

BAILIWICK NEWS

May 9, 2020 - Volume 4, Issue 7

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COVID-time posts (compilation)

By Katherine Watt

Feb. 13, 2020 - Bangry

I'm a strange combination of bored and angry these days. It's boring watching Borough Council members and Penn State trustees focus so exclusively on finding new ways to stick their thumbs up their own buttocks, to the exclusion of actually helping the people of the Borough and the people of Penn State understand and address our shared problems.

It's also infuriating.

I'm thinking about channeling that banger into a serialized, less-shitty-opian fictional account of political and civic life in State College and on Penn State's campus. Exploring what it might be like to live in a relocalized, decentralized community whose elected and unelected leaders grapple with issues for real, instead of whatever it is they do. Parody reportage of some sort.

We'll see. Could be fun to create something new.

Feb. 27, 2020 - Hiatus Updates

Still holding back on more reporting until I see signs that local government understands the predicaments of global corporate centralization and is prepared to take up relocalization seriously.

Still printmaking - some of them may be available downtown at Nittany Quill in the next week or so.

Still developing a fiction series about Lessshittypia, circa 2030.

Tightening up the website in the meantime.

Bound volumes available for \$20 each [at Etsy shop FlatAffectGreetings]

Energy Sovereignty: 2011-2013 – Information originally published at Spring Creek Homesteading Fund's website, about the 2011 State College Community Environmental Bill of Rights campaign, and information published at the Energy Sovereignty website regarding the 2013 citizen campaign to stop the Penn State/Columbia Gas high-pressure natural gas transmission line through the Highlands neighborhood of State College Pennsylvania.

Steady State College & Voices: 2013-2015 – *Steady State College* was a print and online newspaper published from September 2013 to September 2014, focused primarily on Penn State's energy strategic planning in the aftermath of the 2013 Columbia Gas pipeline fight, and initial coverage of Friends & Farmers Cooperative. *Voices of Central Pennsylvania* was an independent newspaper founded in 1993. This volume includes essays by Katherine Watt published in *Voices* between December 2013 and September 2015.

Watershed Protection: Citizen Campaigns 2015-2018 – Compilation of independent citizen journalism related to watershed and farmland protection campaigns that took place between 2015 and 2018 in Centre County, Pennsylvania, primarily to block watershed and farmland destruction along Whitehall Road in Ferguson Township, upgradient from the State College area's two main public water supply wellfields. Most of the content was originally distributed via a Change.org petition to the 2015 Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors, as email updates to the petition's 2,479 signatories.

Bailiwick News Volume 1 – Sept. 2016 – June 2017; *Bailiwick News Volume 2* – Oct. 2017 – Dec. 2018; *Bailiwick News Volume 3* – Jan. – Dec. 2019 – *Bailiwick News* is a free, independent, adversarial newspaper founded in 2016 to offer reporting and critical analysis of Centre County, Pennsylvania public affairs, with a focus on public corruption, government accountability and ecological resilience. Back issues archived online.



March 12, 2020 - For those who may be newly interested in local food security, and rebuilding other local supply chains.

Three useful reports:

2001 Energy Conservation and Food Production in Local Food Systems, Sheffer Thesis - (128 pp., 150 MB) - Master's thesis written by Eric Allen Sheffer in the Penn State Master's of Science Program, Intercollege Graduate Degree Program in Ecology, under the direction of Christopher Uhl (Biology), Heather Karsten (Crop Production/Ecology) and Bill Lamont (Vegetable Crops). Covers historical data on energy needs for local and non-local food supply chains, and includes a chapter on "The potential for a locally produced diet in Centre County, Pennsylvania" based on local soils, precipitation patterns and climate. Appendices include specific crop lists and land area calculations to meet caloric/nutritional needs of local population.

2006 Tompkins County Relocalization Project Outline (21 pp.) - Early effort by a county-level citizens' group in New York state, to think through adaptations for food security, water security, home-heating energy, transportation, health care, and other human needs in the low-carbon, high-poverty era into which Americans have been falling - more or less rapidly and debt-disguised - since 1970.

2019 Centre Region Planning Agency Agriculture Study (37 pp., 37 MB) - Overview: "Supporting the long-term viability of the agricultural industry in the Centre Region is a core theme of the 2013 Centre Region Comprehensive Plan. Agriculture played a pivotal role in the early settlement of the Region and has been a key component of the local economy for over 200 years. While agriculture as an industry has changed over time, ensuring that the industry is supported by local regulations is crucial to its long-term viability. This report provides information on the current state of agriculture in the Centre Region, statewide trends in agriculture, and local regulatory considerations that could help support of the current and future agricultural industry." Includes maps of current agricultural land uses within the Centre Region, maps of soils, and analysis of municipal zoning in the six COG municipalities, as the zoning relates to agricultural land use.

March 22, 2020 - For readers who sew, here's a pattern for making facemasks for medical workers.

Website is Facemask Frenzy at Freeseewing.org There's a four-minute instructional video there too.

I'm making a few today - will post photos of results. Alert readers may recognize the fabric in the photo - it's some of the Spring Creek Homesteading tablecloths

I realize they may not be as effective as N-95 disposable masks, but since those are in catastrophically short supply, fabric masks are better than nothing until domestic N-95 mask production and distribution ramp up. Also they're washable.

I don't know yet exactly how to get them to hospitals and clinics in need - Mount Nittany Medical Center may be okay so far, but New Jersey, New York City, and Florida and Seattle hospital and clinic workers need help.

I'll keep looking into it and if readers have information about how to get fabric masks into the hands of doctors, nurses and other health care workers, please let me know.

March 23, 2020 - First five masks

First five masks sewed yesterday and today, mailed out today to Your Friends in New York, a donation center set up by Kerby Jean-Raymond.

There are more resources now for how to get masks to nurses, doctors and other medical staff who need them.



One is RosieSews.org, linked from the New England Complex Systems Institute, which is doing some excellent public policy outreach about the pandemic response process.

RosieSews has a volunteer signup form and at the bottom of their site are links to other organizations working to match medical supplies with people who need them. Several Pennsylvania hospitals in Philadelphia, Scranton and Feasterville, are calling for donated supplies through the Google spreadsheet, including a tab-sheet listing "Facilities accepting cloth masks" located in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Minnesota, Iowa, California, Washington, Texas and several other states.

I'm aiming to make 2-3 masks per day, and send a package out roughly twice a week to facilities on that list.

If readers who make masks want to drop them off at my house so you can avoid trips to the post office, feel free to do that. (The State College post office on Fraser St. is using a six-foot distancing procedure for customers in the lobby, but the staff are not wearing masks or gloves, at least as of today.)



April 6, 2020 - Notes

Mailchimp update sent out this evening...

I've been taking a rest from writing Bailiwick News since mid-January or so, with one quick report about a Right-to-Know effort published in the interim, on March 2, 2020.

Then COVID-19 happened.

I hope all Bailiwick readers are safe and healthy amid the pandemic and social distancing and small business closures and job loss and all the other difficult things that have been happening.

I hope also, that you're working through the process of transitioning from the old normal to a new normal.

On that topic, Courtney Tucker and Dan Murphy at Penn State wrote a useful guide to "Navigating Unexpected Transition." Well worth a read.

I'm working through that transition process too, spending time sewing fabric face masks, starting seedlings for the garden, printmaking, doing home maintenance projects, reading news and analysis about the pandemic and the second-order socio-economic effects of the lockdowns, walking my dog Pepper, and cooking meals for my husband and kids, who are busy with Zoom calls for work and school, socializing with friends online, and sharing the household responsibilities of dishwashing and laundry and spring cleaning.

I'm also gradually trying to map out what and how to write about Centre County public affairs in the years ahead. I plan to take it one day at a time, as far as output, and likely put more energy for awhile into local food system topics and serialized fiction depicting the cultural shift back to localism as it might play out in State College.

For example, I'd like to write a general-reader-friendly synopsis of a 2001 master's thesis about the potential for Centre County people and soils to work together to feed the population from locally-raised crops and livestock, to reduce dependence on fragile, out-of-region supply chains.

Following the lead of Matt Taibbi, whose work I admire tremendously and who I try to follow as a role model for ethically-driven, populist, long-form investigative reporting, I'm also planning to move my publishing to SubStack sometime in the next few months. Taibbi's announcement - which prompted me to sign up for a paid subscription to read his work in full - includes a good summary of why Taibbi thinks SubStack is a good financial model for independent journalists trying to make a living in the modern media landscape.

Part of the content I write will be free to readers who sign up with an email address, and part will be behind a paywall for readers interested in financially supporting local investigative journalism on a monthly or annual subscription basis.

The last message from Mailchimp will be an invitation to sign up for my SubStack newsletter, once my account is up and running and I've published my first SubStack content.

Thank you for reading and best wishes to everybody.

April 9, 2020 - Garden plots available at Keller Street Community Garden

There are several plots available for the 2020 growing season at the Keller Street Community Garden, which is a joint project of the State College Friends Meeting and Spring Creek Homesteading Fund.

Plots are 20 feet by 5 feet. Cost is \$25 per season plot rental fee (non-refundable) plus \$25 refundable security deposit (returned to you when you leave the garden, if your plot is left in good condition.)

If you are in financial difficulty due to the lockdown/crisis and ensuing unemployment, the fees will be waived.

Also, if you would like to garden a plot to raise crops for donation of fresh produce to area food banks, the fees will be waived.

For more information, or if you would like to garden at Keller Street, please contact Katherine Watt at katherine_watt@hotmail.com.

If you are interested in starting your own community garden, on some land you own or otherwise influence, and want more information about what's involved in managing a small community garden, feel free to reach out. The more food we can produce for ourselves, the more food-secure we'll all be. Even if you just have a big back yard and a hose hookup, with room for one or two plots in addition to your own garden, it can help.

Other updates:

Spring Creek Homesteading's board of directors voted on March 29 to take the steps needed to dissolve the nonprofit corporation (founded in 2011), due to a lack of leadership time and energy to devote to programs and fundraising. So, that legal process will be happening over the next few months.

The Keller Street Community Garden is not affected by this change. State College Friends Meeting will take on legal liability insurance for the garden; liability insurance was the main financial outlay Spring Creek Homesteading was making each year.

Also, this will be Katherine's last year as Keller Garden manager, but it's likely a new manager will take on the tasks for the 2021 growing season so that the garden can carry on.



April 14, 2020 - For those who may be newly interested in local currencies as a way to strengthen local economies and hedge against dollar devaluation

In the U.S.

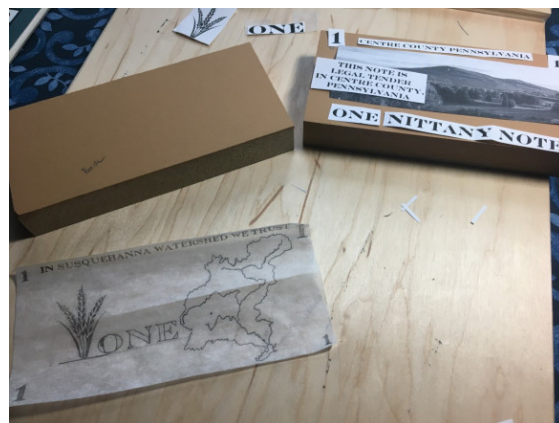
- Local Currencies Program at Schumacher Center for a New Economics.
- BerkShares seems to be the strongest example, used since 2006, now accepted in 400 businesses in Western Massachusetts.

In the U.K.

- Lewes Pound How To Guide (UK)

In the Centre Region surrounding Mount Nittany

I'm working on a linocut block design for a local currency. Whether the idea moves past the idea stage and into planning and implementation depends on whether other people get interested enough to work on the project too.



April 17, 2020 - Burn.It.The.Fuck.Down.

Petition started at Change.org, [<http://chnng.it/pDnjfPyx>] to Centre County Commissioners Michael Pipe, Mark Higgins and Steve Dershem

We hold these truths to be self-evident:

- That the Federal Government of the United States, the U.S. Congress, and the Federal Reserve Board of Governors work by and for the 1% and the corporate-state of financial investment looters;
- That they have looted and continue to loot the labor and natural wealth of the American people;
- That due to campaign finance laws and other legal and illegal corruption, they are unreformable;
- That the current political and legal association between the laboring class People and our former government, as unreformable, is also involuntary, illegitimate servitude unworthy of the names "democracy," "representative," and/or "Constitutional republic" and
- That we therefore need to Burn It the Fuck Down. #BITFD

#BITFD

Therefore, we call upon the Centre County Commissioners to:

1. Enact a secession measure within 30 days of this Petition obtaining 300 Centre County citizen signatures, to withdraw the People of Centre County from their former political, legal and economic association with the United States Government and the State of Pennsylvania and
2. Convene a Centre County Constitutional Convention at Bellefonte, PA comprised of two representatives chosen at random from each 2019 voting precinct (91 precincts) within the county, by lottery of all those who submit their names for selection to the Centre County Elections Office no later than 30 days following the date of submission to the County Commissioners, and can demonstrate 2019 annual personal income of no greater than \$30,000 US dollars, to establish a new government of, by and for the laboring class People of Centre County, to such ends and through such means as they may freely choose for themselves by majority vote.

Postscript May 9, 2020 - I'm an early adopter of a lot of things, so it could be quite awhile before this petition hits 300 signatures. That's fine. We'll get there. :-)

April 20, 2020 - COVID-19's Estimated Initial Financial Impact on State College Borough

Slide from this evening's webinar-Council meeting, presented by Borough Finance Director Dwight Miller, as part of the year-to-date financial report.

When asked by Councilman Peter Marshall, Miller confirmed that he and Assistant Borough Manager Roger Dunlap are working on proposed budget revisions to present to Council at the May meeting.

Miller said he and Dunlap are "looking at" cuts to General Fund expenses; parking, sewer and refuse program cuts; and cuts to capital project expenditures.

COVID-19 Impacts (through May)

Description	Y-T-D Costs	Total Estimated
Technology and PPE Costs	\$13,000	\$15,000
Police, PW, Health Services Overtime		\$63,000
Parking Fund Lost Revenue		\$729,000
General Fund Meter Lost Revenue		\$200,000
General Fund Violations		\$122,000
Refuse Lost Revenue (Commercial Accounts)		\$250,000
Sanitary Sewer Lost Revenue		\$320,000
Earned Income Tax		?
Local Services Tax		?

April 22, 2020 - COG is useless and State College should withdraw from it

I've said it before and I'll say it again: the Centre Region Council of Governments is a waste of taxpayer money and elected official time.

State College Borough should withdraw from it.

To whatever extent interagency coordination for emergency management is a good idea, it can be done for far less than the 2020 COG budget of \$29.8 million.

To whatever extent consolidation is a good idea, the voters of the six Penn State bedroom communities should weigh in during annual voting, about whether they want to merge to form a single political unit of about 100,000 people.

But our continued public funding of six individual municipal governments plus one coordinating government comprised of multiple duplicative administrative departments, mostly engaged in producing expensive reports that few people read and plans that no one implements, and a half-dozen thumb-twiddling committees, is stupid.

Below, as supporting evidence, is COG Administrative Office Manager Scott Binkley's account of the April 21 Executive Committee meeting (a six-member committee comprised of the elected board chairs of the six legislative bodies in State College, Patton Township, Harris Township, College Township, Ferguson Township and Halfmoon Township.)

To be clear, Binkley's reporting is fine. It's the *substance* of COG's "work," which is entirely controlled by the COG managerial bureaucracy and entrenched Executive Committee members, that's stupid. #BITFD

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Good Morning General Forum Members and Friends,

Below are audio and video links from the April regular meeting of the Executive Committee, held yesterday.

AUDIO ONLY: April 21, 2020 Executive Committee Meeting

VIDEO: April 21, 2020 Executive Committee Meeting

Also, attached to this email are documents and a PowerPoint presentation on efforts being taken by Penn State University to obtain a complete count of PSU students for the 2020 Census. This presentation was shared by Charima Young. In addition, Jesse Barlow updated the committee on the Census activities by the State College Complete Count Committee and other Borough staff and requested that the other attached documents be shared with you.

Agenda items discussed were:

- 2020 US Census Update: Penn State Student Enumeration Efforts
- Disbanding of the Steering Committee for the Centre Region Parks, Recreation and Open Space Comprehensive Study
- Disbanding of the Executive Director Recruitment and Screening Committee
- Planning for the Implementation Phase of the Climate Action and Sustainability Plan
- Update on Legislation Authorizing Virtual Meetings During the COVID-19 Emergency Disaster Declaration
- Process for selecting a COG Representative to the C-Net Board of Directors
- Executive Director's Report

The Executive Committee took action and unanimously voted to disband both the Steering Committee for the Centre Region Parks, Recreation and Open Space Comprehensive Study and the Executive Director Recruitment and Screening Committee and thanked the committee members for their service.

The Committee heard information about legislation authorizing virtual meetings for local governments during the current COVID-19 emergency and supported the staff recommendation to expand use of virtual meetings to all COG Committees. Guidelines and best practices will be sent to support staff for all committees.

Additionally, the Executive Committee unanimously approved the following motion: That the Executive Committee asks the Executive Director to serve as the COG's representative to the C-Net Board of Directors, or designate a staff member to serve as the COG's representative.

The Executive Committee was also presented with information regarding the Climate Action and Adaption Plan, including the possibility of forming a Climate Action and Sustainability Committee to guide implementation of the Plan. Because adding another committee adds workload for elected officials and staff, options were shared regarding COG committees. It was the consensus of the Executive Committee that each member would discuss options related to COG committees at their upcoming municipal meetings. The goal is to gather input from each community's Board or Council to bring back to the regular May meeting of the Executive Committee for further discussion.

Options presented/discussed included, establishment of a COG Climate Action and Sustainability Committee, studying merging of two COG committees, making the Ad Hoc Facilities Committee a standing committee, and conducting a more comprehensive review of COG committees. It was requested that municipalities discuss and provide input for discussion at the May 19 regular meeting of the Executive Committee.

Due to the stay-at-home-order issued by Governor Wolf, the April 27, 2020 meeting of the COG General Forum has been cancelled.

May 7 - Public Comment to Centre Region Council of Governments Public Services & Environmental Committee, and Centre Region Planning Commission, regarding University Area Joint Authority proposal for a "Task Activity Report" for an "Act 537 Plan Special Study" to propose and authorize/establish a "Beneficial Reuse Service Area."

Search online at the crcog.net website or contact me if you're interested in the 24-page document in which UAJA's salaried managerial elite Cory Miller and his supporting staff and consultants, responded to concerns and questions raised by the Centre Region Planning Agency, State College Borough Water Authority, Aqualith Technologies, College Township Water Authority, Penn State, ClearWater Conservancy, Nittany Valley Environmental Coalition and Spring Creek Chapter - Trout Unlimited. There's some interesting information in that document.

Short summary: the proposed project is just Cory Miller trying to expand his sewage treatment fiefdom and revenue streams, while avoiding public scrutiny and public debate about whether the people of the Centre Region want and/or can afford to support a growth-based economy or a steady state economy: scrutiny and debate that would most likely accompany a (long-overdue) comprehensive Act 537 plan update.

Public Comment submitted to PSEC and CRPC from Katherine Watt, State College resident:

1. I do not support COG funding for this study; COG taxpayers are and will continue to be under increasing pressure due to the economic and unemployment impacts of COVID-19 and the prior asset bubble which COVID lockdowns are helping to deflate; COG programs and projects should be reduced in response, not expanded;
2. I do not support expansion of the beneficial reuse program, because such expansion is explicitly intended to promote additional growth in the Centre Region, and I think the region is already overbuilt. The extent of the overbuilt capacity is likely to increase, as Penn State enrollment and academic programming contract in the coming years, reducing demand for housing, commercial and other high-intensity land use.
3. I think the beneficial reuse program should be maintained at current scale, or decreased in scope, and land that is currently "developed" should be reviewed for potential for thoughtful **undevelopment**: reclamation of land for farm and forest purposes, through careful dismantling of structures and reclamation of reusable building materials that could be stored for routine wear-and-tear renovation of remaining built structures within the region.

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Bailiwick News is an independent newspaper founded in 2016 to offer in-depth, long-form, contextualized investigative reporting and critical analysis of Centre County public affairs, focused on public corruption, government accountability and ecological resilience. As of Spring 2020, the newspaper is moving from Wordpress to Substack, and offering investigative reporting and serialized fiction on localism in Centre County.

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