

## NEW-HARMONY, (IND.) March 2023

**WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE BRIDGE?***By: Dan Barton*

It seemed to me that I must have written something regarding the Harmony Way Bridge sometime within the last year, but no, that was not the case. The last article in my archives appears to be from back in ancient 2021. Anyway, it's time! I've been getting questions around town on "What's Happening With The Bridge!"

I'd like to say that a lot has happened since 2021, or at least since the Bridge Authority was activated back in 2019, but I can't. It's going on four years, believe or not, since the Authority was started up, and the bridge is still pretty much in the same status. Closed!

After speaking, and emailing to at least five of the Bridge Authority Commissioners (one commissioner didn't respond to my email) on both sides of the Wabash River, what I discovered was that nothing new under the sun has taken place. The Bridge Authority is resolved to follow the same old plan, filing over and over and over to one federal grant fund; get turned down and file again. A little disappointing to say the least.

You see, there is nothing wrong with filing for the big federal dollars but that should not prevent them from also taking other steps, such as, lobbying and filing for state funds with both Indiana and Illinois. (They've received a total of only \$350,000 from state funds so far, and that was only from Indiana. Illinois has contributed nothing.) Also, they might consider filing for more than one federal grant at a time, or raising money privately with Authority Bond issues. There are many options that a Bridge Authority can opt for, besides just the federal grant approach.

Each time the Bridge Authority files for a one time federal grant in the Spring, they get turned down in the fall of that year and can't file again until the following year in the Spring, a one year turn over with each

grant request. Time marches on!

When I initially spoke to Rod Clark, Indiana Bridge Authority Chairman, in February, he said to me that there was, "Nothing to report!", other than the fact that Bill Gillenwater had resigned and moved out of state, and that Gillenwater had been replaced by a woman from Mt. Vernon named Julie Vann. I later went back to Rod via email and got more detailed bridge data.

I also spoke to former Indiana Bridge Authority Secretary Ron Eimer and he couldn't say how much money the 2022 grant request amounted to that was recently turned down, or how much the next grant for 2023 could be for, but he did say that Julie Vann would be taking his place as Secretary on the Indiana Authority, since he has resigned from that position, but is still a Commissioner.

I had also emailed Linda Henning, Secretary for the Illinois side of the Bridge Authority and was able to get the most recent "cursory" engineer's report on the bridge.

Now, back to Indiana Bridge Authority Chairman Rod Clark and the email request that I made to him for Bridge financial information.

The current "cursory," engineering study, done by Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.(WJE) in 2020 cost the Authority \$148,341.84 of the \$350,000 total dollars they received from the state of Indiana in Economic Development Grant, taxpayer start-up money. A little bit under half of all the money that Rod Clark and his other nine Authority Commissioners have been able to raise since they took office in 2019. It's so nice to see that the engineers are doing so well on this project!

What's more astonishing is that after I perused all of the pictures and bridge inspection observations in the WJE report, over 22 pages, I found that they did not

include even one estimate of what it would cost to get the bridge in open and running condition. The other historic reports that I have sitting on my desk from other Bridge Inspectors covering the years prior to 2020 all included detailed estimates as to what it would cost and how to actually get vehicles moving across the Wabash. Getting the next inspection report will cost more money, Rod says!

Rod Clark says that, "There will need to be additional engineering studies when and if the project moves forward." Rod could not say how much these additional studies would cost and he went on to say, "I can not give you a cost estimate on that phase [ two ] other than to say that it will cost considerable more than the cursory study. That study has not occurred due to lack of funding."

We sort of got that anyway!

Clark said that they, the Commissioners, specifically himself in 2023, applied to USDOT for funding for more studies and to rehabilitate the bridge. That filing deadline was February 28, 2023. I asked him what the next grant could amount to if awarded but he would not divulge that amount. He would only say that, "Grant proposals to the USDOT are considered in lock-down or confidential status during the process."

I asked about other monies the Bridge Authority has been receiving and he said, "New Harmony Utilities pays the Bridge Authorities \$2,400 per year for access to the bridge for its gas line."

This is an important point, since, if New Harmony had to resort to some other way to access their natural gas for our town it could cost the town millions of dollars. That means "YOU!" The bridge is vitally important to New Harmony! It's not just about the flow of traffic.

Back to Bridge Authority Commissioner and Illinois Authority Secretary, Linda Henning! When I first emailed Linda on

February 6th she sent me a canned response which she used with a local Illinois radio station. It was informative and covered a lot of old information which I had already written about in the past, something between 40 and 50 thousand words in the prior New Harmony Gazettes, but she didn't get to point that I was looking for. The press release made it clear, however, that Linda was still very much a "Believer" in the effort to reopen the Harmony Way Bridge, and I was very glad to hear her emphasize that.

Linda Henning points out that the official journey for the Bridge Authority started in February 2019 when president Donald Trump signed the Harmony Way Bridge Act abolishing the White County Bridge Commission and allowing the formation of the Illinois New Harmony River Bridge Authority and the Indiana Wabash River Bridge Authority. Linda went on to say, "We haven't given up!"

In our discussion, I indicated to Linda that, based on prior studies, the bridge would need a million or two to bring it up to operational status and then when the tolls get to where they are enough that they should establish a "Capital Improvement" account, above and beyond the annual maintenance expenses, to keep the bridge up and running. Linda replied that, it would take more than a million or two to make the bridge safe and operational "according to the engineering studies."

I stated to her that I didn't think a million or two was very far off according to earlier studies, to which she indicated, "...anything from the past is no longer relevant." And, "...\$2 million is a spit in the Wabash. It will take more than that to get it back in shape!"

It's here that we sort of parted company. I asked her what she meant by, "There's so much more to consider than what was discussed in the past..." I asked her, "What specifically are you referring to? What more to consider? What specifically "from the past" is no longer relevant? What's no longer relevant?"

Her answer to me; "Too many questions to answer in a text. Ask Rod to share the engineering studies." I did ask Rod, as you know, and I'm still puzzled at Linda's reply, and the fact that the engineering study Rod

sent does not answer the question about "How Much?" and doesn't get me any closer to an answer. So, if Rod's study doesn't say "How Much!" then where did Linda get her data?

The basic answers to the basic questions are not being answered by these Commissioners, even after four years! How much to get it up and running? And now the engineers are piling on one bridge study after another for hundreds of thousands of dollars. Where is the lobbying effort? Where are our elected officials on this? Why are the Authority Commissioners using the same engineering firm to do both inspections, and was this the deal (two inspections) when the Commissioners signed on with WJE?

Right now there are many more questions than there are answers, but if I'm reading the federal application rules correctly, the current 2023 Planning Grant could go as high as \$25,000,000 but probably far less. In 2022 the lowest Planning Grant was for around \$261,000, for a project out in Arizona. It is, as Rod informed me, a Planning Grant that they are applying for this time. Last year's Capital Grant went for something over \$17 million in Indiana. Before that the Capital Grant went to build a road between Dunes Park, up north, and Chicago. And before that one, the grant went to add an extra traffic lane on an Expressway running through Indianapolis. Get the picture?

Rod Clark says that the Bridge Authority made their first grant application in 2021, and that they made two grant applications in 2022, (all turned down) one was for a Capital Grant and one was for a Planning Grant. Clark adds, "If we had been awarded the Planning Grant, it would have provided funding, or at least we hope that it would have been sufficient, to complete the second phase of engineering studies necessary to move the project to "shovel-ready." (\* Gazette Publisher note: Shovel Ready means that the construction contractors would have been able to submit their bids and the actual work could start when the bids are awarded.)

He went on, "If we had received the capital proposal, it would have provided sufficient funding to complete the second phase (\*inspection) AND provide funding to complete the project, or at least we hope it

would have provided sufficient funding."

We all know, of course, that none of the grant application proposals to date have been approved. Rod says that in 2022 there were 936 applications seeking funding and of those, 166 were funded. He also points out that in 2022, \$13 billion in requests and \$2.25 billion was awarded by USDOT.

These numbers just serve to reenforce my own contention that more has to be done in regard to approaching other funding sources and using other funding methods to get the bridge reopened.

It looks like getting federal grant money is a long shot, especially while the federal government is spending trillions on transfer payments, with none of that going for infrastructure improvements in our nation.

That's the state of things with the Harmony Way Bridge at this time - See you next month!

#### **COUNTY DRUG SWEEPS UPDATE!** **Dan Barton**

First off, congratulations to Mt. Vernon P.D. Officer Levi Hoehn, for tracking down Jeffery Bates, who had been arrested in the May 2021 Drug Sweep, only to escape the same day and disappear for two years. Officer Hoehn began his investigation in February of this year and using open source investigations located an address in Kansas City, Missouri, where Bates often frequented.

Hoehn made contact with Kansas City Law Enforcement and provided them with a photo of Bates and the potential location. On February 7, 2023, Kansas City authorities notified Mt. Vernon, Indiana, Police that Jeffrey Bates had been arrested by them and was being held and will be returned to Mount Vernon, forthwith. The Meth Dealing case on Jeffrey Bates is officially in Pending status at this time.

Reviewing all of the 711 criminal arrest cases that found their way into the Posey County Circuit Court in 2022, there appeared to be roughly 60 cases involving possession or distribution of Methamphetamine, something near 8% of all total criminal arrests. Back in 2021,

Posey County Prosecutor Thomas Clowers publicly stated that there were 222 cases out of 578, filed in his office at that time out of "all" drug charges received.

My count, The New Harmony Gazette, regarding the total Criminal Arrest Cases heard in the Posey County Circuit Court for the year 2022 was 711; in 2021 it was 748; in 2020 it was 523 and in 2019 it was 646. What caused these wild fluctuations in Arrests and Court Cases year by year is a mystery in and of itself. I have recently written to Prosecutor Thomas Clowers via email to get some of his Office's official numbers and will follow up with him on it for a later edition of The New Harmony Gazette, with a reconciliation of the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, when they become available.

#### THE APRIL 2022 DRUG SWEEP:

In April of 2022 , One Year Ago, 14 individuals were arrested by combined police agencies, local, state and federal, here in Posey County, mostly in Mt. Vernon, on drug related charges. Many, for the use and distribution of the drug Meth. Here are their names listed below and the current disposition of each of their cases to date.

**DAVIS, Dawn**

10 Years Incarceration

**CRAFT, Devon**

8 Years Incarceration

**FORSEE, Nicholas**

210 Days Incarceration

**SHEPHERD, Valerie**

1 Year, 180 Days Incarceration/Suspended to Probation

**ALLISON, Zachary**

1 Year Incarceration/  
Suspended to Probation

**ROWE, Abbie**

90 Days Incarceration

**HANSEN, Timmy**

Pending

**HANSEN, Beverly**

Pending

**ELAM, Megan**

Pending

**MERCER, Daniel**

Pending

**SELLERS, Brandon**

Pending

**BAKER, Rex**

Pending

**SEE, James**

Pending

**BROWN, Noah NMA**

In Federal Custody

In May of 2021, Two Years Ago, 16 individuals were arrested by combined police agencies in a Drug Sweep. Here are their names listed below and the current disposition of each of their cases to date:

**SEABECK, Stephanie**

20 Years Incarceration

**RICHARDS, Miranda**

12 Years Incarceration

**BATES, Halley**

10 Years Incarceration

**WRIGHT, Shane**

10 Years Incarceration

**DEBOSE, Keith**

10 Years Incarceration

**BARNES, Wesley**

8 Years Incarceration

**KUBERSKI, Julie**

8 Years Incarceration

**FLEENOR, Cynthia**

4 Years 180 Days Incarceration

**DEBOSE, Roy**

1 Years, 180 Days Incarceration

**SCHMITT, Linda Michelle**

1 Years Incarceration

**FLEENOR, Johnathon**

1 Years Incarceration

**BATES, Jeffrey**

Pending

**ROBINSON, Brandon**

Pending

**WHITFIELD, Timothy**

Pending

**ROLLINS, Antjuan**

4 Years Incarceration

**ADDISON, Zachary NMA**

In Federal Custody

Posey County Law Enforcement should be about ready for another Spring Drug Sweep very shortly - but the Circuit Court still has at least 10 former arrests pending and sitting in the Posey County Jail.

#### WHY REPARATIONS

#### MAKE NO SENSE!

*By: Richard Moss, M.D. Author*

Among many tell-tale signs of the tectonic fissures dividing the nation, perhaps the most telling is the call by prominent Democrats and others for reparations. A recent proposal by California governor Gavin Newsom calling for reparation payments of a potential \$223,200 per black

resident pushes the matter once again to the fore.

Reparations refers to a compensatory payment made to the descendants of African slaves brought to America through the Atlantic slave trade. It is unworkable but speaks loudly of the state of our politics and culture.

Proponents of reparations argue passionately of the stain of slavery, the long, dark shadow cast by this cruel institution across the American soul. They say this great evil, the original sin of slavery, has cursed the nation at its inception, at the founding, and in our founding documents. The country is thus irredeemably marred and defective, and the blot of that dark inheritance is fixed in our moral DNA. Reparation proponents claim this insidious legacy lives on in America, in the systemic racism that pervades the nation and the disparate outcomes of blacks and whites in all sectors of society today.

But there are counterarguments. We begin with the obvious. Slavery ended in America 150 years ago by something known as the Civil War, and roughly 750,000 soldiers died in that cataclysm, a great and bloody cleansing of the nation over that mortal sin. Furthermore, slavery is illegal today in America, and the sons and daughters are not responsible for the sins of their parents — let alone distant ancestors of more than a century ago.

At America's inception, many of the Founding Fathers and newly formed states deeply opposed slavery. But some Southern states demanded that the slave trade be protected. To obtain broad support to ratify the Constitution, the framers made concessions to pro-slavery factions. Had they attempted to eliminate slavery at the time, a political impossibility, there would have been no nation or Constitution. The Founders were painfully aware that the existence of slavery clashed with the belief that "all men are created equal," but they also understood that they could not resolve the terrible inconsistency at the time. They had planted the seeds for ending slavery in the founding documents and the principles of the American Revolution, and they established states and a central government robust enough to ultimately eradicate the institution in a later generation.

There are other complexities to the matter of reparations as well. There were over 3,000 free black slaveholders who owned some 20,000 slaves. American Indians were also slaveholders and held them even after the end of the Civil War. Most Americans, even in the antebellum South, did not own slaves.

Black Africans, too, enslaved other black Africans and sold them. The Atlantic slave trade began here. Without this, there likely would have been no slaves brought to America or the Americas. Perhaps, sub-Saharan Africa should pay reparations.

Additionally, bondage in North America was a small percentage of slavery in the Americas. In total, about 12.5 million African slaves were brought to the Americas through the Atlantic slave trade. Over 95 percent of the 10.7 million who survived the journey went to South and Central America and the Caribbean while less than 5 percent went directly to North America. Would reparations account for this other over 95 percent as well, and if so, how?

Most Americans today, including black Americans who came later, have no relationship to slavery in America as they or their ancestors came after the Civil War (with the two great waves of immigration that began in the late 1800s and 1900s). It would be improper to link them to slavery in this country.

Further, the reparations claim is not based on specific injury (such as Jewish victims of the Holocaust or Japanese American victims of "internment" under FDR) but on race. It perpetrates a new injustice against those who committed no crime for the benefit of those who are not victims.

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There is also little evidence that individuals living today are disadvantaged by a slave system that ended 150 years ago. There are many successful black people in America today, including black entrepreneurs, black millionaires, black billionaires, and a black president, among many black success stories.

Furthermore, poverty rates for black Americans are shrinking in the decades preceding the expansion of the liberal welfare state in the '60s. Black Americans were coming out of poverty and entering the middle class despite actual institutionalized racism at the time. Most black children then were raised in two-parent families.

That earlier progress halted and retreated dramatically with the onset of the federal welfare system and its associated social and cultural pathologies. These policies and behavioral factors explain racial disparities today far more than "systemic racism" or the "legacy of slavery." Plus, many Americans are mixed race, with complex ancestries that would be challenging to sort out for reparation claims.

Since the '60s, there have been trillions of dollars in wealth transfers to black Americans through payments and preferential treatment based on race (affirmative action). Additionally, western, Christian nations ended slavery, beginning with Great Britain in 1833.

Still, slavery persists today. In fact, there are more slaves worldwide now than during the peak of the Atlantic slave trade with some 40 million people working in forced labor, being trafficked, or otherwise owned, exploited, or enslaved today.

Yet those clamoring for reparations, so concerned with American slavery that ended over 150 years ago, have little to say about slavery today.

No, reparations are not likely to bind the nation's racial wounds, rather it will rip them apart. But perhaps that is the point. Peddling race in this way has been a major growth industry in America, and many who traffic in racism have benefitted from it. But they have also done great damage to black Americans, race relations, and the nation as a whole.

**MARCH GAZETTE RECIPE 2023**

*By: Denise Rapp*

**Bitter Orange Pie**

What a special treat it is to go on a vacation and get to come home with a new recipe. Last month, I went to Florida and camped with my parents. All my mom has been able to talk about is this famous orange pie at Highland Hammock. We'll, we get there and the woman who made the pies has retired. We'll rats! I joked with the clerk a bit and said "All I need is the recipe" "Oh, I've got the recipe right here!" and he handed me a copy. What?!

Yes! So I'm going to share it with you. It's slightly modified as we do not have access to bitter oranges but he said adding lemon juice would do the trick.

Enjoy a little slice of Florida.

Bitter Orange Pie

Ingredients

1 1/2 c. Crushed Graham Crackers  
2 Tbs sugar  
6 Tbs melted butter  
Form into a pie pan and bake 10 minutes at 350

Filling

1 can condensed milk  
2 egg yolks slightly beaten  
1/4 tsp salt  
1/3 c. Orange juice  
1/4 c. Lemon juice  
1 Tbs orange zest -(2 oranges)

Mix all of the ingredients together and pour into the baked pie shell. Refrigerate 3 to 4 hours, serve with a dollop of whipped cream and fresh orange zest on top.

Enjoy!

