Meeting Notes – Oct. 26, 2021:

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, October 27. Rotarian Brandon Ison was responsible for program and invited Dr. Tom Gallagher from the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Services to be the speaker. Dr. Gallagher spoke on the Downed Timber Initiative. After Hurricane Michael, a category 5 storm, hit three years ago (October 2018), it left in its path a lot of downed timber. The estimated value of the timber was $5.6 billion. It was not possible to absorb that much volume in a short period of time, since there is only a 3-4 month window to harvest the wood after a hurricane or other disaster. The Downed Timber Initiative was born from that need.

Harvesting the downed timber was a challenge. Some of the trees were completely on the ground, some were broken off. It is much easier to harvest the timber when the trees are laid completely on the ground. There were also not enough loggers available to harvest the quantity of timber. Machinery was available to help, but the machinery was typically cost prohibitive ($900,000.00 per machine) and did not quite meet the needs of a situation like that. Those particular machines also cut the wood to log length, not tree length that is what was in demand. Dr. Gallagher explained they were in the process of combining two machines into one that would have a felling head which could be rented out to areas in need after any kind of disaster. The projected cost of the machine would be in the $150,000.00 range.

Dr. Gallagher also spoke on the uses and advantages of cross-laminated timber (CLT). It is fire resistant and very strong. It is currently used in the construction of multi-story buildings.

Diane Sherriff