished to speak and who signed the list of speakers would be called in order, and limited to three minutes. Jay Macejko kept time.

Mark Thompson gave his reasons for hiring Mr. Miller. The Emerald Ash Borer problem demonstrated "imperfect knowledge." Mr. Miller was recommended by many and has experience Mark liked. Mark gave a short history of the Forest, noting that its land had been farmed and now contains a gas line and sewer lines. Mark said the Forest "looks unloved," and that the MP is a road map from which to pick and choose strategies.

Rick Miller summarized his experience, including 31 years as an ODNR forester, including in Mohican State Forest where he observed long term changes. He wants to care for the Forest as a system, including soil, water, etc. not just cut trees. He described portions of Mohican that had been logged yet were still beautiful. The MP strategies are based on objectives given to him (listed in the MP), and are not intended to be final, but instead to start people thinking. They are based on characteristics of different elevations, wetlands, flooding, etc. Mid-succession forests are good for certain types of birds and have more diverse species than old growth forests. Harvest is part of sustainable management, but should be done based only on Forest needs, not to make money. Big beautiful trees should be left.

Miller said the Village must define the Forest, must resolve its identity and name (since it's called by many names), then set a direction somewhere on a continuum ranging from utilization through conservation through preservation.

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM VILLAGE COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Bill Dunnivant: This process started with concerns about ash trees. I'm still concerned with liability from falling ash trees. Miller: Could cut ash trees back 100 feet from trails, plus cut big sycamore branches and diseased maples. Or just put up signs "Enter at your own risk." Warnings are sufficient. It's not worth it to salvage cut wood. Dunnivant: Council does not want that money. But people think removing wood will starve the Forest. Miller: People want to clean the woods but there are lots of reasons to leave the fallen trees. Let them go into the ground. Lauren Schroeder: Please keep answers shorter, to allow others time to speak.

Leah Wilson: What is the first thing you'd do? Miller: The Forest Board should establish a direction, purpose and mission statement.

Linda Srnec: Is it true that we shouldn't take down ash trees because there's not much danger? Miller: Best solution is to get them on the ground, if within a certain distance of a trail.

Christine Yash: Cut them down and let them lay? Miller: Fell them into the woods and let them lay.

Joe Mazur: The woods is deteriorating. We need to pay attention to it.

Tim Sicafuse: People have not seen the MP. It's now on the Village website. He received lots of emails recently. Council is not ready to approve the MP tonight. We're coming together to make this a better place for future generations.

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Richard Ciotola: He opposes prevention of forest succession. The Forest has been essentially undisturbed since 1977 and is therefore beautiful. Mature forests have value. The MP has no projected cost estimates, no revenue stream to pay for its implementation. The Village has higher priorities, for example paving roads.

Dorothy Butler: Based on Council's actions, she recommends people re-consider any philanthropy toward Poland Village. Her grandmother Grace Butler donated the bulk of Forest land, and the provisions of the deed (the Forest is to be "kept and preserved in its natural state in so far as possible") must be honored. And according to the deed, the Forest has a name: Butler Woods. Dorothy also read a letter from her uncle, Josh Butler. (Mr. Butler's letter is attached at the end of these minutes.)

(unknown speaker): Council needs to respect Grace Butler's wishes.

Attorney Michael Thompson: Stated his past work for the Village (chair of Planning Commission, chair of Stormwater Abatement, etc.). 1) The MP is impressive within its limits, but to a hammer, everything looks like a nail. The report is overly influenced by the objectives given by Council. 2) Regarding risk of fallen trees: Posting a warning sign removes 98% of liability. 3) Grace Butler left the land for a specific purpose. That must be honored. 4) Implementing the MP would be very expensive. It is not financially feasible.

Joe Mazur: An oil and gas lease would have brought in millions of dollars. Rick Miller: There is no way to get harvested logs out. The MP is just things he wants people to think about.

Philip Pillin: To those worried about liability – if it were easy to sue the Village, he would have sued over minor injuries. Asphalt grindings should not be used; with each flood they wash away into creeks or Bluebells. The Village has higher priorities for its money than this MP.

Dr. Thomas Diggins: The plan has elements of value, but don't remove all invasives, especially grapevine. Do not cut trees, or do only minimal felling. Plant new ones. Protect the sycamores. Many MP strategies are good for woodlots, but the Forest is a park. Miller: Cutting to open the canopy can increase food sources.

Patti Wanat: If the Forest "doesn't look loved," one needs to use new eyes. Trees fall and provide habitat, nutrients, micro-climates. She loves that the Forest is so natural. Those

wanting a garden can go to Fellows Riverside Gardens. Those wanting paved walkways can go to Boardman Park. Our Forest is special because it is so natural. There should be Advisory Committees made up of interested citizens, as is done by Mill Creek Metroparks.

Gordon Longmuir, president of the Friends of Poland Forest: The "Friends" work to preserve and protect the Forest. The MP was supposed to be available months ago on the Village website and in the public library, but it was just made available this week. Few in attendance have been able to read it. Slow down! Look at it point by point, don't accept it in its entirety. Go slow and come up with something all can live with.

Randy Jones: Previous Forest Board members and Forest volunteers deserve much praise. Thousands of hours of volunteer work have saved the Village thousands of dollars. Think hard about the MP. Eliminate those ideas in conflict with the Villages legal and moral obligations. Work for education, recreation and species protection.

Frank Krygowski: The Forest Board, which has management authority, provided MP goals; but those goals were altered without notice. The Board called for no harvest beyond high-risk ash trees, but the goal in the MP calls for sustainable harvest of the entire Forest. This change caused most of the complaints. Miller: The Village's ordinance calls for sustainable harvest of the Forest. But all MP suggestions are optional. Frank K: Whoever overturned the Board's objective should have first consulted with the Board. Old growth forests have value. Cuyahoga Valley National Park was farmland but the National Park Service allows it to progress to maturity. Our Forest has higher priorities: the failing pavilion chimney, Mauthe bridge maintenance, replacement of the plaques honoring Grace Butler and the Bremner family, etc.

Richard Walker: We love the Forest. Natural beauty draws us to it. We walk all trails and we know there is some risk. Those who love natural beauty willingly accept such risks.

Lauren Schroeder: Grace Butler's Forest Board was not necessarily in favor of the Village's Forest ordinance regarding sustainable harvest. On use and value of the Forest: an alternative strategy is "Minimal Management." He's written a position paper evaluating 20 uses and values. In not one case does this MP add value. The plan was "adopted," which is meaningless. Nobody was consulted, no alternatives were examined. This MP should be withdrawn.

Martha Morgan: This MP is a very rough draft. There is obviously much public interest and focus, but public input is lacking. Go slow. Allow for public input, consider a range of plans, get a range of opinions, and use that to put together a final plan.

Maryann Limmer: The Forest is a sacred space. We are just so lucky to have it as it is. Kids are lucky to be able to go into the Forest as it is. If it looks unloved, it will be cleaned by volunteers in the spring. Elinor Zedaker: Spring Cleanup and Mustard Pull is April 8.

Becky Rudzik: Many questions: 1) Forest Board adopted this? Unanimous? Frank K.? Frank: I did not vote in favor. 2) Is there other funding for this MP? Linda S: there is no funding. Bill D: By law the Village can't spend money on the Forest. There is the Forest Foundation to fund it. 3) Could wood harvest pay for improvements? How would you get ash logs out? Mark T: This is just a proposal, a road map. Rick Miller: It's possible to make some money once necessary infrastructure is built, but don't use it saying "we need money." He's not promoting timber management. Bill D: This MP is only an option we're investigating. 4) What are the other possibilities? Elinor Z.: We've had EnviroScience and Eastgate here. We'll pursue grants. The Foundation supports the Forest but can't fund everything. Tim S.: Ash trees are worthless now,

and we seriously doubt we'll harvest other trees. Republic Industries is helping. 5) Do they supply the ground asphalt for trails? She's against its use. [Shouts of agreement from others.] 6) What's the plan for smaller trails? Rick M: The MP is purposefully vague. Trails could be rerouted 50 feet from streams. Nothing's been decided, these are just recommendations, the MP doesn't specify harvesting trees, take one thing at a time. 7) Will there be advisory committees? Elinor Z: We've thought about advisory committees, just haven't gotten to it yet. The Amish proposal to harvest all ash got people interested and coming here.

Tim Francis: Explain the Forest Foundation and the Forest Board.

Charles Rumberg (Foundation president): The Foundation manages the endowment for the Forest. We're in the initial stages, there's no need to panic. There will be no clear cutting, no burning.

Lauren Schroeder: He's not confident this will be an open process. The MP was not made public, there is no alternative plan. Tim S: There is no law requiring this meeting, but we're listening to the public. LS: What are plans for citizen input? Elinor Z: We'll do our very best to bring in ideas. LS: There is no data showing removing dead trees lessens risk. Risk is near zero whether trees are removed or not. There is no difference in risk, but a big difference in the Forest.

Martha Morgan: Will the Forest Board have citizen input committees? Elinor Z: We'll talk about it. It will be an agenda item.

Rolaan Waldman: There's been flood damage. How can we stop the floods? Tim S: We're consulting with EnviroScience. They have grant writers, engineers, etc. We're talking with Mahoning County Sanitary Engineering.

Frank Krygowski: The main problem is the discrepancy between the Butler deed and the Village ordinance. Grace Butler said in 1934 that the Forest was for park purposes only, keep the Forest as natural as possible. Four years later the Village passed an ordinance calling instead for harvest and maximum annual revenue. The ordinance conflicts with the deed, and Grace Butler probably objected. In 78 years the harvest provision has never been used for maximizing revenue. Rick Miller: There was a harvest in the 1950s. Frank K: That was used only to buy more acreage, not for annual revenue. The ordinance should be changed. Bill D: Doesn't the deed call for sustainable harvest? Frank K: Definitely not! I'll provide the text. [The wording of the Butler deed was later given to Mr. Dunnivant.]

Rob Dunham: 1) Few people now attend the Forest Board meetings. 2) Until a direction is decided, you can't discuss benefits and detriments. 3) The discrepancy between the Butler Deed and the Village Ordinance certainly needs to be addressed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Frank Krygowski, secretary pro tem

Attached: Josh Butler letter

NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY MARCH 28, 2017 AT 7:30 PM

To the Poland Village Council and Poland Municipal Forest Board:

Sarah Grace Heath Butler was my grandmother. I grew up a few miles from her home at 73 Audubon Lane in the Village of Poland and spent many days and weekends there. After her death in 1973, I lived in that home. It was originally a Sears Roebuck cottage, built to face an area of woods that adjoins what is now the Poland Municipal Forest. My grandmother's yard, with flower beds and grape arbor, was well-tended but the wooded area was left alone.

My grandmother believed, and taught me, that nature takes care of itself. In her woods, as trees fell, they were left to the devices of nature. Other trees from the same woods grew in their place. To cut a tree was contrary to the natural cycle of a woods.

There were things I did not know about my grandmother, but some things about her I knew very well. My grandmother, Sarah Grace Heath Butler, believed that her forested land "... should be maintained in its natural state so far as possible." Those were her terms to those who would be charged with the care of what is now the Poland Municipal Forest.

Those terms must be honored. Anything less will be an abnegation of her memory and of her gift.

Joseph G. Butler IV

February 27, 2017

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