

According to the commissioners' minutes reported in the December 30, 2009 Morgan County Herald, Dean Cain thinks the county needs empty buildings.

In the commissioners' meeting held Monday, December 21, Cain twice responded to questions by answering that the county needed money to build an industrial park on Morgan Township Road 209 (Monastery Road).

In the minutes, it was reported that representatives from both U. S. Senators' offices (Sherrod Brown and George Voinovich) attended the meeting and asked the commissioners what the Federal Government could do to help the county out of its dire economic circumstance. Cain's answer in both instances was we need money to build an industrial park on Morgan Township Road 209.

According to my own research (I got in my car and drove around the county), we already have empty industrial buildings. There are vacant industrial buildings at the E-Z Grout facility on Morgan County Road 2 south of Malta, there are vacant industrial buildings at the ABC Manufacturing facility in North Malta, and it appears that there is an empty building at the former E-Z Grout location on South Ohio State Route 60 near the intersection with Ohio State Route 266. In fact, I could argue that any one of those sites is an industrial park – in need of more industry.

Further research indicates that there are empty buildings ALL OVER OHIO!

But apparently Dean Cain is convinced that, just like Kevin Costner in *The Field of Dreams*, “if we build it – they will come.”

In Cain's World, Ohio is not still hemorrhaging manufacturing jobs. In Cain's World, manufacturers only need to find that empty building strategically located on a rural township road, 35 miles from the nearest Interstate Highway or railroad. And then, in Cain's World, our problems are over, as these manufacturers will flock to Morgan County's empty building and solve our economic crisis by magically returning us to a smokestack economy that seems to have disappeared everywhere else in the Midwest.

The representative from Brown's office even tried to give the commissioners the correct answers to their quiz, but Cain declined to take to the hint. Senator Brown's aide reported that Noble County had received \$400,000 recently to deliver services to the taxpayers in Noble County.

Clue number one: Morgan County could request and possibly receive nearly a half-million dollars!

Clue number two: the money could be used for services!

Further reading of the December 21 minutes reveals that all Morgan County General Fund office budgets were cut between 7.5% and 10%. This triggered (no pun intended) the sheriff to declare that the Morgan County jail is closed for business.

Additionally, meeting minutes indicate the commissioners can no longer provide any funding for the Emergency Management Agency or Soil and Water Conservation.

Apparently what Brown's aide needed to ask was, "if we gave you \$400,000, could you use it keep your jail open, to keep deputies on the road, and to keep other vital county services available to the taxpayers?"

Unfortunately, she did not pose the question in this way. And it really doesn't matter, because it is very likely that Cain's answer would have been, "No, we really need that empty building on Township Road 209."

As most of us know, to prepare an industrial site and build an industrial building is a MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR proposition. It takes months or even years to complete. And what is the payoff? Even IF a manufacturer decides to locate in our new "industrial park," we don't start to collect more taxes until a few more years down the road.

I don't know for sure, but I think the answer the Senators were seeking was "we need money to keep the county government operating."

Here's one final thought. Last time I checked, the Morgan County General Fund Budget was roughly \$3.5 million. Ten percent of \$3.5 million is \$350,000. If Dean Cain had answered the questions correctly, Morgan County might have received enough funding to offset its budget shortfall.

Five years of experience, and not a clue.