

# City, Call Citi

It took nearly nine years for what seemed inevitable at the time to be in the verge of happening.

That would be the sale of once Mid-Am now Sky Bank and the liquidation of its headquarters in Bowling Green.

The city of Bowling Green will lose 300 jobs and several buildings in downtown BG will become vacant, according to published reports.

Huntington Bancshares, headquartered in guess where ... Columbus, and Sky Financial Group, announced a merger that amounts to a takeover by the Huntington in December. The deal is to be closed in late summer 2007.

**Sky's CEO Marty Adams, who in 1998 orchestrated the merger between Mid-Am and his Citizens Bancshares of eastern Ohio, apparently let Bowling Green's interests slide in return for becoming CEO of the Huntington in 2009.**

Former Mid-Am CEOs Ashel Bryan and Ed Reiter, both of whom once praised Adams' ability, apparently were powerless to protect the hometown's interests, having left the bank's board of directors years ago. All they have for consolation is what they made off their millions of dollars of Mid-Am stock and a 25 percent premium on the Sky stock that remains in their hands along with all other Sky stockholders.

**BG's Mayor John Quinn and its seven City Council members were quick to do nothing publicly to head off this economic disaster for the city and its downtown, whose major growth is in vacancy signs.**

Instead, they started talking about the Sky Bank headquarters building on South Main Street as a possible new city hall with oodles of the downtown's most precious commodity, in their eyes, parking. Who cares if we have no taxpaying businesses with taxpaying employees in downtown Bowling Green as long as we have the blessed parking!

**Too bad the public-minded and public-spirited Library board and its democratic director did not wait a few months before launching neighborhood destruction in the name of parking. With the Sky Bank abandonment and City Hall relocation, the Library could have tripled its parking capacity and left the trees and the squirrels alone. What did they know and when did they know it regarding Sky's demise? Most Bowling Green insiders have suspected Sky's takeover and departure were only a matter of time.**

If the mayor and the council members were really looking after the city's interests, they would have contacted Citigroup (known as Citi), JP Morgan Chase, HSBC and other U.S. based megabanks and tried to interest them in a friendly takeover of Sky Bank that would preserve the jobs and office buildings' occupancy in downtown Bowling Green. Of course, they would not have wanted to have hurt the feelings of their friends at Huntington and its downtown edifice.

**Just in case city officials or any loyal Bowling Greener wants to make contact, here are some megabank email addresses: [citybank.com](mailto:citybank.com), [jpmorganchase.com](mailto:jpmorganchase.com), [banking.us.hsbc.com](mailto:banking.us.hsbc.com).**

Sky and Huntington have written into the deal a penalty payment of \$125 million to one or the other in case a big rival comes calling. That is pocket change to the megabanks.

# 'Switcher' Gardner's Proposal Stinks

Consider the fate of Bowling Green's erstwhile state senator, Randy Gardner.

His beloved Republican Party took a licking in the November elections and his Bowling Green buddy, golfing and dining partner Tom Noe is behind bars for the next two decades (barring pardons).

While Gardner has been a second, third or fourth banana in the leadership of the state legislature in his 17 years, he has never been the top banana and probably never will be.

**Gardner faces another awkward "switch" with largely silent partner, State Rep. Bob Latta. They traded jobs six years to avoid term limits (never mind the voters' intent) and in 2008 they face the same situation. Either switch or be gone from Columbus.**

In Wood County, they have little to fear. The GOP owns the electorate for county races and state legislative races in Wood County. While Democrat Ted Strickland took 59 percent of the county's votes for governor and Marc Dann grabbed 52 percent against local fav Betty M., Republican Tim Brown got 52-plus percent for commissioner and Latta coasted to a 57 percent win.

But Latta may be reluctant to run for state senate in 2008 because two thirds of the votes are outside Wood County in less friendly to Republicans Ottawa County and parts of Lucas and Erie counties. Not to mention State Rep. and Ohio Democratic Party Chair Chris Redfern is term limited and seriously eyeing the seat.

Latta may prefer to run for county commissioner. Gardner may prefer to run for county commissioner and avoid the insults of dealing with the Democratic governor. That leaves incumbents Republican Jim Carter and Democrat Who Votes Republican Alvin Perkins on the bubble. Brown could run for state representative or state senator in 2008 and still keep his post. Republicans from other counties might be heard from as well as legislator contenders.

**Democrats in Wood County? Until we get over being nice and accepting leftovers from Republicans and get a political gut-fighter like U.S. Rep Rahm Emanuel, who led the national Democratic takeover, to run our party and our campaigns, we are stuck as also-rans.**

Gardner has been a flurry of activity since the election results came in, indicating a keen interest in extending his elective career by either returning to the House or running for commish. Wood County has been his focus.

Most notably, Gardner is trying desperately to put the factory farm issue behind him as it has grown in intensity and threatened to fracture his political base in the countryside.

In a goofy proposal that reminds of the wacky plan years ago to cheaply take the sulfur out of coal, Gardner wants to burn the cow manure from the factory farms and turn it into energy. Commissioner Brown, who took a political hit on this issue in November, is Gardner's partner in this stinky mess.

**The so-called bio-digester is nothing more than a diversion to take the voters minds away from the fact that central Wood County is being taken over by factory farms that threaten to pollute our air and water. And I believe the stench bombs will kill housing and economic development in central Wood County, a disaster even to worry Republicans.**

Gardner -- already at odds with small fishing businesses that will be done in by the arrival of Bass Pro in Rossford courtesy of Gardner-backed tax breaks -- is trying to put a happy face on a growing political problem for the party that runs Wood County, the Republican Party. An ex-county GOP chair himself, Gardner is Wood County's best-known leader now that Betty M. was involuntarily retired. He does not want his constituents to hold their noses shut when they think of him.

**BG 4 Corners Tip Of The Month: While City loses \$500,000 a year on rec center and competing private businesses struggle, city could not sell its interest in rec center for half of \$4 million it cost.**

**BG 4 Corners Lamest Coverage Of The Month: The Sentinel Tribune refers to the neighborhood destruction for the Library parking lot as "progress." Only a paper edited by a former Library board member would be so lame. Reads like Karl Rove is writing headlines.**

*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. 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

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