

# Morning Call journalists resist takeover by the “Destroyer of Newspapers”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Morning Call April 1, 2021

🌸 Latest in a series of posts about the Morning Call 🌸

*“Our goal here tonight is to bring more members of our community into the know about the state of things at your local newspaper with regard to potential hedge fund ownership. . . . We are at a crossroads.”*

*Kayla Dwyer, reporter and Secretary of the Morning Call Guild*

*“The boat will continue to sink unless we can find top leadership that cares about serving our communities and whose commitment extends beyond short-term profits.”*

*Bill White*

ref: **Reimagining the Morning Call**

ref: **Reminder: Reimagining the Morning Call**

Gadfly attended the “Reimagining the Morning Call” meeting last night.

Kayla Dwyer laid out the purpose of the meeting.

**Audio Player not available in this archive**

The Morning Call has “shrunk over time.” Industry forces have been “challenging.” The internet has been “a major source of competition.” The Morning Call news staff has shrunk by about 40% over the past few years. The Morning Call no longer has even a physical location. The Morning Call’s parent company is poised to be taken over by Alden Global Capital, known in the media as “Destroyer of Newspapers.” Alden cares nothing about news or serving community. Its business model is to

## THE MORNING CALL GUILD Presents Reimagining The Morning Call

7 p.m. March 31, 2021 via Zoom

Featuring



**Olga Negron**  
Bethlehem City  
Councilwoman



**Sarah M. Wojcik**  
Reporter,  
The Morning  
Call



**Evan Brandt**  
Journalist,  
Pottstown  
Mercury



**Marvin Boyer**  
Political Action  
Chairman,  
Easton NAACP



**Julie Reynolds**  
Journalist,  
DFMWorkers.org



**Bill White**  
Retired Morning  
Call Columnist

**Join us for a conversation about the threat posed to your local newspaper by hedge fund ownership, and the alternatives we're seeking within our community.**

RSVP: <https://bit.ly/3eTfhaa>

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“extract large profits” by cutting and slashing. The Morning Call Guild of journalists has embarked on a campaign to find an “alternative ownership model,” is looking for a way to bring the Morning Call back under local control. They need community support, and the purpose of this meeting was to start to foster community awareness. Our councilwoman Olga Negron was one of the panelists and expressed strong support for the Guild’s efforts.

Though it was not the purpose of this meeting to elaborate on any of the possible alternate ownership models in detail, Gadfly was intrigued by several mentioned.

Gadfly was also struck by awareness that the future of news might not be in *print* news but that the key element in whatever future form was insuring the presence of real journalists.

Gadfly is vitally interested in this subject. Followers know that his very existence is the result of a growing void in local mainstream news coverage.

And even he is retiring soon, with no replacement yet secured.

More to come on this important subject.

Heed Bill White’s strong words below.

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*selections from Bill White, “Why the battle over Morning Call ownership matters.” Morning Call, March 31, 2021.*

With so much news breaking lately [about the sale of The Morning Call’s corporate owner, Tribune Publishing](#), I thought I would offer some context on where we’ve been and what’s at stake for the Lehigh Valley.

When I started at The Morning Call in 1974 — I know, I’m old — we considered ourselves a newspaper of record.

Meetings, police news, courts, elections all were covered extensively throughout our then nine-county region. We covered county councils,

school boards, supervisors, commissioners, zoning boards, planning commissions, sewer commissions.

As someone who attended a lot of those meetings, I can tell you that many were really dull. The Call eventually came around to the idea that we should be more selective about covering ultra-routine meetings and instead use some of that time to develop more interesting stories in these communities.

But even when there's nothing much happening, there's value in the local media's showing their faces in these communities, at least occasionally. More often than not, our reporters were the ones reminding officials that they were about to violate the sunshine law, letting readers know their government wasn't functioning the way it should or just reporting community news that might affect their lives.

Our focus on very local news was so great that we at one time had five bureaus, not counting Harrisburg and Washington, and put out five different editions for readers in disparate parts of our circulation area.

Meanwhile, we were producing outstanding investigative and other in-depth stories that made a difference in our communities. Our commitment to excellence was reflected as well in our feature and sports sections, our photography and our innovative approaches to newspaper design.

Now, thanks to wave after wave of layoffs and buyouts and the closure of our bureaus and now even our home office's building in Allentown, officials in many of our communities are less likely to see a reporter in the audience or stories about their government, so residents often have to look elsewhere for news about what's happening.

It's reasonable to blame some of this on the societal changes that have eroded newspaper readership. But I blame a lot of it on our sale to Tribune Co. in 2000. We were saddled with a succession of inept, even vile, corporate leaders who built up enormous debt and tried to slash their way to higher profits, mostly fleeing with millions in golden parachutes while the employees went years without raises and endured wave after wave of layoffs and buyouts.

The talented, dedicated people who have remained have worked valiantly to produce what still is a very good newspaper. But the boat will continue to sink unless we can find top leadership that cares about serving our communities and whose commitment extends beyond short-term profits.

That does not describe Alden Global Capital, which has been stalking Tribune and now is the front runner to purchase it. Its reputation as the destroyer of American newspapers is well deserved. In its quest to strangle profits from newspapers large and small, this New York hedge fund has eliminated the jobs of scores of journalists, leaving behind the bleached bones of once-vibrant news gathering organizations.

The good news is that there are active efforts to rescue the Call and other Tribune newspapers from Alden's clutches.

How can you help? Letters to the editor would be great, both to help educate other readers and to offer content that can be amplified on social media to a broader audience, including Tribune shareholders.

I recognize that we'll never return to the days of five editions and the newspaper of record. But there's still time to save and ideally reinvigorate a critical force for ensuring that people in the Lehigh Valley are informed about what's happening in their communities.