

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

NEW-HARMONY, (IND.) June 2023

NEW HARMONY TOWN COUNCIL DECISION ON CD INVESTMENTS

By: Dan Barton
June 2023

Councilman Roger Wade brought up an interesting point regarding Town investment strategy at the April 18th Council Meeting. Wade reported on local bank interest rates. He noted that, according to the minutes taken by Town Clerk Karla Atkins, 5/3 Bank was offering rates of 4.5% on Five and Ten month Certificates of Deposit (CDs). While Council President Alvin Blaylock said the Town currently receives 4.45% interest rates on CDs through United Fidelity Bank. Wade brought this matter up during a discussion in the Council about moving some of the Town funds from United Fidelity Bank to another financial institution.

The Town of New Harmony, it has been reported, has 100% of its invested funds deposited in United Fidelity Bank. Wade and other Council members were concerned as to whether the Town's funds were fully insured by FDIC with being in just one institution.

It was noted that Councilmember Rod Clark wanted to quickly purchase additional Certificates of Deposit from United Fidelity Bank out of the Town of New Harmony Depreciation Accounts. Clark said, “I think it's time to move on...and to move fairly quickly!”

Council President Blaylock stated, “If the Council is considering investing an additional \$200,000, he would rather invest those funds at United Fidelity Bank as well.”

These Depreciation Accounts are “set aside accounts” and are funded for specific Utility projects. A May 9th Special Meeting to discuss this subject was arranged.

At the May 9th, Special Meeting, not open to the public or the press, Council members discussed the potential investment of Town Funds.

At the meeting were all five Council members: Alvin Blaylock, Virginia Alsop, Rod Clark, Roger Wade and Tom Williams. Clerk-Treasurer Karla Atkins was also in attendance. Also at the meeting was Jim Alsop, Vice President/Community Executive with United Fidelity Bank, the only local bank representative from Posey County.

Banker Jim Alsop stated at the meeting that the Town's funds are secure above the FDIC limit of \$250,000. He said, the remaining funds above the \$250,000 are insured through the Indiana Board of Depositories which protects the funds of the state and its political subdivisions, such as the Town of New Harmony. Depositories must be an approved depository in order to be covered under the Indiana Board of Depositories, which United Fidelity Bank is, Alsop said. Alsop also stated that the FDIC only covers a total of \$250,000 for all of the Town accounts, in total.

Jim Alsop also provided a current rate sheet to the Council, for United Fidelity Bank. Rates are basically the same as they were with the last certificates the Town purchased. The 15-month certificate is currently paying 4.45%.

Councilmembers had a discussion regarding the amounts to be invested in certificates of deposit from the various Depreciation accounts. The meeting minutes sent to the New Harmony Gazette did not include the specifics of what was said during this private discussion.

The depreciation funds, money set aside in specifically funded accounts, as has been previously noted, have very large balances, which the Council discussed moving to higher interest bearing certificates.

It was noted that the State Park Wastewater Project may require some funds to be spent, as well as the project to replace the water lines on Church Street. Those two items would apparently have a bearing on how much the Town might want to move into C.D.s in the future, from those accounts.

Councilwoman Virginia Alsop then made a motion to invest in Nine month Certificates of Deposit purchased from United Fidelity Bank. Her motion was seconded by Councilman Roger Wade. The Funds used to purchase the C.D.s would come from the Funded Depreciation Accounts and would be in these stated amounts: Gas Utility Depreciation Account - \$100,000; Water Utility Depreciation Account - \$200,000; Sewage Utility Depreciation Account — \$100,000. These Certificates of Deposit, it was reported, would earn 4.38%. All of the Councilmembers were in favor of the motion.

As a follow-up to all of this, The New Harmony Gazette asked Clerk/Treasurer Karla Atkins for some details regarding the Town accounts

noted above. The Gazette asked Clerk/Treasurer Atkins to send the Gazette the March 2023 United Fidelity Bank Statements that showed the end balances of all New Harmony Town accounts, which included the March ending balances on all Town of New Harmony Depreciation Accounts. Also, to delineate which accounts are invested currently in interest-bearing accounts, and with which bank, and/or bank C.D.s, along with the current interest rates being paid.

Finally, she was asked to send the minutes of the Special Meeting of May 9, 2023 to the Gazette. She did all of these things, and here is what was brought out:

Balances of the Funded Accounts A/O April 4, 2023:

Gas Utility Depreciation - \$206,698; Water Utility Depreciation - \$527,529.47; Sewage Utility Depreciation - \$599,379.76; for a total in Depreciation accounts of \$1,333,607.23; of which the \$400,000 will be removed from them and their .75% interest, and into 4.38% United Fidelity C.D.s.

Council President Alvin Blaylock noted on the correspondence from Atkins to the New Harmony Gazette the following: "All Town Funds are on deposit with United Fidelity Bank. Current Checking Account Interest Rate is 0.75%. All Checking Accounts are interest bearing. As of 3-31-23, no depreciation funds are invested in C.D.'s."

In addition Clerk/Treasurer Atkins sent copies of the Town's seven (7) Business Plus Check Banking Statements from their United Fidelity Accounts, ending on 3/31/23 - Account #0101- \$1,503,376.92; Account #0088- \$407,202.17; Account #0091- \$776,358.94; Account #0075 - \$988,087.68; Account #0062 - \$5,551.89; Account #0059 - \$81,388.61; Account #0046 - \$130,726.17. For a Grand

total of: \$3,892,692.38 in Business Plus Checking earning 0.75%. March's one month interest earned on the near \$4 million in checking account funds at 0.75% was reported to have been only \$2,463.

The problem was that monthly interest was not what it could have been if the almost \$400,000 in set-aside depreciation was invested in C.D.s, instead of at 0.75%, where it could be earning over 4%, providing it was safe in one banking institution.

Council-President Alvin Blaylock, who was all for additional investments in United Fidelity Bank CDs, stated at the April Town Council meeting that the Town has CDs with United Fidelity.

In addition, it seems to me, that in the rush, the other problem is that no one may be considering how to more profitably re-invest the balance of the Checking and Depreciation accounts at a safe and higher interest rate over four and a half percent. An interesting thought!

The New Harmony Gazette followed up Blaylock's comments on the C.D.s he mentioned at the Council meeting by writing Clerk/Treasurer Atkins on June 9th, for further verification on the CDs; including Face Value of each, interest rates being paid, what the period of investment is, and what financial institution they were issued from. Also, she was asked to verify the United Fidelity Bank Account totals. At the date of this writing she has not responded to that request.

Whether, Indiana Board of Depositors can do what United Fidelity V.P. Jim Alsop says it can do in case of a bank collapse, or whether it is wiser to spread the money around to a larger more diversified number of banks and investment instruments is something the Gazette cannot answer, that must be left up to the experts in the field.

What one expert in the field, Dr. Randall Kroszner, University of Chicago School of Economics, said recently was, "There's a lot of fragility in the banking system. You're taking more of a risk piling up fragility on top of fragility." He was speaking of Congress' continued expansion of the National Debt ceiling and its possible adverse effect on the overall banking industry.

Let the Investor beware!

**DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN
NEW HARMONY INVESTMENT
STRATEGY MIRRORS POSEY
COUNTY PRE-2018!**

**By: Dan Barton
June 2023**

Back in November 2018 The New Harmony Gazette ran a story about Posey County investing \$28 million dollars all in one bank - United Fidelity Bank. So here we go again!

Posey County changed their investment strategy in 2018. Since at least 2013 the Posey County Treasurer at that time, Justin White, had been transferring funds from other bank accounts used by Posey County into United Fidelity Bank. When Justin abruptly quit his Posey County Treasurers job in 2017 to go to work for United Fidelity, that investment arrangement changed.

When White was succeeded by the new Treasurer, Vickie Speerman, she reported to the Posey County Commissioners, of which United Fidelity Bank V.P. Jim Alsop was one, that the Posey County Bank Account balances with United Fidelity as of December 31, 2017 were totaling \$28,572,183.43.

At the same time Speerman reported that the December 31, 2017 account balances at other banks were: Old National Bank was \$500,000 and Community State Bank was \$57,413.05;

and Trust Indiana was \$15,454.31.

For a Grand total of all these accounts on December 31, 2017 of - \$29,146,050.79.

According to Speerman, County Deposits at the end of 2017 in United Fidelity Bank represented 98.03% of total County bank deposits.

It seems that under Justin Whites' administration County Bank deposits were incrementally moved from four other banks into United Fidelity Bank.

Back on January 31, 2013, four years before, the Posey County bank balances were : United Fidelity Bank \$5,168,055.15 ; Old National Bank \$3,034,175.52; Community State Bank \$3,354,919.86; Fifth Third \$35,957.89 and Trust Indiana \$3,512,953.75. At that time the County deposits were diversified between five banks. A dramatic change over four years.

Vickie Peerman said at the time she took over at the County Treasurers Office they decided to go back to a more diversified approach. Other treasurers in other government offices all over Indiana agreed with her. They said for safety's sake and to prevent a bad impression that it gives the public, diversification was necessary.

In March 2018 Treasurer Peerman transferred about \$10 million from United Fidelity Bank to Trust Indiana.

It may be that New Harmony politicians haven't learned any lessons coming from this and the recent near bank collapse in California. Why not be safe and spread your money out to four or five local banks, rather than hope Indiana can cover a catastrophic loss if there is a bank collapse.

Today, Posey County spreads its deposits of around \$66 million total between primarily five banks - First Bank of Carmi- \$10,085,470 -15%; Crane Credit Union - \$32,077 -Negligible, United

Fidelity Bank - \$17,591,246 - 28%; Trust Indiana - \$27,769,409 - 42%, and Fifth Third Bank - \$10,164,934 - 15%.

The Posey County Treasurers office cleaned up this act and spread the money out for safety concerns.

DEATH DRUG DILEMMA; METH!

By: Dan Barton
June 2023

As has been widely reported, on the morning of May 25, 2023, The Posey County Drug Task-Force, under the title of Operation Last Dance, arrested 22 suspects charged with Drug Dealing and other Drug Offenses, related to Meth.

This was a combined law enforcement operation involving, the Posey County Sheriff's Office, Drug Task Force Supervisor Kenneth Rose, Mt. Vernon P.D., Indiana State Police, Evansville-Vanderburgh County Joint Drug Task Force, Princeton P.D., Washington Indiana P.D., Davies County Sheriff's Office, U.S. Marshals Service and the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency.

In the last edition of The New Harmony Gazette, a list of 22 individuals arrested by our local Law Enforcement personnel for the period January 1, to April 30, 2023, was printed. Those were separate arrests from the Operation Last Dance arrests in May of 2023. Our local officers risk their lives to protect the public from this epidemic of Meth and the individuals who spread this plague that they carry.

Each day our police officers are arresting individuals who are charged with drug offenses, mostly for the Death Drug Meth. Putting their lives on the line so that the good people and their children of Posey County can live, go to school, and work safely. The Court is jammed with these arrestees, as is the jail, yet for some unknown reason to most of us, these individuals continue

to be attracted to this drug. You know them when you see them on the street, no teeth, walking skeletons and sunken eyes; Walking Death! What's the attraction? They are involved in robberies, theft and even murder to support their habits. Enough to turn your stomach!

So, here we go again! Twenty two more names to add to the first list of twenty-two:

Joshua Walden, William Mayville, Katie Jones, Joshua Moore, Chrystal Whitmer, Cody Smith, Haley Overton, Brandyn Alan Cox, Michael Turpin, Jeffrey Turpin, Troy Stewart, Robert Blankenship, Eric Higgins, Jeremy Novak, Christina Alumbaugh, Andrae Lamonte Ellington, Kristina Hall, Cesar Herrera, Birchie Stillwagoner, Alex Kempf, Sara Grabert and Deana Byrd.

That makes 44 arrests from January through April. Now add to that these another 15 arrests made by our local law enforcement officers on street and highway patrol since the end of April.

Meth Arrests from May 1 - to the time of this writing on or about June 9, 2023:

Britney Fisher, Kyle Thomason, David Myers, Christopher Harger, Emily Courtney, Robert Kester, William Hill, Lacle Mosley, Tre Kirk, Monica Goldsberry, Stephanie Richardt, Anthony Wells, George Bollinger, Richard Hanmore, and Taylor Vaughn.

Another 15 arrested. That totals 59 Meth arrests in Posey County since January 1, 2023, and still counting.

Great work by our Law Enforcement community. But what a shame. C'mon Folks, this is a small county - how disgusting! Let's hope the Posey County Circuit Court does as well as our police officers.

All arrestees are considered innocent

until proven guilty by a court of law!

ARE THEY GETTING THE MESSAGE?

By: *Dan Barton*
June 2023

Each time our combined police agencies make a large Meth bust we hear basically the same refrain from Law Enforcement Officials - "Today we sent a clear message, that if you deal drugs in Posey County we will find you and you will be held accountable."

But each year they're still dealing on our streets.

Accountable is a big word. Some, mostly dealers, do get some considerable time in jail or prison, when caught and arrested. Some do not. Those who use Meth, not dealers, are usually given a slap and sent back out onto the street.

It's hard to get a clear picture of what's going on here unless you can go back a few years and follow the cases and the arrestees through the system. I do that!

Back in 2019, there was a very sizable bust, somewhere around 36 plus arrests. I looked at nearly every case. Here's the way it sized up:

Of the 36 arrested - Ten (10) of those arrested for Dealing Meth received between six (6) and twenty (20) years in

prison.

Of the other 26 cases - They received Probation, Community Corrections, Suspended Sentences, Dismissals, Recovery While Incarcerated and Shortened Sentences, Community Transition, or between six (6) months and two (2) years incarceration.

Out of the 36 Arrests - Eleven (11) of them were rearrested at some future point and processed back through the system for other crimes.

Is the Message Getting Through? Well, the Dealers are getting relatively long terms in prison.

The Recidivism Rate for all arrests, mostly users, is around 30% - not great.

The rest, 26 out of the 36, received light sentences - over 70%; and were not Dealers for the most part. Most, if not all, of the Dealers of Meth in this Drug Sweep are still in prison doing time.

However, Nine (9) people were arrested in the 2020 Drug Sweep; Nineteen (19) people were arrested in the 2021 Drug Sweep; In 2022 - Fourteen (14) were arrested in the Sweep and in this year 2023 - Twenty One people were arrested in the Drug Sweep.

So, No, they're not completely getting the message! New faces just replace the old faces and the Meth epidemic continues. Somebody has got to think differently if they are going to get a grip on this war on Meth. Next year's Sweep will continue at the same pace, no doubt!

The one weak link in all of this is the fact that the users, the ones supplying the money for the drug operations, are still getting very light sentences. Take the users off the streets and you take the money off the streets.

Thirty (30) percent recidivism is nothing to brag about.



NEW HARMONY GAZETTE

June RECIPE

By: *Denise Rapp*

Hawaiian Ham Sliders

Gosh I forgot how much I love these simple little sandwiches. Hawaiian sweet rolls, ham, cheese & savory sauce...yes please.

Perfect for picnics, reunions, tailgate parties, camping & going to the lake.

Ingredients:

12pk Hawaiian sweet rolls
1 lb shaved Black Forrest ham
6 slices of Swiss cheese, cut in 1/2
3/4 c melted butter
1 1/2 tbs Dijon mustard
1 1/2 tbs Worcestershire
1 tbs minced onion
1 tbs poppyseeds

Directions:

Place parchment paper in the bottom of a 13 x 9 baking dish
Cut the rolls into 12 even squares & slice in 1/2
Place bottoms in the pan
Top with ham & Swiss cheese, then the tops
In the microwave melt the butter
Add mustard, Worcestershire, onion & seeds
Mix well & pour over the top
Bake for 10 minutes at 350
Enjoy

THE NEW-HARMONY GAZETTE.

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