DIVESTMENT FROM WEAPONS

The case of Charlottesville, Virginia

By David Swanson
1. PLANNING (FEBRUARY 2019)

- We knew the city, and that it had passed divestment resolutions before
- We knew the city council
- We had passed numerous items through the city council and knew how
- We knew that we could oppose both the weapons of distant wars and the weapons that Nazis has brought onto the streets of C’ville in 2017
- We knew that weapons were still sacred totems of patriotic war propaganda, whereas fossil fuels were losing respectability fast
- A candidate for city council had proposed divestment from fossil fuels; having candidates for city council in our campaign would help
- We learned that positive investment schemes were largely scams
Tell the City of Charlottesville to stop investing our public money in fossil fuels and weapons.

Learn more and sign the petition at DivestCville.org.
Come to the rally at 4 p.m. on Saturday April 27 at Central Place in the middle of the Downtown Mall. We’ll have speakers, flyers, signature-gathering, and music by folk singer Ted Millich and by West African Drum and Dance in Charlottesville.
Attend the City Council meeting at 6 p.m. on May 6.

No more using our own money against us!
FIRST STEPS (MARCH-APRIL 2019)

• We made it an educational campaign on the interlocking evils of fossil fuels and weapons, indefensible and inextricable from each other
• We set up a website and petition: DivestCville.org
• We announced a coalition: DivestCville is sponsored by: Charlottesville Center for Peace and Justice, World BEYOND War. Also endorsed by: Indivisible Charlottesville, Casa Alma Catholic Worker, RootsAction, Code Pink, Charlottesville Coalition For Gun Violence Prevention, John Cruickshank of the Sierra Club, Michael Payne (candidate for City Council), Charlottesville Amnesty International, Dave Norris (former Charlottesville Mayor), Lloyd Snook (candidate for City Council), Sunrise Charlottesville, Together Cville, Sena Magill (candidate for City Council), Paul Long (candidate for City Council), Sally Hudson (candidate for state delegate), Bob Fenwick (candidate for City Council).
• We drafted a proposed resolution with lots of documented Whereases
• We posted our responses to all likely objections, including noting all the dictatorships armed with U.S. weapons, all the wars with U.S. weapons on both sides, all the U.S. wars against U.S. weapons, and the general idiocy of “flag” as a justification.
NEXT STEPS (MARCH-MAY 2019)

• We put op-eds and letters to the editor in the media.
• We held a press conference in front of City Hall.
• We held a rally on the Downtown Mall (pedestrian area).
• We handed out flyers, put a public service announcement on the radio, bought radio ads and print ads, raised a few donations to pay for things, did media interviews.
• We collected signatures, built a list, encouraged everyone on it to recruit more people and to contact City Council.
• We submitted our draft resolution to City Council with many pages of supporters’ names.
**Ask the City of Charlottesville to Divest from Weapons and Fossil Fuels**

*More information at DivestCville.org*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Zip / Postal Code</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Swanson</td>
<td>22902</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Lanzman</td>
<td>22935</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Twomey</td>
<td>22903</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Germino</td>
<td>22902</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>we must do this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley Midyette</td>
<td>22901</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Goering</td>
<td>22903</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karleen Pond</td>
<td>22903</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gui Indebetouw</td>
<td>22902</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis White</td>
<td>24590</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Socially responsible investments can perform just as well as conventional ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Caldwell</td>
<td>22901</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Lankford</td>
<td>22902</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branika Scott</td>
<td>22903</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>right thing to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mieke Zylstra</td>
<td>22902</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>we must do it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinah Nieburg</td>
<td>22902</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Russell</td>
<td>22902</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave Chapman</td>
<td>22902</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>for the sake of the planet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Damon</td>
<td>22903</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>there is no time to lose!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela Jiraneck</td>
<td>22936</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Alexander</td>
<td>22902</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Uribe</td>
<td>22963</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad Sayler</td>
<td>22932-2221</td>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Did you know that the city of Charlottesville invests our public money in weapons dealers and fossil fuel producers, so that we are — without ever having been asked — paying through our taxes to destroy our climate and proliferate weapons, including to brutal governments around the world. Other cities have divested from these destructive industries. In the past the city of Charlottesville has divested from Apartheid South Africa and violent Sudan. It can divest from fossil fuels and weapons. It can do so without losing money. Sign the petition at DivestCville.org. Come to the rally at 4 p.m. on Saturday April 27th at Central Place in the middle of the Downtown Mall with music by folk singer Ted Millich and by West African Drum and Dance in Charlottesville. Plan to attend the City Council meeting at 6 p.m. on Monday May 6th. No more using our own money against us! Sign the petition and spread the word: DivestCville.org

Tell the City of Charlottesville to stop investing our public money in fossil fuels and weapons.

Learn more and sign the petition at:

DivestCville.org

Attend the City Council meeting at 6 p.m. on May 6.

Tell the City of Charlottesville to stop investing our public money in fossil fuels and weapons.

Learn more and sign the petition at:

DivestCville.org

Attend the City Council meeting at 6 p.m. on May 6.
CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

• We brought all the people we could to the March 4 and May 6 meetings of the City Council and jumped through all the hoops to have as many speakers as possible get 3 minutes each. Videos of both meetings are at DivestCville.org

• We gave people signs to hold up. We asked those in agreement to stand. We dominated, and there was no organized opposition and nobody speaking against.

• We refused all efforts to split weapons from fossil fuels, knowing that one council member would try to pass only divestment from fossil fuels.

• We also met with the City Treasurer.
The City Council wanted to delay. But the reason turned out to be that the city had money invested in fossil fuels and weapons through both its Operating Budget (controlled by the City Treasurer and the City Council) and in its Retirement Fund (controlled by a Retirement Commission subject to little public control, slow to move on anything, in the middle of hiring someone, and with members to the right of the public).

We proposed that they divest the Operating Budget immediately and commit to advancing divestment with the Retirement Commission ASAP. They did so.

They asked me to join the Retirement Commission. I did.
DO YOUR OWN DIVESTMENT CAMPAIGN:
WORLDBEYONDWAR.ORG/DIVEST

Divest From The War Machine
THE AGONY OF DEFEAT

• The Retirement Commission stalled, distracted, prevaricated, evaded, and delayed for a year.

• I had to fend off proposals for “positive” “ethical” investment that included weapons and fossil fuels.

• I had to refute the possibility that the fund might lose any money.

• Research proved that in the parts of the fund we could get data on, it would have earned MORE money had it divested years earlier.

• I had to deal with endless discussions of what could tangentially constitute a weapons maker, and insist that we divest from an annually updated list of the top weapons dealers.

• I had to try in vain to overcome the patriotic hooha of arming the world with U.S. weapons – a very internationalist endeavor supported passionately by the biggest advocates of nationalism.
Whereas on June 3, 2019, in response to widespread public demand and against no opposition whatsoever, Charlottesville City Council passed a resolution that included: “NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the City of Charlottesville, Virginia that it declares its support and encouragement of any and all persons acting on behalf of City investment activity in regards to City operating funds, to divest all City operating funds from direct security investments in any entity engaged in the production of fossil fuels or the production or upgrading of weapons and weapons systems within 30 days.” Whereas the Charlottesville Retirement Plan Commission has for over a year diligently researched the likely outcomes of implementing the same policy, Whereas the portion of the Retirement Plan invested through Cornerstone -- the only portion for which we have such a comparison -- would have been larger on December 31, 2019, had such a policy been put in place on December 31, 2014, Whereas the Retirement Plan Commission’s extensive research suggests that, to the extent predictions are possible, such a gain, or at least the absence of any loss, is likely going forward, Whereas the weapons and fossil fuel industries are highly concentrated, with a large share belonging to a relatively small number of companies, Therefore the Retirement Plan Commission will immediately direct the Plan’s investment managers to divest from the largest 25 weapons producers and the largest 25 fossil fuel producers in the world, with the divestment to be completed by December 31, 2020, and with the largest 25 weapons producers drawn from this data (to be updated as appropriate in future years) and the largest 25 fossil fuel producers drawn from this data (to be updated as appropriate in future years).

https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRI-Top-100-2002-2018_0.xlsx
EPILOGUE

• I resigned from the Retirement Commission.
• That commission immediately passed rhetorical measures in support of someday sort-of divesting from fossil fuels, somewhat.
• I moved on to helping other localities work on divestment. The more places that do it – and the more weapons that are banned in the more places, as by the new treaty on nuclear weapons – the easier it will be.
• In Charlottesville, we went back to the City Council in 2020 and passed measures to demilitarize the police. We got part of what we wanted.
• World BEYOND War is helping Portland and other cities with demilitarization campaigns: https://worldbeyondwar.org/policing