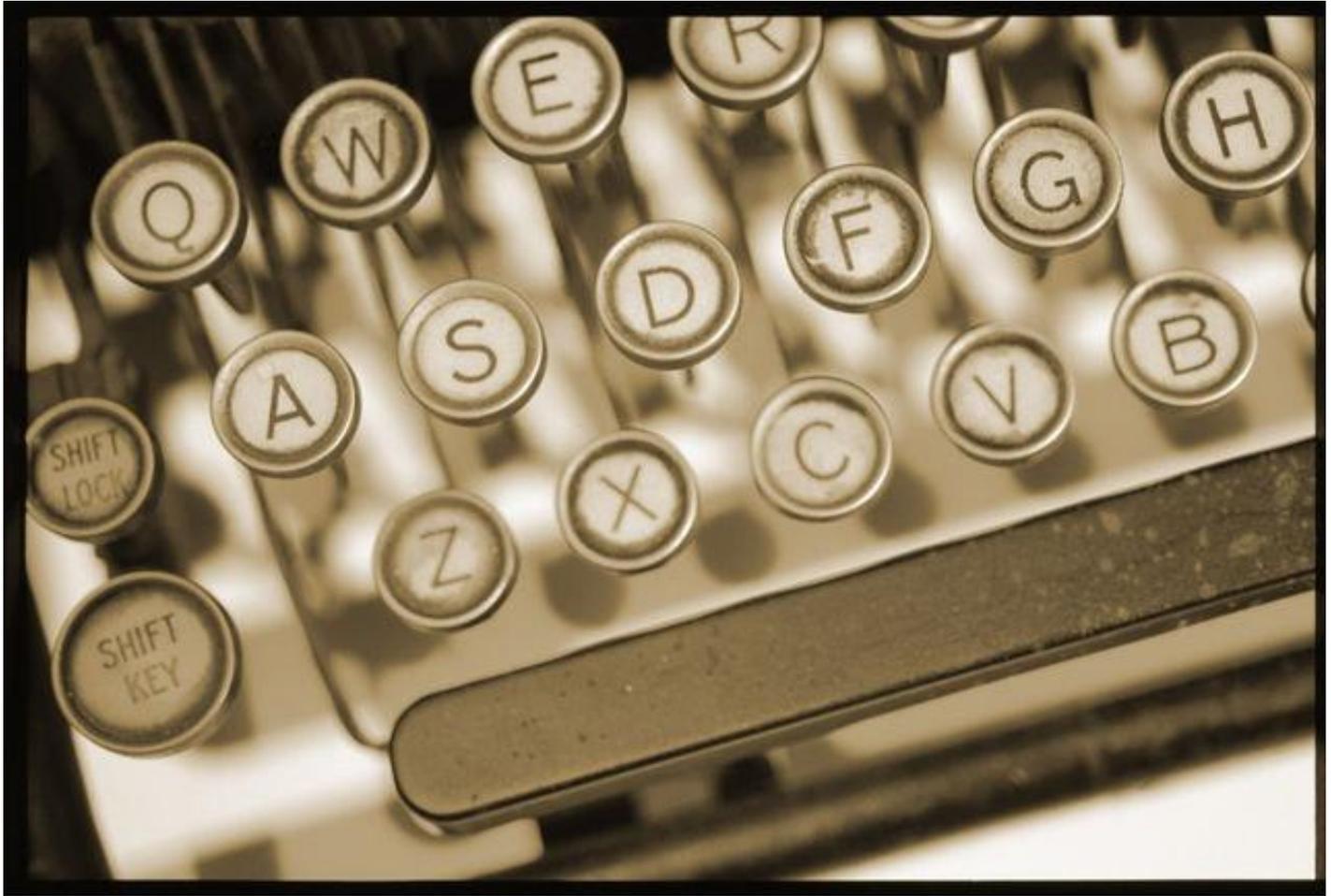


https://www.indianagazette.com/opinion/public-deserves-input-on-white-s-woods/article_13f335c2-9142-11ea-a4c9-2bbb12ceeadf.html

Public deserves input on White's Woods

May 9, 2020



In this difficult period of lockdown and shutdown, one of Indiana's greatest resources is the White's Woods Nature Center. In the routine of the COVID-19 day, a hike in White's Woods becomes a necessity to maintaining a sense of well-being, to walk the dog and to be reassured by nature.

However, now in the midst of this national crisis, a great concern for the very life of the White's Woods Nature Center is raised anew. White Township supervisors have met, without open public input, to contract a company to do the removal of invasive vegetation and the substantial removal of select hardwoods. Many mature, healthy trees have been targeted for cutting. It is widely felt that the supervisors took advantage of the COVID-19 crisis to steamroll this action, fearing a repeat of effective public resistance as experienced in 2008.

Now as then, the fear lies in the fact that this is a first step toward the erosion of the woods as a public nature sanctuary toward a high-end residential development. Without a public hearing on the matter and within this air of secrecy from the township, speculation abounds. Only through a series of open forums can the public and the township supervisors come together to an agreeable reassurance an suitable action.

White's Woods may well need maintenance in facing invasive vegetation, but is this masking another agenda? Why are hardwoods signaled for removal? How would the logistics of this massive operation affect the habitat? How many trees would be cut in creating the logging roads necessary to reach trees deep in the forest? Which methods would be used for removals? Are we understanding that fallen trees are critical to the ongoing life in the woods as they form nutrients and shelters for animals and insects?

White's Woods Nature Center is the national park of Indiana.

I urge the White Township supervisors to design a way for public input on this issue by constructing a "safe" method of public discussion. To proceed without it is irresponsible.

Chuck Olson

Indiana