

TOM CROOKER INVESTMENT FORUM AGENDA FOR JULY 25, 2012, 11:45AM

The Forum will begin meeting at 10:00 AM on August 1,
(except for 8/8 & 8/15, - OLLI Closed), and will continue to meet
at that time until the Fall term, which begins on September 19.

The Week That Was. Equities were up slightly for the week ending 7/20, despite Friday's big sell-off. The DOW was up 0.36%; the S&P was up 0.43%, and the NASDAQ was up 0.58%. The news for the week was mostly disappointing economic numbers, fears on Spanish debt (which drove the Friday sell-off,) but good corporate earnings numbers coming in for the third quarter. And the Fed may, or may not, provide additional economic stimulus, via QE3. Or, pretty much the same market drivers that we have seen for several quarters now.

The ten-year T ended the week at 1.458%, down a tick from the previous week. So investors in long-term Treasuries, despite being told by experts that they were committing financial suicide for several years now (actually, several decades,) continued to make money . . .

The Fiscal Cliff. The "Fiscal Cliff," --- the expiring "Bush" tax cuts (after the November 2012 elections) and what the polarized Congress will or will not do, during an election year, has serious implications for investors. And related issues include the level of US debt, and how we pay for Social Security, Medicare, health insurance, and the aging population. Add to that European debt and China's slowing growth, and what is an investor to do? Are there opportunities in all of this?

I would like to organize panel discussions of these issues, to take portions of several Forum sessions. Any volunteers to serve on three-person panels?

I note that the OLLI Fall semester has a four week session, from 10/17 to 11/7, titled "Deficits and Debt: a Coming Fiscal Train Wreck." It will be Wednesdays from 9:30AM to 11:00AM, just before the Forum.

Thinking of Buying . . . Health Care REIT (HCN.) Lou Coglianese is thinking about buying HCN. He will present his analysis of the REIT, and wants feedback on what you think. HCN (market cap of \$13B) owns real estate - nursing homes and assisted living facilities, hospitals, medical office buildings, which it leases to major medical providers. Is it a health care play or a real estate play?

Searching for Yield . . . Mortgage REITS (MREITS.) I talked about these a while ago, and they have gotten a lot of attention recently, with their 12% to 16% yields, plus recent double digit price appreciation. But, some would say, "don't try this at home." I will talk about this sector, and the risks (substantial) and need for MREIT investors to constantly monitor interest rate moves, the yield curve, and mortgage markets. I will also compare several MREITS and how they differ and perform.

Forum Member Buys and Sells

Buys

Devon Energy (DVN)

Hess (HES)

Novo Nordisk (NVO)

Cardinal Bank (CDBK)

American Capital Agency (AGNC)

Annaly Capital Management (NLY)

Portugal Telecom (PT)

Powershares Financial Preferred ETF (PGF)

PPL Corp (PPL)

I Shares Barclays Intermediate Term Credit Bond ETF (CIU)

Sells

CenturyLink (CTL)

Willis (WSH)

Verizon (VZ)

Al Smuzynski

asmuzynski@verizon.net