

“IF WE CANNOT RECONCILE ALL OPINIONS, LET US ENDEAVOR TO UNITE ALL HEARTS.”

NEW-HARMONY, (IND.) April 1, 2018

## GOVERNOR SIGNS HARMONY WAY BRIDGE AUTHORITY LEGISLATION!

*by Dan Barton, Publisher*

As most of you know from last month's Gazette, House Bill 1290 creating the Harmony Way Bridge Authority, passed 77 - 0 in the Indiana House. It has now been signed by Governor Holcomb making it a done deal and the law of the land. Thanks Governor Holcomb!

Lora Arneberg says to the Gazette, "We're still working on doing a ceremonial signing for photo ops, but it has been signed. It's a big step forward and now we're starting to hear from the Illinois newspapers." She thought that might be a good sign. I responded back to her, "Sounds like it could be. Everybody wants to go with a winner!"

It's time the folks in Illinois got together and pushed Springfield to get route 14 open again between the Harmony Way Bridge and Crossville, Illinois. Let's all get behind the Bridge Committee and Authority to bring back our community connections here in Indiana and Illinois.

I know it has been quite a few years ago that legislation was attempted to establish a Bridge Authority and it failed. Not this time. This is really a big deal! I admit it. I had my doubts. Didn't think that it would get this far. So I'm really impressed. It's a time for dancing on the bridge, that's for sure. Wish I could dance!

"The next step in this process," as explained by Ms. Arneberg at the March New Harmony Town Council meeting, "is to have the ownership of the Harmony Way Bridge transferred from the White County Bridge Commission to the Harmony Way Bridge Authority." She said, "We now have a democratically elected, independent government entity,

with Commissioners elected to four year terms. It will be tax exempt and eligible for federal grants for the first time ever. Senator Jim Tomes and State Representative Wendy McNamara helped get this done quickly. So if anybody gets a chance to send a thank-you note, they should do so. Please do that."

Ms. Arneberg also stated, "The Committee and I will continue to work until all the appointments are made. Once the Bridge Authority is in place they will take over at that point."

There was then a lengthy discussion about Section 4 (b) of House Bill 1290 as it applies to dismissal and reappointments on the Bridge Authority. Council President Alvin Blaylock, Councilman David Flanders and Town Attorney Erin Bauer, were concerned about whether appointments that the New Harmony Town Council makes to the Authority could be arbitrarily removed from the Harmony Way Bridge Authority without their involvement. The language in that section seemed ambiguous to them. (You can find this House Bill by simply inputting Indiana House Bill 1290 on the internet and it is easy to find. I found it. If I can find it anyone can. Then you can read the language for yourself.)

The end result of this long exchange was that Lora said she will look at the language again but that the same rule regarding removals and replacements applies to everyone, including the Governor's appointees. The rule reads, members can be removed with or without cause, and that created some consternation with Town Council members.

Town Zoning Administrator and Bridge Committee Member Rod Clark, who was in the audience, volunteered that, "Irrespective, the Bill has passed. Whatever the language is, is what the language is. If the Governor signs

it, it means the Bill has passed. The Legislature is adjourned, so you're not going to get it amended now."

Lora said that it could be amended at a later time. She added, "I was told that it would just be an amendment to this legislation. So the Governor will sign into law whatever is passed by the Legislature. That'll happen very quickly. I will find out what final language was in there. Then if anyone wants to pursue an amendment, you can."

Kudos to Lora Arneberg and the Bridge Committee for a job well done!

## THE FLANDERS AMENDMENT

*by: Dan Barton, Publisher*

The Flanders Amendment to Chapter 17.52 of the Town Ordinances has been made into law. Now, no longer, after 200 years of continuous tradition, practice, precedent and Town Law can any business or building owner in the Historic District freely use their building's first floor storefront for residential use. The New Harmony Town Council passed the new restrictive amendment 3 - 1 at the March 2018 Council public meeting.

Not that first floor residences were ever commonly done or that it had become a trend for the future. I proved that point beyond a shadow of doubt, but someone might be thinking about doing it and we can't have that. The New Harmony Plan Commission identified two partially occupied first floor storefronts or storebacks being used. That's two out of what Councilman David Flanders described at the Council Meeting as a District with 35 buildings.

This is the threat that had about a half dozen business people in that

neighborhood up in arms and were determined to give up the right to use their property as they saw fit. Well it's done! No crying over spilt milk here. No crying in my beer. I and approximately four citizens of New Harmony lost the battle to preserve the old Chapter 17.52. No blaming the Rooskies. No right wing or left wing conspiracy. Just Democracy and a large touch of unfounded fear.

Fear is not an uncommon characteristic in American politics and is often manipulated by politicians. That seemed to be the prime motivating factor in the passage of this new law. But at the same time there was no strong public support to preserve the old ordinance either. Only four of us came to bat for holding on to the old Chapter 17. However there was enough support on the other side to abolish the 200 year old tradition in New Harmony, and fear has won the day.

This is history and that's why I decided to do this short epilogue. The Town Council voted as follows to adopt this new provision:

Town Council President Alvin Blaylock  
NO  
Town Councilman David Flanders  
YES  
Town Councilman Gary Watson  
YES  
Town Councilwoman Virginia Alsop  
YES  
Town Councilman Roger Wade  
ABSENT

## NEW HARMONY TOWN COUNCIL - SCHOOL PROPERTY CENTER STAGE

by: Dan Barton, Publisher

It was a longer Town Council meeting than usual on March 19th. In fact my typewritten notes went eight pages and still didn't include everything. The New Harmony Gazette is only four pages and I get two. It will stay that way!

The future existence of the abandoned New Harmony School is very much in

danger. None of the members of the New Harmony Town Council have yet "Moved" to list this property with a Commercial Real Estate Broker, not at this meeting and not in the six previous years that they've owned it. That is a fairly simple objective to reach. Call every Commercial agent in SW Indiana and decide which one is the hungriest, then get them moving. A lot quicker and more effective than escorting Demolition Contractors all over the property and building. A lot more efficient than printing up a couple of hundred RFP's and holding your breath for the right buyer. That's if they are sent out!

Though Council President Alvin Blaylock stated that, "All options are on the table!" he's reported to the public that he has had meetings with Demolition and Development contractors about a half a dozen times, but not once with a Commercial Real Estate Agency. Times a-wastin'! Summer is on the way and we'll probably be hearing that it costs too much to run the HVAC to prevent more mold damage. The Council has now frittered away the months of January, February and March without any of the Councilpeople making a motion to put the property on the market. They won't meet again until the latter part of April while they wait for Blaylock's unnamed contractors to come back with a price for demolition.

At the March meeting Councilman David Flanders presented a few questions to President Blaylock about going forward; "Have you devised a process on how you would like to proceed with the demolition or other potential uses?" - "Are you going to handle it piecemeal as it comes in?" - "Do you have a proposal of whether we should be actively soliciting proposals similar to the RFPs like the Council back in 2015?" - "Is there a process for how we might evaluate the use issue?"

Blaylock replied, "I might caution you, David, if you get into some of this it could cost the Council lots of money." Blaylock was not forthcoming on how that would come about.

Flanders also stated to Blaylock, "I

might mention that the Town is a member of Southwestern Indiana Development Partnership. Andrew Wilson is president. I've been in contact with him to see what resources they might have, such as consulting or advertising services. They've offered their assistance but it's up to us to respond to them or to Brittany Johnson who is the Executive Director. I just wanted to see if there is a procedure you were looking to follow or until we find something satisfactory before we entertain the first Demolition estimate that comes in?"

Blaylock answered, "No. I am not going to act immediately on a first Demolition estimate. All options are on the table and will be for a while. As far as if we was going to Demo(lish), and the prices come in, we would have to appropriate money and all that."

Later during the "Open Forum" audience members also made statements and posed questions to President Blaylock about the future of the New Harmony School property:

Rodney Clark, Town Zoning Administrator asked, "Did you go to a Commercial Real Estate Agent to try to sell the school property? Because I asked some people at the Indiana Chamber of Commerce how you put property like that on the market. They said that's the Commercial Real Estate Agents job. They put it out in a Commercial Listing. So for what it's worth, are we waiting for people to come to us? I suggest that we list it with a Commercial Real Estate Agent. Give them the time to put it out on the market for anybody looking for a Commercial Site. That's what a Real Estate Agent does. I'd like to suggest that you list it with a Real Estate Agent."

Blaylock responded by making a reference to the 2015 Request For Proposals (RFPs) that the previous Council sent out in 2015. Mr. Blaylock has not produced a list of individuals or entities to whom those RFPs were sent. We don't in fact know at this time if any but the Working Men's Institute's were actually mailed. The WMI was the only response to the RFPs.

Councilwoman Virginia Alsop then diverted the conversation to a reference she made about a Development Diagram

prepared years ago by an architect whom Flanders identified as Kennedy Hutson. Though the Councilmembers called it a "Study," I call it a "Diagram," since it was not a statistical analysis or an urban planning analysis, but a depiction of how a housing development would look based on three options or schemes, as they were titled.

Blaylock called the diagram a Study also. He said that Kennedy Hutson called for demolition of the building or to turn it over to development or into green space. Hutson was paid to do the diagram, Blaylock said. According to information that the Gazette has received, Hutson was reportedly paid \$55,000 for his time. Blaylock also said that Kennedy Hutson indicated that, "What WMI wanted to do, they deemed it wouldn't work."

As yet the New Harmony Gazette has not confirmed that the Kennedy Hutson report determined that the Working Men's Institute (WMI) project was unworkable. It is not surprising however, that Huston would recommend a housing development. Hutson has participated in that type of development here in New Harmony before, as a partner, along with Andrew Wilson, Nathan Maudlin and Kent Parker, in a partially successful housing development in 2007, under an LLC named New Harmony Vision. Their plans called for six homes. Based on what can be seen on the Church Street Commons lot, only three were built.

During the Council meeting I remarked to Blaylock that I agreed with Rod Clark and said, "I think the school property should be marketed more aggressively. It's my understanding that there is no record of who these 191 RFPs went to. You said that you looked for them."

"No," Councilman Blaylock said, "I said I don't know who they are!" He went on, "There's a lot of options at the table. We're not going to go out there and tear the school down. It's an option. So is leasing it, selling it, whatever."

"It's never been listed!" I said. "I know that!" Blaylock replied. "I'm up to here with work. I'm doing all I can do!"

he finished.

Tom Stahl then said, "I don't think you have anything to lose by listing it with a Realtor."

That ended the discussion on the School property. And as I said in the beginning, there were a lot of good questions, some from the audience and some from Councilman Flanders, but still what is most important to point out is that there was no formal motion by anyone on the Council to list this property with a Commercial Real Estate Agency. This aspect of perhaps saving a valuable town asset has once more been totally overlooked.

My humble advice is to urge our town leaders not to tear down our town's valuable assets. Why do that if you can sell it for a profit. No one will replace them gratis, those days are gone. Use them to their greatest advantage.

Finally, Would a person be wise to tear down their house instead of trying to list it with a broker for sale, when they wished to move, and then lease the empty property to a gardener for few dollars per year? Or when they go on vacation in the summer would they be well advised to seal the house and turn off all of the air conditioning until they come back in the fall?

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## LITTER

*By: Ann Rains*

Spring, the wondrous time of rebirth and renewal. Seeing the tenacious daffodils raise their blossoms to the sun after being beat down with heavy snow is a lesson of life to be learned. Inasmuch as I am counting blessings for another year to view the farmer's fields of winter wheat greening the land, there is a springtime blight that darkens my heart.

This blight is more noticeable now. Have you seen it? Are you aware of the damage it does? That blight is litter. One cannot drive down any road, whether it is a country road or an interstate highway without seeing bottles, plastic bags (modern day tumble weeds), styrofoam cups, and many other unidentified items littering the roadsides. People are

becoming immune and/or oblivious to trash. They don't even see it.

When I experienced a tragedy years ago while living in Maine, girlfriends wanted to do something special for me. They coordinated a trip to the beach. I tried to resist but they were adamant saying, "You need a day in the sun." We went to Old Orchard Beach. The only thing I can remember as I laid in the sun was the beach looking like a gigantic cigarette snuffer. There was not three square inches of sand without a cigarette butt littering it.

Now, researching littering, I find that cigarette butts are one of the worst kinds of litter. Although butts may not be seen from your automobile, this small litter takes ten years to decompose due to cellulose acetate. Plus, the chemicals in the butt pollute ground water (and ocean water) with arsenic and other chemicals. The entire world is littered with 4.5 trillion discarded cigarette butts per year. Lit cigarettes being tossed from vehicles are one of the major fire hazards.

The next most common litter is fast food containers and sometimes the fast food itself. Discarding these items leads to germs, bacteria and viruses. Litter becomes a breeding ground which can attract vermin such as rats. Even a small amount of water that may collect in beverage containers is enough to breed disease carrying mosquitos. Litter also becomes dangerous to farmers whose equipment is not meant to plow glass, metal and plastic.

The listed reasons for people littering are rather repugnant. Topping the list is laziness. Does that mean that people are too lazy to keep their trash in the vehicle and clean it out when there is a trash receptacle available? Is it that they would rather diminish the physical beauty of our God-given home, Earth, just to have a clean car? Another reason is: "My friend litters, so I can, too." How about, "Really, it's just paper?"

Someone suggested that biodegradable containers should be required. But that doesn't solve the problem. Last spring I put some cardboard in my flower bed to kill some hardy weeds with deep roots I



could not pull. It is covered with straw but that cardboard is still there. Having biodegradable containers does not give one license to litter. It is still ugly no matter how short a time it takes to degrade.

Other lists say that littering is the result of poor education and poor parenting. I question that but if people have no sense of pride in residing on this amazing planet and taking care of it, maybe they need to know that their tax dollars, to the tune of \$11.5 billion a year is spent on cleaning up litter. That money surely could be put to better use!

On October 4, 2010, the Posey Green Group sent a letter to the editor of the Democrat. It spoke of the world-wide phenomenon of littering and urged citizens locally to refrain from littering. At that time, the Pacific Trash Vortex was a floating garbage continent the size of Texas. Now it is double in size (only seven years) and there are trash vortexes in all the oceans.

It is a crime to litter. Mt. Vernon has a minimum fine of \$120. However, Indiana law allows fines up to \$1000 and more if it is a lit cigarette. Community service of picking up litter in a specified area may also be imposed upon the perpetrator.

Like the camera on a bridge that records license plates of people transversing it, the future may have cameras on roadways capturing you tossing out that cigarette butt or styrofoam cup. Or, maybe there will be drone litter patrols! Just imagine, you could receive in the mail a fine of

\$1000 or more for your actions. And just maybe, you will have the pleasure of picking up litter. With the amount of litter on the roadways now, our future may dictate that more stringent laws be enforced.

Enjoy the bright yellow daffodils and other springtime surprises, but, please, do not be a litterbug.

## APRIL GAZETTE RECIPE SMOTHERED CHICKEN

*By: Denise Rapp*

This chicken recipe is a household favorite. Tender marinated chicken is smothered in sautéed peppers and onions, then topped with provolone cheese. For this particular meal, my side item is a steakhouse baked potato. We all love that salted crispy skin! Perfect for a healthy diet plan, but still packed with delicious flavor.

### Smothered Chicken

Serves 6

6 boneless skinless chicken breasts - trimmed

1/3 c. Vegetable oil

1 tsp. Salt

1/2 tsp. Pepper

1/2 tsp. dill

2 tsp. Parsley

1 tsp. Granulated garlic

2-3 peppers

2 onions

6 slices of provolone cheese

Mix spices and oil together, using a whisk. Then, add the chicken, and marinate for at least 2 hours.

Heat a large skillet and sear the chicken breasts on both sides, creating a nice brown coating.

Place chicken into a baking dish, with the juice and drippings. Cover contents with foil. Bake at 350 for 15 minutes. Pull the chicken; keep it covered and let it sit for 10 minutes, before adding the topping. Do not over cook the chicken!

The chicken will continue to cook up, during the resting process. Chicken is perfect at 165, so when the thermometer reads 155, pull it and let it rest. It will rise one degree for every minute, over the next ten minutes. Also, the resting process allows the juices to redistribute into the meat producing a very tender result.

Meanwhile:

Slice into strips

2-3 large red, yellow or orange peppers

2 medium onions

In the same skillet add 3 Tbs. Olive oil, peppers and onions

Season with salt, pepper & granulated garlic

Cook on medium high heat, tossing frequently until veggies are al dente (still firm when bitten) but have some nice color on them.

Once the chicken is finished cooking, top breasts with peppers and cheese. Pop them back into the oven for 2 minutes, to melt the cheese.

And it's just that simple!

### Steakhouse Baked Potato

Scrub Potatoes clean, and let them dry  
Rub a coating of oil (I use olive oil) all over the potato

Sprinkle a generous amount of kosher salt on all sides of the potato

Place on a baking sheet

Bake at 400 for about 1 hour.

Boom! A crusty steakhouse baked potato

## THE NEW-HARMONY GAZETTE.

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