School Board's "Big Dig" Fiasco !! –Stupid Decisions–Start to Finish!!– Report by Robert A. Williams

Now that the School Board and County Commissioners have ignored all the problems with building a foundation for the new North Shelby School project, raised the cost estimates $4.6 million over the original budget, borrowed $34 million (using the new Health Department and the new North Shelby School as collateral) clearing the property next to the James Love School has actually began. Basically the trees and scrubs have been bulldozed and the actual contour of the property can be clearly observed.

I made a trip over this afternoon to see just how bad (many deep and wide gullies) the situation with the extensive grading requirements actually was. Scroll back to read previous articles about this project for more information. I walked the property from one side to the other and from one end to the other. There is nothing there that I did not look at. And, I will have to say, right here and now, that as bad as I thought the problem was, it is worse. Much worse!!! The Charles Road side of the property is just about as bad a piece of property as there is in Cleveland County for a construction project.

Also, a good sign of how bad this property is, is the fact that it is located on Charles Road where every piece of property that is fit for construction has been built upon. That should have told the nit-wit school board something.

I nick-named the new North Shelby project the "Big Dig" after the Boston, Massachusetts highway project (took 25 years to

complete) that was the most expensive highway project in US History. The Boston Globe newspaper estimated the final Big Dig project cost at $22 BILLION, will take twenty more years to pay off and was nine years over schedule and $19 Billion OVER budget.

The new North Shelby School Big Dig project is well on its way to overshadow Boston's Big Dig, adjusted for the difference in scales of the two projects. If the School Board would pull their heads out of the dirt and look at the costs, they would see that they could just walk away form the new North Shelby School project that will be located on the James Love School property and build the new North Shelby School on one of the many much more suitable pieces of property that is more suitable for construction. I suggest that the school board put on some brogan shoes, get off their behinds and walk this property tomorrow. Don't take my word for how bad this situation is and don't take anybody else's word for how good the property is. See for yourself how stupid you have been all along. Remember that you were told about this over a year ago.

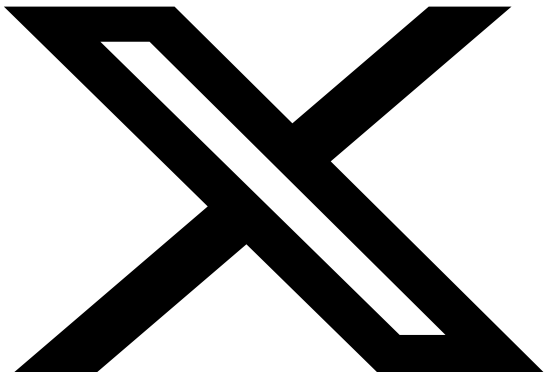
On the way home on South DeKalb Street I passed the Shelby Middle School to again observe the big gullies over there. I just wondered why Cleveland County Schools pays such high prices for sorry pieces of land. Then the thought hit me. Now I remembered what Danny Blanton had said about shifting kids around to fill the 400+ student vacancy at Shelby Middle School. Blanton had suggested moving the kids at Turning Point Academy to a vacant wing at Shelby Middle School and moving the kids at the old North Shelby School to the Central Offices where the Turning Point Academy had just vacated. The horse ring for the North Shelby Students could be located across Sumter Street where the ball field is located now.

WOW!!! I thought. What a simple solution. Use existing facilities that are empty, but furnished, and not have to build a new school that will probably end up costing $16 Million.

Danny Blanton’s excellent idea that was rejected by Bully Glover and his band of nit-wits, as well as the County Commissioners (another band of nit-wits) could have saved Cleveland County Taxpayers $16 Million.

Folks, this is the kind of stuff you should remember this November when you vote in the School Board Election. I recommend voting for Danny Blanton, Kevin Whisnant, Rodney Fitch and Robert Queen (if he runs). This is the School Board Dream Team!!!

Editor’s Note:
The road in the background is Charles Road, which is about 50 feet below the elevation of the new North Shelby School. This is about the only place where the school entrance road off of Charles Road can be built. It is estimated that over 300,000 cubic yards of dirt will have to be moved, compacted and leveled before construction of the school can even begin. And all of this is unnecessary.



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