

DETAILED MEETING NOTES - FINAL
Blair County SWAC - Solid Waste Plan Revision

Blair County Advisory Committee Meeting #1

Date of Meeting: Tuesday, August 23, 2011, 6:00 PM
Meeting Location: Altoona Heritage Discovery Center
1421 12th Avenue, Altoona, PA

Meeting #: Blair County SWAC Meeting #1

Attendees: See Attached Sign-in Sheet

Terry Keene started the meeting. He introduced the Consultant Team and then asked everyone to introduce themselves. After initial introductions, thanking Terry Stacey and Claudia Montoro for providing food, and basic housekeeping comments, Terry Keene proceeded to discuss the agenda.

Terry Stacey commented that Blair County Recycling and PA CleanWays are participating in a tire collection. Terry Stacey continued with announcing the list of other members of SWAC that were not in attendance:

- John Harker - retired teacher and township supervisor
- Julie Nelson, Director of digester project and staff of Representative Jerry Stern's office
- Tammy Holsinger, Cove Recycling and Terry Decker Sanitation (scrap dealer and hauler)
- Don Straub, Manager of Duncansville Walmart (major recycler in Blair County)
- Donna Fisher, Director of Blair County Conservation District
- Paul Kane, hauler in Duncansville – mandated and non-mandated communities
- Jim Steiner, Ravine Apparel – local businesses in area, served on SWAC and Authority

Terry Keene reviewed the agenda and commented that most of the discussion will focus on Item #5. This is the kickoff meeting for the Plan Update/ Revision. Terry commented on the purpose of time tracking and asked that attendees sign in/sign out. Time can be used toward the local (20%) match for the grant - it can be used for up to half of the matching funds. Terry also asked everyone to track mileage coming to the meetings and going back. Mileage can be used toward match as well. Terry Stacey is the primary contact for this plan. Terry Stacey will get SWAC comments back to the Consultants. Terry Keene commented that the Consultants will do this plan paperless as much as possible to minimize solid waste. The Consultants propose that we will also develop a website on the Barton & Loguidice webpage. Terry K. invited the SWAC to review the Mifflin/Juniata page that's currently on that website. They will be able to see items that will be uploaded for this plan also.

Terry Keene continued by discussing the Plan's Schedule. It is expected at this time that the planning process will take approximately one year. This time frame generally allows for the time to produce a Plan in draft form, and then proceed to the approval stage. If it works out to be a "substantial plan revision," it will go through a different comment and approval process. Currently, we do not know what route this plan will go. If it's a non-substantial plan, it requires a 30-day public comment period, and then it goes to the County Commissioners for approval, and is then submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) for their approval. Mike Union asked Terry K. if he knew what type of Plan this one would be. Terry responded that if we look at utilizing flow control to direct waste to a specific site, this would make it a substantial plan revision; if it happens to become a regional plan (i.e. if other counties are involved), it will also go become a substantial plan. There are also

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a limited number of other circumstances that can place this plan revision into the substantial revision/ approval process, including a request by PADEP to have the plan go this route. Otherwise, it would be "non-substantial," having a much simpler approval process. It cannot be determined at this time which way this plan is headed, until the plan proceeds and until the SWAC has further discussions. It is possible for a plan to go almost through the entire planning process and not identify which type it will be, until the draft is ready to release. This is the reason it is important to identify critical planning issues at the beginning of the plan update process.

Sue Rhoades asked if meetings were always going to be on Tuesdays, or if they would be random, or if we even knew at this stage. Terry Keene commented that the SWAC could determine the best day of the week to have our meetings that will accommodate most members.

Terry K. handed out a table that illustrated the types of typical waste categories contained within "municipal waste," and discussed the types of waste we are planning for in this document. He reviewed it with everyone.

Planning overview: Terry Keene commented that some have been on the SWAC before, and are familiar with the solid waste plan update process, while others may be new to this process. To summarize, this is a 10-year planning process; Solid Waste plans typically need to be updated every 10 years. PADEP normally gives a county a reminder approximately three (3) years before the previous plan expires, in an effort to give time to get an update ready. Terry K. stated that this plan revision is currently on schedule to complete the draft plan update in 2012. Terry continued by explaining that certain waste materials from Marcellus Shale are considered residual waste. We are not responsible for residual waste in this plan; however, we need to make sure the residual waste does not affect the capacity of regional disposal sites to accept municipal waste from Blair County. Terry K. commented that this SWAC would do its best to deal with all the critical issues related to each of these kinds of waste.

Previous plan (2002): Terry Keene thought that some on this SWAC worked through the 2002 plan when it was prepared. He stated that it is a relatively easy read and that the 2002 plan has a good history of what went on with waste management and Blair County over the course of time. Also, Terry K. noted that he worked with the City of Altoona on a City-wide waste planning study in approximately 2004-05, so there has been a lot of planning that has gone on in this area. The current Blair County solid waste plan is commonly called a "menu plan." The menu plan recommended there be contracts put in place, and issued an RFP to secure waste disposal capacity. Terry Stacey stated that he was not on the SWAC, but he assumes this also. Terry Keene asked Terry Stacey to check the contract terms to find out the expiration dates for those contracts. Terry Keene thought that most likely those contracts would expire at the same time that this plan will be revised. Within the previous plan, the recycling goal was expected to reach 35% – including curbside recycling. The previous plan also recommended making the recycling process more efficient. Terry Keene asked Terry Stacey if he happened to know where Blair County is, currently, with its recycling percentage. John Frederick of the IRC stated that they worked with PADEP a few years back to come up with a methodology process in calculating this percentage.

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John said it's safe to assume that it is not at 25% currently. At one time it may have been higher, but not currently. Kerry Tyson suggested to Terry Stacey that he could try to get his recycling reports through Re-TRAC and get at least a close idea of tons in/tons out, and it also give a percentage. Terry Keene explained what the percentage means. He said that in recent years, PADEP has downgraded the importance of percentage recycling by weight. A good example is glass - there was a lot of glass 10 years ago, and now it's been replaced predominantly by plastic containers. There is a much smaller fraction of heavier recyclables than there are lighter recyclables. As we collect less tons of recyclables, it does not mean we are doing a poor job of recycling, it just means less tons of heavy recyclables are being collected. There are additional efforts needed, though, to try to increase recycling. A good sign showing an increase in more recycling would be if waste is growing and you're recycling more types of materials and volumes of recyclables. Terry Keene asked Terry Stacey if he wanted to add anything about the 2002 plan. Terry Stacey stated that the current plan states something about local licensing of the current haulers, which no longer exists. He also noted that the administrative fee previously collected by the Department, also doesn't exist anymore. The old plan is outdated, and Blair County needs this revision. Terry Keene advised everyone that there were court cases in the past 5-8 years that ruled that administrative fees are no longer allowed under the current law, which means Blair County doesn't collect those fees anymore, which in turn results in a loss of revenue. Terry Stacey stated that the loss of revenues and lack of sustainability in recycling and other public programs may be the most important issue to address in this plan update. The licensing of most waste haulers is now done at the state level (pursuant to PA Act 90), and we don't have the leverage with licensing anymore.

Roles of the County and the IRC: Terry Keene reminded everyone that it is important for the SWAC to understand where these two (2) groups stand (the County and the IRC) in the activities of this plan update. Terry Stacey explained what his agency does, and noted that the County runs two (2) composting sites. The County is very involved in those activities. There are also ten (10) recyclables dropoff sites, and those are serviced four (4) days a week. The collected materials go to different locations for processing. He continued by explaining that the County assists the local community with tire collections, annual household hazardous waste collections, home composting workshops (even though PADEP doesn't provide the home composting bins anymore), education of various types, presentations to civic groups/schools, etc., and coordinates its activities with the IRC, who also provide services to the community. John Frederick explained some of the services of the IRC. The distinguishing difference between the IRC and the County is that the County handles traditional county responsibilities, and the IRC has more focus on municipal responsibilities, making sure the processing facilities report what they should, and do what they need to do. The IRC is a council of governments with a total population of approximately 70,000 out of 127,000 County citizens, and represents four member municipalities in the County (City of Altoona, Logan Township, Tyrone Borough, and Hollidaysburg Borough).

Terry Keene explained that the role of the Consultant during the plan update process is to help guide the SWAC activities, and to help identify and address issues as we go through the process.

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Role of the SWAC: Terry explained that it is to represent this community's broad interests; this is the reason for the broad representation of the SWAC membership. The primary functions of the SWAC are to help identify issues and needs, participate in discussions and provide feedback, review draft plan update materials, and recommend changes in the plan to the County Commissioners. One example of this may be illegal dumping, which can very possibly be an important issue in this plan. Terry Stacey stated that Mike Union would be a good resource for that, with his representation of PA CleanWays, and could help identify issues and provide the SWAC with ideas. With SWAC input, we will help determine which changes make sense in this plan, and recommend changes to the Commissioners. Terry requested that each SWAC member work with the Consultants on recommendations to help get the plan implemented, and encouraged the SWAC to keep this an open plan that addresses the issues in a practical and implementable way. Terry Keene feels these are the overall goals of this plan.

Terry Keene explained that at this kickoff meeting, we are going to collect background information for review and analysis. The Consultants will request whatever we can from the annual county recycling reports, along with waste tonnages and population data and projections. When we have all of that, we will compute an average waste generation number, in pounds per person per day. Then we will calculate that based upon population changes over the next 10 years, how much waste will be generated and how much can be recycled. Terry Keene explained that the Consultants will rely on the County Planning Department to get the ten-year population projection information.

Surveys: Terry Keene continued to explain that the Consultants will also collect and analyze surveys of different factions of waste generation in the county. Kerry Tyson of the Consultant Team will be taking the lead role in that. Kerry commented that in other plans, we have broken it up in several groups such as townships, haulers, institutions, businesses in town, etc. It depends on what is in the counties in order to determine what groups we will send surveys to. Kerry stated that the surveys will ask simple questions like: "do you know where your garbage goes, do you know where/what to recycle," etc. Then we would finish the survey with questions on "what issues are you having", "what suggestions do you have" – Kerry commented that often the most interesting information that comes back is from the haulers. We then start to evaluate the information and look at trends. Kerry stated that sometimes you could include the wastewater treatment plants in the survey, also. There are many factors to consider, who we will survey, what kind of questions we want to ask, etc., and we will work with Terry Stacey's department to do that. Terry Keene stated that a letter went out last week to each of the County's municipalities announcing that a plan update is currently in process. That letter stated that someone from the plan would be contacting them to gather information. Terry Keene feels that once mailed, the initial survey response should take about a month, and then, someone will need to follow up by calling those that have not responded; it may take several months or more to receive a majority of the responses. Terry Stacey said that we have to count Tunnelhill Borough, so that totals 25 municipalities in the County to survey. Kerry Tyson gave Terry Stacey examples of what other counties asked in their surveys. John Frederick commented that he feels it is important when we do the survey that it be as unbiased as possible. John expressed that Blair County has always reacted more to the noisy minority than the silent majority. He feels that it should consider the majority over the small, louder group. Terry

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Keene commented that the Consultants have experience with a small minority steering the decisions. Terry stated that it's a comment well taken, and he can assure that the Consultants will certainly be unbiased in our planning. Kerry Tyson stated that often, many want to see more recycling, but it always results in trying to determine how to pay for it.

Plan Issues and Goals: Terry Keene urged the SWAC to identify the issues early on, since we are still in the early stages of this process. If we identify issues now, we can incorporate it completely at the beginning. Mike Union commented that it occurs to him that a lot of public officials have not been in office long enough to know about this process. It would be helpful to be as detailed as possible in the plan to explain it to them, on the municipal level. Larry Carter also agreed with this. Kerry Tyson commented that there is a cover letter that goes with the survey explaining what it is and what it is for. Terry Keene asked Terry Stacey to email a copy of this letter to this SWAC group so they can see the detail of it. Kerry said that this is a plan to set forth some goals – look at it as an opportunity for shaping the future. Sue Rhoades asked if it would be beneficial to have a phone call or a visit in person to explain it to the entities being surveyed, rather than just a piece of paper explaining it. Terry Keene explained that normally, where Kerry sees a lack of information or a concern, Kerry would contact them directly to discuss. Sue expressed concern that some of these surveys will be thrown to the Township Secretary, or a staff member, just to get it filled out and returned. That doesn't make the problem better. Sue suggested that if there was a little bit of a background check to find out more about each area/municipal official, we might get better results. She suggested to perhaps have Kerry precede the mailing with a phone call to the contact person to make sure it gets to the right level once it is in their possession. Terry Keene asked Terry Stacey if there was a contact list of people that we could contact and ultimately send the survey to. Terry Stacey said there is a book from the Township Association that seems to be pretty reliable and that could be available. John Frederick stated that in his experience, he tried to call Tyrone Township a few weeks ago and he's still waiting to get a response back. John expressed that there's not much paid staff and regular hours at municipal offices to get information back. Larry Carter handed Terry Keene a paper with information on it about contacts for the City of Altoona and avenues to contact. Terry Keene stated that it would be a good idea to call when the surveys go out. John Frederick said you can do the best you can do; you can lead the horse to water on some, but you may get some that do not care. The County can use time spent on making the calls toward the local matching funds for the grant (in-kind services), so perhaps the County staff will make the calls.

Terry Keene continued to explain that locking up disposal capacity in landfills over the next 10 years is a base requirement of DEP on all plans. If we would want to direct the waste to a certain place, that is related to waste security and it goes into a different kind of plan. Cost for services are things we need to look at, funding for services, how the funding is done and how can it be done with what we need to do. John Frederick said we are paying much more for services in Blair County and we're getting less service. This is one of the serious things that need to be addressed, paying high monthly fees. Mike Union also commented that every Sunday he sees an ad in the local newspaper where a hauler is advertising \$100 a year, which is much cheaper than what he personally pays for this same service. Mike stated that he

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couldn't believe there is that much of a price discrepancy among these haulers. He continued by saying that Centre Region COG (State College area) is paying \$15 per month, and they can put out anything except the kitchen sink. Terry Keene commented that this is a good example of saving homeowners money through collective bidding for waste and recycling collection services. Terry K. says that he (personally) has single stream collection where he lives. It's not that expensive, and it's convenient, because the contract is awarding the service to one hauler in a municipality rather than leaving it up to the current free market system, with its somewhat inefficient and overlapping service routes. Larry Carter commented that the City of Altoona decided to support the "free-for-all" service, which costs at least another million dollars to Altoona residents annually, and you can look at it as a local government subsidy for haulers. It is still inefficient, but it has narrowed the City down to four (4) districts that they have to collect in on certain days; Larry says that you have all the haulers in one district at one time, but there is no way to keep track of it. One of the disadvantages we have is, if the County Plan bids to select one landfill to accept all the waste of the County, one of the disadvantages of that is there are two (2) major firms with transfer stations in or near the City of Altoona (Burgmeier and Waste Management). If you direct all waste to one individual landfill, this might have an adverse impact on one hauler or another. Waste Management now offers single-stream recycling in such a way that they ship it all to one place for further separation there. Larry Carter said he self-hauls his own garbage to a landfill. Mike Union stated that he pays \$22/month for subscription service. John Frederick said the average seems to come in at \$18-19 per month (that was 3-4 years ago). One of the things that have changed is a fuel surcharge being added. You're still paying the same for the waste services. Terry Stacey stated that the private haulers' monthly rates didn't go down when the County stopped collecting the administrative fee. John Frederick stated that he would never say that the waste haulers do not deserve a seat at the table. Some of them are very good business people and hard workers, although they shouldn't be the only people at the table. It is proven true here as well that they should be part of the discussion to raise their concerns and issues, but our concern in the end should be based upon the concern of the 125,000 people in the county and their needs, instead of just focusing on the waste haulers' needs. Terry Stacey stated that the 1-2 haulers who are part of this SWAC are not in attendance tonight. Terry Keene confirmed that the City residents could save on the order of a million dollars per year if trash and recycling services went out to bid. Larry said that would also require more uniform recycling collection.

Terry Stacey commented that he would like to comment about where Waste Management's recyclables go. He believes that Waste Management has a location in Moon Township for recyclables. Terry S. is not sure how that impacts Waste Management's interest in recycling. John Frederick said one of the other downsides to private subscriptions is that there is hesitancy for haulers to engage in large-scale capital investments without waste commitments. Burgmeier is a good example. The IRC asked Burgmeier to put a roof over their drop-off area, and he's concerned about the capital investment because he has no idea of where or how much material is coming. Terry Keene commented that by bidding, there is a certain amount of commitment that allows haulers to make that capital investment. John Frederick also said, even though a few haulers and the county and the IRC have tried hard to address "special wastes" collectively, and have made good improvements with it, when you look at

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other counties with large plans, he feels there are special wastes that are being handled well in some areas and not well in other areas. Terry Keene stated that maybe we should list the areas where these things are best done. That may be a challenge going forward in Blair County, and we may learn from others' successes. Larry Carter commented about Terry Stacey's composting operations – he asked Terry how many more years he has of funding the current programs. Terry said about a year and a half. Terry said the Department refunded about a half-million dollars to various landfills and haulers. Larry's guess is that there may not be the intestinal fortitude to alternately fund these programs, so they may just go away. John Frederick said we're in deep trouble if this happens, because we do not have any place to bring the materials, if that's the case. Terry Keene said we need to look at alternative sources of funding, who supports what, and it all should be a part of the planning effort.

John Frederick said one of things that has to happen, is that we have to think of something outside the traditional box that we're in right now – because the traditional box is almost bankrupt. Larry Carter said one of the tactics was to try to get money from the water/sewer authority. Mike Union stated that from the State perspective that he was a part of, the Section 902 recycling implementation grants helped that. He feels that the bottom line was that a lot of municipalities were dependent on that money, but that's not what DEP intended it to be. Now that the funding is going away, there are a lot of facilities that will have trouble supporting themselves. We have to look at some of the facilities that we want to keep in place, the ones that are worth keeping and moving ahead. Mike said the DEP gravy train is over, and it's not coming back. As an example, some composting places didn't need to spend a million dollars to buy a turner when they could have spent half of that and had money left over to keep the facility working well. Terry Keene agreed that the funding sources are critical, and that we need to think outside the box, come up with new and creative options. Terry worked for years on a composting project that he couldn't get off the ground. If the residents had agreed to pay \$2-3 per month per household, it would have worked fine and efficiently; this is less than the price of one specialty coffee or pack of cigarettes each month. This shows that many times, the magnitude of the solution is doable, if the residents can only get over paying a little more each month to make it happen. Kerry commented that this is a common theme that is going through all county plans; we have to make funding sources a critical issue in this plan update.

John commented also about the illegal dumping. He suggests that people spend a half hour at one of these cleanups to get an idea of what goes on out there. When there is no funding, then cheaper "disposal options" start happening, like accumulating vehicles in your front yard, etc. That joke isn't funny when it makes economic development an issue. We should recognize that, reach out to the community to make this a quality of life issue. This is something we should work through.

Terry Keene said we will have to bid for solid waste capacity for the next 10 years, so one thing we can ask for in that bid is for disposal sites to offer free space for dump/ illegal cleanups, since people are volunteering their time to drag these materials out of ravines and creeks. We know that PA CleanWays helps identify certain sites that are heavily littered or illegally dumped. Illegal dump cleanups should be supported in the plan update.

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Open burning: Terry Keene stated that this is also an issue in this County and is something that should be looked at. John said there are two (2) municipalities that don't allow it but the other 23 allow it, and actually have advertising about it on the public channel. John Frederick made an observation. He feels it's important to understand that something has changed over time – there isn't much left in your home wastestream that can't be recycled or should be burned. Haulers now take any kind of printed paper at curbside; Waste Management will take paper board, corrugated cardboard that can be dropped at facilities; every kind of plastic can now be recycled, etc. This should give municipal officials pause that maybe now it's time to give this issue a better look. Terry Keene said there is something called the Redi Index, being proposed by someone at PSU (Al Matyasovsky); they were looking at some kind of metric to say how well you're doing, and there was nothing out there that they felt was adequate, so they've come up with this new idea and plan to unveil it soon. Terry K. believes it can be applied at the county, municipal, business, or homeowner levels. It deserves a look. We may want to show there are opportunities for recycling as much as 90% of the waste stream someday

As for open burning, DEP is focusing more on not burning recyclables. Mike Union asked if that was specified in the current plan, and who controls certain activities. Terry Keene said it's hard to see how it is applied in the current plan, other than in a general way. Mike Union suggests that to anyone, we need to be more specific as to what burning in a burn barrel means. Mike isn't sure that many people understand the distinction. Terry suggested a sample ordinance or two in the plan update to help municipalities regulate this activity. John stated that there's great hesitation to telling municipalities what they can and can't do, and maybe we can talk about it another time but, does a typical solid waste plan talk about things like this – can you get a whole county to agree – can you have a county-wide burn ban, a county-wide mandatory recycling collection, etc. Terry Keene answered yes to both. Terry said that you could do all of that at the county level if you have support to do that. Kerry commented that this is Blair County's plan, and it should include what the SWAC and County want to include, regarding regulation of open burning. John feels we need to try to build support and make it happen. Mike doesn't feel it's possible to make that happen. He commented that if certain townships saw some of that, they would not be a party to it. John feels we can shoot for what we feel can be accomplished. Kerry suggested that perhaps this go in the recommendation section, and make it a long-term goal. Mike Union said it's a worthy goal but is it practical?

Terry Keene said depending on what we get into, the party that will adopt this plan update, in the end, is the County Commissioners. We don't want to prepare a plan that they will not approve. It may require some coordination, or workshops with them to help them understand it, and for us to understand their concerns and wishes. Kerry stated that if the Commissioners understand what this is all about, it could be expressed to the public in a positive way. This would be a good way to do it. We have to look at what is practical in the end.

Kerry Tyson commented about flow control and said we all know that's a tough word to use. Terry Keene can work with the Commissioners educating them on what that really means.

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Terry Keene said that he would like to know what each member of the SWAC feels should be the most important role or goal of this plan update, i.e. the top priorities of the plan update:

John Frederick – to raise the level of performance for recycling programs

Beth Strittmatter – curbside being more available to more communities, adding dropoff locations, increasing availability/opportunities for recycling in the rural communities.

Claudia Montoro – expanding the processes of collection, greater education to the public on the benefits and improvements of recycling.

Larry Carter – don't back-pedal; don't lose existing services.

Mike Union – agrees with Larry's comment. Now that people have services, they've come to expect them; it would be a shame to not have them in the future. Bulky waste, non-traditional items – there is still interest in people learning how to dispose of these items.

Terry Stacey – the key element of sustainability funding of programs; exploring partnering with a broker to provide equipment that can't be provided otherwise; setting up a facility where recyclables and commodities can be consolidated for marketing; looking at prison labor to help achieve this; expanding/permitting the County's composting program to possibly include the composting of food waste (possible additional revenue source).

Terry K. commented about the FAM (Fairfield Agricultural Mulch) facility that was an active composting facility in Altoona in the 1970's-1980's. So, there is a history of organics composting in the Region. John said the reason that facility closed is because new organics collection trucks needed to be purchased. Terry feels there is an opportunity there, John Frederick agreed.

Terry K. said we should circulate those ideas through the group, get any new ideas to Terry Stacey, identify the issues list of what we want to address, and keep this process moving. John Frederick agreed that it should continue to move along.

Terry asked about voting the chairman and the vice chairman of the SWAC. John Frederick proposed that we talk about this to the committee and make this an item on the agenda for the next time. Terry Keene asked Terry Stacey to send this as an email and also ask everyone what day works best for the committee. Terry suggested the email should first ask what day of the week is best first.

Terry K. said Item #5 on the agenda needs to be firmed up in the near future. He asked what that means to everyone - do we need to have a meeting or can we do it via email? Terry's not sure that there would be that much more information to share to constitute a meeting. Terry Stacey asked how we move forward to things once we have some of these things in place. Terry Keene said the whole beneficial purpose of this process is to get as much confirmed in item #5 as possible first. We should advise the committee of where we stand on confirming these issues and determining our course from here

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Meeting adjourned 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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