

FREE - TAKE ONE - 'LOT' EDITION

# BG 4 Corners News & Views

Common Sense Where Main Meets Wooster

Bowling Green, Ohio

Vol.2, Nos.1-4

Sept., 2006

## Last Hope For Library Lot Foes: BG Council President Sets Sept. 5 Meeting

After hearing Aug. 21 from some of us Bowling Green residents concerned about the library's paving ambitions, City Council President Megan Newlove scheduled a meeting for 7 p.m. Tuesday Sept. 5 to consider doing something about it.

**The committee of the whole meeting in Council's chambers may be the last hope for the many citizens who oppose the parking lot at the corner of Church and Court streets.**

I spoke at the Council meeting Aug. 21 after I realized that the Wood County District Library Board and its director had become intransigent and unyielding in their desire to demolish, strip and pave over the neighborhood to the west of the library building. See page 2 for the details about my discouraging visit to a library board "public meeting."

I made the following statement to City Council Aug. 21:

"I have come here today to ask you to intervene on behalf of the neighbors of City Hall and the Library and on behalf of the entire community.

**"A series of unfortunate events has resulted in the demolition of a nearby property with the stated intent by the Library board to turn it into a parking lot. The letter and spirit of the City's planning process that includes such matters coming before City Council apparently is being circumvented. In other words, the public that you have been elected to represent is being excluded from the process.**

"I am here to appeal to you to exercise both your legal authority and powers of persuasion to change the course of this matter.

**"First, I am asking you to employ an independent counsel to litigate the matter of the city's authority to rezone the property in question.** Since both the prosecutor and the city attorney have given their "opinions" that the city has no role, I urge you get an outside opinion by hiring an independent counsel. I would suggest that the independent counsel begin by asking for an injunction to prevent any pavement from being installed until all legal appeals have been exhausted.

**"Second, I am asking you to initiate discussions with the Library board about releasing to the library the nine parking spaces in the existing library lot now controlled by the city in return for the library canceling its paving plans.** In addition, I would suggest that the city consider reserving 10-20 parking spots in the municipal parking lot to the immediate south of the existing library lot for library patron use.

**"I regret to say that parking mistakenly has become the whipping boy blamed for business occupancy problems in the downtown and that these alleged problems are unduly influencing the Library board's decision-making. I submit that the right mix of tenants and promotion would fill every downtown building with existing parking. In other parts of town, there are lots of empty storefronts with free parking by the door."**

I was honored that Dr. William Feeman and Kim Layden added their voices in support of City Council intervening on behalf of the community at the Aug. 21 meeting.

I hope that City Council realizes that the library board cannot complete its paving ambitions fast enough. Only quick action will prevent neighborhood destruction right in City Council's backyard.

-- John K. Hartman, Editor and Publisher

(OVER)

## Library Board Off In Own World, Ignores Public

I made a mistake by attending the Wood County District Library Board meeting in the early morning hours of Wednesday Aug. 9. I had intended to have a rational discussion with the board in hopes of dissuading it from constructing a parking lot at the corner of Court and Church streets.

**What I found was a “meeting in public” not a “public meeting.” The distinction is that in the latter undertaking the public is welcomed and its feedback sought. In the former – what I encountered Aug. 9 – the public is not welcome and ignored.**

I arrived a few minutes before the 7:30 a.m. starting time and took a seat in the library conference room. Two clipboards were passed to me. One asked me to sign in and the other asked me to sign up if I wanted to speak. I signed them both and passed them on. I also received a copy of the agenda but no copies of attachments that the board members had. **There was no spot for public comment on the agenda.**

The first big discussion was about whether or not the library board should continue to own the red house next to the product-of-demolition sandbar at Court and Church streets. It had been offered \$125,000 for it by a woman who wanted to live there with her son. The board declined.

The second big discussion was about whether to accept a \$150,000 donation from developer Bob Maurer and whether the donation required the library to keep the red house. A lawyerly written resolution skirted the issue and the board voted to accept the donation. Wink, wink. Nod, nod.

Another board member talked about remodeling the red house for library offices and community events though the cost of needed repairs appeared to approach \$100,000. **Is the board unaware of the many empty storefronts and buildings that could be used for offices and events in conveniently located downtown Bowling Green?**

The board tiptoed around the issue of paving over the “sandbar,” mentioning only briefly that engineering contracts were being prepared and not yet knowing what it would cost.

**I got the impression that the board can’t issue bids, spend the money and get the parking lot built fast enough – figuring wrongly that once the dirty deed is done the public will move on to other things and they can go back to meeting without the meddlesome public present.**

At 9 o’clock seeing no further business the board chair announced adjournment. He never bothered to ask if anybody wanted to speak nor did he look at the clipboards for signers.

So I interjected: “Excuse me. Some of us are here to speak.” The board chair relented and we interlopers were granted a grudging audience.

I began by asking the board members to introduce themselves and identify the means through which each was appointed to the board. Some they were selected by county commissioners and others said county judges.

But all you can do is blame the appointing authorities. **There is no provision to recall the board members if you are unhappy with their performance.** Furthermore, there is no provision to force a vote to reduce the library bond issue that was passed in August 2001 to fund the renovation of the structure that reopened three years ago. Proceeds from this \$5 million issue are being used to buy and pave over the property at Court and Church. Not what we thought we were voting for 5 years ago.

**Put another way: there is no direct way for citizens to force the library board to change its course. This is where City Council must step in on Sept. 5 and hire independent counsel.**

***BG 4 Corners You Read It Here First Tip Of Month: Ohio Turnpike free by 2008!***

***BG 4 Corners Lamest Claim Of Month: Betty Montgomery issuing negative audit of charter schools to try to court favor with Ohio public school teachers after allowing billions of STRS investment losses.***

*BG 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](mailto:John.Hartman@dacor.net). Patrons may support *BG 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](mailto:John.Hartman@dacor.net); 419-352-8180; 1400 Wren Road, BG, OH 43402. Back issues at [www.dacor.net/john.hartman](http://www.dacor.net/john.hartman) Copyright 2006, John K. Hartman, All Rights Reserved.