**ReImagine Appalachia Report**

**For Green Sanctuary Committee November 21, 2021 Meeting**

Following my presentation on ReImagine Appalachia to the Washington County Commissioners in September, Rebecca Phillips (resident of Marietta) and I (non-resident of the city) gave a presentation to the Marietta City Council on October 21. Unlike the county commissioners, who gave me a half hour exclusive time, the President of the Council only allowed us to share in the portion of the Council meeting devoted to citizen concerns at the end of their meeting. We had six minutes to cover the topic of the ReImagine Appalachia Resolution. There was no opportunity for discussion, and we did not get a chance to hear the responses of council members to our talking points (included below). I sent the talking points to the clerk of council and asked her to distribute the document to the council members. I also asked for some reaction from the council such as referral to a committee or presentation for a vote—no response yet.

Last week I learned that Ms. Sheila Fox, liaison from Senator Sherrod Brown’s office, invited me to speak about climate action from the point of view of Appalachia Ohio. This presentation would be to the senator’s staff. I would use some of the same talking points that Rebecca and I used with Marietta City Council. No indication of a date for this presentation yet.

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**Talking Points for Presentation to Marietta City Council re: ReImagine Appalachia Resolution**

**George Banziger & Rebecca Phillips**

George Banziger- (202 Lawton Road, Marietta) Retired college professor and academic dean; in retirement involved in strategic planning for Harvest of Hope, Creating Health Communities Coalition of the Washington County Health Department, presented data to Council on counts on the Marietta River Trail; 35 years ago, while at Marietta College, conducted NIH-funded research on the relationship between mental health & economic factors in Appalachia WV & OH; these economic factors of extreme disadvantage have not changed in all that time.

Rebecca Phillips– (631 Second St., Marietta) Retired from WVUP; longtime resident of Marietta; coordinator of the Fort Street Pollinator Habitat.

Washington County is one of the 22 counties included in Appalachia Ohio; Appalachia has been characterized by endemic poverty, lack of employment opportunities, low wages, health inequities, extractive industries that have taken profits and jobs to parties and interests outside of our region, and more recently high levels of drug abuse; these are endemic problems that have existed for decades and have resisted numerous efforts at amelioration.

Recent population estimates show that Washington County has dropped below 60,000 and Marietta below 14,000—a decades-long trend of decline, characterized by an aging population, a lack of diversity and young people leaving for better opportunities elsewhere.

Now we have a unique opportunity to do something about these deeply rooted problems with the considerable investment of federal funds to promote infrastructure, address the climate challenge, and grow jobs in services, manufacturing trades, and farming.

The ReImagine Appalachia Resolution is an attempt to set the stage to take advantage of this opportunity. It focuses on the Ohio Valley including the states of PA, OH, WV, and KY. A major funder of ReImagine Appalachia is the Pittsburgh-based Heinz Foundation. It was originally convened by Policy Matters OH with sister organizations in PA and WV.

For many years absentee corporations have drained wealth from Appalachia and left their imprint in the form of abandoned coal mines, oil/gas wells and stripped land.

What’s needed in Appalachia are good-paying jobs with good benefits and responsible employers rooted in this region.

Endorsers of the Resolution: 100 local officials, 17 mayors, 18 local councils, 96 local legislators including the Wood County Commissioners of WV; federal legislators pay attention to these local officials when the former make decisions about allocating federal funds.

The Tennessee Valley and the Colorado Basin have been recipients of massive federal investments in the 20th century; the Tennessee Valley Authority brought expanded and affordable energy and economic growth to that area over several years of federal investment. It’s time for the Ohio Valley to get its share.

-Major points of the Resolution

* Make sure that Appalachia gets its fair share of public investment
* Revitalize manufacturing through jobs related to renewable energy (there is a long history of glass manufacturing in this region—solar panels and wind turbines have glass as essential ingredients)
* Restore damaged lands and waters
* Revive the Civilian Conservation Corps (to restore wetlands, plant native trees [to absorb CO2], job training—to provide meaningful opportunities for those in drug rehabilitation and people in need of immediate employment
* Modernize electric grid
* Establish universal broadband
* Doing all this makes Appalachia Ohio an attractive place to live
* Promote local ownership to build the middle class
* Promote the Appalachian region, including this county and city, as a destination for people from other parts of the country, such as climate refugees (we don’t have earthquakes, forest fires, regular floods, hurricanes and tornados; we do have relatively inexpensive housing and cost of living)

We encourage City Council to join those cities and counties that have endorsed this resolution

I have not yet done follow-up with the County Commissioners on the Resolution—I am not sure how to address Mr. Ritter’s reaction that it amounts to a Communist manifesto.

I have not yet received a response form City Council President Susan Vessels about what City Council plans to do with the Resolution.