

FREE – TAKE ONE

4 Corners News & Views for Ohio's Cradle of Education

Common Sense Where Main Meets Wooster

Bowling Green, Ohio

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BG Financial Crisis Looms

Fifteen years ago the geniuses that run Bowling Green became frustrated because the city did not have enough tax money coming in to spend money like they wanted. The citizens would not vote to pay higher taxes so the so-called “city fathers” decided to do an end run.

For the geniuses it was not enough for Bowling Green to be a university community, its unique distinction over cities like Findlay, Fremont, Tiffin, Defiance and Napoleon. **They wanted BG to be a factory town like Findlay** and maybe, deep down, wanted BG to become a Republican-dominated city like Findlay instead of one where the parties are even-steven.

If they could just get more industries to come to town, they could collect more city income tax and have all the money they needed to finance their grand projects such as the \$6 million downtown redevelopment, the \$6 million East Wooster St. widening, and the \$4 million Community Center.

The owners and executives of industries do not like to pay property tax and they like to figure ways around paying city income tax, but they don't mind if their employees pay city income tax.

The BG (which stands these days for Beware Government) brain trust offered welfare in the form of property tax abatements and equipment tax abatements and gave away utilities and infrastructure to lure these industries to town.

And the Beware Government brain trust (BGBT) figured they would need to hold property taxes down overall to attract industries, so they went to the BG City Schools and asked the board to go for a school income tax rather than a property tax increase.

The first time the school income tax was on the ballot, it lost. It barely passed the second time. Since there was an 18-month delay in collecting school income tax compared to property tax collections, **the school district lost \$1.9 million, the lion's share of the \$3.2 million deficit** that plunged the school district into chaos and put it in a spin from which it has not recovered.

So the BGBT had its way with the schools – running them into the ground to satisfy its selfish interests of having more city tax money with which to play – and began developing available farmland on the west and north sides of the city – not the sacrosanct west side where the BGBT hangs out and golfs.

With the exception of the Cooper Standard expansion and one or two other solid-looking plants, what the BGBT gave us was a bunch of nondescript aluminum-sided buildings with a relatively small number of not particularly well paid employees. Some of the “industries” reneged on their tax abatement payments to the schools (another little BGBT gimmick that harmed the schools), some never met their goals for number of employees, and some closed.

All this had the effect of giving city coffers a short-term financial hype, but a decade later City Hall of Beware Government is nearing a financial crisis because of overspending. The safety forces are costing more than their special income taxes provide and the Community Center is an empty disaster. One of the newly elected councilmen already hinted that finances need to be studied. Four of the Council members of a year ago are gone. The mayor is a lame duck. Get ready for higher taxes.

Beware Government indeed!

-- John K. Hartman, publisher, *4 Corners News & Views*, John.Hartman@dacor.net

Voters Reject School Bond Issue Despite Sentinel Cheerleading

For three days the week before the November election, the *Sentinel-Tribune* ran one-sided, exaggerated articles on page one attempting to show what bad shape the Bowling Green City Schools facilities were in and seeking to stampede voters into passing the measure.

Instead of providing objective journalism that gave both sides of the issue and stating its opinion on its editorial page as is journalistic convention, the *Sentinel* tried to fool the public. Of course, the *Sentinel* is one of the few newspapers its size in the country that does not provide a daily editorial page. It would not want to over stimulate the minds in a university community.

The *Sentinel* and the school board had 38% of the voters in their corner. 62% said NO.

Build Memorial For Thoughtless Government

The Library Board has backed off on its request for rezoning the plots of land on North Church Street to build a parking lot. **So the sandbar will remain a sandbar for a while.**

Of course, the board is holding an opinion by the County Prosecutor that it does not need a rezoning decision by City Council in order to pave over the sandbar and complete the trashing of the neighborhood and the show of disrespect for the neighbors.

Maybe the Library Board is planning another early morning disturbance of the solitude of the neighborhood without warning for the ceremonial laying of the asphalt.

I have a better idea. City Hall takes over the land – uses eminent domain if it must – and creates a unique memorial. A memorial that would bring visitors from around the country and around the world. Just what Bowling Green needs to attract the visitors that it pays \$35,000 a year to someone to attract.

Erect The Memorial For Thoughtless Government in the middle of a small wooded park.

It has a foreboding ring, doesn't it?

It would be a reminder that in Bowling Green we do not let misguided, though well-meaning, public officials to run roughshod over our neighborhoods. When they try, we shut them down.

People from all over would flock to see where the You Are God-Damned Right It Will Not Be In My Neighborhood Or In Your Neighborhood Either movement started.

Once the factory farm people got wind of it (and the wind does smell near their places), they would close up shop and flee the county if not the state.

Of course, it is the official policy of the Ohio Department of Agriculture to promote factory farms. Another reason why Gov. Bob Taft has the lowest popularity of any governor in the country, **why Randy Gardner and Bob Latta (our job-switching legislators) are running for cover**, and why Betty Montgomery, Jim Petro and Ken Blackwell will be looking for work in January 2007.

We could hire one of them as curator of **The Memorial For Thoughtless Government.**

Raze City Hall, Move Offices To Community Center

One solution to the financial dilemma facing Bowling Green would be to better use existing facilities.

The \$4 million Community Center that has about one-quarter of its projected membership is largely vacant.

Why not move city offices there to recoup the investment?

Meanwhile, close City Hall and raze it. It truly has become an eyesore, has little architectural value and would be a lovely parking lot for the library and senior center.

Eventually, The Memorial For Thoughtless Government will require overflow parking, too.

West Side Neighbors Get City Largesse, Not Downtown Neighbors

Rule No. 1 in Bowling Green. The West Side neighborhoods get taken care of first.

A developer wanted to build on 19 acres off of Sand Ridge Road.

The neighbors did not want it.

So the generous thoughtful folks in City Hall stepped up to the plate and borrowed \$470,000 and put up with some other "found" money to purchase the property for \$585,000.

Of course, the neighbors promise to pay the city back. Someday. Maybe.

I'm sure City Hall will make the same kind of deal with the Library Sandbar neighbors.

Tell 'em you're from the west side, Kim.

Sentinel Prefers Mindless Features To Properly Honoring Deceased

Did you see the front page of the *Sentinel-Tribune* Nov. 28? Across the bottom was a story and a family picture of some goof traveling across the country on an independent quest for president. He is a former journalist.

Meanwhile, readers had to turn to page two to find a story about the tragic death of the beloved Ruth Larabee. Her obituary did not belong on page two. It belonged on page one. It was certainly more important to Wood County readers than a kooky left-wing presidential candidate. And the obituary lacked a picture. In 2004, Ruth Larabee sat with President Bush at an event at Owens Community College. Surely the *Sentinel* had a copy.

4 Corners News & Views You Read It Here First Tip Of The Month: Jerry Springer won't run.

Coming in 2006 To 4 Corners: Tom Noe and BGSU. What The Heck Was Going On?

4 Corners News & Views of Bowling Green was founded June 1, 2005 by John K. Hartman, its publisher. Its purpose is to provide additional news and points-of-view to citizens of Bowling Green in the belief that thorough awareness of and discussion of issues makes for a better community. It will be available free at various drop-off points in Bowling Green and by email by sending your email address and request to John.Hartman@dacor.net. Patrons may support *4 Corners News & Views* for \$10 per issue. Ads may be purchased for \$20 per issue. Comments and submissions are welcome. Contact information: John.Hartman@dacor.net ; 419-352-8180; 1400 Wren Road, BG, OH 43402. Back issues at www.wcnet.org/~randers/liberalbg/. Copyright 2005, John K. Hartman, All Rights Reserved.