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<https://letsGOPublish.com/publish/trump/wb/mayorgeorge.pdf> in February 2019. When Mayor George Brown was not a sure thing for Mayor, John Q. Doe was thinking of running for the Wilkes-Barre office. These are his thoughts for a great city.

Most of my books had previously been published on Amazon.

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Help for Mayor George & the Next Mayor of Wilkes-Barre

Wilkes-Barre Officials need to learn how to create a
better city!

BRIAN W. KELLY



Help for Mayor George & the Next Mayor of Wilkes-Barre

Wilkes-Barre Officials need to learn how to create a better city!

In 2015, your author wrote a book titled, Wilkes-Barre PA: Return to Glory. In 2019 as a follow-up and as a primer for Wilkes-Barre citizens, I wrote a new book titled The Ghost of Wilkes-Barre Future. When I ran for Mayor of Wilkes-Barre in 2015, I was hoping to change Wilkes-Barre enough that the City would return to its prior glory. I did not get the chance as the people thought they had a better shot with Mayor George and almost Mayor Brown. I'll let others comment on the wisdom of the City's decision.

I thought it would be much easier than it was to become the Mayor of my home town. I had lived in Wilkes-Barre all my life and I had just researched what would be the best solutions to bring to the City—just in case God decided that I should be its Mayor. Wilkes-Barre does not have to be as it is.

Politicians had never moved the City off the mark. Like most in Wilkes-Barre, I was sick of politics at all levels of government. I built a catchphrase for my campaign and it was on the first page of the prior book that I had written:

Dreams and ideas; plans and actions equal LEADERSHIP

Wilkes-Barre PA had twelve years of the same Mayor who was a terrific Mayor for the first six of those twelve years. It is tough to be a politician without getting sucked in. Having received 17% of the vote in the 2010 Congressional Primary v Paul Kanjorski, without a real campaign and no funds solicitation (no donations), I thought my formula might work for my City. I figured Wilkes-Barre needed a person who was not political but who understood the nature of politicians. I was wrong and I admit it.

After getting just 5% of the vote of my friends in WB, I learned that I was big-time wrong. Tony George, a fine affable man, is now our Mayor and he wants to be Mayor again, hoping to be reelected in 2019. No matter who becomes Mayor in 2019 for the next four years, I know it will not be me. I will not run again for anything. I still want to help the City, but differently. I have decided to write this book for our next Mayor and Council so they know what to do to make Wilkes-Barre a better city in the future.

Just being a prior Mayor or Council Person will not do. The next Mayor and Council must explain in detail why they should be elected. Therefore, all candidates for City offices in 2019, will have to be more accountable to the people. They can't hide and not answer public questions as the last mayors have done. This book tells you what all the candidates must do to win the people's support. Wilkes-Barre does not have to accept candidates who will not tell the people what they plan to do. Let them write a report or a book like this to tell us all. Good idea?. The message is that if you want to be Mayor or a member of Council in Wilkes-Barre next year, tell the people you are adopting Brian Kelly's plan from this book for a Safe City; a Clean City, and an Affordable City.

Brian W. Kelly
Lifelong Resident of Wilkes-Barre, PA

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Help for Mayor George & the Next Mayor of WB

Editor: Brian P. Kelly
Author Brian W. Kelly

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Dedication

To all the people that I have ever mentioned in the Acknowledgments of any book. Please check out www.letsGOPublish.com to read the latest version.

*Special Dedication to My wife Pat & children --
Brian P, Mike P, and Katie P Kelly*

*Additionally,
Dennis Grimes, Barbara Grimes; Gerry Rodski &
the inimitable Joyce Heck*

*Thank you for all of your support in my Writing and
publishing efforts.*

You all are the best.

*Special Thanks to Joe Kelly, Ann Flannery, Angel
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John Rose & Bernie Hummer
For your excellent research for this book.*

*Thank you also to Angel Irene Jachimiak, and
George Elias, my buddies From High Street for the
inspiration. Love comes in many forms.
God bless all High Street and WB Personnel!*

Preface

This is a much smaller book than that from which it has been culled. It is more important to me as your author for the people of Wilkes-Barre to have the best suggestions for how to turn around the City and make it much better. So, from the book titled, the *Ghost of Wilkes-Barre Future*, I took the chapters dealing with the how-to for the Mayor & the Mayoral candidates in 2019, the Council, and the Council candidates in 2019.

The idea of this book is for our elected officials when they are candidates to read about how to solve the issues plaguing Wilkes-Barre and then to offer an endorsement or a counter proposal for the people to evaluate as to why particular candidates should be elected in Wilkes-Barre.

I would only ask that the citizens demand that all the candidates tell all the people in speeches and in ads whether they support the notions introduced in this book that are written to help Make Wilkes-Barre a better and more prosperous City. Any candidate who chooses to not respond to the query in this book should be dropped immediately from consideration for your vote.

By the way, Bernie Hummer, a well-known and they tell me, eligible bon-vivant in the City corrected my first Wilkes-Barre book and so I decided to show his note again in this the second book based upon the original book titled Wilkes-Barre PA: Return to Glory. Can you blame me? Bernie Hummer's note is shown later in this preface. Thanks Bernie. God bless you and your buddie Tony Glazensky, another great mason (concrete guy).

In terms of a writer, I am basically a tech guy who learned to write technical material by trying to convince IBM clients to do the "right" things with computer systems. I eventually got pretty good at it.

When I wrote tech books, which was about ten to twenty years ago, I figured out what I was going to say and then I outlined the book and then I wrote the book from the outline. I had to be careful to be sure every bit of advice was spot-on so for the finicky technocrats who would be reading the book, it would work. The outline for me in my recent books now is mostly mental. I have not built a written outline in about 100 books.

When I write a patriotic book or a book about trains, such as *Take the Train to Myrtle Beach*, which I wrote several years ago, I start out like I am writing a short piece for a newspaper or for one of the online tech papers for which I write frequently.

In writing my first Wilkes-Barre book, which happened at the time I was planning to run for Mayor of Wilkes-Barre in 2015, I wanted to talk about a few dreams that I had and still have for Wilkes-Barre City. I also talked about some ideas, followed by plans and actions. Together the notion of dreams and ideas and plans and actions in many ways is a definition of leadership. I hoped to be an effective leader for the City as its Mayor. I wrote the precepts for the next Mayor and Council when I designed my Mayoral Web site in 2015. Since then, I brought the site down after a while as I was not the Mayor and no longer needed it to be up when the current Mayor chose to not seek my advice.

However, I included the major precepts of the WB solutions as the meat of this book. In my opinion, anybody wanting to be Mayor of Wilkes-Barre should use this book as their bible.

Without casting direct aspersions on prior Wilkes-Barre administrations, I always felt leadership was a missing quality despite how much the City executive at the time wanted to turn things around. In my experience with the City of WB, working as a computer consultant, I found Tom McGroarty to be the most on-duty Mayor I ever experienced. He may not even like me but that too is OK. He was a Mayor who worked very hard. He would be on the plow-truck the morning of a big snow storm, even before the driver came to work.

Anyway, unlike other writing ventures of mine, I kept perfecting my first WB book because I kept having more and more ideas. This book is the direct successor of a book titled, *Ghost of Wilkes-Barre Future*. The reason for this book is not everybody has \$15.95 to spend on a 374-page book, though it is a great read. This book, as you can see is small, pocket sized, and just \$8.95 a copy. The Kindle eBook version is available for just \$2.95 a download. Wilkes-Barre residents need this book, so they know what to ask of their official candidates.

I loved writing the books about my City so much that I could not stop. Even when I was in final edit of the first book, trying to clean

the book up of typos and oversights, I added more material about Gerry's Pizza, a mainstay in South Wilkes-Barre, as well as Sable's Music Center being acquired recently for parking and possible expansion. My kids had played on Gerry's sponsored team in the little league. The book was alive and it has been enlivened and updated even more after its initial printing.

In this book, I removed interesting notions like viewing the business routes of Central City, including the Public Square. I did not explore many of the important businesses and landmarks in the "business district" and what's new. Instead, I focused on what the candidates for Mayor and council must do to earn the people's vote.

So, in this book, the focus is on advice to the next Mayor and the next Council. I went back to the web site material for when I ran for Mayor and I dusted off my plans to create a new motto for the City under my administration: *Wilkes-Barre: Safe, Affordable, and Clean*. Yes, I know they were to-do's then and they still are to-do's—very important. The major advice for City officials were presented in the last four chapters of the Ghost book right before the end. Those chapters are the substance of this much less expensive book.

This book is filled with ideas for any candidate running in either party to help make Wilkes-Barre a fine place to work and live. The people of the City need to read this book to be smarter in the selection process for Council and the Mayor in the elections of 2019. On the next page is Bernie Hummer's note. He cares about the Wilkes-Barre story being told correctly.

I have a standard set of acknowledgments that I have posted on the Internet for the people who have helped me do anything regarding my book projects over the years. All their help keeps me writing. The help of all the people on the list was instrumental in my being able to write 59 books by 2015 -- at that time (now up to 192 with this new book)

Since my first Wilkes-Barre book, I have written many more books. My 65th book is titled. *Great Moments in Notre Dame Football*. It is now in its second edition. I completed it in April of 2016 and I wrote four more books while I was putting together a 650-page book titled *Great Moments in Penn State Football*. The PSU book was my 70th. I finished it in July 2016 and it too is now in its second

edition. I claim "dual citizenship" with Notre Dame and Penn State as my favorite college football teams.

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FYI, I have written four more Penn State books and two more Fighting Irish books along with college football books about Alabama, Clemson, Florida Gators, Army, Navy, and Syracuse. In 2018, I began writing pro football books beginning with the world champion Philadelphia Eagles, then the Steelers, and then the Patriots. None gave me more pleasure than writing the first book about Wilkes-Barre, however, and I am enjoying writing this book as much as my first Wilkes-Barre book.

With this, I have written 188 books in total. All of my books that are current are available on amazon at [amazon.com/author/brianwkelly](https://www.amazon.com/author/brianwkelly).

Please note again, the chapters in this book mimic the last four chapters in the Ghost of Wilkes-Barre Future book. They describe the three-pronged approach to brightening the future of our City. Having a safe City; an affordable City, and a clean city are key to turning our Wilkes-Barre around. This book in many ways is the to-do list for any candidate for Mayor or Council who wants success.

Sincerely,

Brian W. Kelly, Author

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About the Author



Brian W. Kelly retired as an Assistant Professor in the Business Information Technology (BIT) program at Marywood University, where he also served as the IBM i and midrange systems technical advisor to the IT faculty. Kelly has designed, developed, and taught many college and professional courses. He is also a contributing technical editor to a number of IT industry magazines, including "The Four Hundred" and "Four Hundred Guru" published by IT Jungle.

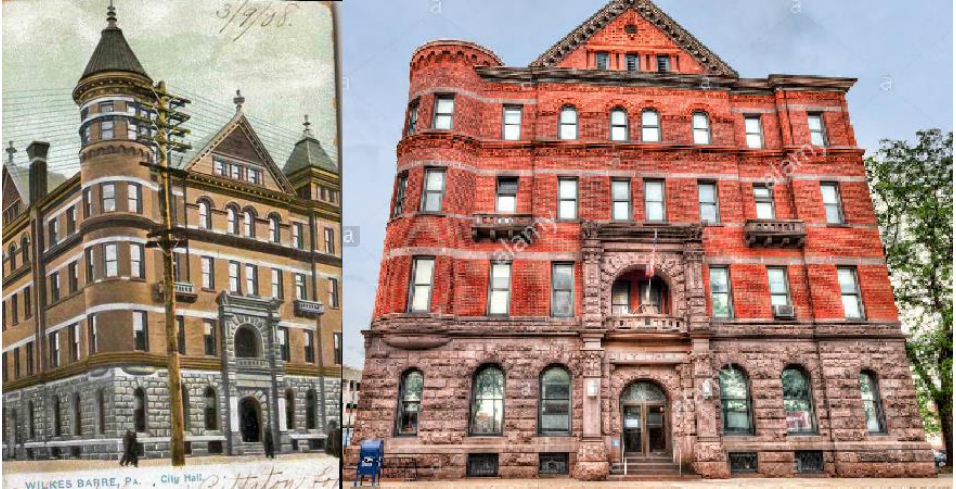
Kelly is a former IBM Senior Systems Engineer and he has been a candidate for US Congress and the US Senate from Pennsylvania. He has an active information technology consultancy. He is the author of 188 books and numerous articles. Kelly has been a frequent speaker at COMMON, IBM conferences, and other technical conferences.

In 2010, Kelly ran for Congress as a Democrat against a 13-term Democrat and, took no campaign contributions. He spent enough to buy signs and T-shirts, and as a virtual unknown, amazing the pundits as a nobody, he captured 17% of the vote.

Brian Kelly ran for Mayor and lost in the 2016 primary to the current Mayor of Wilkes-Barre, Anthony George. For six months or so after the election, he kept his donation site available at www.bookhawkers.com for unreimbursed expenses. It is now down. Better than donate, Brian would prefer that you buy a book. [Amazon.com/author/brianwkelly](https://www.amazon.com/author/brianwkelly). God bless you all.

.

Chapter 1 Brian Kelly Ran for Mayor in 2015



Old City Hall with exquisite towers on left; New City Hall with no Towers on the right.

Wilkes-Barre is worth the fight

People from Wilkes-Barre hate to see it go down without a fight. After a nice career with IBM, when I hit 62 years of age, and after I had been on the faculty of King's, Misericordia and at Marywood University for a number of years, I figured it was time to give something back. So I decided to run for Congress in 2010. My family, friends and I got 1500 signatures and this got me on the ballot with 500 to spare. The Capitol Police in Harrisburg PA drew my number first so I got first ballot position in the election of 2010.

In a three-person race, though I tried to win in other ways, I wanted to be beholden to nobody. So, I took no political contributions. I spent about \$4,000 on yard signs and miscellany. I was pleased to receive 17% of the vote in District 11. It was a learning experience for sure.

When Tom Leighton appeared to be stepping down after three terms as Wilkes-Barre's Mayor, I figured I would give it a shot again. I ran for Mayor of Wilkes-Barre in 2015. This time I used my computer tech skills to build a web site that accepted donations. My friends and family chipped in about \$3500 for a campaign that cost me about

\$7000 to run. So I was out \$3500 for the campaign. I'll never get it back but c'est la vie.

It was an expensive lesson for me. Without the backing of a machine or a lot of reserve shekles in the bank, of which I had none, I regret to say, a regular guy in my opinion cannot ever be elected. My wife Pat, and I agreed that I had done my civic duty for life when I lost the Mayoral race after receiving only 5% of the vote. I had guessed that not being one of the politicians in NEPA would help. It did not help.

Darlene Duggins-Magdalinski, another candidate and I together, had no real chance against Tony George and George Brown. Their spent warchests gave them the notoriety to win. Darlene and I were too naïve to know we could not win with our limited resources when we began the process.

Councilmen George Brown and Tony George, both good people, had major media blitzes in the newspapers, radio, and even television. As members of Council, they were already well-known and their media blitz had them on everybody's minds when it came time for the people to vote. Despite valiant attempts using economical vehicles, Duggins-Magdalinski and I together received less than 10% of the vote. My friends would say I am rounding-up.

Tony George's margin of victory was very small. In fact, if all of the Darlene votes or all of my votes were in George Brown's column, he would have been elected Mayor. I wanted to be Mayor not a close almost but I was neither.

So now it has been four years since I wrote *Wilkes-Barre PA: Return to Glory* and it has been four years since Democrat Tony George was heralded as the new Mayor of Wilkes-Barre after he defeated Frank Sorick of the Republican Party in the General Election to get the nod .

Mayor George has let it be known that he is going for a second term, and I have it from the horse's mouth that George Brown is coming back to challenge him in the Democratic Primary. George Borwn is a fine man whose only problem in the election of 2015 was that he was associated with the 12-year Leighton reign. This year should be another interesting race. There may be more than two participants

again in the primary but yours truly will not be one of them. Don't count out George Brown as he is a fine man and a tough competitor.

Early in his administration, I visited Mayor George at City Hall to congratulate him and to give him his own copy of *Wilkes-Barre PA: Return to Glory*. After having written a book and run a campaign hoping to be able to return Wilkes-Barre PA to its glory days, I admit that I have not seen the solutions that I identified in the book, implemented in any way by the George Administration.

I still would like to see my City return to the glory days of its founding and by identifying in a publicly available book, the means by which this can be achieved, I believe that together, we, the people of Wilkes-Barre, PA. can bring Wilkes-Barre to the top of its game again. Of course we need to find a candidate that thinks like us to get that job done. Is it Tony George?

Mr. George does not choose to talk to me even when I spell it out that his comments will be freely available if he provides them in this book. Expecting Mr. George to run, I will offer him the opportunity to say what he thinks and I will republish this book to make sure his comments are available for all to see. Mr. George chose not to comment to me. I am OK with that.

And so, in this book, I will review and expand on a number of ideas that I published during my 2015 campaign. I had researched what was needed for Wilkes-Barre in many areas and all of my findings were available to all candidates on my web site and also in the WB book. Some may recall that I offered a free download of the Wilkes-Barre book on the web site ready for the downloading cost-free. Consequently, since I chose not to verify downloads, I do not know who read the book *Wilkes-Barre PA: Return to Glory*. Since the current Mayor never called me to explain anything, I suspect that he was not interested in what I had to offer.

The ideas from my campaign are well researched and well defined and this new mini-book about how to bring Wilkes-Barre back to the top of its game again, will amplify the recommendations already provided in my former campaign site and the prior book.

You may recall the major crime problem in Wilkes-Barre and that the City was declared one of the most dangerous places to live in the country. I spent many hours working with a retired state police officer who was the principal, operating under cover, in bringing down a major US motorcycle gang.

With his help, I devised a unique solution to solve the drug crimes issue in the City. Being a third or fourth tier candidate in the primary, neither of the two city newspapers after interviewing me, followed through on the jointly developed crime solution put forth and they backed other candidates for the Mayor's position. Even the newspapers ignored me as I was simply an unknown in the WB political world.

Though I made my plans available on my web site before I brought it down well after the election, and I offered help to the two general election candidates, both the Democratic Party and the primary winner chose to use local expertise rather than use the advice of the expert crime fighter I had found. I had been excluded, though a Democrat from their efforts to win.

Again, this new book and its ghostly predecessor will be available to the public, including all of the mayoral candidates. Perhaps if they absorb the recommendations outlined in this abbreviated book or its predecessor, the candidates may opt to work for the people of Wilkes-Barre in bringing the City back to the top of its game.

As the primary wound down in 2015, on May 5, 2015, Citizens Voice Staff Writer Jacob Seibel wrote a summary piece that in general describes the one-time in which all of the mayoral candidates "debated" on the same stage. Here is his synopsis:

WILKES-BARRE — The five mayoral candidates sat before about 200 citizens Monday evening in the ballroom of Wilkes University's Henry Student Center to lay out their platforms and answer questions on their plans if elected.

The Wilkes-Barre Downtown Residents Association, a nonpartisan organization, held the two-hour long forum, the first of which to bring all city mayoral candidates together before the public. Eileen Kenyon, coordinator for DRA, said the association sponsored the

event to give people in the area a chance to come and listen to what the candidates had to say.

“We have to elect a mayor, and we hope this will let them make an informed decision,” she said.

Each candidate gave a brief opening statement before association members moderated a question-and-answer session during which they broached such topics as unpaid pensions of city employees, how to attract wage-earning residents, their assessments of city hall and city resources, and crime.

The primary race became more competitive in February when incumbent and three-time mayor Tom Leighton announced he would not seek a fourth term. The following are running in the May 19 primary election for the mayor’s position: George C. Brown III, 64, who retired from a career in business management for international companies and is a current councilman; Darlene Duggins-Magdalinski, 46, a community activist who founded the advocacy group “United We Stand Divided We Fall;”

Brian W. Kelly, 67, who retired from IBM Corporation as a senior systems engineer and currently works as an information technology consultant; Tony G. George, 63, former Wilkes-Barre police chief and current city councilman; and Frank Sorick, 42, Republican, realtor and president of the Wilkes-Barre City Taxpayers Association.

Crime dominated much of the discussion. There have been almost 10 shootings in the city this year, and just two years ago was the city’s deadliest time in history — with 13 homicides. When association members asked how the candidates would bring more wage-earning residents into the city, all answered in terms of what was keeping those wage-earning residents out — criminals.

“Every candidate up here is saying the same thing: ‘Until we solve the crime problem, we’re not going to get people to want to move back to the city and raise their families here,’” Sorick said.

Brown, George and Sorick want to address the crime problem using traditional means, such as getting more police patrols in

place and reviewing the city's budget to see if more funding could be allocated to emergency services.

Kelly and Duggins-Magdalinski, on the other hand, had different ideas. Kelly plans to restructure the police department and other emergency services if he is elected. He advocated for hiring a police commissioner and other top positions for fire and EMS that would oversee the city's emergency services. He said these top positions would be held by professionals who know how to manage emergency services and delegate responsibilities down the command chain.

Duggins-Magdalinski approaches the subject from a human interest angle in which she believes the city has to address the underlying causes of what drives people to crime, such as providing better tools to deal with substance abuse.

Association members asked candidates how they assessed the city's departments and agencies and which needed cuts and which needed more resources.

Sorick was the most astute. He said emergency services was the main area that was understaffed and needed more resources. Eliminating some city positions, like the city spokesperson, which he characterized as useless, would help reallocate resources to other departments and agencies that need them.

Kelly said there were almost 300 city employees. Most of them, he said, make two and a half times more than the average Wilkes-Barre resident, and he would work on cutting down salaries. Duggins-Magdalinski expressed similar concerns and solutions, saying 69 percent the city's 2015 budget was salaries and benefits.

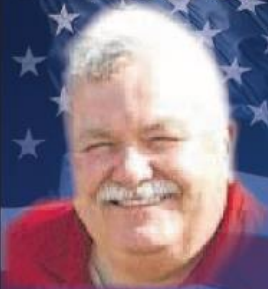
Brown and George, however, were less eager to voice what they saw as wasteful, both instead saying they would review a line item budget for the city in order to determine what could be cut and reallocated elsewhere.

My thanks to the Citizens Voice for this contribution *Brian W. Kelly*

Chapter 2 Brian Kelly Tried to be Mayor But Failed

ARE YOU HAPPY WITH HOW THINGS ARE IN WILKES-BARRE?

If you are, then:
 Vote for your current elected officials. ... Vote for the Good Ole Boy Establishment and politics as usual. You've seen what they will do! Your vote will help keep everything the same.



DO YOU AGREE THAT WE NEED BIG CHANGES IN WILKES-BARRE?

If you do, then:
Vote Brian Kelly for Mayor!

You'll be voting for a Police Commissioner & a Special Violent Crime Unit to purge the drug masters and the gangs and thugs to make the City safe again!

And cleaner! And more affordable! When the City is safe, affordable, and clean... then jobs will come back quickly.

<p>MBA in Accounting & Finance Information Technology Consultant IBM Designer / Senior Systems Engineer; College Professor; Problem Solver JFK Conservative Democrat; Independent Not part of the political system or current administration Fully Committed to Wilkes-Barre's Future Lifetime Wilkes-Barre Resident</p>	<p>Major Platform Points & Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilkes-Barre is Open for Business • Safe, Affordable & Clean City • Add more businesses and better jobs • Revitalization and Growth 	<p>How to get there?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build trust and improve management in all City departments 2. Commit to long term education plan for all City employees 3. Introduce merit-based recognition and promotion 4. Hire best person for the job 5. All employees serve the residents / taxpayers 6. Establish a culture of continuous departmental improvement 7. Establish a code of ethics for all city employees 8. Establish partnerships w/ hospitals, education, & businesses <p style="text-align: right;">More to come—www.briankellyformayor.com</p>
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Vote for a Safe City! Vote for an Affordable City! Vote for a Clean City!

VOTE BRIAN KELLY
For Mayor of Wilkes-Barre

Note to Republicans: Please Write-In BRIAN KELLY on Election Day! Thank you
www.briankellyformayor.com

This was the signature ad I used in my 2015 campaign for Mayor. I was hoping to gain voters in the 2015 Democrat Primary. My objective and it was in my theme, was to begin a return to glory for Wilkes-Barre by making Wilkes-Barre A safe city, an affordable city, and a clean city. If I had been elected, I believe that we all would be four years ahead of where we were in 2015.

As an unknown in politics and as naïve as I could be of the political process at the time, I would pass a lie detector test if I told you that I did not know that I had no chance to win. If I knew that my lack of funds, lack of notoriety, along with never having been a politician were so critical to convincing voters to give me a shot, in retrospect, like all my friends, I would have stayed home instead of running a campaign. I would not have run for anything.

So, in case you thought about asking, “No!” I am not running for Mayor in 2015 or ever again. I am done. But, now like then, I think my ideas for Wilkes-Barre to rise from the funk and ashes to a first-rate City are in the cards with the right dreams, ideas, plans, and actions. On that folks, I am not kidding

I was serious in 2015 when I wrote my first book about Wilkes-Barre being able to rebound from a host of issues. I have stayed serious about the prospects of making Wilkes-Barre a far more desirable place to live than it has been in recent times including its current state of affairs four years after I tried to get elected so I could improve things. I still believe that together we can make the City a much better place but we need to assure that those we elect feel as strongly as we do. I have already sent the current administration a request for information and unfortunately, they have chosen to ignore my request.

I would suggest that you write up a set of questions such as those I wrote in the book I wrote in 2019 titled *Ghost of Wilkes-Barre Future* plus your own and see what the administration’s plans are for Wilkes-Barre for the next four years if they are fortunate enough to be reelected. Go ahead and write them. It would help all of us in Wilkes-Barre if politicians believed we actually care.

FYI, here is what I asked the City to which I received no response

Date: Wed, 12 Dec 2018 11:08:10 -0500
From: "Brian W. Kelly" <bkelly@ptd.net>
Subject: Note

Dear *Administrator*,

I was unable to see a Director of Public Relations or Communications Director title, so I am sure that you will know who best to direct this

request for information. It is for my new book anticipated in January or February of next year. Thank you for your help.

My request is as follows:

I am in the process of writing a follow-up book to Wilkes-Barre PA: Return to Glory, a book that I wrote in 2015.

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01J6LONXS/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1

I would like to include a letter from a current City Official that I can place in the new book.

I wonder if you might send me a note in response to the following questions:

Re: Public Safety

What changes have been made to City police procedures since the Leighton Administration?

What was the effect of those changes?

Is Wilkes-Barre a safer City than during the Leighton Administration?

If so, how and why; If not, Why?

Re: Public Administration

What changes were made to public policy since the Leighton Administration that made the City a better place to live?

What improvements have been made to the city during this time in terms of infrastructure and items such as computers, software, etc.

What are several areas that have been identified for improvement and are currently being improved or cannot be at this time. How? Why?

Do City Officials believe that there are 1. Too few, 2. just enough, or 3. too many employees serving the City in various ways.

Does the City plan to take any action to help the new groundswell movement to prevent moving the three school district high schools out of Wilkes-Barre City? Why? Why Not?

Re: The future

For the next four years, what is the City's plan for improvement in all of the areas above.

Thank you very much.

--- end of note to City ---

Besides four thousand dollars, I invested the better part of a year in preparation and research to gain a *how-to* for bringing back glory to our City. I researched what was necessary to jump-start the Mayor's office for the people in 2015. Why? Because I thought as Mayor, I could help make it happen.

In my unsophistication in the political process, I actually thought I could win. I have the correct educational background including an MBA in Accounting and Finance along with substantial IBM and IT expertise, and more than anything else, I lived in Wilkes-Barre just about all my life. I know what is needed for the City to succeed as a City. The people chose Tony George as Mayor instead. I cannot change that. The plan he has executed as Mayor is nothing like the plan I constructed. The results have been predictable. I offered my help to the Mayor but he chose to not hear what I had to say.

In my campaign preparations, I devoted a lot of hours to fine tune my platform and my message. Unfortunately, I did not have the resources to get the message known by the people of Wilkes-Barre. And, so I lost the election as all the pundits expected.

Here I am back again but I am not running for anything. I still have all my work from the 2015 campaign available and much of it is written down in the Return to Glory book and on my computer. The rest is in this book. I have already dusted off a number of dreams and ideas and in prior chapters I presented them to you. The details are coming in the last four chapters.

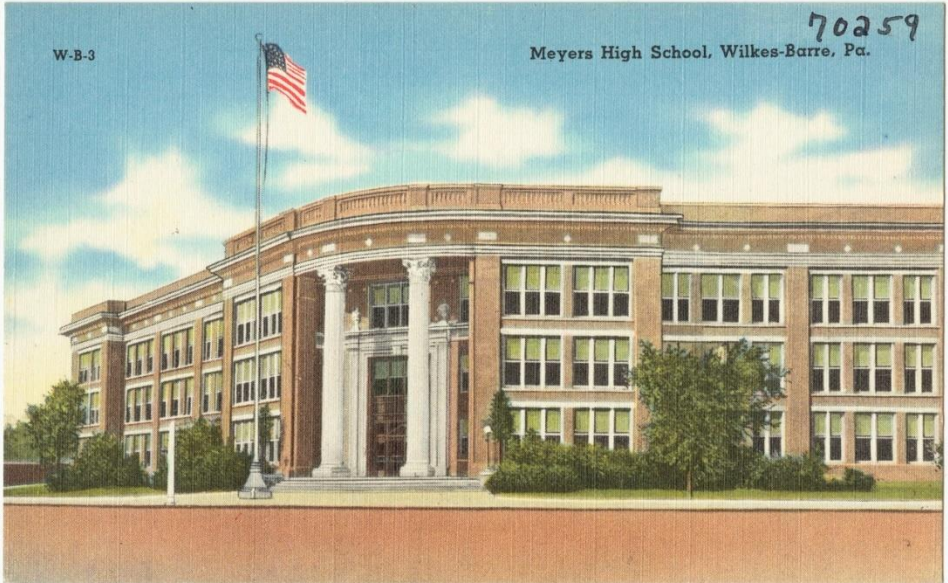
I have put together my set of thoughts from my prior work and from new dreams and ideas from over the past four years about how to brighten the future for all of the people of Wilkes-Barre. They will be available for all in this book when it is completed.

I am making it all available again today so that the people and the politicians have a lot more to consider than business as usual. If the

ideas are those you would pick, when the candidates come forth, my advice is for everybody to support only those candidates who think the kind of thoughts that you think.

Don't vote for a neighbor or a friend or a crony or somebody the Party wants unless they think like you think. Since you are reading this book, you certainly know how I think. At least you will know when you finish reading this work. I would ask that you consider my suggestions and of course vote for the best candidate possible for WB Mayor and for WB Council and also for the WB Area School Board.

Chapter 3 Stop the Axe Man from Doing More Damage



Three City High Schools to be Demolished?

Meyers, G.A.R. and Coughlin are in danger of the Wilkes-Barre axman at the insistence of what some would call the corrupt Wilkes-Barre Area School Board.

From <http://preservationpa.org/uploads/2018-PresPA-At-Risk-newsletter.pdf>

AT RISK ELMER L. MEYERS HIGH SCHOOL Luzerne County 341 Carey Avenue Wilkes-Barre, PA Threat: Demolition Beginning in May 2008 and extending through April 2012.

[Yet, here we are at the beginning of 2019, and Meyers is still here, and it Is still functional and still in working order.]

Preservation Pennsylvania worked with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the United States Environmental Protection Agency on a program entitled, “Helping Johnny Walk to School:

Sustaining Communities through Smart School Siting Policies.” This program encourages school districts to retain historic schools, to locate new ones in locations where a portion of students can walk or bike to school, and to use schools as a center of community activities beyond regular school hours.

The Elmer L. Meyers High School, built in 1930, stands as a testament to the importance of continuing such programs. As a Depression-era construction project, the school embodies the grand design of early 20th-century public architecture. It serves a diverse neighborhood and is located in a central location that children can walk to.

The Wilkes-Barre school board has planned to consolidate several of their schools, including Meyers and the historic James M. Coughlin High School, and build a new school approximately four miles from Meyers. The plan was created as a reaction to several feasibility studies done by the district indicating that renovation of their historic high schools would be cost prohibitive.

The plan ultimately concludes with Elmer L. Meyers being demolished in order to build a park. This historic school serves as a community anchor and ties the residents to the area. Losing this school would mean that children would be bussed out of town for school.

Wilkes-Barre Area Save Our Schools has been advocating for the school to remain in use, and locals are preparing a National Register nomination for the Elmer L. Meyers School. Preservation Pennsylvania hopes to work with the district’s school board and the local community to encourage the building’s preservation either as a school building or new community use.

Special landmarks do not have to be destroyed

Throughout this book, as we have discussed one neighborhood or section after another, we found a lot of holes in our City. There are many vacant lots where once magnificent buildings stood. The latest of course is the Hotel Sterling, but our history is replete with the Axe Man delivering damaging blows to our future, and the City wimpishly agreeing with the anti-public school board to take down one monument after another that can never be replaced.

We have two more monuments that are about to come down if they are not cared for—The Irem Temple Mosque, and The Hotel Sterling Annex. This must be stopped. There is recent good news on both of these as we know the Annex is being rebuilt and the Irem Temple Restoration Project is collecting donations to bring back the Irem treasure. See picture of The Irem Temple below:



Additionally, the Wilkes-Barre Area School District, whose mission is not to care about Wilkes-Barre per se, wants to rip down our three high schools and replace them with a huge Plasticville building in a different City. The new structure is to be built over toxic material and compared to the existing high schools, it may or may not last thirty years.

I am 100% against this and I wrote a letter to both papers about it. The Citizen Voice printed my letter on the day before New Year's Eve, 2014. Here it is in its entirety as printed. It says it just as I meant it. Many in Wilkes-Barre have thanked me for writing it as it represents the feelings of those of us who care.

LETTER TO EDITOR

Published: December 30, 2014

Editor:

The fixes required for Wilkes-Barre Area School District high schools have been depicted as unaffordable by taxpayers regardless of the approach — fix it or demolish and build it again cheaper. I don't think so. I don't buy it. It would have been interesting if the numbers and "plans" had been presented at Wednesday's meeting along with the impact on millage. We all know the school district has not been a tax bargain for local taxpayers. More importantly for all of us living in Wilkes-Barre Area, the question should be, "Do we really want to destroy historically important, well-built school buildings and replace them with cheap quality 30-year models?"

Wilkes-Barre High was established in 1890. It later was renamed Coughlin High after GAR opened in 1925. This old Coughlin school building is in fact the oldest public high school building in Pennsylvania. Can you believe some people want to tear down the oldest public-school building in the state? The Coughlin Annex structure was built in 1952. The original Coughlin building was occupied in 1909 though construction had begun much earlier. Citizens of Wilkes-Barre Area need to get involved and think about what is being proposed and we must ask ourselves if there are not better ways to solve this problem without doubling our already unaffordable school tax burden.

In March 2005, Clif Greim wrote an excellent piece titled “New Construction vs. Renovation for Older School Facilities.” Though 10 years old, it still covers the issue quite well. It is available for all to read online.

Greim offers readable counsel on the big decision for Wilkes-Barre Area:

“Generally, schools built in the 1950s or earlier have impressive architectural character and often are fixtures in their neighborhoods. They are structurally sound and can accommodate new systems. In addition, there is often strong sentiment to keep them in some form.

“Newer schools built in the 1960s and ’70s generally lack architectural character, are not energy-efficient and are constructed of cheaper materials. These get torn down more often or become hand-me-down conversions from high schools to junior highs or from junior highs to elementary schools.”

All of the buildings in question were built before 1950 other than the Coughlin Annex, which was built in 1952. I think it is safe to say that the same logic Greim discusses for post-1950 buildings applies to the Coughlin Annex.

I admit I was taken back by board members who said, “It’s going to cost a lot but it’s something we have to do.” I would ask whether they would vote to tear down historic Independence Hall if it were within their responsibility back in 1860? It helps to know that at that time, this famous Philadelphia structure was about the same age as Coughlin is right now. We all know that Independence Hall is the birthplace of America. We also know that the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution were both debated and signed inside this remarkable building. Independence Hall was built between 1732 and 1756 to be the Pennsylvania State House. It still stands and thrives.

Originally, this building housed all three branches of Pennsylvania’s colonial government. Yes, it was built even before the U.S.A. became the U.S.A. It is now two and a half times older than Coughlin High School and it has a lot of life left. Think of the famous graduates of Coughlin, GAR and Meyers, and think of all the memorable events at those schools. These buildings are special landmarks in our home area, and they do not have to be destroyed.

GAR is almost 90 years old and Meyers is the baby at 85 years of age. Why would we give up these historically significant, well-built structures and replace them with 30-year throwaway, square buildings made of sheet metal, plastic, and other cheap materials? We have historical buildings with grand designs, granite and limestone interiors, and exquisite stained glass auditoriums. Who are we to cast this all away so that in 30 years another study like this can be done as we rip out the structures to be built and go with even cheaper buildings with 20-year lifetimes or perhaps a modular school or a few trailers?

Where there is a will, there is a way. Somehow we lost our will with the Hotel Sterling after spending \$6 million without fixing the roof. Let's keep our will and our wits as the board tries to shove a huge millage increase our way ... for a less desirable outcome than the status quo.

One off-hand suggestion I have is to budget about \$1 million or more if we can afford it. We can bring in a great building contractor from our area to allocate five or 10 artisans just for Wilkes-Barre Area, to begin work on these buildings, one year at a time, one objective at a time. Let's get the hazards out of the way first. When real emergencies occur in the other buildings, we can dispatch this crew of experts along with Wilkes-Barre Area maintenance personnel to fix the problems posthaste.

I would also use our political representatives to get waivers for the beams that can withstand lateral forces. This is a very costly undertaking and should be ruled out immediately. Clearly all of the Wilkes-Barre Area buildings in question have not been blown over by big puffs of wind in the 85 to 105 years in which they have been standing and they are not going to be blown over tomorrow or any time soon. I would also try to get waivers for increasing the physical size of the classrooms. They seem big enough to have been able to be used for conducting classes for many years and surely they could continue to be used. Waivers would save a lot of money and they are practical and safe.

I would bet that the local and state historical societies would help in gaining the waivers. How can we consider destroying such history for a promise we know will be broken 30 years from now? After all,

citizens make the laws. If the laws do not fit, waivers are a good way to save money and still have the benefits of a safe school.

When all the emergencies are fixed, I would put the new team of artisans to work on one floor at a time of one building at a time. I would use as many vocational students to help in the effort as possible. Think of the training they would get. Additionally, Wilkes-Barre Area also has a lot of maintenance personnel, who I bet would love to learn new skills working with the best artisans in the valley in building, plumbing, electrical, carpentry and other endeavors. Where there is a will, there is a way. Nothing in life truly worth having is easy. Why give up the best for a solution that may not even be good enough to be second-best?

Brian Kelly

Wilkes-Barre

Have we not learned our lesson with the wrecking ball?

Chapter 4 Safe Biking, Jogging, & Walking



Around Town Bicycles kicks off Saturday Morning Ride series
April 8, 2017 Times Leader Local, News, Top Stories 0
Katherine Pugh - For Times Leader

WILKES-BARRE — The brisk weather Saturday morning didn't stop a group of about 30 cyclists from gathering at Around Town Bicycles for the start of their annual "Saturday Morning Rides."

A dream, and an idea for Wilkes-Barre

Please do not get sick of my dreams. I dream a lot about getting Wilkes-Barre City out of its temporary rut. While working to do that, I think we can at the same time be making our city safe, affordable, and clean. But that too is not all. Among many ideas that would help the city prosper, this idea would help our City become a city that is desirable by those people, such as entrepreneurs, who might fall in love with Wilkes-Barre as we all have. Maybe some people who can help can move here and gain some great opportunities for exercise and fun. We'll all love them for it.

Why not make the City better than it ever has been by making it accessible and friendly to biking, jogging, and walking from point A to point B. Providing recreational opportunities to stay fit and healthy is a critical part of being an asset to residents for any community.

And, so it is incumbent upon any mayor and council to want to be sure that there are bike paths and well-maintained sidewalks. These, along with walking and jogging paths would encourage a healthy lifestyle in safety. It would also make our City a lot more fun, and what is wrong with that?

So, let's examine the notion of safe streets and bike paths for both biking and walking. Wilkes-Barre is not a large city geographically and therefore mostly everybody in this City is within a half-mile of what could be interconnected bicycle facilities. Such facilities should be able to take those people on bikes or walking from very close to where they live to work, to shop, and to green spaces without fearing for their safety.

There are many gaps in today's pedestrian network though many sidewalks and handicap curb structures built in recent years have made the situation much better. But, the job is not yet done.

Clearly all of this is not in the Mayor's sole purview as there is a City Council involved, which in the past admittedly had been a rubber stamp for the Mayor's whims. Any mayor must develop a good working relationship with City Council to work as a team for the betterment of the City and its people.

First, there would need to be community meetings to assess needs. Then, officials would need to develop long-range plans to address those needs, while being consistent with funding availabilities and land-use requirements.

Would it not be nice if Wilkes-Barre adopted an enhanced bike sharing program that put say, 50 bikes in operation in 2019 or 2020? Yes, we have the beginning of such a program right now: <http://wilkesbarrebikeshare.com/>, so, for some this is not such a new idea. BTW, in addition to Gus Genetti, a major advocate of the program, the WB Rotary Club is behind the bike share notion for

Wilkes-Barre. Is it not appropriate that Wilkes-Barre's # 1 entrepreneur, Gus Genetti is behind the bike share idea in Wilkes-Barre?. It is nice of Gus to help out.

With more pick-up and drop off points, the program could be much better. There are many programs in other cities such as Pittsburgh, which added 500 bikes in 2014. Biking is good for a lot of reasons and if we make it safe, it can also save the expense of gasoline.

Major cities are placing more focus on biking and walking as a means of getting around with less focus on recreation for the sake of recreation. It is a great idea. In order for Wilkes-Barre to do this, we would have to examine our streets, and help quickly redesign those, with minimal costs, to be amenable as much as possible to both bike and pedestrian traffic.

We have some great parks and we have a huge bridge connecting parts of our City with recreation areas that are also part of our City. I am talking about Wilkes-Barre's Kirby and Nesbitt Parks. We can do lots more than we think. We have the asphalt path on the dikes which are blacktopped and are as nice a path as any, anywhere—and with a great view of the Susquehanna.

Even here, it would help to have pedestrian and bike lanes so that nobody is injured from not knowing the "rules of the "road." We don't want joggers being accosted by high speed bikes when both are merely recreating. And, we need to come up with a better way to permit pass-through when the top of the dike seems to end.

Where needed, we might try to carve out a special one way or perhaps wider two-way bike path in the dirt away from the asphalt on the dikes. We need to use our heads properly. Some things will work, and others will not. When the cost is not prohibitive, we can test out ideas and see if they work. But we first need dreams, ideas, and then plans, before we take action. What we do not need are negative thinkers.

The objective would be for our City to have significant, well maintained, bike paths, park bike paths and wonderful walking areas that can be shown as a commitment to encourage biking, jogging, and walking. And yes, of course, we would need to monitor this use so

that it continually works. Having a citizen committee interested in pedestrian and biking activities with the steady ear of the Mayor, whoever he or she may be, would help make this even more feasible.

Leading cities for bicycling are implementing innovative bicycle infrastructures (a.k.a. cycle tracks, green lanes, intersection enhancements, bicycle boulevards, etc.) to encourage people who are interested, but very concerned to ride a bike in the city.

We should examine ways to implement these types of innovative bicycle facilities to attract even more Wilkes-Barre residents to ride bicycles and to be assured that the chances are low that they will be harmed by cars or that they may harm pedestrians.

Clearly in our City as in others, in just about every neighborhood, besides the idea of safety period, one of the top concerns is drivers simply going too fast, driving aggressively, and/or not yielding to pedestrians. We need a plan in Wilkes-Barre to calm traffic and make our neighborhoods safer and more comfortable for us to walk and bike? What speeder does not regret the accidents they cause. Is everything so important today that we cannot take the time for safety. Neither you nor I think so.

We first must identify the problem areas and then put forth workable solutions. Have you ever heard a city official talk about making the city safer for pedestrians and bicyclists? Me neither? It is not on their lists of important items—aka—the items that will get them reelected. Well, folks it is up to us to put them there.

It all starts by making the public aware. Police can be counted on to do their jobs and to keep us safe. Our obligation does not end when there are police willing to help. All of us can drive more safely—but we could also use friendly, yet firm reminders.

Of course this program would involve more focused police enforcement of existing traffic laws. I know the police are stretched thin, but we may be able to use them to lead volunteer emergency police that could be used in problem areas. These extra people can be used in similar fashion to the school crossing guard system. Why not if it helps the kids, and if it helps the population of WB in general.

The “police” would be self-policing, with the authority to issue warnings to drivers that become part of their unofficial driving record. Local citizen patrols could be formed, and they could be asked to help create greater citizen awareness. After all, it is our City!

The Chief of Police must be intimately involved in the safety of cyclists and pedestrians as we permit people the free access to streets designed now only for automobile traffic. Bicycle and pedestrian safety should be a city priority. Hopefully, in due time, the City will hire a Public Safety Director with a major mission to make it all work, who reports directly to the Mayor.

The Public Safety Director would continually work in operational matters with the Police Chief and would also help codify and explain any new regulations needed so that Council can get them passed for the good of the City. When Council needs to approve them, the Director would present them to Council for their approval.

The Director would "direct" that the Chief apprise his officers of the City's priorities. They would need to look closely at jaywalking and gridlocking and to create awareness of potential problem areas and to alert motorists to requirements of giving bikers proper clearances.

If there is a will, there is a way. A nice billboard about bicycle safety factors may help our out-of-town driving guests as to how serious we are about protecting our bicycling and walking public.

To the extent it is possible with the problem of street parking today being the most efficient form of parking in our City, open streets would surely be wonderful. Even periodic open streets can be enormously popular events as we have seen in nearly 80 cities and communities throughout the U.S. As long as residents understand the goals and the rules, they will not purposely try to impinge on good ideas to help us all.

Open Streets temporarily restrict motor vehicle traffic on one or more streets at a time so that people can use them for scheduled physical activity—walking, biking, running, playing, or even a block party with

street dancing. The Mayor should work with community stakeholders to make Open Streets Wilkes-Barre a reality?

The City of Wilkes-Barre, must act as a cheerleader in the implementation of a comprehensive education program that is pervasive in its ability to increase and maintain a constant positive awareness related to traffic safety, infrastructure, and way-finding. It is one of our basic jobs

Wilkes-Barre residents want the Mayor to take the scarce resources of our City and use them to gain the most benefit for all the citizens in all areas. If the Mayor objects, let he or she object before the elections so we can recognize him or her by their limp.

Citizens want a brave Mayor that has always been an advocate for common sense quality of life issues, which certainly include bicycling and walking. Even our fine Police, who make Wilkes-Barre safe for us all, can be more visible on City Police bikes in our neighborhoods.

I do bike myself but not as frequently as when I was a kid. I can recall taking my three kids and a zillion neighborhood kids at times through the maze of South Wilkes-Barre streets over the Market Street Bridge, and into the most desolate "nature" areas of Kirby Park right by the river. They loved it. I loved it. But, today it is not as safe to do this as they say "homeless live there." Let's figure out how to handle the homeless. It must be safe for all as it is such a great adventure. The path from here to there should also be safe.

I make it a point to frequently walk the dike and sometimes even the streets in my neighborhood. I admit, I also use my recumbent bike and treadmill when it is cold like many days in NEPA winters. Not only do WB citizens get warned often about an expected "storm of historic proportions" arriving tomorrow. We actually get them from time to time. When the weather prevents it, exercise indoors or at the Y or at physical fitness centers in the City but most of the time. we should be able to have our streets usable for biking and other forms of recreation. I think we simply need to think about it and we can figure out how!

I understand how our open spaces, bike trails, jogging paths, and bike paths have been utilized where they exist. I have personally seen the difference when a road does not have a bike lane and I have come dangerously close to being hit by passing cars. This is not good for the cyclist or the driver.

If we can make it better, we should make it better. Over time, almost all identified issues can be solved. But we must identify and track them, and then solve them. Those that appear unsolvable may even be solved at a later time, as we get better at what we are doing.

I understand the prioritization and seriousness of bicycle/walking related issues. I know that safety is number one but let's start thinking about what we can do once we feel safe rather than wringing our hands wondering if that can ever be. It can.

Our police are great. With the proper leadership, they will make our City as safe as the safest cities in the country. If there are not enough police, the Mayor should be able to figure out how to give them better tools and if we still need more police, we should get more. The third secretary of a secretary can be attrited, when we need what we need.

Wilkes-Barre's Mayor must provide a comprehensive long-range plan, which would build on current assets. I think we need a one-year plan and also plans that go out five, ten, 25, and 50 years. The administration must also vigorously respond to new solutions. Public initiatives, undergoing constant review, should be brought forth, and examined, and implemented as appropriate.

I would expect that a Mayor could do this seamlessly but nothing worth having is ever easy so there will always be some lumps and bumps. I would expect that a good Mayor over time, would agree that before we see any smooth roads, we will encounter a lot of bumps on the way to a lot of great solutions.

I am not naïve enough to believe that Wilkes-Barre citizens can ride bicycles all the time as an alternative to nice warm transportation. But there are lots of times that we would be able to do just that. I know this from experience.

When I went to King's from 1965 to 1969, my dad forwarded some cash to me and "we" bought a Honda 50 for me to go back and forth to school from the Rolling Mill Hill. It was a two-mile ride or so. Though unable to achieve breakneck speed, a Honda 50 could travel a lot faster than a bike. It looked a lot like a moped without the petals.

When I reached King's after two miles for class in December and January of my first two years, with my multiple layers of hoods and masks, and other necessary clothing, I literally had ice forming from my watering eyes.

Yet, I took the little Honda, because it was easy and inexpensive to get where I needed to go, and there was no problem parking it. Since bicycles go slower, and since the rider does not always have to get to an 8:00 AM class, perhaps less icicles would form. I probably would have simply got a bike and did the same thing in about ten minutes if I had thought that was a good idea. I guess I just wanted my Honda 50 and I had to pay my Dad back for it, but it did get me there faster.

You may have heard of Somerville, a small community adjacent to Boston Massachusetts. It is at the top of the game for bike commuting in the Northeast, so says the League of American Bicyclists. Other top areas include Cambridge, New Haven, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. Maybe one day Wilkes-Barre can be on such a list. Everything good starts with an idea. Massachusetts, by the way, like Pennsylvania, is not a warm state.

Somerville is dedicated to bicycling. The city has 14 miles of bike lanes, 6 miles of bike paths, and 25 miles of shared roads marked for bicycle travel. With all that in place, the city went forth and completed its first cycle track as a protected bike lane. A cycle track is in fact, a bike lane that is separated from the roadway and traffic by some form of physical barrier. Beacon Street, which runs into Boston, has never looked better.

And so, we have Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania and Boston Massachusetts (Somerville), two cities with little more in common than long cold winters, and the hardiness of its people. The only objection I could think of to the utility of making Wilkes-Barre more bike friendly would be the cold weather we share with Boston.

Yet, Boston has proven it can be done and that the people love it. Soon, if we choose to move on this, other communities in NEPA would want to be involved.

Can we stretch Wilkes-Barre to Pittston

Stretch your imaginations, please. How about a nice bike / walking trail adjacent to the "cho choo train" that one day may be circling the Square two-blocks out, each day in the future. How about extending a train from Wilkes-Barre past Eighth Street and right on into Pittston PA, the home of the greatest Tomato Festival on the planet. I see there is a lot of track already on that side of the river bank. A bike path right next to it sounds like a pretty good idea.

Since a train around the city is more than just a little project, if we gain the interest in bicycling and we act on it, we can surely create a bike path along the same route. Even without the train, which I know is a dream, and not yet an idea, why not be able to ride a bike, reasonably unencumbered from Wilkes-Barre, along the river to Pittston? Now, there's an idea. While others say, "Why?" Let's help Wilkes-Barre be known in the future as "the City that says 'Why Not?'"

In June 2005, many of us recall that Mayor Thomas Leighton suggested to Wilkes-Barre residents and friends: "The biggest obstacle that we must overcome, is the negative attitude of a small, but pervasive, segment of our population. We must reverse this negative attitude. We must be taught how to believe again."

At the same time, the Mayor unveiled a new slogan for Wilkes-Barre: "I believe." The slogan turned up on buttons, key chains and signs distributed by the Mayor's office. Mr. Leighton's Pep Talk to the City was a good idea, no buts about it.

I believe we need to believe we can, but we also need to dream, to create ideas from our dreams, discuss those ideas with City leaders, decide what our priorities will be; plan to achieve them, and then get the job done.

Believing we can, is a great start in forming a great attitude. Those who believe they can, do! Those who believe they cannot are always 100% right.

In 2015 , Wilkes-Barre held a major election. We are embarking upon another election cycle in 2019 which, because we live in America, will give all citizens of the City the opportunity to bring in the leadership of our choosing. There is already leadership in place. The Current Mayor and a number of Council members are running again. Let's challenge them to reveal their plans to make Wilkes-Barre better before we reveal our vote at the polls.

After twelve years of hard work by Mayor Tom Leighton and his administration, our current Mayor and Council have had their own four years (2015-2019) to improve our City. Have they met your expectations?

Let them tell us all their accomplishments, their dreams and ideations, and how they see our future. Demand details. Don't take it on possibilities and potential happenchance. Don't vote for anybody already being paid by the taxpayers without knowing what they have done and what they plan to do in the future for the citizens of Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Let's see what they think of the "Choo Choo" project and the pathways / bicycles project for biking, jogging, and walking. Wilkes-Barre does not have to be number two in anything.

Of course, we will hit some potholes along the way for sure but we can look to the future now that local elections are in front of us again. We can see the opportunities for some great improvements. How about the Mini-Malls or the little town and hotel by Barney Street. What do our elected officials who want us to vote them in again think of these proposals? Yes or no?

Surely, we should thank Mayor Leighton and his administration and our prior Council before 2015 for their service and we must likewise thank Mayor George and his administration and our Council before 2019 for their service as we move on to select our next leaders for terms from 2019 to ????

If you think Mayor George and the current Council have brought the City closer to its glory days, you are obligated to reward them with your vote. Make sure you first know their accomplishments and their plans for the future of Wilkes-Barre, however so you can anticipate the future of the city with them in control.

Don't let anybody hide without giving you the information you need, and I need to make an informed decision at the polls. Unfortunately, when I asked for this information from the Mayor's office my request went unanswered. I hope you have better luck.

With effective leadership, there will always be new dreams and new ideas. Whatever the composition of our political officials, we must remember they work for us—each and every one of us. And so, it is up to us to help our leaders make the right decisions about our future. We have to engage the system until we correct it. We can achieve a better Wilkes-Barre one step at a time. We all want better for Wilkes-Barre? There is nothing political about safe biking, jogging, and walking so we should be able to get an answer.

We live in America. In our country and in our state and city, the people run the government. We often forget that, and we get stuck voting for politicians when we should be voting for representatives of the people. Public officials may think that they run the government but that is not true. It is the people. We the People are in charge. We determine the government we get, and we determine the government we choose to keep. Remember that in 2019 and always.

By having a vibrant city, when Mayor George finishes his time with the City, we need to be prepared to elect new leadership. If we cannot coax enough good men and women to represent us, then we seal our fate by bringing in politicians. Our goal must be to either keep the people we have or put the right people in place to replace them. They won't be hurt if you think they did not do a good job. We the public must take opportunity after opportunity to help shape our government with the best leaders. This will help us shape our City.

This is why I feel so good about our prospects as a City. We the people are in charge. Democracy means that every four years in

Wilkes-Barre, we pick the people we want to lead us for the next four years. Let's not blow our opportunity.

From reading the local blogs and talking to people for years about our City, it is clear that the citizens of Wilkes-Barre would like things to be better. They would like a safe city, an affordable city, and a clean and beautiful city. They would like jogging paths and bicycle paths. They would like safe roads to travel by car or by bike or when walking.

Surely, there have been great improvements in the uptown areas of the City and during the Leighton years, many have been substantial. Yet, the people you meet on the street continue to openly discuss making the changes necessary to put Wilkes-Barre back on the map again. The way I see it, Wilkes-Barre is a city ready to return to its roots. The people are sick of the dark days of poor government.

Who knows what the ultimate future of Wilkes-Barre may be in its return to dignity and splendor. One thing we do know is that one of the only factors that may separate us from a wonderful future is if as a City we choose not to pursue our dreams. Why should we not choose to be our best by electing the best people in the City for public office.

If the Mayor were to make a decree that would have consequences, he or she would decree that "Dreams are back in style in Wilkes-Barre Pa." Pursuing dreams about our community and its people is a prerequisite for bringing back the great days of Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Let the dreaming begin folks, and soon after, let our great ideas, plans, and actions help make our dreams come true. And if I might add, let none of us sit on the sidelines or somebody may deflate our goals. Get in the game Wilkes-Barre!

Now, how about going to a Wilkes-Barre bike shop and picking out a beauty!

Return to Brighter Days: The Short Plan

In the first chapters of this book, I wasted no time to reveal my big life secret. I am a dreamer; a technocrat; and a solver of problems. Living in Wilkes-Barre almost all of my life, like you, I have become somewhat disillusioned as many aspects of the City have deteriorated. Maybe I am partly responsible for not speaking up enough. Well, I am speaking up now. The dreams of the people have been the continual victims of the perpetrators. If I know that and you know that, surely our elected officials know that. I want to hear from them.

When I ran for Mayor, I asked Mayor Leighton for a few things to help me and other candidates be heard. I asked if he would open the Council room in City Hall so that during the campaign at least one or possibly two nights a week, the Mayoral Candidates and the council Candidates could deliver a platform speech and take questions from citizens.

The Mayor said that was not permitted legally. I have two lawyers in my family and they said that was hokum. Obviously, nobody at City Hall nobody's from the city to become known by the people. The two Councilmen for example had huge financial warchests where the two outsiders, Duggins-Magdalinski and Kelly were not so fortunate.

I would make the same recommendation to Mayor George right now. Let's see what his answer is. Of course, I am not running but this nonetheless provides a fine forum for the people to hear and question the candidates.

It is not easy to get the word out. On my web site so I could be heard, I posted the dates when I would be in each neighborhood giving a campaign talk and taking questions. I visited twelve different sections of the city and even when nobody was there, I gave a speech and every now and then a few neighbors would come out to hear what I had to say. Unless you have a lot of money in a campaign, it is tough to get a message out. Quite frankly, that is why we always wind up with politicians instead of regular members of the public in our important offices.

Not all politicians are bad but they know the political game well. The city needs to provide a regular forum for newcomers and regular citizens to speak on a regular basis even when there is no election in the future.

Like many who are not in elected office, I too know that I have a solution to the ills that plague Wilkes-Barre today. It is part dream for sure, but there are enough ideas and plans in the mix that if we were to let loose and execute them all, Wilkes-Barre's days of brightness would be well on their way.

Citizen & official action needed for City's return to glory

With new Wilkes-Barre leadership in place after our three-term Mayor chose not to run in 2016, it seems that we citizens may have again settled for the same old ideas from the past. After all, we elected our new leaders to get us out of our long-term funk. Our new leaders have not often spoken to us or they would have told us all that in order to get the job done, we all needed to chip in and help.

So, here many of us are four years later, and like a team depending on a good coach, we have been waiting for the Mayor and the Council to send in a few good plays. We have about ten months to go before we get another chance to change the status quo if we wish. For now, Mr. Mayor and the esteemed Council, please send in some good plays.

In the next several chapters as we wrap up the book, I am presenting the essence of my campaign platform calling for a safe city, an affordable city, and a clean and beautiful city. I have dusted these up just a bit from 2015 as the suggestions are basically the same. When I talk in these essays about what I will do as Mayor, please know that I mean that is what I would have done and it is what I believe the people should demand of the current administration in their time left in office and what I believe the new administration should do when elected. I would suggest that any newcomers or existing officials who like what they find in the next four chapters, that they may adopt the Safe, Affordable, and clean notion of Wilkes-Barre in their own campaigns in 2019 with or without attribution. Best wishes to all. Again, no worries, I am not running for political office but I do care.

Chapter 5 Advice to new 2019 Mayor and new 2019 City Council



Three parts make a whole plan

The three prongs of my campaign when I ran for Mayor in 2015 included making Wilkes-Barre a clean/beautiful city; an affordable city; and most of all a safe city. I could not think of a better way to become one of the best Mayors ever in the history of the City by providing these three elements of a great city to Wilkes-Barre residents. Who could ask for more?

You may ask: “Who am I to think that four years later I should be counted on to provide advice to the new Mayor and the new Council?” Here is why? “I am a citizen of Wilkes-Barre, PA and like you, I am tired of politicians not delivering on their promises. I have invested in understanding the solutions that can best solve our big problems.” I thought I could solve our problems by running for Mayor and becoming your Mayor in 2015, but I was unable to

become a politician overnight. I failed to get elected, though I tried very hard to do so.

However, I did spend the better part of a year in research and discussions with crime fighters from different parts of the country and I did find the best crime-fighting professional to lead our City into a new age in which gunshots were not a regular occurrence in certain neighborhoods, and drugs were not so pervasive.

I had the City's crime problem solved but I never became Mayor. I also researched how other cities solved the dirt and trash problems and the ugly streets. More importantly, I outlined how to make the City affordable even with a poverty level of 35%.

I was ready to serve but I was not elected Mayor. Yet, like many of you, I live in Wilkes-Barre and I am right here today ready to help. That's why I wrote this book. That's why the contents of this book can help Wilkes-Barre's next administration—even if it is a reelection.

So, I am offering as I did after my loss in 2015, the benefits of my research and my unique ideas to the new Mayor or the same Mayor as the case may be as well as the New Council so that Wilkes-Barre can become a safe city, an affordable city, and a clean city. In the next three chapters, I provide more details for the next Mayor and Council so that they can accomplish all three of these major goals for Wilkes-Barre citizens.

Making the city clean means a lot of things. It does not mean that the Ax man cometh or the wrecking ball comes again and all historic monuments that are left are again in jeopardy.

Speech in the Wilkes-Barre debate

This is the speech I gave at the Downtown Residents Association in the only “debate” of the 2015 primary campaigns season.” Their rules were very strict. Unfortunately for me, I had about four sentences left when they decided I could not say them. They did cut me off with no warning. C'est la vie. They put the stop sign up and I did not get the needed extra seconds to hit crescendo and finish my speech.

I knew my speech was tight for three minutes but I figured if my podium delivery was slightly longer (ten to fifteen seconds more), I would be able to finish it with an apology. I was wrong. We only got one speech before the Q & A, and three minutes was not a lot of time. But it was the same for everybody so it was fair. I was able to get my points in during the Q & A, but I admit that having been stopped in my tracks threw my game off just a bit.

I was the first speaker. In all fairness, once I was stopped as the first speaker all of the other candidates knew there would not be one second extra. We all knew ahead of time it was just three minutes. I misjudged the leniency factor but none of my opponents had the same issue. Overall it was fair but rigid.

Before we move to the detail chapters of the Wilkes-Barre solution, I am providing the text of this speech below. It will give the next three chapters a suitable introduction for solving the problems of safety, cleanliness, and affordability.

Because speaking and reading require different phrases, I have altered the speech below just a bit to add-in words that when spoken would have been done with some inflection. Thus, there were fewer words in the spoken speech at the debate than shown below. Here goes:

Good Evening to all. Thank you to the Downtown Residents Association for this event enabling the public to meet the mayoral candidates.

I'm Brian Kelly; a JFK Democrat w/ sane conservative family values. I ask Republicans to vote for me as a write-in.

Two favorites in this race are Wilkes-Barre Councilmen. Both are very well financed.

Their handsome faces are everywhere. Radio, TV, and Newsprint. I have no such warchest. Two of the Mayoral Candidates, the favorites, are City Councilmen.

Council has served over three years; it has 8 months left to go.

Is it fair they blame Mayor Leighton for everything while they hold top positions in this poorly functioning city??

Two councilmen have great plans if they become Mayor? Where have they been while on Council?

Why not pass ordinances to help the people right now?

Should Council take the next eight months off while Wilkes-Barre is blowing up from gangs and drugs and thugs? Why wait to be Mayor to have ideas?

I am not a politician; not part of the Administration; not from the special privileged families in WB who know somebody.

I Know Nobody. I Owe Nobody. I am Owned by Nobody. Like you, I don't like how it's been going in WB?" I love this city.

I am a problem solver. MBA in Accounting and Finance. I have the background to cut the budget to make this city affordable.

I solved problems for 23 years as an IBM Senior Systems Engineer in business, government, and hospitals.

Afterwards I networked the campus at College Misericordia; taught courses at Misericordia, Marywood, and King's.

My forte is solving problems—big problems like we have in WB

In my business career, I solved problems across the US at Sterling Bank in NY; Raymond Corp in Endicott; Harden Furniture McConnellsville, NY; Circus Circus, Las Vegas; Keystone / A&A Auto in Exeter; Penn Millers WB; Glassman High Voltage, NJ; Lackawanna Casualty Insurance WB, Dillon Floral- Bloomsburg, and many other companies.

*I've written 60 books. # 58 is **Wilkes-Barre PA: Return to Glory**. I am serious about turning our city around for keeps!"*

For six years, I served in the Military Police. Yet, neither the ex police chief nor I are modern crime experts.

We need real experts to make our city safe again. We cannot survive on legends.

My priorities are a clean, affordable, and safe city.

My first act as Mayor will be to hire an expert Police Commissioner.

The next act will be to create a special violent crime unit; hire a top quality expert supervisor.

Only our best police officers will be evaluated and selected. If need be, we will hire officers from outside.

This unit will fight only violent crime... no domestic or minor burglary or traffic violation calls.

Mission will be restricted to fighting organized gang drug crime and homicides that result-- like Willow Street [a murder just the prior week], which really raises the mark.

Violent crime is our biggest problem. What happens when the bad guys stop killing each other?

The City has been unprepared; still is unprepared. To the bad guys, we are like babes in the woods. They love coming to Wilkes-Barre to wreak havoc.

Same ole same ole has not cut it and will not cut it. We must crush this gang drug thug problem to bits. We have to stomp it down.

Police force must re-professionalize. No more pleading to fraud. No more officers being the bad guys. Police must get out of comfort zones so people can get comfortable living in WB again.

There is no choice but to win by outsmarting & taking down the bad guys. Lock them up for good or chase them out of town.

When no longer comfortable to conduct their nasty business, these gangsters will leave Wilkes-Barre as quickly as they found us.

Thank you again and may God bless you all

Chapter 6 Making & Keeping Wilkes-Barre Clean



Much of the next three chapters after this were written when I was in the running back in 2015 for Mayor of Wilkes-Barre. When you read this chapter, feel free to go back to the original Wilkes-Barre book to see the Palm House and other beautiful sites in Wilkes-Barre from the olden days. Nobody can tell me that the things our grandparents did for this City are impossible for us to do!

When I was with IBM. My peers from the Scranton Office and I found it humorous that top executives from IBM, who would fly in to meet with important clients (local business persons) with big systems issues, were such extreme optimists. Inevitably, the executive would promise delivery of the whole world and several appending galaxies by tomorrow or the next day. They would then get on the plane out of Avoca never to be seen or heard from again.

After being through this several times and finding our clients even more upset after the executives' unfulfilled promises, our sharp sales people created a counter argument for the customer. Immediately after the executive had lifted off from Avoca, the client received the catch phrase for the Scranton IBM team: "Nothing happens overnight in Scranton." It never did.

I am inclined to believe that nothing happens overnight in Wilkes-Barre either and that is the nature of the beast. But good things happen when good people decide they will get them done. It may take a bit longer than tomorrow, however for the good to materialize.

No matter how many tomorrows it takes, Wilkes-Barre will have its clean city. It will be cleaned incrementally one neighborhood at a time, and with God's grace, most of the neighbors will be pitching in. While the City's Administrators will be coordinating this effort, the Public Safety / Police folks will also be cleaning up the city one neighborhood at a time for another malady.

City officials will handle the businesses and the downtown area for the cleanup and the maintenance. We know we cannot do it overnight but by the end of a four-year term and hopefully long before the end, the City will be remarkably clean, and it will have lots less bad guys living in town. Like many things we will be doing, we will be partnering with unpaid city residents to make things even better.

Under my three-prong platform, the Wilkes-Barre **Clean City Action Committee (CCAC)** will be established by the City and its focus will be a project called The Clean City Initiative (CCI). A clean city is the objective. A goal is to turn the entire project over to the people when it becomes fully functional. There will need to be a liaison designated in the administration to assure this initiative is a priority.

The cost of cleaning up after others is too high so let's clean the City from top to bottom one time, and then let's maintain its cleanliness through caring neighbors, caring shopkeepers, and caring volunteers. The committee itself will be set up as a non-profit organization to focus on a lot of cleaning, some greening and the overall beautification of the City of Wilkes-Barre PA.

The CCAC's mission is to assure that Wilkes-Barre becomes and stays an admirable city, and one of which the residents can be proud. To do this, the committee will need to build bridges between quality of life resources and the various neighborhood groups, merchant associations, CCAC volunteers, and Wilkes-Barre citizens.

The Clean City Action Committee is to be designed to improve and enhance the physical environment of Wilkes-Barre through beautification, solid waste management education, riverfront awareness activities, and litter abatement programs. Among other things, its mission is to educate citizens; and encourage their participation in this worthwhile venture.

As a new organization, the group is to become an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful Inc., The committee will be set up to be successful using their proven methodology. Among other things, what I like about this organization is that we get to share a common philosophy that each of us has a responsibility for enhancing our community environment.



Keep America Beautiful Volunteers in Action www.kab.org

Like the 600 plus other affiliate cities and counties in the US, and some internationally, when we fire up, our small group will depend on volunteers to implement perhaps many worthwhile projects each year. Volunteers are sorely going to be needed for a variety of projects including litter cleanups, tree and flower planting, youth environmental education, marketing support, and more. Wilkes-Barre is a first-class city and we all will expect first class results.

Though the promise of a clean Wilkes-Barre focuses on beautification aspects such as cleaning up the loose dirt and trash on the sides of city streets and roads, parks, and public areas, as well as keeping residential areas and properties well maintained—and that means free of 18 to 24 inch-high weeds, baby trees, dust bunnies, and spent cigarettes mounds. The City will also be focused to assure that we remain a clean-air and clean water community.

Philadelphia, Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton, as well as Pittsburgh may be great cities in which to live but their air quality is listed among the worst 25 cities in America for Air Pollution. The CCAC will work with City officials to assure that our area stays clean in all ways, but we admit we are looking for that which pleases the eye first.

Clean for a city can also be defined as being functional and in good repair. A piece of junk is a piece of debris is a piece of extra-large litter. For example, what purpose does it serve to have a rusty, broken down parking meter, or a stop sign where the paint is completely worn away? How about traffic signals that do not work? What good is it to have a beautiful fountain on our Public Square that is dry and an eyesore? What difference does it make to have once busy bridges becoming dirty, filthy eyesores in a major commercial area of our city?

Is the state of the City regarding something so easy to address as cleanliness a tribute to the inability of the City and its current leadership and resources to make things work? You tell me. I see what you see. Fifty millions of budget dollars does not buy much in Wilkes-Barre. It apparently gets spent on budgeted items but I see what you see. If every one of the 260 employees in the City made \$100,000 a year in wages and benefits, there would be \$24 million left in the budget for everything else. It should be available for projects to help the people. I do not accept that there is not enough money for Wilkes-Barre to be clean. Do you?

[Please remember that in 2019, I am not a candidate but I was in 2015]

If I have the good fortune to become the next Mayor of Wilkes-Barre things will be different for the better. Anything that is in place should work or it should be removed. If it is not in place and it should be in place, it should be built and maintained and be better than you can even imagine. Under no circumstances should any structure or any areas of the city detract from the appearance and overall function of the City.

The infamous fountain on Public Square

I have read with great interest that the rationale for example for having a once attractive, now broken fountain on Public Square is that the City, with a \$43 million budget (Now \$50 million) cannot afford the \$40,000 to fix the fountain. Yet, somehow, we can afford the fence installation to keep people away and the unattractiveness and the dirt and the feeling of ineptness we all get by looking at a city deteriorating in its center. Meanwhile we are completing major projects costing millions in other areas of the City.

If we like drawing people downtown to Public Square for nice events, would it not be nice for the visitors to be impressed? It helps if the place looks nice and is clean. Not so much now. The broken fountain with a fence around it is a public eyesore in the major business district and visitor center of our City. Moreover, where are the public bathrooms that are never open during events anyway. The bloggers don't seem to be able to find any available. Will King's make the old Ramada restrooms available so that there can be foot traffic again on Public Square?

Are the bathrooms on the square broken too? Do they exist? Would it not be nice for the Vo-Tech school to rehabilitate the underground latrines that once existed on the Square years ago when I was a kid? This would help us save a buck, provide a service, and teach Wilkes-Barre kids how to manage interesting projects that will live on after they graduate. It also would stop urination and defecation on Public Square. Maybe we cannot – not – afford such restrooms!

As with most new City action groups that will be formed by this administration if we are fortunate to be elected, donations from Wilkes-Barre citizens; citizens from neighboring communities; those citizens with a history of a residence in the greater Wilkes-Barre area; and of course those friends of the City who simply care about Wilkes-Barre—will be accepted for this project and all other projects. These gifts will be most appreciated. Would it not be nice if there were a way to bring a Percy Browns-like operation back into downtown? How about a Boston Candy Kitchen or even a Cheesecake Factory? Yes, without tongue in cheek, my administration would welcome such overtures.

A one time City monument becomes a decaying building— then a pile of debris



A one time City monument becomes a decaying building— then a pile of debris

This picture was one in a montage taken by a local artist before the Hotel Sterling a 113-year old landmark that once overlooked the raging Susquehanna River (Shown on the right in the above pic), was quickly ripped down. The Ax man did it. What a shame. You can see the dirt and the look of disrepair on the streets and sidewalks if you look closely enough. This is page 1 of Wilkes-Barre for many visitors.

As I understand it, over \$6 million dollars was invested in the structure but it was used to make parking lots out of several surrounding buildings and the leaky roof of the Sterling was never fixed. Thus, the building kept getting worse and worse. Six million dollars of the people's money was wasted. Before it was torn down it was a tribute to inept City management. Four years later, the area is still a pig-sty even without the Sterling. Why?

Doesn't that frost you? It sure gets to me. Would you have been able to build a roof for starters for \$6 million? By the way, it was \$6 million in federal tax money and casino profits that a company called Citivest claimed they poured into the property. Look at the picture and tell me if Wilkes-Barre City officials were adequate custodians over such a prestigious landmark. The City chose to rip it down but only after somebody chose not to fix it properly.

And then while the building was in such a sad state of affairs minus the \$6 million, a major section of the city on River Street was completing a beautification project on the river side while the Sterling side was continually maintained as a pig sty. How are City Officials not partly responsible for that?

In fact, the area for what seemed like forever was partially shut down giving visitors an even longer look at the demise of our City and the demise of a landmark that the people thought should be saved. Not being part of the Administration, I do not know what happened, but it would not have happened if I were in charge. Check the article on the Sterling demolition and the Historical Society right here:

http://opacity.us/article136_hotel_sterling_to_be_demolished.htm

Look at this snapshot from inside the Sterling on the next page. What a shame! Sure does not look too clean. Can you tell where any of the \$6 million dollars were spent? How could something this good get so bad? What about the things we cannot see?

Despite the travesty of the Sterling, I don't feel embarrassed saying that I love Wilkes-Barre. After all, I grew up here and I am happy to live here. Our fine City is far from a perfect City; but I know it can be closer to perfect than it is. There certainly is excessive taxation and a number of other issues of which most people are aware as they drive through the town. Unfortunately, because of the real issues from which they suffer, some City residents have a hard time singing any praise at all for our fair City or its leaders.



Surfing through the blogs about Wilkes-Barre, PA, there are an awful lot of people who care like I do about the City. There may even be some that care even more than I do but not many! There are also a lot of people who are disgusted with the dirty politics as well as what they call a dirty city in what overall seems to them to be the dirtiest area of the state. What a legacy!

If dirt and dust and debris and weeds had value, this would be a rich and prospering town. But they are not of value and they detract immensely from our otherwise fine city. And, so of our population, in our dirty city, over 35% of the residents find themselves trapped under the federal poverty level. That's not good.

Unfortunately it is not hard to discover dirt and dust and an overall blah look and feeling in far too many places in our City. We must give some credit to certain areas that have been improved but still are not as clean and as inviting as they should be. These include the Cinema on Northampton Street where Percy Brown's once stood—in Wilkes-Barre's one-time heyday.

I am not talking about the blah of the future, but the blah does represent the present and the recent past. My reason for writing is so that like the Ghost of Christmas Future we can make Wilkes-Barre Better and not accept its demise. Many bloggers show their blah and disgust for what has happened physically and politically with Wilkes-Barre when they write what is on their minds.

I agree that it should not be this way but it is. The bloggers do not feel good about the chances of the City surviving. Some go so far as to say

that no one cares about Wilkes-Barre. Of course that is their opinion based on their observations. They add that it is because it is a big part of Northeast PA, which they say no one visits —because it is an expletive hole. That's being kind from many of the posts I have read. Even those of us who love Wilkes-Barre cannot deny what has become.

Would it not be nice to tap much of that negative energy for positive purposes to help the City overcome its many issues? All things are possible. Some cite that in their opinion there are dirty towns up and down the Valley along with dirty bars. Some go so far as to call this area the arm pit of the state. Even those of us who love it here for our own reasons, wish it could be better. I think we can make it better but not without paying attention to details such as keeping Wilkes-Barre City clean if not pristine.

Does Wilkes-Barre Need a Ramada or a Crossgates?

In a series of posts from less than a year ago, a number of bloggers chose to comment that Wilkes-Barre had just lost its most modern hotel, the Ramada to King's College. Historically, the hotel was built as the Sheraton, who named it the Crossgates. Nonetheless, it did not survive as a Sheraton.

It was bought and became a Ramada. Recently it was sold to King's College, and this great college just made it part of its campus. But it looked so nice as an inviting hotel right on Public Square. What could be more attractive for businesses entertaining the possibility of relocating? Now, Gus Genetti's great hotel up the road from the Square is what we have after many hotels in the past have disappeared from the work of the wrecking ball. One or two new hotels in downtown Wilkes-Barre would be nice.

If there is nothing else, in my queries I have learned that there is an overwhelming disdain for taxes in Wilkes-Barre because they are unaffordable. Even the bloggers are aware of the tax implications of the Ramada going to a non-profit. And, so, King's plans for the Ramada were not all met with citizen approval. Many citizens think that the Ramada as a hotel added to the Wilkes-Barre good feeling. It was an attractive and clean establishment. Most of us saw no reason

for the only hotel on Public Square to become part of a private campus. This feeling is reflected in several blog comments below:

1. “Just more tax revenue the city will lose to a So called “Non Profit” What a joke!
2. “Oh wait, let’s just wait and let it become another Hotel Sterling.....instead of expanding the local colleges to attract more out of town or even local students to attend and then become professionals and stick around to better the area!!

By the way, <http://wbtruth.blogspot.com/> is one blog that has no love for how the City has been managed. When I had a Brian Kelly for Mayor site under the heading of “A Safe City,” you could get a perspective on how, if elected, I would deal with corruption at any level in Wilkes-Barre. Check out these last three chapters of this book where this article is now kept.

To put it candidly, there is no room for corruption in Wilkes-Barre. We simply cannot afford it. Besides, it is too ugly for our clean city initiative. In this section, we are talking literally about a clean city in terms of its beauty but to repeat, nobody wants to live in a city that is dirty—politically or otherwise.

From the Outside In—Bloomsburg is Attractive

When traveling through Columbia County, I have often thought how nice it would be if downtown Wilkes-Barre were as inviting as downtown Bloomsburg. In Bloomsburg, for example, the City has a wide range of companies and bustling establishments and stores that contribute to a vibrant local environment. The city look and feel is quite attractive especially near Main Street, Bloomsburg, for sure. In other words, when you appear on Main street in Bloomsburg, it actually looks like more than it is because it is well decorated, and it is clean.

The architectural heritage and the overall 'feel' of the downtown area in Bloomsburg make it a big draw for visitors. Nobody has to convince me to go to Bloomsburg for the FAIR or for picking apples or cutting down the family Christmas trees or whatever. Visitors to The Bloomsburg University campus, which directly adjoins the City's

downtown area are invited back by the pleasantness of the surroundings.

The University ranks as one on the really great things to see in Bloomsburg PA. Just as Wilkes-Barre has seen property deteriorate when leased out to students who are here for just four years, Bloomsburg, and most college towns in the state report some blighted and slum areas, once populated by working families that have been made less by student incursions (renting the places).

From my observations, unfortunately, Wilkes-Barre suffers from blight much more than Bloomsburg as our blight is almost immediately obvious whereas in Bloomsburg, you are deep into the community before you spot an issue. Wilkes-Barre needs about 10,000 Michael Anthony's to visit our city and hopefully soon. But since he is no longer available, we'll have to do it ourselves. I do think we can.

Wilkes-Barre could surely use more companies and bustling establishments and stores that contribute to a vibrant local environment. Unlike Wilkes-Barre, in its presentation on Main Street, the small community of Bloomsburg (14,000) shows off a charm that is catchy, and it makes you want to come back. My wife and I love that City.

When we first got married, we bought a fresh Christmas tree in Millville, which is right down the road from Bloomsburg about ten miles, and we celebrated after loading the tree into the van at Dick Benefield's Groaning Board at the Hotel Magee.

It was a great experience. We surely do not favor Bloomsburg over our city but... We love Wilkes-Barre and we live here but we would sure love anybody with an idea like Dick Benefield to come by for a visit—and yes, we would give a high five to any idea about setting up a nice Groaning Board in our fair City.

One more Bloomsburg story before I have taxed your patience. Most of us have been to the Bloomsburg Fair. I can recall a while back as a young man newly married, being at the Bloomsburg Fair, staying at the Hotel Magee overnight. My wife Pat and I, along with Kenny and Karen Evans, wanted to see Bob Hope in person. He was already seventy-five years of age. I can remember Mr. Hope beginning his act

by describing how thrilled he was to have landed at Bloomsburg International Airport. I thought he was kidding but he was serious. However, it was really Bloomsburg Municipal Airport—minus the International part. You can see it in the picture below.



The look and feel of Bloomsburg has not changed much for me over the years though it has changed in the residential areas. Residents say it is not as nice as it was in the years past. At least it is still nice but like all cities in this poor economy, it is tough doing well.

Wilkes-Barre needs to come up to the Bloomsburg or better standard so we too can enjoy a certain pride in the beauty in our city. Just by focusing on something important gives us all more of a tendency to help make it happen the way we want rather than if we ignore it. Wilkes-Barre will be a much cleaner and more beautiful city if you choose to elect me as your Mayor. I promise you that.

Big benefits to a tidy and clean city:

The material below was gleaned mostly from <http://cleancity.wordpress.com/> and a blog known as <http://blog.tidycity.org>. These are generic links / sites that people

have set up to help get the message across about the desirability of a clean city.

This is right up my alley as it is one of the three major pillars of my campaign for Mayor of Wilkes-Barre. These two particular links are not Wilkes-Barre specific, but they might as well be. As I went through much of the material that I have represented below, I rewrote and reedited it somewhat and used the name Wilkes-Barre so it would be more meaningful to those of us who choose to read this piece. It sure is refreshing to find so many people writing about having a clean city.

We have all heard the term that “cleanliness is next to godliness.” The choice between clean and dirty is almost always made in favor of clean. When work is involved, however, things slip into disrepair, clutter, and finally plain old dirt. Nobody is looking for work without pay.

Despite the obstacles in front of us, I know, and you know that we can make our city clean and we can keep our City clean if we choose to do so. If the people of our City think like us—that we can do it, they are right. If you think you can’t and they think they can’t you both are right; so let’s think we can. Few people who think they can’t ever can, and even fewer do!

We need a *can-do* focus about the beautification of Wilkes-Barre in all ways. Public cooperation is key. Without a buy-in from the public, none of us in the plain ole town of Wilkes-Barre can achieve much of anything. Together, however, we can have it all.

That is why having a clean city is one of the three major prongs of my campaign for Mayor. A clean city should help all residents know we mean business. So to keep our city clean, there must be a mass awareness by the public gained via all of the mass media and low media outlets available in Wilkes-Barre. I am talking about, newspapers, radio, TV, city officials and city employees. We have to believe we can do it. Maybe we need another euphemistic “I believe campaign” to test our mettle. We can if we choose, and it is about time we choose a big plus for Wilkes-Barre.

Litter and garbage and dirt in the streets is beyond our limits of tolerance. We can do better, and we will.

Of course in addition to being clean in a beautiful sense, the city must be clean in other ways to assure that our health is protected and assured. This should be a great concern for each individual person as well as the City as a whole. We must consider our environmental health to assure that all the physical, chemical, and biological factors affecting health, which includes air, land and water are under acceptable tolerances. It is important to us all. If we think we can, we can, and that is that!

Whose job is it to keep Wilkes-Barre clean?

Keeping our City clean is every citizen's duty. First it would be great if we all learned to love our City and then we all would be less inclined to do things that hurt Wilkes-Barre, PA. Maybe the City can coach the Kirby Center to have Wilkes-Barre days in which lessons on “clean’ and “beautiful” can be shown for free on the big screen?

Maybe local artists would perform for the elderly from the high rises for free for the privilege of playing on the Kirby Stage. Maybe it can be once every two weeks for all the high rises with donor paid transportation. Who would not contribute? Why not let the public pay a couple bucks admission to the Kirby for the same performances for general admission—if there is room. I know my daughter’s group, the great *Charming Beards* would sign up tomorrow. My son, a master keyboardist and a local lawyer, would be happy to play.

We need to get beyond the thoughts of some bloggers. It would be nice if just as the people liked to sing the Cohan tune “*It’s a grand old flag*,” we would be inspired to sing songs that may praise John Wilkes and Isaac Barre for founding our city. Of course we can also sing more modern songs yet to be written by local songwriters about Wilkes-Barre—and we can all smile when we do. Even if you may think we can’t, I know we can.

To make a clean city happen, it is up to all of us. Just a few principles and you and I can be on the same team. We all must be careful not to throw dirt or garbage anywhere that suits us. A strict law from Council should be enforced. We could make rules such as those in

Singapore, where there is a huge fine for detracting from the beauty of the City. We have to show we mean business, or we will wallow in the murk when we should be shining on the shore.

For Wilkes-Barre, since we are not Singapore, as a reminder, there should be a fine, but not a crippling fine because it is tough to live already in this City. The fine can be collected and used for city development / beautification purposes. So they have to read about themselves, we can put the violator's names in the paper or on the City Web site under some notable heading, and I would suspect few would want to brag about being such a perpetrator.

The bottom line on responsibility is that it is our duty to keep our city clean. Would we not like Wilkes-Barre to be the finest lady of them all? Our City represents the types of people we are—those of us who live in this City. We should represent ourselves well.

Snippets From the blogosphere

My campaign team and I cannot take credit for all of the content that we put forth, but we believe in it. Some is written for the PhD and some is written for everybody. We hope both will see the merits of our campaign and choose a Safe City, An Affordable City, and A Clean City as the way to go with Brian Kelly for Mayor of Wilkes-Barre. So, from the blogs, I gleaned the following material about clean cities. Most is right on the money. Some just expresses frustration.

How does *Wilkes-Barre: Safe, Affordable, & Clean* sound as a motto?

I rewrote the essence of some of the pieces in this blogosphere section for one of two reasons: It would read more smoothly or there would be little room for misinterpretation of what the blogger was saying. Since most bloggers do not give campaigns the right to broadcast their thoughts, there is no attribution on many of the items brought forth... nor are most word for word. I take no credit for the thoughts presented other than that for the most part, I most certainly buy into the notion that Wilkes-Barre should be a clean city. For this section, I will use italics in the headers.

Here we go:

To make and keep our City clean, a superset of the following simple steps can only help:

1. *Educate the people about it.*
2. *Do not throw away plastic bags.*
3. *Do not through garbage in any open area.*
4. *Grow a garden and learn about plants.*
5. *Taking it one step further, without becoming a whack, you can use solar energy because it does not produce any residue but be careful when discarding the panels which are not environmentally friendly.*

Transitional employment through community improvement

The Wilkes-Barre CCAC initiative will undoubtedly find that there is merit in providing transitional employment opportunities for those incarcerated in Luzerne County Prison. I can see things like community improvement / beautification activities such as street sweeping, graffiti removal, and perhaps even neighborhood greening. But, we would have to make sure there are no legal hurdles to cross and no substantive expenses to incur. Plus, there should be no risk as those incarcerated must be watched carefully.

In such a program, notwithstanding any buy-in from the incarceration facilities, low-income and homeless individuals may be used to help and paid a minimum or perhaps even less than minimum hourly wage. We would have to test the legality of this to see if wages can offset any public assistance or room and board—for a limited period, maybe several months. For prisoners, it would be as they prepare to rejoin the regular workforce. For others, it would be as long as appropriate.

As a science major and an IBM Systems Engineer, and as a Business Professor, I surely do not claim to be versed in understanding exactly what would be needed for this to be win-win for the City and the individual hoping to return to society ready to work. If there is no offsetting funding for this, of course, it may go into the bucket of good ideas that Wilkes-Barre cannot afford.

Participants who would work in such a Clean City Initiative program might be referred through the Department of Human Services, drug and alcohol treatment programs, social service agencies, shelter case managers, and even the criminal justice system. Nobody is interested in making it more dangerous to be a city resident and that is why such approvals would be necessary to bring somebody on board.

Partnering with other agencies to spit shine our City is not a bad idea. If our laws do not permit this, then city residents and others must point out the absurdity of such laws to those legislators with authority to make the system work for the people.

Such a program would work in conjunction with the aforementioned agencies and others to ensure that our accepted participants are first of all helping the City, and secondly that they are receiving the transitional support they need during their move from their current surrounds to economic self-sufficiency. Wilkes-Barre can help but only to the extent that the program benefits Wilkes-Barre.

Though Wilkes-Barre is empathetic to rehabilitation notions that will help other agencies bring their clients / consumers back into the mainstream, that would not be our primary mission. Our mission is selfishly to help in this endeavor only to assure that the participants help Wilkes-Barre in its goal to revitalize itself by becoming a clean city and perhaps the cleanest city in the state of PA, and perhaps even the nation.

The notion of “cleanliness is next to godliness” can teach all of us to keep our surroundings clean and to lift more than just a finger to help any other area that needs attention. Efforts to make our City a clean city will doubtless be seriously endless. Don't we all have to bathe regularly to present a modicum of appropriateness to our very own beings? That too is never ending.

Of course we are not talking about silly things here. It can be argued that a motivated person in clean mode can make every possible effort to make the City a clean and perhaps even a green city. He or she can surely visit several barren lands in the city and try to grow some plants and trees. Admittedly, that is not the clean notion of what we speak, and so we must spread awareness of what this really means so that the goals are not misinterpreted.

Public latrines can be constructed anywhere but especially near every landmark in the City so that the people won't discharge personal waste as a dog or a cat would do. I like the idea of a partnership with the vocational / technical schools. Public dustbins can be kept so that the City garbage doesn't lie anywhere in the public areas. Volunteers can maintain the cleanliness of the rest facilities.

We know that the Olympic motto is "stronger, higher faster," so those who donate time to the City for its beautification can join a strong team with high aims and objectives. When this begins, with your approval, we will be looking to help our community as soon as possible. God created this beautiful world and a beautiful Wilkes-Barre. Our Lord expects that the hands given by him to all of us should always work towards beautifying his creations.

I know few people who would like it if their home / house was filled with dirt and waste and there was a bad odor all around? Who would want to live in such a place? Nobody!

Our City should not give visitors, passers-by's, residents, or potential city business owners the idea that Wilkes-Barre is a place full of waste and bad odors. Of course all areas of the City are not like this but, all of us have found areas that are not up to anybody's standard of niceness. Nobody would suggest that anybody else live in such an untidy place or build their business where the people do not care enough to spruce up their own City.

We all clean our houses, our clothes, the utensils with which we eat, and most importantly ourselves; and we must do that every day. Why do we do that? We do that so we can maintain our hygiene and stay healthy and fit, and so that we can avoid having to sit in rot for any long period if at all. When we treat our City as one of our most prized possessions, our City will benefit from such kind treatment.

If none of us care to stay in a house that is not clean, why would we choose to stay in a City that is not clean and tidy? Just like we own the look of our homes, inside and outside, as owners or renters, or simply passers-by, we also own our City and as such, it is our duty to keep it clean.

Of course this is not just for us, but also for the people visiting our city and also for our future generations. Bad habits and good habits live a long time. Let's get into good habits. Nobody is looking to have tomorrow's Luau in a cesspool!

We all know that there are many ways in which we can do our part to keep our City clean. They include throwing garbage and waste in dustbins and not on the road. Even if we are not the perpetrators, suppose we observe plastic material or other debris being thrown onto the road. As dedicated citizens of a beautiful Wilkes-Barre, we should be motivated to pick up the problem and we should throw it into a handy dustbin.

We should not feel ashamed of our altruistic actions for our fellow citizens and they should do the same for us. We should teach whoever will listen, children, adults, and even septuagenarians and Octogenarians to do the same. We should use public toilets and, other than in a dire emergency we should not put our personal waste on the road, and even then, we should do our best to cover it or remove it completely.

Doesn't it disgust you that the moment you leave your home, somebody may know it is unattended, and they may choose to paint some nasty graffiti on your frontage? We know that nobody should do this but they do. Likewise, nobody who loves Wilkes-Barre should write on the historical buildings and monuments.

Most importantly we all must tell everybody in Wilkes-Barre about the advantages of keeping our City clean and we should promote campaigns and activities on this issue as it will help us all and help our children today and down the road. Nobody wants to take their kids to an unhealthy city play area?

These are important ways in which we can keep our City clean. But many people must be thinking, that we should do so. There are many advantages for keeping our City clean and green. The most important is because it will help us and all of Wilkes-Barre.

Would it not be nice for Wilkes-Barre to be a Tourist Attraction?

We can surely promote tourism as we make our City more and more attractive for the public. A major benefit of tourism across the board is that it increases the economy of the entire country. More importantly for us, when the folks are attracted to visit our City, it helps the local economy. Of course, tourists are only attracted to those cities that are beautifully carved and are rich in historical architecture.

Our 200+ year old City is rich in history and worthy of many visits from outsiders. However we must hold onto our architecture and never again let major assets, such as the Hotel Sterling disappear ever again. We need to fight the wrecking ball mentality of the past. Monuments are not rebuilt after they are gone.

If we keep our City dirty and if there are mounds of garbage and unsightly weeds all around, this will have a negative impact on tourists as they form their opinions of our culture and lifestyle. In other words, we will get few repeat visitors and we can forget about word of mouth telling a positive story about us. The moral of this is that we must keep our City clean and then we have a chance to attract more and more people to visit. This will improve life in Wilkes-Barre for all of us for sure.

Better health for the people of our City

We all know that following good hygiene practices will help us stay healthy and fit and thus will provide us with a longer life. Heaps of garbage and waste products and debris in our City as it has been in some places in the past gives rise to insects, mosquitoes and flies and worse. These in turn will lead to diseases like chicken pox, jaundice, perhaps even malaria, and many more diseases that are caused by unhygienic conditions such as old tires laying around. To demonstrate that this is serious, please note that there is a litany of diseases just from mosquitoes. These include the following:

- *Malaria*
- *Chikungunya*
- *Dog Heartworm*
- *Dengue*

- *Yellow Fever*
- *Eastern Equine Encephalitis*
- *St. Louis Encephalitis*
- *LaCrosse Encephalitis*
- *Western Equine Encephalitis*
- *West Nile Virus*

The message to all of us living in Wilkes-Barre is that we should prevent the accumulation of wastes and keep our City clean. Thus, in turn, this will prevent diseases from spreading and we can thus stay healthy and fit.

We all should pitch in to help preserve our environment

Throwing waste products such as plastic cans, wrappers and many other things in the parks, gardens and other places will surely degrade the physical environment. We have all learned that plastic items do not readily decompose, and accumulations of such non-biodegradable rubbish will lead to degradation of the soil and thus our environment. Most of us understand that the bottom line for we the citizenry is that we cannot haphazardly deal with our waste.

Unfortunately, because we are humans first, as caring as we may be, we must be reminded regularly to avoid throwing waste products in the public places. We have to convince ourselves to use dustbins and garbage cans to save our environment and preserve it. All of these notions are things we can do in spades if we choose.

Saving the City for future generations

Our future generations depend on our acting prudently beginning right now before it is too late. This present generation must take care to keep our City well maintained. We all would like our City to be preserved for our posterity and our progeny. We must be careful therefore that we do not destroy our natural resources and our reserves along with City monuments and historical buildings and of course our natural landscapes.

Our future generations need to be rich in history and culture and our natural scenery must be safeguarded and protected. We cannot act

selfishly. Instead we should care about our City rather than take the easy way out. It goes without saying that we also think about our future generations. We should not throw waste products here and there—destroying our environment and our shrines and important statues. The bottom line, to repeat, is that we must keep our City clean, so that down the road, our lives and those of our children will be much better.

Do things that attract multinational companies to Wilkes-Barre

Why should so many people in Wilkes-Barre be poor while it seems that the rest of the country has a shot at the American dream? Good question! Inviting multinational companies into our City will lead to economic growth and it will also be beneficial in many other ways.

For example, overall, there can be lower taxes and lower production costs, which in turn reduce the price of consumer goods, making the City more affordable. Local labor can be trained using effective techniques.

These will help the City prosper and provide many more benefits from the existence of better employment opportunities. Keeping our city clean is very important and it will help attract the multinational companies who offer such promise so that we can all take advantage of all the benefits which will accrue.

Attract even more employment opportunities

As stated, keeping our city clean will attract more companies to employ our people. Thus, it is very clear that the more fine-companies that we can attract, the more employment opportunities will ensue. It stands to reason so that smart citizens and not-so-smart citizens alike can discern that the more people that are employed, the fewer incidents of poverty will be seen.

In fact, learned scholars have correctly suggested that the rate of poverty will decrease as the rate of literacy increases. Thus, our City and all others will grow both economically and socially with stronger opportunities for jobs. The message of course is that none of this good happens without a clean city and it is up to all of us to keep it clean.

Wilkes-Barre gaining a high ranking among PA cities brings better visitors, new residents, and new business.

If we want our City to be best in all spheres, whether it is more employment opportunities, an increased literacy rate, decreased poverty rate, lower rates of taxes, better education facilities, better health facilities and even much more things, the image we project to all comers matters. To repeat to the point of boredom: We must keep our city clean and perhaps even beautiful and green.

To hold a top position in the ranking of the cities, we must demonstrate the ability to show tremendous growth economically, socially and industrially. Of course there are other factors, but, to not be shut down at the gate to achieve this, Wilkes-Barre must take the initiative to do what we must. We must avoid blight at all costs.

That means we, the citizens, must clean up after ourselves. We must plant trees, avoid throwing waste away indiscriminately, and we must create an awareness among all people in our fair city about the benefits of having a clean city and thus we can ensure the mandate to keep our city clean.

Here is a good example bringing out the good qualities among individuals

If we will keep our city clean, it will impart a civic sense in us, which will help us in the long run to achieve something big in life. It will teach us to keep our surroundings clean, which can also help us to impress any potential bosses who may entertain developing jobs in this area of PA.

Preserve our historic monuments

Wilkes-Barre is over two hundred years old. Yet, many citizens, especially the youth are so restless that they seem not to care. And, so we find useless things written on the walls of many monuments and buildings and public passageways. We also find the usual garbage and waste throwing going on in historic places and we find many thinking it is OK to use our monuments as latrines.

This destroys the heritage and defaces the monuments and historic buildings. But, worse than that, it destroys our culture. It keeps us down as an area, and it makes a lot of people give up. The message is simple: Keep our city clean.

By having a clean city there are major advantages.

Of course heaps of garbage and waste products that are accumulated on the roadside occupy an awful lot of space and they stink to high heaven. But, if we look at it just a little differently we find it is even worse than otherwise believed. Yes, garbage and waste occupies too much space in our City and by occupying real estate, it prevents the regular people from using such space for something constructive.

We like to use hyperbole in our explanations, so you get the point before we make the point. Lets say this space, covered with garbage at present, can be used for something constructive and useful, such as a whiffle ball field. At the lower level, perhaps it can be a fine parking lot, and working our way upstairs such poorly maintained space can be the seeds for a number of other productive ventures.

But, hey, if there is a proclivity among residents to throw waste all over this particular place, who does that help? Nobody! Therefore, without overt action, it will continually remain idle and it will be a welcome venue for flies, mosquitoes, fleas, ticks, stink bugs, gnats, and assorted various other insects, whose mission seems to be to bring disease with them to afflict our families. Who wants that?

When a place is not used for any fruitful work and it thus becomes a wasteland, what should citizens hoping for the finest Wilkes-Barre do to make things better? It is not complicated. If, rather than muck and mire, our citizens want our city to have more space for parking, light recreation, wider and cleaner roads, and many more advantages of more availability of space, the answer is obvious. We must keep our city clean and because we believe this is the truth, we should preach the same gospel to others.

Can you as one person make a difference?

In Wilkes-Barre and in all of our towns, it all starts with us. If we choose not to engage, that is the lesson of the town and the politicians

still run the place—clean or dirty. They do not care as long as they are reelected. So, the message is we must begin with ourselves, and then we can work up to larger projects. We all have it in our control to make sure we recycle, and we do what we can to remove the unsightly areas of our City. If we find our politicians are unsightly, we can do the same with them.

Once we have some success with our friends, it is wonderful if we can move on up to organize something like a whole block cleaning “party.” In this, you try to get as many people out to pick up garbage around your block as you can contact and who will agree. You can bet the elderly in your neighborhoods who have nothing left for beautification of their property would love a breath of fresh air from helping townspeople. I’ve seen great groups in Wilkes-Barre doing exactly that—but not enough.

If you are tied up listening to the radio or perhaps even the Rush Limbaugh show, or the TV stations decrying how bad our City has become, you are the right person to help us all out. Help the elderly in your own neighborhoods which also happen to be theirs. Help them in their neighborhoods clean up their yards. Surely with no help, these burdens may become unmanageable over time for them.

Try to arrange a clean-up day with City Council and the Mayor so the City can help in organizing and advertising. Wilkes-Barre is a great City only because its people know how to be great. All one would have to do is get the word out about a helping event and surely everyone would be picking up at least one piece of trash every day. Your city... our city... can be beautiful in no time.

Here are some specific posts from local blogs. When I copied these I did not write exactly where they came from. I would be happy to add attribution as requested. Additionally, I corrected major typo errors.

Telling kids what to do

This post came in on January 5, 2009. It is placed here unchanged:

“In public places, kids who walk around licking their ice-sticks or chocolates have this habit of dropping the stick or chocolate-wrappers, as soon as they are done eating. Parents or guardians seem to make

no note of this and ignore it entirely. And in worse cases take to doing it themselves or telling the kids to drop it right there. In movie theaters, shoving plastic cups and wrappers under the seats are a common practice. If you come down to the canteens, there usually are big trash bins there to drop the waste.”

“But unfortunately all public places do not offer trash bins you could show kids. So until we have some sort of arrangements coming, we will have to revert to keeping all junk in person, in bags or-----
- brown papers till we get out and spot a bin.”

“Please take to telling your kids to not drop things as and where they feel like. If you start showing them the right practices at a young age, they are likely to follow those rules through life.”

This was posted in [What we can do](#) | 2 Comments

This post is here to show us all that we can correct ourselves if we choose. When we choose to do the right thing. We all win!

Against throwing things out of car

January 5, 2009

“Throwing things out of cars has become a common practice here. People don’t think twice before dumping all kinds of food waste, papers and bottles out on the roads.

First reason why this happens is there is no awareness or a sense of righteousness that makes them wonder if there is anything wrong in it. In the future I hope kids would have a whole new subject at school on keeping your world clean. But those who already finished schools could only be made aware through strict regulations sent through media so everyone knows. We will need the help of the law and the government for this. I’d like to leave this thread open for suggestions on what we, as common citizens can do about it.

Are public messages saying “Please don’t throw out things from car onto the streets Keep your city clean” possible? In boards in big font.

There is so much of space used for ads in roads... so this should be possible too – it's to serve a good purpose.

Second reason is because people say they don't have a place to dump it all. It's quite easy to carry a big cover or packet to dump all your trash and keep it aside, or in the trunk until you find a garbage bin to dispose it. Please do that, since that can be done without depending on any higher authority, all by ourselves – it's quite easy and possible. By a small effort from our side, we can do a lot for the place we live in."

Posted in What we can do | 5 Comments »

Lets keep our cities clean

January 5, 2009

A short intro to the blog. I am starting this as a follow up on my attempts to keep city clean.

Problem is there has just been talks without actions of any sort so far. I don't know what I can achieve through the blog, but when it's a community where people talk and comment, its likely to pull in more interest and when there are more people involved for any cause, actions are bound to follow. For the moment, I am taking up some threads I made in an orkut community started with the same intention:

<http://www.orkut.co.in/Main#Community.aspx?cmm=50968212>

This blog is entirely dedicated to write ups on keeping the places around us clean, wherever we are. It's not about Trivandrum, or Kerala, or India. It's about keeping our little world clean. And removing the myth that we can't do anything about it. If we can clean a room in minutes, a house in hours, and a compound in a couple of days, it is only a matter of time before we can keep our city clean. We don't have to take a broom and start from one end. If each of us did small things, every individual doing his part, which won't take more than a moment's time, there shall be a huge difference.

I hope everyone would join me in this, and make individual and combined efforts to have a clean city around us. See your city as your own little room, one that you wanted to see clean all the time. Where you won't throw waste papers and junk food on polished floors. Our cities are our rooms, our homes. Lets keep it clean.

Posted in About the blog | 2 Comments »

*** End of blog excerpts***

Where did the “dirty Wilkes-Barre problem” originate?

Was it always here? Did we simply let it go on for too long? Since we are part of a much larger world, we can make excuses and say that there was a major upturn in environmental organizations & socio-responsible movements, and this made us ever more acutely aware that our town had many of the characteristics of an eyesore. It's not over by a long shot. We still do but we can change that.

There still exists a great disparity between this upturn & youth involvement in anything after intermural and high school sports. Youth seem to feel they have been disengaged from reality, doubtful of their own abilities, and confused by how to convert what they see online into ACTION! This is an issue with exponential repercussions, as the education and engagement of youth is the key to all futures! Wouldn't it be nice if we could harness that lost energy on something good?

Can we effect a Solution that will work?

Nobody claims to be a psychiatrist or a sociologist here but it makes sense that the notion of an idle mind being the devil's workshop is alive and well today. Put that mind on to something productive and the workshop can add real benefits for the individual and for the community.

The Clean City Initiative for Wilkes-Barre is designed to create a total attitude shift towards volunteerism. People of all ages will be able to join a volunteer corps--not just the youth. However, the youth will make this work and they will make the whole notion enjoyable and rewarding to the adults who want so much for it to succeed.

An objective along the way of course is to redefine volunteerism as fun, engaging, self-expressive, and rewarding. As we get better at this, we can invite citizens, and most especially the lost youth in our communities the freedom of choice—to choose how they get involved and at what level they get involved—and self-expression—to perform clean acts that are unique, and which express their inner creativity.

In giving youth the freedom to choose, and through utilizing some motivational techniques such as incentive-based programs, our Clean City Initiative brought forth by the Clean City Action Committee will engage to harness those efforts for large-scale, perhaps even county & state-wide, and we can even look for national results!

In Wilkes-Barre this is not just about the idea of the sustainability movement. In Wilkes-Barre it will be far simpler than that. Moreover, because we will not take sides on global warming, aka climate change, we will not step on anybody's ideology. In Wilkes-Barre our objective is to assure a future of being able to maintain and improve our soon to-be-clean City. It is also to educate and engage all who are willing, but especially our youngest demographic. The message is:

Get Involved! Please! Volunteers Wanted

Even if I should fail in my attempts to convince you that I should be your Mayor, I would encourage any candidate for Mayor to take and use the three-prong attack that I have outlined. Run with it as it is designed to move our city into the future as a safe city; an affordable city; and of course as a clean city.

The Clean City Initiative and the CCAC can do wonders for Wilkes-Barre. In all cases, citizens should insist that our City begin this effort as soon as possible. Why wait until after the election? Wilkes-Barre should right now be seeking champions to join the project team in all fields/skills sets. I wish I were empowered to say that “If you want to make a difference and promote positive change, why not start with helping us right now? Check out how you can become a My Clean City Ambassador!”

Would it not be nice to find youngsters from a primary school or middle school, or even a high school working with residents,

encouraging them to take responsibility for their neighborhood by keeping it clean? Overtures with names such as “little hands make big changes,” can make big changes to the way we act and think as a city.

Those little hands can encourage the bigger hands to care while taking part in litter picks, growing edible food and improving their school’s recycling methodologies. Would it not be nice to see members of the community recruit other members of the community to join in these activities, encouraging adult residents to keep their streets clean by not dropping litter and using their recycling bins properly?

Where such notions have been put forth, comments from community leaders include this one: "This is about developing children as citizens, ensuring that they have a positive future and a real awareness of the importance of not littering and taking care of the community in which they live. We’re hoping that local people will take an interest in the project when they see the children getting involved."

Projects all have costs but let’s see if we can ask people in our community to help in any funding costs such as t-shirts or signs or for garden seeds for vacant areas or for helping the elderly with their own victory gardens. Of course the City can fund this, but the idea is that we the people are the city and nobody wants taxes raised.

Don’t Flick It!

Don’t Flick It! A number of cities across the country have been getting on board for a lively anti-litter campaign that has real promise. It is called “*Don’t flick it!*” It is a cigarette butt anti-litter campaign. Think about the number one cause of litter everywhere, and then think about how when each of these little sticks get tossed hither and yon, they fly across the shallow sky like little torches. They continue to produce their noxious smoke and pollution until they go out all by themselves. At that exact time, they become environmental pollution. It is a fact that over 50% of all items found in mixes of litter are cigarette butts. Solving this problem can be a great start in creating a clean city.

In the US Armed services, the troops are trained by innuendo to not flick it. Every base has a part of the day used for something called police calls. These police calls line up the troops who then walk from

point A to B and they police the area. This means they look down and pick up every cigarette but that is in their path. It works. Less and less butts get picked up each time on military police calls.

You have seen it and so it happens far too often—a cigarette butt that isn't properly extinguished. Even when dropped on the ground as we walk, it can cause incredible damage. They've been known to blow into front-gardens where they've ignited a flammable object and within a few minutes a butt dropped without thought has damaged an innocent person's property.

They've rolled under cars where they've burst into flames and even blown into the faces of small children. Improperly extinguished cigarette butts have a lot to answer for. They are a menacing problem. However, extinguished or not, cigarette butts are still one of the major pollutants of our time for the toxicity they cause as well as the blight.

I am reminded of the old joke told by a “bum.” “Bum,” by the way, is a politically incorrect term meaning many things including a no-account as in a tramp or a vagrant. I am not for political correctness as it seeks to obfuscate the true meaning of speech by forcing the use of less emotionally charged words. PC will always fail because eventually the word or term used to replace the original will always become just as charged over time as the word or term it replaced. Thus in this case, we might as well use the term *bum*, because such people are always bumming cigarettes, small change or other items. You already know what I mean. It is an accurate term and it is already saturated with emotional charge. It ain't broke, so we should not be trying to fix it here. Back to my story.

As the one bum is chatting with another bum, he mentions how tough things are in the world of today. He says: “Yeah, look at my wound here. I was downtown yesterday getting some smokable cigarettes, and somebody stepped on my hand.” In the newer, cleaner Wilkes-Barre if the old bum ever chooses to come back, we sure hope he finds no cigarettes on the ground for the picking and we hope his hand stays in good shape.

Do you think we have a shot at ever stopping unsightly cigarette butts in parks, city streets and on sidewalks? People across the country are in the beginning stages of campaigns to do just that.

The **Don't Flick It!** campaign is designed to bring awareness to those who 'flick' their cigarette butts. They may not think so, but they are in fact littering. Throwing a lit cigarette butt is no different than throwing a candy wrapper or a gum wrapper or a piece of chewed gum. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable and are the major disfiguring pollutant in mostly any city's landscape.

Studies done by The Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-up and the Great American Clean-up report similar results. Cigarette butts and filters are the number one litter items polluting Canadian and American shorelines and waterways. In 2012 in Canada, for example, over 400,000 cigarette butts were collected as part of the annual Shoreline Clean-up.

Key messages from “Don't Flick It” campaign:

- Cigarette butt litter is unsightly and wrong
- Cigarette butt litter costs taxpayers to clean up
- Cigarette butt litter is harmful to the environment
- The community needs to do its part by preventing all litter.

What to expect

The mission of these committees and our own Wilkes-Barre committee, when it is formed, is to work towards the elimination of litter in the City through:

- Public awareness;
- Co-operation and communication;
- Promotion and education; and facilitation of community involvement

Aspects / Tools of Implementation

- Clean City Web Site -- active
- Unclean areas need to be reported and resolved
- Volunteers will help
- City focus with employees or groups to solve beautification problems

Goals for Wilkes-Barre Clean City Action Committee

As noted previously, some of the goals of the Wilkes-Barre Clean City Action Committee are as follows:

- To alter littering behavior through the development of the community's sense of ownership;
- To encourage community participation through public awareness campaigns and organized litter clean-up activities;
- To make the "Don't be a Litter Bug" phrase and image widely recognized by the citizens of Wilkes-Barre; and
- To improve the natural environment and beauty of Wilkes-Barre.
- Make all city people aware of the importance of keeping the city clean and green.
- Plant more trees, shrubs, and other greenery
- Etc.

Thank you all for your help in making and keeping Wilkes-Barre clean .

Chapter 7 Making & Keeping Wilkes-Barre Affordable



Our City must be affordable for its people

This article was written when your author Brian W. Kelly ran for Mayor in 2015. It has been refreshed somewhat for 2019 but there are still elements that reflect how things were in 2015. Here goes:

On the average, the people of Wilkes-Barre are very rich in spirit but unfortunately, not very rich in material wealth. Most, like my wife and I grew up in three-bedroom standard issue coal-heated homes. There was a Heatrola stove right between our dining room and what we called the “parlor.” Some other people in the City had coal furnaces to heat the whole house. Not ours.

Ours was a rental on High Street for which my dad paid \$25.00 a month for about 30 years before the landlord had to raise the rent to \$50.00. Nine of us lived in this small home. My dad took care of my

grand-mom and grand-pop on mom's side; as well as my mom and the five kids.

Despite having little, we never knew we were poor. We lived in Wilkes-Barre, and nobody in Wilkes-Barre knew they were poor. Wilkes-Barre is still not a well-to-do town; but we manage somehow. Surely, more and more of us are close to the end of our ropes financially. Powerball and the Megamillion lotteries for many offer much more hope than the local economy. Unfortunately, there is little industry and so it seems that unless you have a corporate or government job, life is tougher than in most places in the state.

Those of us with friends in city or county or state government over the last ten years have watched their salaries, pensions and benefits spiraling upward. Government officials have achieved only limited success negotiating union contracts favorable to taxpayers, even though taxpayers are less able than ever to handle the load.

Many of us remember quite vividly that for 2013, Wilkes-Barre Mayor Tom Leighton initially proposed a back-breaking 31% property tax increase on all Wilkes-Barre residents. The population was going down so why a bump in the taxes? Many wanted that answer; but it never came.

After sharpening his pencil, the Mayor settled for "just" 26%. This is substantially more than the meager raise in social security payments and the salaries of private sector workers who live in the City. It did not matter that it was unaffordable by the masses, the Mayor said Wilkes-Barre needed it. The implication was the *Wilkes-Barre needs the money more than you do*. I do not think so folks.

Meanwhile for city residents, the price of groceries, gas, rent, and home maintenance, and mostly everything else has been growing really fast. We all know that household incomes are not moving anywhere close to costs. If the federal government was not lying about the real cost of living in their published consumer price index, we would be getting a daily affirmation about how the cost of everything is out of control.

So, on top of everything else, the federal government enjoys cheating us all by telling us there is no inflation and then they tell SSR

recipients that there is no COLA increase because costs are not climbing. Yet, the storekeepers increase prices and for years gas was going up and up and up. How do SSR recipients with no other means keep up with it? They starve or stop paying taxes and lose their homes.

You have heard the underpinnings of the government rationale for cheating on the consumer price index. Economists convinced the government that when people cannot afford steak, they'll eat hamburger so they substituted hamburger for steak in the CPI cost formula to cheat seniors out of a raise. They said the protein was the same. Then when cans of tuna were cheaper, they moved from hamburger to tuna. Then, when people were beating the system by using cat tuna, they priced in cat tuna into the CPI instead of regular tuna. You can't find this on the Internet anymore as Google does its best to please the federal government. The public remains uninformed about the feds ripping off seniors.

I wrote a short book in 2018 that helps seniors come to grips with what the government is doing to them. It is called *Government Must Stop Ripping Off Seniors' Social Security!* It is available at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1947402641>

The point is that seniors in Wilkes-Barre received nothing extra to pay their 2013 City property tax bill it. That's a fact. Seniors are going broke while City employees get nice wage increases. With a poverty rate of 35%, Wilkes-Barre leaders should be ashamed of what they are doing to the entire population of Wilkes-Barre. Dear Mayor and Council, the pockets are empty. Get used to it. Cut something! Cut something else and then Cut something else. How about giving the population of the City a break?

The average homeowner's property tax went from a 2012 payment of \$591 to \$744 in 2013. On the average, the amount was \$152, a 26 percent hike. Some pay a lot more than that. The Mayor also increased the price of several city fees, including recycling service and city-issued garbage bags. Even the increase in fees was beyond the meager increase in retirees' social security payments. This made an already unaffordable tax burden even less affordable.

There are those who say nothing can be cut or you'll lose services? What services? We pay all kinds of fees for any service the City provides. With 53 job titles of City Employees having large overtime budgets, I see no reason for tax increases. It is time for tax decreases so seniors can afford to live here.

Few people had the money to pay the Leighton increases without major cutbacks in their ability to live their lives. Yet while the City was going broke or, so they said in 2013, and thus needed a 26% bump in taxes, for 2014, all city employees received a 3% raise. Seniors got nothing. The citizens of Wilkes-Barre were not so fortunate. Some suggest that this clearly demonstrates that the full 26% increase in the millage rate for 2013 was not entirely necessary.

Many residents have family working for the City, and they are enjoying the fact that their relatives and friends have such fine wages and benefits. It is a wonderful thing when someone we know gets a job at the City or the County or the School District because that is one person who will be able to keep up with the cost of living. Unfortunately, the reality is those fine wages and benefits must be paid for by people who are barely surviving.

Average Resident's Paychecks v. City Worker Paychecks

As many know, the Mayor posts a budget document each year, and all are welcome to view it. The salaries for all City employees by title is included in this report. To demonstrate the disparity between the taxpayers and the wage and benefit receivers, I have taken this information and analyzed it further so that you can see the big differences between the payers / citizens and the receivers / employees.

It is not my intention to suggest that all of the employees of the City are not worth their wages, for I believe that indeed they are. However, to be honest, I do not see how Wilkes-Barre citizens can continue to last much longer under such a huge tax burden. Dear leaders, we cannot pay your stiff taxes. Figure something out.

The following chart from 2015 shows ranges of salary for city employees. This data is not presented this way in the Mayor's reports. The first chart below shows just those employee titles, whose salaries

are less than \$40,000 per year. There are only twelve or thirteen of them, and so, it is not difficult to write these in a chart, and it is not difficult for a taxpayer to read these titles, and salaries. Here they are:

Lowest Salaries of City Employees – Those less than \$40,000 per year. All others exceed \$40,000 and they have gotten four years of wages since this chart was established.

City Employee Job Title	Salary per year
Police Secretary	\$24,825
Parking Enforcement Attendant II	\$24, 931
Parking Enforcement Attendant I	\$27,702
Civilian Clerk II	\$31.328
Custodial Worker City Hall	\$32,450
Disease Specialist	\$34,472
Protective Inspection Clerk	\$35,444
CA Coordinator Comm. Director	\$36,050
Revenue Clerk III	\$37,806
City Assessor	\$37,863
Driver IV	\$38,030
Driver IV	\$38,030
Disease Specialist / Inspector	\$39,388

In this next chart, I show the distribution of salaries within various categories. We begin with the category in which the lowest salaried employee in the City, the Police Secretary, who makes \$24,825 per year is in the first grouping of employees making \$20,000 or more. We end with the Police Chiefs, and the City Administrator who are in a league of their own in the highest salary bracket—even higher than the Mayor's, and not including overtime. Here is the chart:

Salary Distribution within dollar categories:

Lowest Salary for City Employee = \$24,825
260 of 260 employees make \$20,000 or more
257 of 260 employees make \$30,000 or more
248 of 260 employees make \$40,000 or more
187 of 260 employees make \$50,000 or more
108 of 260 employees make \$60,000 or more
015 of 260 employees make \$70,000 or more

006 of 260 employees make \$80,000 or more
003 of 260 employees make \$90,000 or more
Highest Salary for any City Employee (Chief) = \$91,305

*** None of these salaries include overtime wages.

The highest city salaries in 2019 are now well above \$100,000. Moreover, in the most recent budget, fifty-three city positions were budgeted overtime. Fifty-three! Who are we kidding folks? Fifty-Three! There should be zero overtime. We all know that.

To help put these 2015 City wages in perspective, here are some numbers about the regular citizens who hold private sector jobs in Wilkes-Barre.

Statisticians have found that the median earnings for males in Wilkes-Barre is \$27,232. Across the state, the median wage for males is \$38,788. At the Federal level the median wage for males is \$38,921

The median wage for females in Wilkes-Barre is \$18,961. Across the state, the median wage for females is \$22,899, and at the Federal level the median wage is \$23,115.

Using these statistics, we can approximate the average wage of all employees, by combining the median values for males and females. There are slightly more females working in Wilkes-Barre than males. There is just a 3.8% difference in the number.

To average this out, for argument purposes only, because the difference is so small, let's use a 50/50 split in the number of females and males. The average of the two median figures would therefore be calculated in this way: Male median wage (\$27,232) + female median wage (\$18,961) = \$46,193. Now, to find the average (mean) -- not the median since we do not have the raw data, we simply divide \$46,193 by the number in the sample, which is 2 (male and female).

\$46,193 divided by 2 is \$23,096.00. Therefore for reporting purposes, the average wage for all Wilkes-Barre residents is \$23,096.

So, how do regular employees in Wilkes-Barre compare to those employed by Wilkes-Barre city. The lowest wage of any unelected city employee is \$24,825. Therefore, the lowest wage earner employed by

the City makes \$1728.00 more than the average wage of Wilkes-Barre residents who are not employed by the City.

Using the data from the tables above, we can approximate the median (most frequent / mid point) wage of a City Employee at just about \$58,000.00. That means that if all 260 employees were in a listing numbered from 1 to 260 in ascending sequence by wage, employee number 130 would be making \$58,000. Half of the employees would be making less and the other half of City workers would be making more than \$58,000.

If we take this \$58,000 wage and divide it by the average wage for Wilkes-Barre residents, which by the way includes the Wilkes-Barre City employees' salaries, we would have a calculation like this:
 $\$58,000 \text{ divided by } \$23,096 = 2.511$.

This means that the “average” City employee makes approximately two and a half times more in earnings than the average non-City worker. It is these taxpayers, making 2 1/2 times less who pay the salary of all City employees. These citizens of Wilkes-Barre are not fortunate to be employed in the much better jobs that exist in City government.

Not all police in the state of PA are in fat city. Considering the average income of residents, Wilkes-Barre treats officers quite well. In other areas of the state, the police wear the same uniforms, take the same risks and train to the standards of all Pennsylvania police officers. Yet state records show about 28 percent of municipal police officers who patrol communities in Western Pennsylvania are employed part time, making \$10.50 to \$16 an hour with no health benefits. It makes one think if Wilkes-Barre might be a bit too generous. Just saying.

WB Bloggers have an opinion

To City employees, they may find themselves scraping along with about 250 employees making over \$40,000 plus overtime. To Wilkes-Barreans, their numbers are not so good. On a number of blogs that highlight Wilkes-Barre issues, citizens of the City are outraged with the disparity. The recent 3% across the board raise did not go over well. The average Joe in the City makes so little that he would need

an 8% raise to match the average dollar raises awarded to city employees by the Mayor in 2014. Here is a typical blog comment:

“This really ticks me off because in this time of financial hardships for most, these city employees are getting a raise. How about we pave more roads and actually try to stop crime before it happens instead.”

The following is an open message carried in the Independent Gazette. It is addressed to Members of Wilkes-Barre City Council, the Mayor, and the Staff. It is well written and expresses the dire financial straits of a large percentage of city residents.

Here is another blog entries. This one is signed Ray Arellano:

“Before I am out of time, I wish to state unequivocally that I am opposed to any tax increase, or increase in any of the fees currently in force, except for maybe the parking.

I live in the Rolling Mill Hills district. My neighborhood is comprised of mostly septuagenarians and octogenarians, some of which are borderline ninety. At age 77, I am considered the “kid” on the block! Most are widowers or widows. They came up when there were no 401(k)’s or reliable pension plans, so most rely on their Social Security checks and meager savings.

All of them hope that they can outlive major repairs to their homes. They are one water heater or furnace away from a major financial crunch. They pee in their toilets three or four times before flushing to save on their water bills. They only put garbage out every other week because of the cost of garbage bags. They pay exorbitant school taxes even though they have not had a child in school in fifty years!! They cannot get to the store for groceries, so they have to pay to have what meager things they buy delivered.

They worked hard all their lives to pay their bills, raised a family, and through no fault of their own, have lived too long. Many have outlived their children, their families, and friends. They only turn on the light in the room that they happen to be in, and keep the thermostat in the low 60’s, using blankets for warmth.

When they last saw their mate, they had to continue trying to fly with one wing, and for a while they were successful, but now it has

become an insurmountable task. Waiting to die has to be the most depressing for them and some go to bed wondering if maybe tonight it will be over. If they are forced into a nursing home the speculators will buy their homes, and they will rent them to the dumpster overflow from out of state, until they are no longer habitable, then walk away.

It shouldn't have gotten to this point, and it wouldn't have if you had been better stewards."

Ray Arellano, Wilkes-Barre

Here are a few other comments from the Independent Gazette regarding the taxation situation in Wilkes-Barre. This one is from Linda Urban:

"A few comments for the City of Wilkes-Barre's elected and highly paid insiders. How much is enough? How much money do you need in order to be happy?"

You have brought our city to its knees and bankrupted us.

You have stolen from us. Your neighbors for the most part despise you after finding out just what you have been taking from us.

The practice of rewarding certain pals with excessively high paid jobs for votes in order to maintain your lifestyles is passe'. We know your game.

We live within our means and always have. We punched a clock or logged our hours and didn't expect a fellow employee to cover for our absence from our job.

We won't pay for your ridiculously excessive salaries and benefits, campaign donations to local pals, new homes, vehicles, gas, cell phones, vacations, pricey clothing and shoes, private school educations, or your family lifestyles with our money any longer.

You aren't special anymore. You are rather a disgraceful cornered den of jackels.

Your wealth and social prestige is all because of us so remember that when you walk or drive through our dying neighborhoods or bask in the sun aboard a cruise liner or on southern Florida beach. It's all because of the past Wilkes-Barre naive or foolish baited voters.

I suggest that those of you that have been milking us for decades go and try to find a non taxpayer funded job that even remotely compares to what the city salaries are. Even from years ago!

If it weren't for the city taxpayers in most cases many of you would be either moved on or living in a normal day to day survival mode.

Greed has destroyed our city.

So again, how much is enough?

Reduce your salaries or clean out your desk. We cannot afford your lifestyles.

Linda Urban, Wilkes-Barre

End of bloggers' comments

Do we pay too much in taxes?

The latest statistics which we have cited from 2015's election time above were provided for 2012. They show that 26.8 percent of Wilkes-Barre residents live in poverty. In 2018, the number below the poverty line is now 35%. That does not provide much room for city officials or any taxing authority to increase taxes or fees of any kind. In fact, it really says the pendulum ought to start swinging in the other direction. Wilkes-Barre must begin to reduce taxes, before the City or its people go bankrupt.

City residents believe that any increase in any taxes or fees is too much. Wilkes-Barre residents feel they already pay ala carte for services such as garbage, recycling, and even flood protection in addition to huge taxes. One could rightfully believe that "you pay for everything here."

Besides a safe city, one of my top objectives as Mayor is to create an affordable city and a clean city for all. At a minimum that means no tax increases or fee increases during my term(s). In fact, my pledge is to do my absolute best to reduce taxes—most notably property taxes. Increasing taxes or fees on a bleeding public needing a big break hurts Wilkes-Barre’s people even if it enriches the City government coffers.

Those of us with friends in city or county or state government over the last ten years, know that salaries, pensions and benefits have spiraled upward and out-of-control. Meanwhile with the economy in bad shape, taxpayers have not had it so good. City leaders achieved only limited success negotiating union contracts favorable to taxpayers during this period.

Worsening the problem for the public’s ability to pay is the lingering effect of a recession that has whacked Northeastern Pennsylvania with crippling poverty and for a time a 9.5 percent unemployment rate – the worst in the state. When things get bad, in recent times, Wilkes-Barre gets them worse.

Wilkes-Barre has been hit worse than the rest of the state and the nation. The unemployment rate in our area is the highest in a state which is now recovering simply because the former governor was an advocate of enhanced gas drilling. It is too bad that there is no oil or gas in Wilkes-Barre, and the coal mines have been shut down for more than fifty years. The current governor now wants to tax the drilling which will increase the people’s heating and hot water bills. How does that help the citizens?

I root for my City but facts are facts. In our City, as noted above, more than one in three people live below the poverty line. This means in 2015, these people are below a yearly income (2015) of \$22,811 for a family of four with two children. This is according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Meanwhile, though I do not begrudge them of their fair wage, the lowest salary for an employee in the City of Wilkes-Barre other than a parking attendant is substantially more than the average wage of most citizens of Wilkes-Barre.

The taxpayer’s ability to pay over the last ten or more years has been totally ignored. Yet, City salaries have increased substantially. In fact,

the most lucrative jobs in town are held by those who work for the City, the County, the State, and the federal government. How is that fair to the poor residents of this community?

There are few suggestions that increases in taxes have not been needed to pay for government services. Of course the money has been spent. But, one can argue that the price of such services is not affordable to a good part of the citizenry of Wilkes-Barre.

As we saw on the BK for Mayor site in 2015, some people, writing on the blogs are really, really upset. Yet, there are others who have even suggested this is OK: "We may not like to pay higher taxes, but it's just the flip side of government services. If we don't want to pay higher taxes, then we have to give up the level of government services we are used to." Well, maybe we do because people cannot go losing their homes to keep the City running.

What if a city cannot pay for the services demanded? Would the residents prefer to get less services or pay more from their meager wages to support City employees? More than likely, the City employees are getting fair salaries while the people in the community are working for slave wages because that is all that is available. Still it grates on citizens to have government employees making more than 2X the average for their community?

I have no survey results on that question but on balance, from reading the blogs, it is clear that citizens of the City are not happy that city employees are doing so well because the residents are sacrificing beyond their means.

It would take time get an accurate survey answer but logic dictates that those making less than the minimum salary for a City employee would suggest that maybe things are not fair.

There is a growing number of Pennsylvanians that have targeted the property tax, as the number one enemy of senior citizens in Pennsylvania. One group that takes this fight seriously is the Pennsylvania Taxpayer Cyber Coalition (PTCC). These folks are dedicated to equitable tax funding of Pennsylvania schools. They see the property tax as the enemy of mankind's ability to live in a comfortable home.

Their concern is that many people who own their homes outright and have for many years, find that they are paying more in property taxes per year, than they would be paying in rent. In many cases this is because of poor fiscal management by school districts and municipalities such as Wilkes-Barre, but sometimes it is because it is simply easier to give huge pay raises than to say no, “we cannot afford that.”

Property tax increases are the easiest way to steal from taxpayers. Considering that most home owners buy their homes so they do not have to pay rent, this is a perplexing phenomenon indeed. This group introduces the problem on their web site in these words:

“Many Pennsylvanians lose their homes and a lifetime’s work to sheriff’s sales each year because they can no longer afford to pay their property taxes. Senior citizens on fixed incomes are increasingly forced to sell their homes because of unrelenting increases in their tax burden. Young families cannot afford to purchase a home because the per-month property tax escrow is simply too high.

“Multigenerational family farms are being sold piece by piece to pay property taxes, devastating Pennsylvania agriculture. School districts in areas of the state with limited population and no commercial tax base are in distress and are unable to afford to give their children a quality education. Job losses, outmigration, and abysmal state economic performance caused by burdensome property taxes are devastating Pennsylvania’s economy.” The PTCC also notes the following:

“Over the past few years the PTCC and PCTA (*Pennsylvania Coalition of Taxpayer Associations*) has been asking homeowners to send us their real-life stories telling how relentlessly increasing school property taxes are affecting their quality of life. The response to this request has been overwhelming; the letters starkly demonstrate the frustration, fear, hopelessness, and anger that is widespread throughout ALL age groups and families from all areas of Pennsylvania over the lawmakers’ inaction in addressing this issue.”

“These politicians who refuse to support elimination and offer nothing but lame excuses MUST be shown that their inaction and

endless political games are jeopardizing the welfare and the lives of many thousands of Pennsylvanians. They MUST understand that what they are doing (or not doing) is destroying the future for good, honest people who only want to live their lives without the fear of financial ruin.”

If lawmakers truly care about homeowners in Pennsylvania, they will consider carefully the letters written to PTCC—two are shown below. These clearly demonstrate that just as in Wilkes-Barre with so many struggling to make ends meet, this is a contagion. Here are some REAL faces of the property tax issue and how the procrastination and cowardice towards eliminating school property taxes is affecting the lives of REAL people in a plight similar to the taxpayers of Wilkes-Barre.

PTCC Letter # 1:

“My husband and I wish to thank the Coalition for all the effort put forth to help save homes in Pennsylvania. Our local representatives have done nothing to show taxpayers they are serious about tax relief, just the usual rhetoric.

We personally have had to list our home for sale since last October due to the \$7,000 school tax bill we can no longer afford as working middle class residents. This is not a mansion, but a 200-year-old house that we have worked to restore for the last 16 years. We can pay our mortgage, but we can't possibly pay the \$584 per month tax payments.

The “relief” from slots is a total joke, a slap in the face of taxpayers. At today's oil costs it has become a choice to have heat or pay taxes. I am sure our home can't be saved in time, but my hope is others will benefit.

We are not sure we will ever own a home again in PA, renting is far more affordable and stable and after losing so much on this home at our ages (55 & 53), it does not make sense to start over again, until we move to another state that does not penalize homeowners.

It goes without saying that the taxes are keeping us from selling in this district. - Anonymous, York County

PTCC Letter # 2:

“My husband & I are on Social Security now, & though we have some savings, it won't be long before we have to use it for the ever growing taxes that are due in Spring & Fall.

The PA school tax is especially burdensome as you well know. We had hoped for a resolution to this long before now by the abolishment of that tax.

If our savings are used up with those taxes, what will we use when an emergency comes along?? With the ever-rising prices of gas & oil & food, the money we have to work with is getting less & less.

We urge you to please put into law the END of the huge Property tax before ours & the savings of countless others is gone, homes lost, & hope erased. We have worked hard all our lives to maintain & keep our home, & now the resources that we thought we had, are like water sadly slipping through our hands.

– Folks from Elverson, Chester County

Taxation Without Representation is still alive in Wilkes-Barre



The above reality check on government spending is from the Wilkes-Barre Taxpayers Association. Former Mayoral Candidate Frank Sorick is the long-term president of the group.

Though the letters on the prior page are not from Wilkes-Barre residents, they could very well be as we suffer from the same exorbitant taxation system as the rest of the state. That's why HB 76 is so key. I always liked Eddie Day Pashinsky and I still do but in this matter, he does not represent any of the hurting citizens of Wilkes-Barre (or so it would seem) in the current fight to help all of us keep our properties rather than give them up to the tax collector.

Besides PTCC, the people of Wilkes-Barre have another great friend in the Wilkes-Barre City Taxpayers Association. We should pay more attention to them. Our local group is working in conjunction with The Pennsylvania Taxpayers Cyber Coalition PTCC to get property tax relief for Pennsylvanians. I am willing to say right here, right now,

that if you are a Wilkes-Barre resident and you do not want fair property taxes, then I do not want your vote for Mayor. And, if I could give it back if you insisted on voting for me, I would do just that.

The groups have already held rallies together. On Friday August 22, for example, your friends from Wilkes-Barre held a rally in front of Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Eddie Day Pashinski's regional office, located at 152 South Pennsylvania Ave Wilkes Barre, PA 18702. Feel free to write the good representative a letter so he knows how you feel.

This rally was to bring greater awareness, and support for HB76 the School Property Tax Relief Act – aka The Property Tax Independence Act. Hard as it is to believe, Representative Pashinski has chosen to support the Teachers Unions rather than the people of his district. The teachers are not being asked to take a pay cut and this could help the elderly and the poor in Wilkes-Barre so I do not understand Representative Pashinski's position or the position of the unions. Nobody is doing union busting.

Our representative has publicly stated that he is against HB76, while at the same time, according to the Taxpayers Union, he has accepted substantial campaign contributions from the teachers unions, who, for undisclosed reasons are against giving taxpayers this relief. Frank R. Sorick is the President of the Wilkes-Barre City Taxpayers Association. Thank you Frank. This is not a joke. This is real. Who can be against fair taxes?

I have the feeling that after winning the Democratic Primary this year, Representative Pashinski felt pretty good about himself as nobody could touch him on the issues no matter where he stood. He had no opponent in the general election and had already captured the Democratic Primary. That is the only reason I could see him backing his buddies instead of his constituents.

I suspect he was surprised on September 22 of this year (2015), when the Times Leader broke the story that Wilkes-Barre resident Betsy Summers announced on the day before that she would support Senate Bill 76 if she was sitting in state Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski's seat. This is the main reason she decided to run against him as a Libertarian.

The WB Taxpayers association has a mock of a yard sign on their sight and it is very telling:

End School Property Taxes Now!

House Bill

76

Senate Bill

PROPERTY TAX

Independence Act

LIBERTY EQUALITY PROSPERITY

www.ptcc.us

Call your Legislator and tell them why 76 matters to you

Supporters of 76

Senator Lisa Baker (R) (570) 675-3931
Senator John T. Yudichak (D) (570) 883-4690
Representative Sid Michaels Kavulich (D) (570) 562-2350
Representative Tarah Toohil (R) (570) 453-1344
Representative Mike Carroll (D) (570) 655-4883
Representative Karen Boback (R) (570) 675-6000
Representative Gerald J. Mullery (D) (570) 740-7031
Representative Kevin Haggerty (D) (570) 342-2710

Opposed to 76

Senator John P. Blake (D) (570) 207-2881
Senator John R. Gordner (R) (570) 784-3464
Representative Frank Farina (D) (570) 876-1111
Representative Phyllis Mundy (D) (570) 283-9622
Representative Eddie Day Pashinski (D) (570) 825-5934

Paid for by the combined efforts of Lackawanna/Luzerne County PTCC Groups

FYI, in November 2018, Democratic incumbent Eddie Day Pashinski defeated Republican challenger Sue Henry in the race for the 121st District in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. For their own reason, the people appear indifferent to property tax reductions. Many thought Henry's stance on HB 76 made her a shoe in. Now it seems the people were just not paying attention to what could have benefited them the most.

The 121st District includes all of Wilkes-Barre. Pashinski and Henry live in Wilkes-Barre. Pashinsky was first elected to the Pennsylvania House in 2006 following the retirement of Kevin Blaum. He was reelected in 2008, 2010, 2012, and easily defeated Libertarian challenger Betsy Summers in the general election in both 2014 and 2016. There was no Republican nominee either time. It was not as easy to defeat Henry as some taxpayers apparently woke up from the deep fog.

The bill Henry backed aims to eliminate school property taxes by broadening and increasing the state sales tax by 1 percent and raising

the state's personal income tax from 3.07 percent to 4.34 percent. For most taxpayers, on the cusp of solvency, this would permit them to be assured that they would be able keep their homes for the long haul, and pay a small amount extra for sales tax.

“A lot of taxpayers are hurting, and it seems ridiculous that Rep. Pashinski wants to just ignore the fact that people are losing their homes and will continue to lose their homes,” Summers said. I think Pashinski made a big error in going against the people.

“We can never truly own our property because it's taken away from us if we can't pay the tax,” Summers said. “Something has to be done, and I'm not afraid to keep harping at them in Harrisburg.”

Good for you Betsy Summers. Thank you.

Nonetheless the people either did not believe it or they have more money than I think.

Property tax in PA is like having to pay rent all your life and eventually, you cannot afford the rent, and you are evicted.

What Can Wilkes-Barre Officials Do?

To address citizens' complaints that our City is becoming unaffordable, what can Wilkes-Barre city officials enact in terms of a lean budget in coming years that cuts the property tax rate and adds very few new employees and services and perhaps even cuts some. As Mayor if I were elected, and even now as a private citizen, I have the answer. It is the same answer that we all have been using in order to survive this poor economy. We have had to do it and we do not expect our City to make our burden worse.

Wilkes-Barre City must live within its means. If we cannot afford 260 employees to dote over us and provide for our every need, then we must reduce the size of the city workforce. Another option is to reduce the salaries of some of the employees who work for the City. But, it would be nice if we did not have to do that.

Can we afford an average salary of \$58,000. How about \$70,000? Can we afford a minimum salary of \$25,000? Can we afford a maximum salary without overtime of over \$100,000. You tell me. I can certainly say that my objective is to reduce expenses and lower taxes – especially the property tax rate. That is what I plan to do if elected Mayor.

If you cannot afford to buy groceries, what do you do? You cut back. While the population of Wilkes-Barre is declining every year, there should be no need for our budget to be ballooning out of control. We must fix this, or we will have no city. I am sure our dedicated City employees will do their part to help this city recover and once again be affordable.

The City income tax of course is reasonably low compared to most cities that impose such a tax, but compared to surrounding communities, it is higher than most. So, we need to look at that even though it is not as pressing as property tax relief. Many residents are saying no to all taxes and they are packing up and heading for greener areas to live.

With the School District getting ready to finance a big Taj Mahal High School, and the City always looking for more, who will be living here supporting City employees if we all decide to pack up and leave? With City employees' earnings increasing while the citizens' own earnings are decreasing, it is a tough sell to convince anybody in Wilkes-Barre that they should have to cough up a little more for the Gipper!

It would be nice if we could afford high salaries and a high number of employees to match. The facts "on the ground" sure are pointing to a conclusion that we cannot.

People Who Love Wilkes-Barre May Choose to Help Us.

Let's invite those with something to spare, who are good friends of Wilkes-Barre to help our city become affordabe. We should have a Donate to Wilkes-Barre Web Site so whatever we might receive does not have to be shared with Go Fund Me!

Besides many tax reduction notions, the City under the Kelly Administration would set up trusts / funds so that we can take gifts from residents who love this City and we can take bequeathments from prominent citizens and others who choose to direct the proceeds of their estates to the care of Wilkes-Barre City. If we had some revenue from those who credit Wilkes-Barre with part of their lifetime success, that would be wonderful. Of course we would have to promise to work hard to get ourselves back on our feet, so we would not need handouts.

To make this work, we first would need to announce that it is not a stupid notion to donate to your city instead of giving it all to an errant nephew or a church, which may be torn down tomorrow. Would it not be a great service for a resident to set up a will that includes Wilkes-Barre as a recipient? Many people feel a debt of gratitude for living so many wonderful years in our City that they would love to give something back. And, of course we need it to help make this city as great a city as these folks remember.

We would need part of a job description / job or a person in the Administration to become adept at grant writing and being able to solicit those Wilkes-Barre alums who may have the means to help the City.

To do this of course, we would need a well-structured schedule of gift accounting and gift recognition. It would be appropriate to see statues in Parks etc. for those so kind that they would choose to help our City. There have been those in the past such as the Kirby Family (Kirby Park), or the Miner Family (Miner Park) so that such benefactors can be recognized in the same fashion as the wonderful plaques in churches for donors being so generous for the wonderful causes for which they contributed.

In our case, of course it would be to keep our city safe, clean, and affordable. Thanks ahead of time for those willing to help Wilkes-Barre. Any Mayor, not just me, can ask the people who have more to give, to help in this way.

We must give credit where it is due, but we should not have to endure a 3% raise for city employees already doing OK in Wilkes-Barre when the Social Security bump is less than 2% and sometimes zero. Tom

Leighton has already done a good job in collecting a lot from nonprofits. Payments compared with Scranton and Hazleton are quite nice, and we must credit Mr. Leighton for that. His “windfall” came from Wilkes-Barre General Hospital and King’s College, who were major contributors to the \$437,000 prize from payments in lieu of taxes which the city budgeted in 2014. Unfortunately the dollars were used to give out raises to many people doing quite well.

And, so, my thinking is that Wilkes-Barre’s finest taxable commercial properties are now occupied by colleges, hospitals, and many other non-profits, many of whom do not directly benefit Wilkes-Barre taxpayers as The General and King’s did last year (2015).

I would be happy to stand corrected. However, I personally know of not one city scholarship granted by any of the colleges to a Wilkes-Barre high school student simply because they happen to be a citizen of Wilkes-Barre. I bet there are ten or twenty such students or more who could use such help. Do you know of any who got help?

I know of not one resident of the City who was treated to an extended hospital stay simply because they were a Wilkes-Barre resident. I know it is not so simple, but, I think you can see my point. The leader of Wilkes-Barre should do the best for Wilkes-Barre while the leaders of other organizations or institutions should look out for their best interests. I would like to see even more financial cooperation between the non-profits and the City.

The colleges and the hospitals and other non-profits gain substantial tax breaks that you and I would not have, and most people think these institutions help Wilkes-Barre. It may help some merchants downtown and this in turn helps the City, but for the most part, Wilkes-Barre is not the big gainer. Tuition in all colleges is a hundred thousand dollars or more for 4 years. Kids then go into hock for their whole lives trying to pay back their loans.

There is no deal of which I am aware, which gives residents of our City any priority in our City Colleges just because the student is home grown. That sure would be nice, and you can bet I will ask for Wilkes-Barre City scholarships. And, I will see what can be done to help the poor in our City who are in need of medical care.

There is some good news and bad news about the affordability of Wilkes-Barre's taxation system on its residents. Here is the good news:

The cost of living in Wilkes-Barre is 16.5% less than the Pennsylvania average and the cost of living in Wilkes-Barre is 15.2% less than the national average. So, if Wilkes-Barre residents had the same money as all Pennsylvanians on the average, and as all Americans on the average, we would be doing quite well on the cost side of affordability, independent of taxes. But our taxes are crippling and only a few citizens benefit from this in their paychecks.

There is more good news:

In Pittsburgh, the median price of a home is about \$120,000; in Wilkes-Barre, the median home value is \$52,800. This is good unless after twenty years, you are trying to sell yours. So, Wilkes-Barre Residents can theoretically afford a home easier than those in Pittsburgh. But, in what conditions are these homes, as most Wilkes-Barre taxpayers cannot even afford the paint to make their properties shine.

And, so there is bad news:

This results in more bad news as Wilkes-Barre home values have declined -1.7% over the past year and it is predicted that if they go up again—if- they will rise just 0.5% within the next year. Wilkes-Barre residents like to boast to Scrantonians that anything you can do I can do better, but so far it is not so.

Homes are more noticeably larger in the Scranton Area, and though they are not as inexpensive as Wilkes-Barre's properties, they are much more elegant, and the people buy them because they somehow have the money. In Wilkes-Barre few have the money to afford a Scranton home.

For example, the median list price per square foot in Wilkes-Barre is \$46, which is lower than the Scranton Metro average of \$89. The median price of homes currently listed in Wilkes-Barre is \$63,500 while the median price of homes that are sold is much less, so the sellers are always unhappy with a median sale price of \$51,485. The

median rent price in Wilkes-Barre is \$625, which is lower than the Scranton Metro median of \$750.

The bad news is that in a nutshell, life in Wilkes-Barre or Scranton is not as good of a financial deal as life in Pittsburgh using home values are a gauge. But, life in Wilkes-Barre sure seems to be somewhat worse than life in Scranton. Check the murder rate.

Minimize your tax burden by doing certain things:

Property taxes can be extremely burdensome for a homeowner. They tend to rise steadily over time and, even once you pay off your mortgage, the taxes keep on coming. The good news, however, which is minimal, is that there are some things homeowners can do to reduce their property tax burden. City officials should tell the people how to make their tax obligation be only as large as it must be. In our administration, we will have counselors to help the people make good financial choices as it can only help the City.

Permit me to repeat that property taxes can be extremely burdensome for a homeowner. For Wilkes-Barre City homeowners, this is more the rule than the exception. Property owners in Wilkes-Barre not only have to pay the real estate tax to WB City, at the local level; we also must pay a County Tax, a huge School District Property Tax, and a WB City income tax.

All tax rates mysteriously tend to rise steadily over time and, even once you pay off your mortgage, the taxes keep on coming. For some people, the tax is much more substantial than what they would have imagined as the amount for which they could rent their property to a passer-by.

There are ways that individual home owners can minimize their property tax burden. I will give tips in that regard but my goal as Mayor of Wilkes-Barre is to reduce the amount of taxes all of our citizens pay. If I can offer a tip for you to reduce your tax burden because of your special circumstances, I will do so. It is not a right to pay taxes. It is clearly a burden, which most Americans cheerfully take on to help their communities. But, have communities become too grabby? Is Wilkes-Barre asking for too much?

I would advise that you keep reading to learn some simple tips that any homeowner can follow to lessen the pain when tax time rolls around. (For related reading on tax issues and mortgages, see *The Mortgage Interest Tax Deduction and A Tax Primer For Homeowners*.)

<http://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/06/mortgagepoints.asp>)

You might consider reading *The Mortgage Interest Tax Deduction and A Tax Primer For Homeowners*, for additional information about saving on real estate taxes. If you are already aware of these devices, then I regret stealing any of your time to evaluate them.

I found the information immediately below at:

http://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/07/property_tax_tips.asp.

Here are some things you can do individually to help reduce your property taxes

Tutorial: Exploring Real Estate Investments

1. Request Your Property Tax Card ... And Study It

Few homeowners realize they can go down to the town hall and request to view (or receive a copy of) their property tax cards from the local assessor's office. The tax card may very well be a printout from a modern-day computer system. It provides the homeowner with information the town has gathered about the property over time. Wilkes-Barre's system may not have cards per se but the City has the information to give.

The card includes information about the size of your lot, the precise dimensions of the rooms, and the number and type of fixtures located within the home. Other information may include a section on special features, or notations about any improvements that have been made.

As you review this card about your property, note any discrepancies and then raise these issues immediately with the tax assessor. The

assessor will either make the correction and / or offer to conduct a re-evaluation. This tip sounds laughably simple, but mistakes are common. If you can find them, the City has an obligation to correct them.

2. Don't Build

Wouldn't it be nice if Wilkes-Barre had a number of pristine areas ready for development? Think again. Though the population is the lowest of all time, and at one-time Wilkes-Barre hosted over 88,000 residents, to get back to those levels, we cannot have a tax structure in place that causes every new Wilkes-Barre citizen to want to leave.

For some reason, Wilkes-Barre City officials think that everybody wants to live in Wilkes-Barre. And, so, any structural changes to a home or property in Wilkes-Barre, after you pay the required permit fee, will increase your tax bill.

Can you imagine a City that wants to be clean and beautiful, that chooses to whack its resident taxpayers whenever they marginally improve their properties? That's why Wilkes-Barre remains unattractive to passers-by, and to visitors, and to those who would otherwise like to move their 500+ employee organization into the city.

A deck, a pool, a large shed, or any other permanent fixture that is added to your home increases your tax burden in Wilkes-Barre. Is this really a good idea for a City that cannot even convince the offspring of its residents to stay and enjoy life in the City close to their families?

With this in mind, homeowners should investigate how much a new addition might cost in terms of property tax prior to construction. Call the Wilkes-Barre local building and tax departments. Do not spend a dime getting this information. They'll be able to give you a ballpark estimate. Write down everything they say as it may come in handy when they try to tell you they were only kidding.

3. Limit Curb Appeal

Tax assessors are given a strict set of guidelines to go by when it comes to the actual evaluation process. However, the assessment still

contains a certain amount of subjectivity. This means more attractive homes often receive a higher assessed value than comparable houses that are less physically appealing. It might just be the “gut feel” of the assessor who thinks you can afford it because your property is clean.

Some suspect that if the city street cleaners actually put their brushes down in your neighborhood, your assessment would be substantially higher than those neighborhoods where the trucks just give a salute or pass by with the brushes up!

Keep in mind, your property is essentially being compared to your neighbors' during the evaluation process, as well as others in the general vicinity. While it may be difficult, resist the urge to primp your property prior to the assessor's arrival (which is usually a scheduled affair).

Finally, if possible, don't make any physical improvements or cosmetic alternations to the home (new counter tops, stainless steel appliances, etc.) until after the assessor has conducted the evaluation. (When selling your home, a little primping goes a long way. Learn more in *Fix It And Flip It: The Value Of Remodeling*.)

In Wilkes-Barre, at least now, and in most cities, the assessors do not visit the inside of homes unless ordered to do so. Therefore, if you are inclined to improve your home do it inside. Meanwhile, if you can get some neighbors to pour graffiti on your exterior, you may have a substantially smaller assessment and thus less taxes to be paid. Does graffiti ink come in invisible ink cartridges?

I agree this makes no sense as all communities want all property owners to help make their communities attractive. But, officials want tax revenue before everything else. That is why HB 76 is so important. I can only promise that I will try to solve this problem in one way or another but just for the City Property Tax when I am elected.

The way it works, now, the next tax bill you get will show the higher tax based on the improvement. You may have made the improvement because your walls were falling apart but it does not matter to the taxman. When they do not do a complete reassessment, they whack all the poor souls who make small improvements. This is surely

counterproductive to attractive and clean neighborhoods. I will try my best to change that if I am elected your Mayor.

4. Research Thy Neighbors

As mentioned above, please remember that information about your home is available at City Hall. What many individuals don't realize is that in many cases, information about other home assessments in their area is also available to the public.

It is important to review comparable homes in your area and general statistics about the City's evaluation results. You can often find discrepancies that could lower your taxes. For example, let's say that you have a four-bedroom home with a one-car garage, and your home is assessed at \$250,000. Your neighbor also owns a four-bedroom home, but this house sports a two-car garage, a 150-square-foot shed and a beautiful swimming pool. Despite this, your neighbor's home is valued at \$235,000. Can you do anything?

Was there a mistake? There probably is an error - unless politics is involved, or your property has some other distinguishing characteristics that explain the discrepancy.

With all of this in mind; if an error is found, it pays to bring the problem to the assessor's attention as soon as possible so that you can get a reassessment if necessary. If politics are part of the process, you will be waiting a long time for a resolution, unless you get a lawyer, and the home you reference is that of a favored politico. I would love to eliminate property tax in Wilkes-Barre if I could. Maybe I can.

5. Walk the home with the assessor

Many individuals allow the tax assessor to wander about their homes unguided during the evaluation process. In Wilkes-Barre and surrounding locales, the assessors often do not visit the inside of homes though they may. But if they do, denying them access is a big mistake.

This not only can be a mistake; it can cost you substantially. Some assessors will only see the good points in the home - the new fireplace or the beautiful new faucets that adorn each sink. They'll overlook the

fact that other appliances in the home are out of date, and that the roof is warped, leaking, and needs replacing. Do not mess in the process of the assess.

To prevent this from happening, be sure to walk the home with the assessor and point out the good points as well as the deficiencies. This will ensure that you receive the fairest possible valuation for your home. Again, you may not get to do this, because many assessors evaluate your interior value based on how the outside looks.

Bonus Tip - Don't Shut Out the Assessor

Recent inquiries on my part revealed that you do not have to allow the tax assessor into your home in Wilkes-Barre. Please note that for years Wilkes-Barre has not checked inside homes and to the best of my knowledge, Luzerne County does not do so either. The information I put forth is the norm. But if they do want to go inside; beware. Why me Lord? Just let them in! What typically happens if you do not permit access to the interior is that the assessor assumes you've made certain improvements (such as added fixtures or made exorbitant refurbishments). This could result in a bigger tax bill.

Certain towns (not WB thank you) have a policy to the effect that if the homeowner does not grant full access to the property, the assessor will automatically assign the highest assessed value possible for that type of property - fair or not. I have checked in Wilkes-Barre and this is not what they do but the other taxing authorities in WB – County and School District may do what they need to do to increase their revenue. Just be careful!

At this point, it is up to the individual to dispute the evaluation with the City, County or town, which, incidentally, will be nearly impossible to win, unless access to the interior is ultimately granted, and the officials have no axe to grind against you as a taxpayer. The lesson: allow the assessor to access the home. If you've obtained permits for all improvements that you've made to the property, you should be fine.

Bottom Line

It can be hard to balance the desire for a beautiful home with the desire to pay as little tax as possible. However, there are some little things that can be done to reduce property tax without resorting to living in a dump. Remember to avoid making any improvements right before your house is due to be assessed. Check out the neighbors values. If they pay less tax than you but own similar homes, you could be in line for a tax reduction.

Don't assume that your tax bill is set in stone. A little homework and due diligence can help reduce the burden.

If you're still thirsty for tax hints, check out *Tax Tips for The Individual Investor*.

<http://www.investopedia.com/articles/01/112801.asp>

After you finish reading this, please remember that your fellow citizen of Wilkes-Barre, Brian Kelly is running for Mayor and if you want life better, you might consider voting for him for Mayor of Wilkes-Barre.

[Brian Ran in 2015 and got about 5% of the vote. He has no plans to ever run for office again]]

Thank you.

Chapter 8 Making & Keeping Wilkes-Barre Safe



Wilkes-Barre Was Once a Safe City

Wilkes-Barre was once a safe city; however, it no longer can be stated as such. I recently (2015) reviewed the (UCR) uniform crime reporting stats for the city and it is alarming that a city of our size can have such a high murder rate.

Whether it is true or perceived, we citizens have heard the negative opinions concerning our police department. Of course there are heroes within the ranks. I have been assured by qualified sources that most of our policemen and women are hard-working, honest people who give their lives to the community. I also understand that the families of these officers commit to the police schedule and sacrifices

as well. I will approach this city with an open mind, but I will not be a status quo mayor. The safety of our residents is too important to be an afterthought.

My office [Mayor] through the Public Safety Director and the Chief of Police will work in conjunction with local, state, and federal agencies to create a firewall to contain and resolve our increasing crime stats. I will task all departments and community groups to help restore pride to this city.

Make no mistake about this election (2015). With everything that is at stake, again it is your choice as to which direction the City should move. Some say we get the government we deserve. We deserve the best but often for reasons such as expecting a job for our kids or our nephews or nieces, we may not make the best decisions. The dirty politicians win in those cases.

This election is not about friendship and voting for the status quo—it is about survival and choice. Does our City survive another term of status quo? Are our children, parents, friends safe from the ever-increasing onslaught of crime? Will our home values tumble due to the negative publicity of our continuously increasing crime rate?

I would like to touch on another important subject here and that is our ability to afford the best protection we can get. I am keenly aware of public unions and our ever-increasing public pension burden. I believe we need to negotiate for fair practices, fair pay, fair taxpayer obligations, and fair service from Fire, EMS, and Police. All negotiations must be in good faith and must be the proper balance of affordability and service.

As your Mayor, I would establish a panel to evaluate, design, and encourage private development within our city. I will consider all avenues to draw businesses to Main Street Wilkes-Barre. These would include tax incentives- police foot patrols, bicycle patrols, parking options, etc. Like you, I want a vibrant, safe, clean, and affordable city for all to enjoy.

Public Safety – The Number One Priority

There are no good jokes about Public Safety because it is the only factor that a city government must deliver and must deliver well. Nothing else compares to providing safety and comfort to the citizens of our community. That is what it is all about. The people would rightfully care little about any City structure if there were no Police and no Fire and no EMT crews to assure their safety.

In this campaign, I hope you have already noted that I am appalled how our City streets and the City's overall look evokes a feeling that some cleaning crew someplace missed a few spots. Public safety issues show up in homicides and other crimes stats and we are reminded about these when we drive down the dirty streets of our city.

Sometimes we see so many eyesores from potholes to rough roads, to dirt piled up in the roadways that a visitor or a potential employer would conclude that keeping the City clean is not a priority. A dirty City is a workshop for crime. It seems to show the perpetrators that nobody in official Wilkes-Barre cares. If the City cannot be kept clean, how can it be kept safe? Compared to even smaller cities in Pennsylvania, we somehow do not measure up...but we should... and we can for sure—if we choose to do so.

One look and a normal person could readily conclude that the huge street cleaning machines paid for by taxpayer dollars pull up their brushes when the streets look too full of debris—especially at end of shift. Not cleaning out these big machines after a credited run would save the driver a lot of work cleaning the machine. Don't think that does not happen.

I am not saying that is so; but after all, somebody eventually must clean it all from the body of the truck—the brushes, and the whole deal. If the truck returns clean to the garage, such additional work is not necessary. Can this be? From my WB consulting experience, I know that it is. In my administration, we will find out. If it is so, let me assure you it will not continue to be so.

Take a trip to little Bloomsburg down the road from Wilkes-Barre and you will find a city well maintained, clean, and obviously attractive to visitors and potential employers alike. Somehow the small merchants

on Main Street, Bloomsburg are able to keep their places nice and they find Bloomsburg to be an affordable city also. Affordable and clean, however, does not trump safe. Bloomsburg also claims great police statistics, and from visiting the town regularly, and knowing the perception of University students, I would agree. Safety, even in a College Town like Bloomsburg is #1.

I am inclined to believe that we Wilkes-Barre residents are too forgiving. If we all looked further into this nice small town called Bloomsburg, we would also find that it is a safe city. Even though, just like Wilkes-Barre, it has its share of University students. A field trip to Bloomsburg and a major discussion with their officials and shopkeepers and students should be an important item on any new mayor's to-do list.

Just like Wilkes-Barre ought to be a clean city, and that is easy to evaluate with a trip around the City, it also ought to be a safe city but, we find that again, it is not. When such issues occur in a business, we blame management. It is time to blame current management again for the City's ills. City management makes all the decisions. They do not invite a person from Kingston in to see if things are going well. Wilkes-Barre officials are the heroes or the goats. Kingston is not involved.

Look again at our homicide statistics. Ask your friends. Ask your children; ask yourself! Has anybody ever tried to hustle you in downtown Wilkes-Barre or surrounds? Did you know whether they were carrying or not? Members of my own family have been accosted by such flagrant disregard for the law. We seldom hear of prosecutions for such actions because the people are too patient, and we endure too much. In my administration, for such abrasive crimes, our police will not be tolerant.

In fact, whether true or perceived, there are real questions by many as to whether the police always work their hardest for the people. As your Mayor, I will remain confident in the Police, Fire, EMS, and all city services. Trust, but verify will be the modus operandi of the new city management team.

My bet is that the current police and fire personnel will be our first line of defense in our endeavor to build a safer city. The management

structure, however, which permits second-rate results, must be changed.

It is my number one (# 1) priority as Mayor, to make Wilkes-Barre one of the safest cities in the country. Public Safety through fire protection, building protection, and most importantly through police protection is the tonic that can permit all residents to live well, without fear, while the public safety team deals with the bad guys. I would prefer to let nobody off the hook but if somebody must be let free, I would instruct the team to deal with parking violators last.

As many proud City residents, I live right here and I see how bad things have gotten in my City. I have lived in Wilkes-Barre for all but two years of my life. I love Wilkes-Barre and I want Wilkes-Barre to be at the top of the USA Safe City List! That is my # 1 objective for our City!

WB Needs a Public Safety Director

Few experts in police matters would argue the point that Wilkes-Barre is in dire need of direction and discipline within the police department. Though Wilkes-Barre is a relatively small city compared to giants such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, it is a city with considerable resources, though these resources are certainly not excessive. Yet, a \$50 million budget (2019) is far from chicken feed. Making each of those dollars work for City residents is a must. Having no oversight over safety, cleanliness, or affordability is not the way to assure city dollars do the most good.

In the safety area, there is no better resource to invest in than a Public Safety Director unless you are not interested in public safety. Not having such a position is like letting the police run the City without direction. No Mayor can serve as Mayor and Police Chief and Public Safety Director and do any of the jobs well.

The Public Safety Director position is designed to provide the direction and discipline sorely needed by the City. Many of the continuing issues in Wilkes-Barre would have been resolved internally long ago if such a position were filled and staffed with a competent officer with the authority to make it right.

Maybe the female police chief who recently stepped down would still be the police chief or maybe she would not have been appointed. That would have been the Public Safety Director's decision just like the Police Commissioner's job in *Blue Bloods*.

It is time for the Wilkes-Barre Police Department to reorganize and prioritize its commitment to the citizens of this city. We must assure that we have a well-organized, well-trained, well-disciplined, and committed set of officers. New officers that are hired as time goes by must be prepared to join the many professionals within the Wilkes-Barre Police Department, who proudly wear the badge of our City. Just recently as many know, nine such officers (2015) were commended publicly for bravery.

To assure that what is good either stays good or it gets better, when you select me to be your Mayor, please know that I am committed to building the safest city in the Commonwealth and in the Nation. Part of that process will be to establish a web-based program designed both to enhance public trust and confidence in all public departments, not just the police department, as well as providing services, which today are unavailable to the public.

The residents of Wilkes-Barre must have an outlet to contact any agency within city government with a formal complaint about an officer, public worker, or contractor and they must be assured that each and every complaint or comment will be investigated and reported to a board appointed by the Mayor. No overtime for getting the job done.

We all can speculate but with good reason that if such as system had been in place over the last twelve years, [Leighton Years] we would not have had all the negative press, which unfortunately was well-deserved. The Headliner for one of the major City problems [at the time] was a person that we will identify only as Mr. Glodzik. He was the City's one source Towing Contractor.

His arrest cemented the notion that he was not serving the City well. Yet it appeared that City officials were still ambivalent as to what to do about the quandary they faced. Would the citizens of Wilkes-Barre

be the winners or would the cronyism continue? Our system should prevent cronyism. Ask the next Mayor how that happens.

And so, if we had such a system, in which any member of the public could offer a comment or complaint, the issue would have made the headlines continually. Under the new Police System, it would receive an incident number and a phone call within 48 hours of the complaint. It would have been very difficult with the great newspaper coverage we get, for most residents to be unaware, and the prior Mayor would have been forced to action long before there was an arrest.

In such a system, internal investigations would immediately take place. They would not be public knowledge, but every citizen would have the opportunity to provide a statement concerning their specific issue / complaint.

I can assure you that in my administration, the new position of Director of Public Safety Director will be staffed by a highly qualified law enforcement officer or former police officer. This officer will be very familiar with policies and police procedures. He or she will also have strong administrative capabilities to evaluate current protocols and typical routines and will make recommendations to the Mayor for adjusting, significantly changing, or enhancing current practices.

As Mayor, my goal is to make the police department as well as the fire department and all city government areas streamline their operations to become part of a high-performance organization in the most cost-effective manner. I realize that this requires my full commitment to the City, its citizens, its current employees, and I am ready to make that commitment. I am a life-long resident of Wilkes-Barre City, by choice, and I care about our City.

My choice for Director of Public Safety has already been made if he chooses to accept the position. When I can offer the position to him, it will be a great day for Wilkes-Barre. Yes, my selection is as good as it gets for Wilkes-Barre or any other city facing the increase in crime that we are experiencing. This gentleman is not a politician; he is a career PA State Trooper, who has extensive investigative knowledge and many years as a police supervisor. He is a former undercover agent who has received multiple awards for his extensive undercover

activities. He retired honorably after 20 years of service to the PA State police.

I have worked with his man and I know his capabilities. I have witnessed his tenacity, his integrity, and his personal commitment to get the job done. I have personally asked him to assist me in transforming this City into the safest city in America. I am very pleased that he has committed to me.

In order to have this long-time protector of the people to sign up to give Wilkes-Barre a “fighting” chance against crime, your job of course is to make sure that you elect Brian Kelly for Mayor of Wilkes-Barre. I know that I found the best man for Wilkes-Barre to address its most critical need. The rest is up to you.

Mission of the Director of Public Safety

The mission of the Director of Public Safety is to assure the security and safety of all residents and patrons of the City of Wilkes-Barre through the oversight and execution of the public safety operational strategies of the Police Department, Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Emergency Management (EMA), Building Inspection / Code Enforcement, and the Community Action Team.

The mission of departments / sections under the purview of the Director also includes improving community and first responder safety through training, technology, fleet upgrades and increased community visibility as well as the enhancing and enforcing of team collaboration across all public safety areas.

The Director, through the various departments in the Public Safety Group, under the auspices and direction of the Mayor, is prepared to oversee and lead the overall public safety strategy for the City of Wilkes-Barre. The objective of a Director Position for these related departments is to create a professional and competent partner in the public safety arena to all businesses, and institutions, and individuals needing such services.

Looking forward into 2016, [written in 2015] a new and important program known as The Wilkes-Barre Initiative to Reduce Crime

(WIRC) will be operating under the auspices of the Mayor, and run by the Public Safety Director. The objective will be to reduce the number of homicides and other major crimes in the City.

We definitely need real experts to make our City safe again. We cannot survive on legends. It helps to repeat that the priority is to brighten the City's future by making Wilkes-Barre a clean, affordable, and safe city.

My first act as Mayor as noted will be to hire an expert Police Commissioner, who will serve also as a Public Safety Director. The very next act will be to address the incessant crime and murder problem in the city through the creation of a special violent crime unit. The supervisor of this unit will not be an ordinary policeman but a top-quality expert supervisor who knows how to deal with the worst of the worst.

Only our best police officers will be evaluated and selected for what may be a team of five officers. If need be, we will hire officers from outside. This will be an elite unit whose mission is to make Wilkes-Barre the city in NEPA of which the bad guys want no part. In fact, the bad guys won't even want to visit here because for them, it will be a crime career ender.

This unit will fight only violent crime... no domestic or minor burglary or traffic violation calls. Over 95% of the Police Force will be designated to regular duty. We have room for this special unit. The people of the City are not intimidated by traffic violations or parking issues or domestic issues but they are taken back at all the gun-toting bad guys, the drug trafficking, the gangs, and the murders. This administration will solve that, and we will run the bad guys out of town.

The mission will be restricted to fighting organized gang drug crime and homicides that result-- like Willow Street [a murder just the prior week], which really raises the mark.

Violent crime is our biggest problem. What happens when the bad guys stop killing each other? Will they leave or begin to terrorize the communities even more?

Our City has been unprepared. It is still unprepared. To the bad guys, Wilkes-Barre is a target city. We are like babes in the woods. For years, the bad guys have loved coming to Wilkes-Barre to do their pillaging because our countervailing force has been immeasurable against their willingness to torment our citizens. That, will end in the Kelly Administration.

The good ole boy network and same ole; same ole has not cut it and it will never cut it. We must crush this gang drug thug problem to bits. We have to stomp it down so that it never resurfaces again in our City. We do have the resources if we have the will.

There are lots of ways to get the job done but wringing our hands in despair and saying we are going to do what we know we are not prepared to do is no longer on the list.

The Mayor and the Director believe that a neighborhood camera system must be deployed and depending on funding, it should be in conjunction with a new gunshot detection system in specified areas within the City.

In addition, I know that the new Director of Public Safety is committed to strengthening the relationship between the community and all Public Safety Departments / Sections and will be implementing a new community outreach program for all nationalities and races, managed within the Office of the Director.

This program will enhance and coordinate all initiatives across the Public Safety Departments / Sections, other departments within City government, as well as with the Office of the Mayor. I will be a big player on this team.

The Director that I have already selected because I believe he is the best in the nation hates crime as I do and as you do. He is committed to leveraging partnerships across the law enforcement community within Luzerne County and surrounding counties / municipalities.

This commitment involves working closer with federal partners such as the Office of the United States Attorney, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms, United States Secret Service and others to leverage federal assistance in

addressing the crime situation within the City of Wilkes-Barre. We mean business. We will make the City safe once again. And all residents and all businesses will be glad.

Moreover, our federal partnerships will continually be enhanced with relationships between the Mayor, the Director, the Chiefs, and all department Heads within the Public Safety Group and City administration.

This will be in concert with the Pennsylvania State Police, Office of the Pennsylvania Attorney General, Office of the District Attorney of Luzerne County, Lackawanna County Police, Office of the Luzerne County Sheriff and all other local law enforcement agencies within Northeastern Pennsylvania. Our team of crime fighters will be trained to be the best it can be. *Don't mess with Wilkes-Barre* will be their slogan as they depart to other cities.

Contract Negotiations Is a Team Effort!

The Director of Public Safety will have a dotted line relationship with all other city departments / department heads to assure that the City is ready for any and all contingencies and emergencies.

Additionally, to assure Wilkes-Barre does not waste money, the City Administrator, Public Safety Director, Department Heads, and the Mayor's Office will evaluate all contracts, insurance policies, maintenance contracts.

They will assure that all contracts are legitimate and the services are performed according to the agreed upon terms. In other words, the good old boy network is a thing of the past. Cronyism in City affairs will not rule the City and in fact, it will not be tolerated. A safe city must be an honest city.

The Director will be helping the City in the beginning by assuring that all safety plans are in good order, and that all plans are good for the City. For example, three areas of past problems in particular, will be the first ones to be examined –

- Towing contract(s)
- Parking Authority plans / relationships
- Insurance contract(s)

Substantial savings can be afforded to the City if we negotiate our contracts properly and the Director will help assure that all work done is done honestly, and that the negotiators do not wind up winning while the City loses. No dishonesty!!!

Important Early Initiatives in the Safety Area – in no specific order

1. Assure all plans are updated including floods, a potential nuclear mishap, police protective service etc. These contingency plans include the actions to take to assure success

- a. Proper training- equipment
- b. Traffic routing- hospital & prison evacuation etc
- c. Looting prevention, etc

2. Review all City Insurance policies. Assure a proper bidding policy is in place as these amounts are substantial.

3. Work on Police credibility so that the public perception of an honest, disciplined force is maintained.

- Conduct Internal Investigations to assure credibility and honesty.
- Internal investigations assigned a control number
- Review by the Mayor, the Chiefs, and the Public Safety Director.
- If internal charges are substantiated; check procedures to
- decide action against employee. e.g. Suspension / Termination etc.

4. Contract bidding: Major Supplies, Equipment, Public Utilities contracts must be bid and issued on a closed bidding process which is open to all legitimate parties.

5. Automated Complaint System: Build / Improve a Web based public complaint system for all public employees.

6. Task Force Assignments for Police: Police need to be assigned to county/ state or federal task forces, rotated on a two year basis. This provides less opportunity for a member of the force to become uninterested. .
7. Crime Files: Informant files are to be maintained and reviewed on a monthly basis.
8. Undercover Financing: Such funds must be managed tightly - accounting expenditure records etc.
9. Preventative vehicle maintenance: An officer needs to be assigned for every department -- police, fire, public works etc. to assure the city's expenditures are properly made.
10. Reports Mandated: Departments must report all expenditures accurately each month with reviews.
11. General improvements: The following items are presented in a bulletized list.
 - When hiring those with prior investigative jobs such as state troopers, FBI agents, etc., if they already have a retirement pension, WB must negotiate not having to supply pension benefits. (Officer already collecting public benefits)
 - Reduce the number of city employees who are issued a car, phone, and Gas card.
 - Require all city employee to pay for partial health care.
 - Accept any voluntary wage reductions to help the city
 - Work to assure the pension payout system is fair to the city and the employees
 - Set up internal accounts so that benefactors can donate freely and clearly for specific or general city initiatives. Advertise this on all city correspondence – billings etc. Publicly praise city residents and others who choose to help Wilkes-Barre from the goodness of their hearts.
 - Enhance police and firemen fitness standards by encouraging physical fitness programs/ competitions to better serve the community. For example, there is a national competition in

which officers can. Most officers are good policemen as are most other city employees. As Mayor, I understand that I will be tested as will my director, chief of police, and the fire chief. We may in fact experience resistance at first. This is exactly why I'm reinstating the position of Public Safety Director. This position will be responsible for implementing the essential guidelines as part of a collective research effort to determine those that are necessary to fulfill my commitment to the city.

- I will not be bought by the same people who have driven this city into the ground. As mayor, I promise all of the citizens that I will not appoint a yes man or a person with an agenda to this important position. I will demand positive results from all entities under my control as mayor and those positive results will benefit all of the citizens of Wilkes-Barre.
- A strong, experienced public safety director will bring the background necessary to ferret out who or what are the problems, understand the problem, and solve it immediately. The Safety Director will have a relationship with the chief, who in turn must have a relationship with the officers and first line supervision responsible for the patrol/ crime investigations.
- The public safety director is designed to be a buffer for the chief of police- fire chief - public works. In many ways the Director will take the hit for all bad news, and then he or she will work to assure such things are one-of-a-kind issues. The Director will be charged with building procedures to assure the operational flow is proper.
- The Public Safety Director will revise and / or draw up the field regulations and code of conduct that must be maintained by all employees. The chiefs would be charged with making sure all policies are followed by all members.
- Violation of—or any conduct considered contrary to policy will be investigated and reported so that it can be investigated internally and either be substantiated or unsubstantiated.
- Discipline will be based on a progressive manner for insubordination and documented by supervisors. Criminal allegations against officers will result with suspension / without pay if charges filed. Desk duty until charged of investigation clears the officer.
- The use of vehicles by officers from city contractors must be terminated to maintain public confidence. Negotiations with the unions may be required if this is perceived to be a benefit.

Summary: How to create a safe city

Besides and effective crime fighting unit as discussed above, there is more to building a safe city. Without getting you bored, it is a given that the people have a major role in their own system. Our kids will not longer be in the middle of the street playing kick the can down the road—at least until we clear out the bad guys from our midst.

The people in the community have a major role. A blog at safewise.com includes an updated list of the eight simplest ways for the people to engage in this fight for a safe city.

- Know your neighbors. ...
- **Keep** up your yard, and encourage your neighbors to do the same. ...
- Be extra cautious when you go out of town. ...
- Close your windows and blinds at night. ...
- Improve the lighting on your street. ...
- Encourage outdoor activity. ...
- Know your local police department. ...
- Install a security system.

Nothing in life worth having is easy.

Wilkes-Barre is not alone in its fight for safety

While our City is closer to the bottom than the top of the Safe city list, we are not alone. Cities across the world actually are doing their best to fight crime in the streets, in the home, in the back allies, and in the heart of the cities themselves. Not every city succeeds.

Medium.com offers Wilkes-Barre and all other cities of the world six summary points to remember to help make our cities safe. It all begins with *Control*.

There is no question that the cities proper contain more people nowadays. This can also be said as “The urban population is growing, with over 50 percent living in cities.”

The World Health Organization estimates that by 2050, 75 percent of the people on the planet will be urban inhabitants, up from today’s 50 percent. The old methods of keeping cities safe are not going to continue to work when faced with advanced thuggery. Therefore, cities must pay attention and implement advanced technologies to add to the existing protection designed to improve the lives of its citizens.

For any city seeking safety as a priority, there are a number of major components that must come into play. By implementing the best techniques, cities can become safer and smarter at the same time.

Medium.com’s list of six steps for creating a safe and a smart city are as follows:

1. Control
2. Visibility
3. Connectivity
4. Advanced Communication
5. Action Plan
6. Sharing and Collaboration

These are not new concepts. We have already addressed these in the prior chapters but Medium.com has organized them in a way that makes them easier to remember and easier to focus upon. Let’s look at these six summary points briefly one at a time:

1. Control

Though it is not a bad idea to have satellite police stations spread across the city, there must be a centralized and well-equipped control room by Police HQ that is manned around the clock. This is a crucial part of the City safety picture as it focuses on the challenge of managing situations and incidents and appropriately handling the consequential masses of data that are collected.

The more we know about crime and criminals and their operating venues, the better we can handle the issues. Cities across the world are looking for solutions. Some have already found them.

Medium.com cites a system recently implemented in Nanded, India.

The Nanded City Council found an innovative way to enhance city security as well as meet its budget requirements. By creating a centralized command, control and communication center, which they call C-Cube, they are now able to monitor the entire city.

To achieve this, the city council did not do it alone. Instead, they worked with major security consultants and security solution providers. Below is a picture of their well-equipped control room, which has clearly become one of the keys to the success of the Smart City design in Nanded, India.



2. Visibility

Fighting blind is never a good idea. Visual information is extremely important for real-time handling of events, ongoing investigations, statistical studies (queues, crowds and traffic) as well as constant improvement through the debriefing of processes.

An observation and crime fighting camera network, located at critical spots around the city, is necessary to provide city operations centers with ongoing visuals relating to incidents, risks and progress of activities. Police across America are implementing such systems which first begin with cameras across the cities.

Visibility must also be smart: automating detection and using “machine vision.” Video analytics can instantly flag the incidents that need to be handled, pinpoint critical information as well as track specific people or objects. It is important for all of the tools to be integrated and managed by the centralized control room in our case, City Hall.

You can challenge me if you wish by telling me Wilkes-Barre City has over 300 cameras strategically placed to help provide the necessary data for crime fighting and you may say that this “lecture” on implementing a crime information system in this book is superfluous because it is in place already. Hmmmph!

It goes without saying that the system must actually work in order to show positive results. If everything is hunky-dory, why doesn't Wilkes-Barre have the wherewithal to report its crime statistics regularly. An information system based on live and recorded data cannot be an afterthought. It cannot be effective if it is unused because of a lack of education, a lack of maintenance, and / or a lack of concern. Wilkes-Barre has been funded but failed to use the tools given to provide its citizens with any benefits. Why?

We only have to look at a fountain on Public Square as proof positive that Wilkes-Barre does not maintain its resources well. Not only that, but the fountain tells other tales that the City would probably prefer were not well known. The fountain's neglect is a clear indicator about the ineffective management of resources of all kinds by City officials.

If for ten years, the City could not keep a small fountain on Public Square operational and defended to the hilt its decision to allow it to continue as an eyesore and not fix it, what can we expect of a very expensive crime prevention system depending on three hundred broken cameras?

It is too bad that we don't get even more investigative reporting from our local media sources but we must be thankful when we do get some insights from the outside press. Let's look at one story that tells an awful lot:

In 2016 Andy Mehalshick and Jayne Ann Bugda of the I-team reported the state of disrepair on the City's camera surveillance system. In the report, they concluded the system rarely ever works.

In Nanded City India and across the United States, these systems work effectively but in Wilkes-Barre Pa, the same team that maintained the fountain on Public Square were assigned to the camera project. What results should we expect? With a \$50 million budget we did not get it right--again?

The reporters visited the WB Police Department. That is where the command center for the camera surveillance system is located. Sources in the police department told Eyewitness News reporters that the entire system is almost always locked up. No officers have access to it. Cameras are just about everywhere you look in Wilkes-Barre... surveillance cameras but the servers for the cameras are for all purposes, in operative. How can that be in a city run by a Law and Order Mayor?

The reporters found that there are nearly 300 cameras located around the City but many of them do not work and even when they do work, there is nobody assigned to watch anything happening in the City in real time. They are not monitored.

Wilkes-Barre's crime system took a dive into the netherworld when the City took control of the system from a private firm in 2016. Their report did not mention if any City employee was even assigned to manage this major asset, which since it is now dysfunctional, has been wasted. Since then, the great shots these cameras may be taking in real time are no longer a factor in fighting crime.

There is always an excuse in Wilkes-Barre but rarely are there results. Mehalshick and Bugda did not use the word incompetence or ineptness to describe this major flaw. Let me do that. City officials say they want to revamp the system and are trying to find the money

to make that happen. So, the City is just a few dollars from success. If only taxes could be raised?

Now wait a minute. The City took over the fountain on Public Square when it was working. Now it is not working. Dah! It is not scheduled for repair because there is no money. Dah! The \$200,000 grant for the Square was earmarked for line painting etc. Whoops, I got off track a bit. We are talking about the camera system. But the stories are basically the same. No maintenance, then disrepair, and then no money to fix and then officials say it was not their fault. Then whose fault was it?

City officials have a problem with fountains from way back. Some City residents may be unaware of the beautiful fountain on the Square that was in place and operational closer to the turn of the 20th century. It may have been three fountains ago. Because it was using too much water, City officials shut it down and disassembled this treasure of absolute beauty.

They are said to have locked away the beautiful statue of Princess Kankakee in the City's special vaults for unused valuables. It was never sold but it disappeared. There was an investigation quite recently of this magical mystical fountain figure and the strange disappearance of the stature of Kankakee. The Indian maiden that was once centered there on top of the fountain disappeared. What happened? Nobody knows. It's gone. Perhaps it was hauled to the Island of Misfit Toys?

Mehalshick and Bugda ended their piece on the camera system with the following: " Word of the camera problems has some people who work downtown very concerned." Hmmph!

Wilkes-Barre almost had the visibility solution in place for crime prevention. Do the officials really care what it takes? Can we trust the caretakers of City assets to do the right job in the future for important crime fighting tools?

3. Connectivity

Another necessary aspect in creating a smart city is using IoT (Internet of Things) solutions. IoT is a system of interrelated devices

that can transfer data over a network. These innovative solutions improve city operations and increase safety through the smart sensing of daily life in the city—anything from license plate recognition to gunshot detection systems.

The objective is for the city's functional main systems to be connected and integrated. Then all relevant information can automatically be collected, correlated, and made actionable.

4. Advanced communication

Field professionals and the operators of the centralized control room require an advanced communication solution between them. This is another must-have item for a smart city. Using live broadcasts from any desired location and live first-hand reports from the field operators, from their squad car systems and communicating GPS units, a smart solution can notify the control area which operators are available and where. As a result, everyone involved can effectively collaborate with one another at any given time.

5. Action Plan

The system must have documented procedures for how to handle any security related incident or events, with the above advanced implemented technologies. Clearly this would take the communication to the next level and would result in constant improvement of the procedures for the benefit of the city residents.

6. Sharing and Collaboration

The success of operating a smart and safe City relies on the collaboration between the many departments: power plants, information systems, hospitals, schools, and law enforcement among others.

Creating a smart and safe city not only requires state-of-the-art technologies. It requires forward thinking and a relentless concern for perfection in use. It needs the seamless incorporation of technologies, communication, and smart implementation. More importantly, it

needs to be properly controlled to ensure the safety of the City's leaders and its citizens.

For Wilkes-Barre, if the City is able to ever make its partial camera system workable again and is able to implement the full six-point plan, it is incumbent on the Mayor and high-ranking City officials to assure the system provides the biggest possible gain for the city.

We surely do not need a fourth fountain if you get my drift.

Other Books by Brian W. Kelly: (amazon.com, and Kindle)

[Ghost of Wilkes-Barre Future: Spirit's advice for residents about how to pick the next Mayor and Council](#)
[Great Players in Navy Football: Navy's best including Bellino & Staubach](#)
[Great Coaches in Navy Football: From Coach 1 to Coach #39 Ken Niumatalolo](#)
[Great Moments in Navy Football: From day 1 to coach Ken Niumatalolo 1](#)
[No Tree! No Toys! No Toot Toot!](#) Heartwarming story. Christmas gone while 19 month old napped
[How to End DACA, Sanctuary Cities, & Resident Illegal Aliens](#) , best solution to wipe shadows in America.
[Government Must Stop Ripping Off Seniors' Social Security!](#): Hey buddy, seniors can no longer spare a dime?
[Special Report: Solving America's Student Debt Crisis!](#): The only real solution to the \$1.52 Trillion debt
[How to End DACA, Sanctuary Cities, & Resident Illegal Aliens](#) , best solution to wipe shadows in America.
[The Winning Political Platform for America](#) . Unique winning approach to solve the big problems in America.
[Lou Barletta v Bob Casey for US Senate](#) . Barletta's unique approach to solving the big problems in America.
[John Chrin v Matt Cartwright for Congress](#) . Chrin has a unique approach to solving big problems in America.
[The Cure for Hate !!!](#) Can the cure be any worse than this disease that is crippling America?
[Andrew Cuomo's Time to Go? "He Was Never that Great!"](#): Cuomo says America never that great
[White People Are Bad! Bad! Bad!](#) Whoever thought a popular slogan in 2018 would be *It's OK to be White!*
[The Fake News Media Is Also Corrupt !!!](#): Fake press / media today is not worthy to be 4th Estate.
[God Gave US Donald Trump?](#) Trump was sent from God as the people's answer
[Millennials Say America Was "Never That Great"](#): Too many pleased days of political chumps not over!
[White People Are Bad! Bad! Bad!](#) In 2018, too many people find race as a non-equalizer.
[It's Time for The John Doe Party...](#) Don't you think? By By Elephants.
[Great Players in Florida Gators Football...](#) Tim Tebow and a ton of other great players
[Great Coaches in Florida Gators Football...](#) The best coaches in Gator history.
[The Constitution by Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, et al.](#) The Real Constitution
[The Constitution Companion](#). Will help you learn and understand the Constitution
[Great Coaches in Clemson Football](#) The best Clemson Coaches right to Dabo Swinney
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