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## Interview with Allan Stockberger

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Allan Stockberger

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Life Along the Kokosing

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Informant: Allan Stockberger, Knox County Commissioner  
Place: Knox County Commissioner's Office, Mount Vernon, Ohio

A: Knox County has an interesting diverse group of people. Gambier being a subculture within. Then you have Apple Valley which is another subculture. And there are some little subcultures within Apple Valley. You have the retired affluent people, then you have your working class, then you actually have some LMI - low moderate income - class people that live there too, so there's quite a bit of diversity. If you go down to Southeastern Knox County to Bladensburg, you'll even notice that they talk - they have a little different accent there than they do in Mt. Vernon or Fredericktown. For example, it's like you've arrived in Southern Ohio.

B: It's very interesting what you're saying about different subcultures in Mt. Vernon. Because, of course, when I came here, all I knew was the College, I didn't understand...

A: How long have you been here?

B: I'm a junior, so this is my third year here. My mother actually grew up in Coshocton, so I've always kind of felt like a native.

A: Right, Coshocton is not far away.

B: It's interesting what you said about Gambier being more environmentally conscious than...

A: Well, see Gambier is the only community in Knox County that has a successful recycling program. I think it's very commendable. And I'm very disappointed Mt. Vernon doesn't have one. It should have, because it's the county seat and should be the leader in that area, but the city fathers haven't seen fit to do yet.

B: It's just because they haven't - that's where it has to come from, is from the top?

A: Right. At the County level, we've encouraged them to try to facilitate -- in fact I'm working with Tim Koponen -- he's working on some plans to try to facilitate that with the city right now. Met with him, probably's been two weeks ago now - and discussed how - we had the city administration present too in order to try to encourage them, but since then, I have heard from the mayor indirectly, and he's stated that the waste haulers really were not interested in doing that. Bottom line is he's not interested in pressing for it. So, at this point in time nothing will happen, I think, unless the county takes the lead, and we can't - the county could purchase a facility and have a recycling center, which I think would be prudent to do. However, we still could not mandate what does on within the city. What I think should happen, is I believe it should be like Gambier, where they have curb-side pickup, so it's convenient, and also where it would be pay-as-you-throw, some refer to it as where you pay by the bag. So there is incentive for you to recycle, economically. If you get your recyclables picked up free, you pay for your trash. And if you don't want to recycle, you have that prerogative. It's just, you're going to pay a little more. That's what I'd like to see happen. But, like I said that's not my choice totally.

B: What do you do as a County Commissioner?

A: County Commissioners I refer to as being on the management team of Knox County. There are three of us on the Board. We're charged with ensuring the county government operates. A big portion of that, of

course, is funding. We have to approve budgets for all the departments. And, we also maintain the facilities, we ensure that there are buildings and that they're maintained for the county government. We work cooperatively with the county engineer on roads and bridges. Any contracts that are issued for the county, regardless of the department, the board of commissioners has to enter into that agreement. They can do all the negotiations, but ultimately we end up having to sign it, that's just the checks and balances that are built in our system.

We oversee...I'll just go over a few in my head. We have the airport which we appoint an authority which we call the airport authority we appoint them and they in turn operate the airport. MRDD which is mental retardation and developmental disabilities which is known as New Hope School here in Knox County, New Hope Industries, we appoint half that board. I should have brought over a list of all the things we do. We also serve on various boards around the county. And we tend to split those up depending on geographic region in which we live.

For example, I do one \_ \_ \_ Community Action Commission, and that stands for Knox Holmes Coshocton Ashland counties. They meet usefully in Glenlaw which is in the corner of Holmes county, except I live in eastern Knox County, I've been the one that serves on that board. Bob Durbin serves on the DKMM Solid Waste District which is Delaware Knox Marion and Morrow. He lives in Fredericktown which is 20 miles closer to that district, so he serves on that. McLarnen serves on some, I guess his are all here in Mt. Vernon because he lives in Mt. Vernon and there are ones that he can work into his schedule - he's also a manager at the Kroger store. And as you are probably aware I farm in addition to the commission.

B: Is this a full-time job?

A: It's not considered full time. The description for it is part time, however, it's not difficult to accrue full-time equivalent hours. But it works well with my farm, because I can, for example, a lot of times on a meeting day, I may do 10 or 12 hours and do a mega amount of work that day then I can have the next 2 days at the farm, plus a lot of times, I'll end up doing things from the home office that are county-related. My phone number is listed in the book, so people call there, I can take care of business on the road or from home.

B: Do you do anything that in some way relates to the Kokosing?

A: Well, worked with the Scenic River Group which is Ray Heithaus, and Doug McLarnen...the two of them are actually the two that were really the ones that pushed that along. But I participate with them on that and I like the river. I farm along it some, I don't live very far from it. I can almost see it from the house, not quite. I like to canoe down it, and it's just a great river.

B: So you don't - there are a lot of infrastructure issues that relate to it - like wastewater and irrigation, but you don't really deal with any of those issues?

A: Well, indirectly. See if I can explain. We do have a wastewater treatment plant that the county maintains. We operate the wastewater and the water for Howard and Apple Valley. So, yes, we do take care of the wastewater there. Our well field for the water system is right adjacent to the Kokosing river. And I guess it's probably safe to say that we have infiltration from the river that recharges the aquifer.

In addition to that, we have an interest in Wayne township which is the northwest corner of Knox County, where Del-Co has sighted a well field. We fought against that project because we believed it would be better if it was not located in our county, especially since our citizens opposed it vehemently. They were very outspoken. We did go ahead and settle out of court because it appeared that may be better doing that than taking a risk of losing totally in court. What we did accomplish in the out of court settlement is to limit the number of gallons pumped per day and also we have an option to purchase that at some point in the future. Anticipating that Knox County needs will grow and that will give them time to develop water resources elsewhere. Up there at that location, we have entered into an agreement with the - not the corps of engineers - us geological survey, USGS, I guess.

They operate a stream gauging station there. They're doing readings now before they start pumping and so we'll be able to monitor what affect if any their pumping activities will have on the river. It's a really interesting process. It used to be that you had a little building along side the river bank and you had a gauge on that building and you visually look it. Well, we've gone hi-tech. Now there are electronic measuring things and it communicates via satellite and tells you what the river status is.

B: So you're hoping to use that information to defend against the Del-Co issue?

A: Yes, in the event that it has a negative impact on the area beyond the emotional impact it's had presently, we'll have data to confirm that.

B: Why do you think it's had such an emotional impact?

A: Well, Knox Countians are very territorial, I guess. And they view this water as their water. And even though Ohio law says that the property owner has the right to the water beneath that, they view it as an act of piracy that the Del-Co people are coming over and exploiting our good aquifer. And part of it is, there's some resentment too, I've picked up, that they think that during dry season, such as the year we've just experienced, that our water resource will be pumped over to the Muirfield Area which is northwest Columbus, and it is served by Del-Co, that Dublin area. And it will be used to water grass, water lawns, in affluent neighborhoods that could do without the water - they think that's a frivolous use of their resource.

B: When you say Knox Countians, do you mean people who have been here quite a long time or does that also apply to newcomers? Do newcomers - are they emotional about the Del-Co issue?

A: I think most of them are long-time residents. It's interesting, newcomers have their own set of emotions also, and that's usually , and I've seen this happen in Apple Valley along the lake, and it's happening in the rest of the county. Their emotion is, that I'm here now, and I like it here and I want to keep it just the way it is. So, we don't want anymore development.

B: Interesting - so they want only as much development as brings them in, but then that's it.

A: I've heard that repeatedly from different people, where, well, the lake along Apple Valley Lake is pretty well developed now so it's becoming something of a mute issue. But, earlier on, people would get their home developed, and it was nice, and they enjoyed it because they could look both ways and there wasn't a house right next to them. And someone comes along and builds a home next door, which was bound to happen, and there not going to like that very well. The same thing happens in a rural area. Someone will buy a one acre or five acre tract, build their dream home in the country, and they're happy for a while and someone else decides to do the same thing and blocks their view and then they're not happy about it. Plus, it does, and I guess I'm a member of this camp, you know, the more development we have, the more traffic problems we see developing, and also tends to increase crime a little bit because you have more people. And sometimes we do have people who move to the country because they think their wayward children will do better here. And that may be a little bit true, but, it just causes us some distress in the meantime.

We talked about subcultures a little bit, and there's another subculture in the Centerburg area, and that's the Columbus -the bedroom community - and that's not limited to Centerburg. There are people in Mt. Vernon who work in Columbus, Apple Valley. I live on a road that is a bit of a commuter road from Apple Valley - about 5 a.m. the commuters start heading towards Columbus. It's not a real steady stream, but it's noticeable, and that's a change I've observed in the last 25 years. 25 years ago Apple Valley was just starting, and now its really booming, and the traffic increase is very noticeable.

B: And that's a problem?

A: Yeah, I think so. And another interesting thing about our Knox County population - I think the mood may be changing a little bit but over the years, the last 9 years I've been more involved in county government, that the transportation problem as been discussed back and forth many times with various suggestions. A couple of times there have been some suggestions for a by-pass. And a by-pass has almost

always been shot down. And usually it's the same mentality as those I mentioned earlier about once they get their home in the country they don't want anyone else to have one... Well, it's like, a bypass would be okay, but not in my backyard. And so, a really interesting scenario developed about four years ago.

We had a formal committee formed and we even engaged a consulting firm to work through some preliminary bypass plans. Part of their strategy was to identify a 2000 foot wide corridor where the highway may go. Somehow, the public thought there was going to be a 2000 foot wide road. I don't know how they ever thought that, because logistically, if you think about that, roads are not 2000 feet wide - that's almost half a mile. People thought anything in that path was doomed, and it became so blown out of proportion that it was dropped, and it's pretty much been on the backburner ever since.

I did have a brave moment sometime this year on a radio program - once a month we do what's called Radio Line, and that's a call in talk show and I asked the listeners if their sentiments had changed about the by-pass any and building codes, and actually all the response I received was positive on the by-pass at that point in time. I might add that that by-pass proposal has been tweaked quite a bit since it was first discussed thirty years ago. Thirty years ago there was a proposal to extend -- there is a bypass around Fredericktown, I don't know if you're familiar with it - it's the only four lane divided highway in Knox County. And that was built at least 30 years ago, probably a little more. Well, that was to go clear to Newark and clear up to Bellville, North to South. And so ODOT had a plan to go on around the west side of Mt. Vernon, it was going to cut right out to green valley farmland area, and back in those days, people maybe didn't like the idea, but they figured there wasn't anything they could do.

Well, that was changed. And so, considerable resistance developed over the years to that proposal, so the most recent proposal we've worked on for a bypass would not even be a four-line divided highway. It would be a two lane what I call super two highways where it would limited access, it would have turn lanes at intersections, but otherwise it would be 55 mph bypass with minimal if any development. And that would be somewhat subject to local zoning. But it would also be controlled by a limited access highway.

B: Now is that resistance to the road, has that come mostly from long-time residents, or can you judge that at all?

A: I think it's been mostly long-time residents, although you get some of that same mentality, where they say, I don't know. Compared to Columbus the traffic isn't really that bad here, which is true. I mean Coshocton road is kind of crazy sometimes, but a trip to Columbus will make you think it's no problem at all. And so those people who are usually newer here, a lot of times they work in Columbus, so it doesn't seem that bad. And they'll say, no, we don't want the roads fixed up too much, because that will bring more people in. We want to keep it just like it is.

And even out of Knox County, up in Medina County, which is maybe 2/3 of the way to Cleveland from here, the State of Ohio is looking at a proposal to make interstate 71 three lanes all the way from Cleveland to Columbus because of the high volume of traffic. And I think that's going to happen - everywhere except Median County. Median County said, nope, we don't want that, because it's going to make it handier for people in Cleveland to move to Median County. And we want to make it as inconvenient as possible which I don't think is really rational thinking, but that's the position they've taken right now, so it's going to remain two lanes. So that's the same mentality that shapes things here in Knox County occasionally.

B: It's interesting. It seems that our little study of the river that we've done so far, that the river could really be a unifying thing because everyone seems to want to develop the greenway corridor. Newcomers and long-term residents. Is that true?

A: I think everyone may be a little too strong. I think the majority are in favor of that. I do encounter some people who are resistant and their resistance is generally based on fear. They fear more government control. In fact, the scenic river initiative was feared by some, because of more control. I researched it pretty thoroughly because I too operate agricultural land along the river and I wanted to know what changes if any would take place.

As near as I could tell, the only actual changes that have happened is that before the scenic river designation, there was a blanket - a provision, that's called a blanket provision - for doing a ripp-rapp along the river for erosion control - that you could do up to 500 feet of shore line per year without a permit. Well, technically, with the scenic river designation, you need a permit for any amount. And from the County's perspective, we have a few more hoops to jump through when we build a new bridge somewhere. But, in generally, most people are very supportive.

Most people recognize the river and the greenway as a positive thing. I do anyway. I think it's probably the best river in the state. I realize I'm biased, but when you look at the water quality, our river is usually clear. Right now, for example, you can probably see the bottom, four feet down. Granted after a heavy rainfall you can't, that will change, but...The Mohican River, for example, which is the next watershed north and east, it's often times a bit on the murky side, and of course, you go west and it's usually murkier. All of that has to do with soil types. I had to study on this a while before I understood. I wondered, why is our river nicer than the Mohican? I think one of the main differences, in their watershed, they have a lot of clay soil types. Ours tends to be more of a sandy loam and so we don't have that clay suspension in the water like they have, and so sand will settle out quicker after a rain fall - it just cleans up better. I would like to think it's other pollution factors too, but I think that's the biggest reason.

B: I was reading in Focus 2100A that wastewater effluent from the plant in Mt. Vernon goes into the Kokosing...

A: That's correct.

B: So, that's probably a concern with more people coming into the county.

A: Yes, but the EPA has pretty strong regulations on that...they have a term called degradation and I'm told that, for example, the water out of our wastewater treatment plant in Howard is supposedly of a higher quality than what the water in the stream itself is. Once it's treated through the wastewater treatment plant, then it's chlorinated and then it's dechlorinated - I don't fully understand the chemistry involved here, but they dechlorinate it before it's actually discharged into the Little Jelloway Creek which is a tributary to the Kokosing River. I'm not sure about Mt. Vernon's wastewater treatment plant - how good they treat theirs, how good their effluent is. I know, from a commissioner's standpoint, we have worked and continue to work on trying to get as much as the sewage as possible going into wastewater treatment plants instead of little packaged treatment plants or on-lot disposal systems that I believe have a tendency to pollute more than what - they're also much more difficult to monitor, the smaller units are. Because the EPA is monitoring the big ones and for the most part, no one monitors the small ones. Technically, the health department can monitor them, however, they do not have sufficient staff to go around and keep an eye on them.

B: So building a county-wide infrastructure would help in a lot of ways, it seems.

A: I think it would long range. That's quite a ways down the road, and it will be a system that evolves, which is very typical of any developing county. I guess ideally if you were planning, and the only place I know where this happens is with Les Wexner's development over in New Albany where he has sufficient funding to come in and just basically wipe things out and start over and do everything really first class all the way. In most communities, you start out with on-lot treatment and then that becomes ineffective after a while and then you end up putting in collector lines and municipal water, which would be nice if that was done originally. In Apple Valley, it was. We try to encourage subdivisions that are closer to the city so that they can tie in with existing infrastructure. We need to tighten up our regulations on our subdivisions. They're a little to lax right now. I think our regional planning is working on that, but we need to do that.

B: Can you be a little more specific about what those regulations would be?

A: Well, regulations would regulate things such as the street, the amount of pavement - actually the health department regulates if they can do on-lot disposal or not. They also control whether or not they can have a well or if city water is available, we certainly encourage them to take that. In Knox County for the most part, the lot sizes is determined by local zoning, so regional planning I don't think has much control over that, except as an advisory board. They will advise the local townships.

Knox County has 22 townships of which 18 are zoned. The four in the southeast quadrant are not zoned, and that's very evident. Bladensburg is a very pretty little community down there, but if you look on the map, you'll see Union, Butler, Jackson and Clay are not zoned. And so, they're drawing those people who

seek unzoned areas, and that means they'll bring mobile homes, they'll have a tendency to have more junk accumulate around their properties. That type of housing that I personally would rather not see, but that's the choice they made. Although I think Union township is on the verge of putting an issue on the ballot so they will probably become zoned. However, there's an element there that's kind of interesting. They have, I believe about 53 Amish families, with several more moving in. Amish also tend to head for the unzoned areas, because it depends on the zoning - for example, in Middlebury township the zoning is not very friendly toward Amish, what I call them cottage industries. Most Amish don't operate strictly a farm anymore. A lot of times they'll have the old fashioned farm, but then they'll have a sawmill or a furniture shop or someother cottage-type industry. Some zoning ordinances don't provide for that. If Union township wants to, they can craft their zoning resolutions so that it makes provision for that. And it will be interesting to see how they develop it.

I didn't mean to sidestep that issue of the subdivision regulations. I didn't explain that as thoroughly as I should have, because I'm not as familiar with that as I should be. I know the part that I need to make sure is addressed - is the street issue and also storm-water runoff. I don't think we have that adequately addressed. Now, that is another area - storm water runoff - is an area where the county commissioners have worked with and continue to with the local soil and water conservation district and they've hired what they call an urban specialist - the position is considered an urban specialist. That person's job is to work with lot development, homesite development, commercial development, like in the east part of Mt. Vernon off Coshocton Road; there is definitely a strong water problem there. That's a little bit of a challenge, because it's like the recycling I mentioned earlier. It has to be a cooperative effort. The soil and water conservation office is in this case, they're advisory and cooperative, they don't have any policing powers where they can...[end of tape]...[The commissioners and other political people took a tour of soil and water conservation district efforts around the county to ease erosion...] One of them we looked at was a road-ditch improvement out in Morgan township. It was an area that had erosion problems for years and where they've put some subsurface drainage in and also put limestone riprapp lining the ditch so that it will carry the water without any erosion. All the projects of that nature help enhance the water quality somewhere on down the stream.

B: Do you have the name of the urban specialist...

A:...The last stop on the tour was the Aldi's parking lot.

B: I bet that's bad.

A: It is. There's that bank that's eroding down and I think Aldi's probably had a little retaining wall constructed on the north side, and it's probably half way up that retaining wall, the sediment it is, and it's very evident where during a heavy rainfall event, the water comes down around the end, and you can see the silting that's taken place on the blacktop, and we haven't had that many rainfalls this years - it's been a dry year. So, he [the urban specialist] said that was going to be his first project. He called it the showcase project. He's going to work with the owners of that property - the property that the erosion is taking place on is not Aldi's, it's a joint-property owner, but they've expressed an interest in working with him to try to correct that. I hope it's one of many....Some of the others I mentioned, for example, the Morgan township one, that's probably in the north fork of the licking.

We're doing away with an old package treatment plant for a 32 home subdivision. It's probably about 25 years old, and it no longer meets EPA standards. We explored various options, and I thought the one option that might have worked for us was a wetlands. There is actually a wetlands right down gradient from the wastewater treatment plant. But EPA regulations will not permit you to use an existing natural wetlands. You have to create a wetlands for any effluent treatment, and we couldn't acquire without going through eminent domain, property to do that. So what we're doing instead, we're building a pipeline and we're piping their effluent over to the village of Centerburg's treatment plant and it will be treated there.

B: This is an aside, but why can't you use eminent domain for the Del-Co property?

A: Well, okay, that was our strategy. Good question, I'll address that. The initial approach was to prove that they were taking an excessive quantity of water. Well, when that became questionable, we asked could we develop a different strategy. So then the strategy was, we switch to the eminent domain. Eminent domain as based on that Knox County will need that water at some point in the future. Well, it became a real - we should have started that earlier but we weren't aware of that option earlier. In any event, as things progressed, and before we actually filed the eminent domain, we were trying to work out a friendly purchase with Del-co where we would purchase the land, lease it back to them and then end up purchasing it at some point in the future. We left one meeting convinced that we had an agreement in place - it was a matter of formalizing it and signing it. With less than a month, they phone us and said deals off. That's

when we filed the eminent domain proceedings. We did file it, but in the meantime, we thought as though they kind of played us along, and basically had taken advantage of us. They went ahead, and they were going full steam ahead on their plans to develop the well field. They had already broken ground, awarded the bid. Well, our legal counsel told us that once we had put them on notice of our intentions to take an eminent domain, anything they would do after that time would be at their own risk. So, we proceeded, feeling fairly confident that we were safe. If they want to spend a few million here, then we're going to buy it at the appraised value when we intended to take it. Well, what ends up happening is, when you do an eminent domain proceeding, it goes before a jury. And you never know for sure what those jurors are going to say. But Del-Co is spending about 10 million dollars to develop this whole project, and it's quite possible that the jury would say, okay Knox County, we see that you will need this maybe, thirty years from now. So you can have it, but you have to pay what they've invested so far. Well, we really are not needing it yet, nor in a position to spend 10 million dollars to buy it right now. It would jeopardize other county programs. So, when we had an opportunity to settle - also it was going to cost a quarter of a million dollars to wage this war through the court system with no guarantees of the outcome. We did get the limit on the amount of water pumped, and half a million gallons a day for Knox County if we want to use it, and the chance to buy it in the future and we said, okay we'll go ahead and drop - plus, each side had to drop their pending lawsuits, which they filed some frivolous lawsuits against us, we felt. They said that we were acting recklessly with disregard to their well-being.

Just as an aside, it's relevant to this. We just experienced an eminent domain proceeding with the airport. We had an ongoing, kind of a little feud, it's been a cold war of sorts with an adjoining property owner down there for years. They've alleged that we have these hostile tensions in mind, which we really don't believe their accusations are true. However they're convinced they are. FAA said that we needed some additional air space for safety. We already have considerable airspace over this gentleman's farm, which was purchased for 1 dollar 30 or 35 years ago. We needed a little bit of additional space and it was appraised at \$7000 dollars. We told them what it was, we had our appraiser, they had their appraiser, we said will you settle for that? No. Okay, we'll do an eminent domain.

So we did, no problem, everything went very favorably on that. But then he says, well want don't you just buy another 60 acres on the ground, so I don't have to deal with you in the future. Okay, so we said, can we agree on a price? Well, sort of. But then, we said, why don't we buy another 100 acres - it will prevent building on the north side of what would be runway area in the future, which we thought might prevent various arguments down the road. So, he says, we can sort of agree on a price. However, he said, I've discovered that if you do an eminent domain, I don't have to pay capital gains on it. So let's go ahead and do eminent domain so I can void capital gains. We're like, okay. So, we have our appraiser, he has his appraiser, and naturally there's some difference. So, we figure in court that the fair thing to do would be to split the difference. That would be kind of the usually customary. Well, to quote from memory, I think our appraiser had the land valued at around 300,000. And his has it at 380 or something. Well the jury awarded it at like 400, and then they put a residual damage on the existing land, which I believe is debatable personally, because some people actually like to build by airports because they want to fly in and out of there, they think it's - they just like that, they like to watch airplanes. So, it ended up being over 500 thousand dollars that the jury said, yep, we think you deserve this. And, so, I told you this because it's relevant to Del-Co. See, the jury could have said, you owe Del-Co not only for what they've expended, but you need to pay their attorney's fees and whatever, you just never know, so that's why we decided to settle.

B: Where did the court case take place? Who were the jurors? It sounds like it took place in Columbus.

A: It was in Knox County. The airport thing? Right. The airport thing was - it was right across the street over here in the Courthouse. You get back to people's thought processes. It never ceases to amaze me that somehow they do not relate to the fact that county government is their money. The money we pay for this is their money. I don't know why they don't realize that. The property owner came in and made a case like he was being taken advantage of, and so he gained their sympathy - I didn't watch the trial, but I heard reports on it - and that's what they said, he managed to make it appear as though he was being misused...Once the award is made, I believe there are 30 days to pay or you start paying interest at 10% - which is way above market currently. 10% was put in some years ago when interest rates were much higher. As you can see in the Del-Co thing, it could have been a beast out of control. In this case over here, we've appealed because counsel says if a jury awards beyond what was asked, and there's a term for this, that they're being unfair to this case, to Knox County. Because it would be okay if they awarded the property owner the amount of money asked, but they went even beyond that which is not proper in an eminent domain proceeding, I guess. We'll see what the judge does with that.

Another thing on the Del-Co situation that you asked. See, we filed to have it in Knox County court, because we figured that with a Knox County jury - and I think, I guess in my heart a Knox County jury would be friendly to Knox County in the Del-Co thing, even though they weren't in the airport - because



Del-Co is viewed as big and nasty. They're out of county - bigger than Knox County is the perception. But, it ended up getting moved to Columbus in federal district court, and so, you know, in federal district court, they don't care about Knox County. In fact, their jury pool may actually be more from an urban area, and they're thinking, well sure, why does that rural area need that water. We have these people, we need that water, let's take it. Those are some of the reasons we backed out of that.

B: Do you think that's a problem with new people coming that they don't care about Knox County? I mean, they care about living here, but they don't care about resources, and cultural things - they still think of themselves as urban people living in a nice...

A: Well, I don't know. I think that's probably depends on the area of the county. Now, a little bit of a biased comment here, because I am favorable to zoning now, whereas at one point in my life maybe I wasn't. But I think when you go to the unzoned townships, you'll see less concern for the environments by the residents than you will in a township that has more planned development. I think that's pretty true - a fact of life. People who choose not to plan as much choose to seek out those areas where they can live that lifestyle.

B: Do you foresee anymore Del-Co like issues in the county with resources?

A: Well, hopefully not. However, part of the reason that we did press it as far as we did was to try to send a clear message to any wannabees out there that were looking at Knox County as a potential water source. We don't want to be viewed as an easy mark. I think for me personally, I've learned a lot through this, frankly we didn't take it that serious back in '94. It's been - it was August '94 when I first was made aware that Del-Co had purchased that property. I'm not sure that it will have that much of a negative effect on the aquifer. There seems to be a very strong aquifer there, but perception-wise... the interesting part - I had a most interesting call. I had phone call from a person who lives on Big Run road. This was a couple of years ago, and they said they were having trouble with their well. They were sure it pertained to Del-Co's well field up there, and that Del-Co had dried their well up. Well, Del-Co hadn't - as far as I know, they're not even pumping yet, so I know it had absolutely no effect on, but that was 20 miles away, and the perception - I referred them to our geological consulting firm.

B: As a commissioner, are you working on that issue of perception?

A: Well, yes, in fact before Del-Co came here, we didn't think a whole lot about our water. We knew we had good water, and we knew we had plenty of it. It was just a resource we banked. Mentally we thought we were comfortable in that. Well, now that Del-Co is here, we realized we needed to get busy and plan so we could say, yes, we have good water, and plenty of it, and it's for us, and we're going to use it for Knox County. And that was a big reason why the Focus 2100 plan came together. That was a lot of it. We had a plan on file from the early '70's. And it was like, there was no problem until Del-Co came. Then it's like, oh, we need to update this. And I think that is another thing regional planning will be doing. They will be updating the Focus 2100 plan I think, every other year or so. And that did not happen with the old comprehensive plan from the mid 70's. Necessity is the mother of invention sometimes, a real motivator, and I guess there wasn't a necessity for planning for our water until Del-Co came - now there is, and we are.

...

One thing [Richard Stolard] made me aware of, which I really hadn't thought about, is he said that part of the charm of Knox County is the landscape. He's not talking about landscaping around the courthouse, he's talking about the rural landscape. And when we mentioned that, I remembered, and I had some people build a home across the road from my farm, and they told me they build there because my farm was so pretty. I realized it was - yes, I do like to maintain it and keep it pretty, and I have a rolling hilly farm. It's east of Gambier. I keep it kind of mowed, and have these crops planted on the contour, and I think it's pretty. And I guess they thought so too, but I really didn't want a neighbor across the road. In fact, I've purchased all the land I can afford in order to preserve farmland. Then I realized what he was saying was very true. In fact, it got me a neighbor.

...

If you want to talk about rivers, Doug McLamen - he's a river nut, literally. He works over in human services, he's a case worker for children's services, and in fact, I went with him to Montana and did the Missouri River this past August where Lewis and Clark explored. It was a fun trip, it was interesting. It's not just a scenic river, it's a wild historic and scenic or something or other - nationally designated. Ours

just has a state designation. I guess theirs has things that ours doesn't. Probably a whole lot more restrictions than what ours would have.

You know the zoning issue is kind of an interesting one. It depends on your philosophy, I guess. There are those that will argue vehemently that this is America and we have the right to do as we want to do. To some degree, I see their point. In fact I used to be there more. In fact, I'm a bit reluctant to impose building regulations on people for the same reason. But yet, I can also see what happens when you don't have zoning. Like my wife has this saying that you teach people how to treat you by your actions, you teach people how to treat you in life. And effectively, zoning does the same thing. Either zoning or not zoning - you create the environment that tells different segments of society what kind of people your attracting in to your area. And so if you choose to have an unzoned townships, you're going to attract more LMI class of people than if you have a Gambier-like setting. Gambier, they're highly regulated. In fact, a guy joked the other day, he said, they're wanting to get it so you need a passport to come into town. I like Gambier. It's a very quaint, pristine, and small town, and you know they've down a superb job of preserving it. There are certain factors of modern life that are indeed a fact - one is that there is a state highway goes though there. And if people want to drive through there, they can and are permitted to do that. We had one caller call in on the radio show that was adamant that we should do something about route 36 being closed. Some of the extra traffic is going to flow into Gambier. He was concerned that the college kids would be run over by all the extra traffic... One of my colleagues said that he thought college kids were smart enough to get out of the way.

The USDA applied for a grant for additional greenway enhancement. I think it could be used for septic tank upgrades if you lived somewhere along there and had a poor one, could be used for filter strips in agricultural land. The USDA has on going program for that. You can put anything up to 300 feet of greenspace between your cropland and the river.

B: The will fund that, subsidize that?

A: Yes they will?

B: Who applied for the grant?

A: The Farm Service Agency which is USDA - if you want to know about it, I'll give you a contact name on that too - his name is Steve Lovejoy - 392-0891.

B: What is a filter strip?

A: A filter strip: I can get cost share up to 300 feet to plant grass or trees or a combination and they'll pay the cost share to establish the practice, and they'll also pay a rental for that land, for at least 10 years, maybe 15 or 20.