

In Response to Sarah Leach’s Article in the Holland Sentinel Entitled “Save the Campbell’ is about far more than utilities – here’s why” by Joseph Parnell McCarter

Sarah Leach has written an article dated 2/11/2024 with significant errors about the “Save The Campbell” effort. Unfortunately, she never contacted me before publishing, so this will be my response to set the record straight:

- Yes, I am a Bible-believing Christian and it motivates what I do, but I believe the “Save The Campbell” effort benefits all citizens and all citizens are welcome to join in the effort. We all have an interest in reliable, affordable, environmental electric.
- Becoming a charter county provides a sound legal way to get local control over the Campbell plant and transfer it to a county electric cooperative. In fact, it is the only secure viable way I have seen thus far.
- We are making good progress in obtaining petition signers to get it on the ballot. Please register as a petition signer and ask your friends to as well: <https://savethecampbell.com/add-my-name-to-petitions/> . In order to succeed, this effort requires significant citizen engagement by all of us to reach the 12,000 county signatures by April 30 so this will appear on the August ballot.
- Regarding feasibility of the plan, a charter county has the unquestionable legal right to municipalize electric and transfer it to an electric cooperative.
- It will be very challenging but not necessarily impossible to have the county charter in place by May 2025. But there are various legal options open to Ottawa County to delay the closure or at least the demolition of the Campbell plant until the final steps in charter county status are complete. These options are being noted at SaveTheCampbell.com. Even before then, the County can have sent a strong signal for delay by petition and vote to Consumers Energy and Lansing that they better not move forward with demolition given the will of the citizens of Ottawa County.
- I disagree with Ms. Leach that the citizens of Ottawa County are not qualified to elect the county executive, so that it needs to be an appointed position. This seems to be her primary objection to charter county status. (Or perhaps could it be an unstated one: she does not mind if a liberal Democrat county like Wayne County has lots of local control, but she does not want a conservative Republican county like Ottawa County to have lots of local control?)
- While I am for nuclear energy in general, the current plan for Palisades is significantly flawed and the company entrusted with it (Holtec) is a rogue actor, as explained more fully at SaveTheCampbell.com. It should not be rushed forward because of an unnecessary premature closure of the Campbell plant.
- Ottawa County, and the electric cooperative it would transfer Campbell title to, would not be picking up the cost of fly ash remediation at the Campbell site. That cost, along with the savings Consumers Energy would enjoy from not having to demolish the Campbell

plant, would be subtracted from the purchase price of the Campbell plant. In other words, Consumers Energy would bear the remediation cost under our plan.

- After purchase, the electric cooperative would manage the fly ash in a more environmentally responsible way than Consumers Energy did, by selling it (at subsidized rates if necessary) for commercial purposes and not allowing it to accumulate and become an environmental hazard.
- Financing of the purchase by the electric cooperative would likely take one of 2 forms: note payable to Consumers Energy (with Consumers Energy having secured interest in the Campbell facility until paid off) or municipal bond secured by the Campbell facility. This is all very feasible.
- The elected Board of the electric cooperative would likely first seek Consumers Energy to serve as contractor to manage the Campbell plant, but if that negotiation failed, there are other parties like DTE which could be approached. Alternatively, the Board could hire experienced, professional staff in the industry to manage it.
- The electric cooperative owning the Campbell facility would be an economic windfall to the citizens of Ottawa County, given its 1 million customer base of steady rate payers and the fact that the power plant has already been built.
- A county charter is a county constitution, and appropriately would include a bill of rights. As an Antifederalist, I want to see a bill of rights incorporated into the county charter, but it would be the County citizens and not me who decides that. (In US political history, Antifederalists insisted upon inclusion of the Bill of Rights in the Federal Constitution, after Federalists had illegally overthrown the USA's original decentralized, Christian constitution, the Articles of Confederation.) Among those rights are Second Amendment rights, as worded thus at the website: "Recognition of the right and even duty of a well-regulated citizens militia consistent with US and Michigan constitutional law, appropriately armed to be called upon as necessary by elected government officers, and under strict regulation by County and State officials such that it would in no wise be vigilante." It is sad indeed that Ms. Leach insinuates seeking Second Amendment rights, or Christian speech rights in the face of certain legislation on the docket in Lansing, are terrorist in direction.
- Various organizations are mentioned in the article that have not endorsed the "Save The Campbell" effort (Citizens for Local Choice, Ottawa Impact and Gideon 300) or have nothing to do with this political effort (my employer). It is a petition drive of grassroots citizens, and we all have an interest in reliable, affordable, and environmental electric.
- It is utter nonsense that my real motive for this effort, which Ms. Leach suggests at the conclusion of her article, is getting conservatives out to vote and not saving the Campbell plant. Over the course of the last year I have become more and more concerned about the increasing risk level of our electric grid, given rapid off-lining without adequate replacement. This is not just my personal opinion, but the assessment of the North

American Reliability Corporation, as even the Zeeland Board of Public Works reports.¹ As Zeeland BPW reports, load shedding may become necessary if the situation worsens. The South African energy crisis demonstrates how a nation can go from reliable electric to unreliable electric if electric supply is insufficient for electric demand.² When I came to realize the County's Campbell plant, which provides electric for 1 million regional customers, I became alarmed, and started to study what might be done to stop the closure. My own study persuaded me that municipalization as a charter county was the most legally secure and effective route for Ottawa County citizens to stop the closure, because then Consumers Energy would no longer be owner. It would be forced to relinquish it to Ottawa County. Curtis Clark had put the charter county concept on my radar with his advocacy of it in general. I am recommending Ottawa County transfer the Campbell plant over to a member-owned electric cooperative. I ran my view by legal experts, and it is viable. Since it is the only viable solution offered thus far, combined with other benefits it can bring, I support it.

- I welcome Ms. Leach to join me on <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ottawacountypublicsquare> to discuss this topic:

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Sarah Leach
Holland Sentinel

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OTTAWA COUNTY — A group of citizens fighting against "communist" energy policies championed by Democrats now wants to change how local government is structured, taking over privately owned electric utilities in Ottawa County and making them publicly owned and operated.

An initiative called "Save the Campbell" aims to prevent Consumers Energy from decommissioning and demolishing the coal-fired J.H. Campbell Plant in Port Sheldon Township. Organizers of the effort — members of far-right fundamentalist groups Ottawa Impact and The Gideon 300 — say a government-owned electric co-op is possible if voters approve a "home rule charter" on an upcoming ballot.

Experts, however, say the plan isn't realistic and could lead to unintended consequences for the county.

"Creating a charter (to) buy and operate the Campbell Plant is, without question, the worst idea I have heard in 40 years as Ottawa County's counsel," said Doug Van Essen, the county's former longtime attorney.

¹ <https://zeelandbpw.com/prepare/>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_energy_crisis