

Commissioners Vote for 75% County “Fire Tax” Increase!!!– Falls Votes NO, Says there is Another Way– Re-Election Politics or What??? Falls doesn’t Say! –Report and Math by Robert A. Williams

In the midst of the already exploding scandals at Cleveland Community College, Cleveland County Schools, Commissioners, DA’s Office and the Economic Development crowd, we are not being fooled into overlooking what just happened to the volunteer fire districts in Cleveland County at the May 2, 2017 Commissioner’s meeting. Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!!! The Commissioners just got revenge for taxpayers voting down their phony sales tax increase in the 2016 election. They just raised your taxes without your vote of approval. Heck, without you even knowing about it or knowing the details. For Fallston and other districts that’s a 75% increase. Anytime you have to raise taxes by 75%, it’s a sure sign of bad leadership amongst the Commissioners. Nothing new about that.

And, let’s not forget, in Cleveland County politics there are always winners and there are always losers. Again Kings Mountain and Shelby are again the winners and the rest of us are the losers. You would think the rest of us would get the message. Vote the Commissioner fools out of office.

We haven’t done that so this is what we get for not having district representation on the Boards of Commissioners and the

School Board too. And, especially us not getting out candidates and then getting out to vote the trash out of office and put our people in office.

Now for the details of how we got screwed on this fire tax increase. And how we screwed ourselves.

I will start this report from the bottom line. The City of Shelby will spot annex the Clearwater Paper property. The county taxes and Shelby city taxes on all that expensive property (about \$500 millions in land and equipment) that is presently in the county will now go to the commissioners and the City of Shelby. ALL property remaining in Cleveland County Volunteer Fire Districts will have their property Fire Tax increased by 3.75 cents. Yeah, Shelby got the gold mine and we got the shaft. The lying commissioners have convinced all the volunteer firemen that they will get additional money too, but the bottom line on that is they will also be paying much higher taxes. Excuse me, We, make that WEEEEEE will be paying higher taxes.

Paying 75% higher taxes for what was never mentioned or discussed. Just like the sales tax increase on the 2016 Ballot never told what the money would actually be going for, the discussion and vote by the commissioners to raise the fire tax 75% never mentioned a word about where this money would go for except for one thing. \$120,000 per fire district to pay the volunteer firemen-some of whom will be paid and most will not be paid. That is a sure formula for disaster if I ever did see one. The ones getting paid will stay and the volunteers will all leave.

All of this was presented in a fancy slide show that apparently fooled all the volunteer firemen that filled the room. The firemen were told that the fire tax increase for an average house would only go up about \$5 a month. Carefully forgetting to say taxes are collected on a yearly basis and that \$5 per month is actually \$60 more on your tax bill. A big

jump.

Now, for some background and some math and some adding up to a conclusion of all this mess.

Let's start with the Town of Fallston and the Fallston Volunteer Fire Department. Especially the Fallston Volunteer Fire Department that is about to go away. The Fallston Town Council surrendered the Fallston Volunteer Fire Department without firing a shot. They were blackmailed by the commissioners. Read on.

I received a Notice of Public Hearing in my Post Office Box in Fallston Monday evening. The notice stated there would be a Public Hearing June 6, 2017 where the Cleveland County Commissioners would vote whether or not to annex the Fallston volunteer Fire Department into the Cleveland County Volunteer Fire Department Service District. After attending many commissioner's meetings over the past 20 years I wondered why Fallston would be fool enough to surrender their Fire Department to the crowd in Shelby.

So, I drove over to the Fallston Fire Department to see what was going on with all of this. Several Firemen told me they were tight on money and by joining the County Fire district they would get more money. I asked if you need more money, why don't you justify why you need more money and justify raising the fire tax just for Fallston instead of turning control of our fire department to somebody in Shelby. They had tried that and the Commissioners wouldn't let them I was told. Well, how much will this raise taxes? I asked. No increase in taxes I was told. More money has to come from somewhere I said. We don't print money I said.

They were looking me in the eye and believed every word that they were saying to me was true. I knew they were repeating just what they were told, but I also certainly knew what they were saying was NOT true. Extra money does not grow on trees.

It comes from somewhere and somebody pays. In this case I knew it was Fallston taxpayers that would pay the county and the county would return SOME of the money back to Fallston, after taking their cut.

So, early the next day I called the Mayor of Fallston about this. But not before checking the Commissioner Meeting Agenda for the meeting that very night. The information I got off the County Agenda indicated a 75% fire tax increase would be voted on that very night by the Commissioners. That is the MO of the Commissioners, have a vote before anybody finds out what is going on.

When I got in touch with the Mayor of Fallston, she indicated there would be a tax increase but did not know how much. And she indicated there would be a Town Meeting that very night where the town council would vote whether or not Fallston would join the fire district. AND, the Town of Belwood would also be voting that night too, since the Fallston Fire Department also serves Belwood.

I was even more alarmed about all this for the following reason. The Notice of Hearing stated the Fire District Boundaries would be revised and some kind of report would be drafted and both would be available by May 22nd for inspection. So, the Fallston Town Council, the Belwood Town council and the County Commissioners (with nobody from Upper Cleveland) voting on a plan and boundaries before the plan and boundaries even exists is a stupid and foolish thing to do. I don't care whose toes I am stepping on when I say that. It is a formula for disaster. Maybe not today or tomorrow, but soon we will realize just how bad we are screwing up by signing on to something without knowing what we are signing on to. No wonder Shelby High School has such a high dollar baseball field, auditorium and swimming pool and we have basically nothing at Burns. I am totally convinced the Shelby folks consider us folks in the upper Cleveland County area to be fools and imbeciles. And why shouldn't they? We prove it to

them time and time again by letting them get by with their mess.

I asked the Mayor to inform the Fallston Town Council of my concerns and recommended voting AGAINST the Fallston Fire Department to be annexed into the county fire district until the details could be worked out and everybody knew exactly what they were getting into. Since the Commissioner's Meeting started at 6 PM and the Fallston Town Meeting started at 7 PM I could not attend both meetings, so I decided the Commissioner meeting would probably be more important to find out just how bad Fallston and Belwood were going to be screwed over.

But, in the end it comes to this. If Fallston, Belwood and the entire Upper Cleveland County wants to be screwed over, asks to be screwed over and likes to be screwed over so much that we enjoy screwing over ourselves, why should Shelby and Kings mountain spoil our fun by not screwing us over.

Anyway, let's do some math:

Fallston has a 5 cent property tax that goes to the Town of Fallston and a 5 cent property "fire tax" that partly goes to the Fallston Volunteer Fire Department.

The 5 cent fire tax raises \$186,000 per year for the Fallston Fire Department.

A 75% increase in Fallston's fire tax should bring in \$186,000 times 1.75 or \$325,500 per year

According to the Commissioners meeting discussion Fallston would get \$230,000 per year plus an additional \$120,000 to pay salaries. \$230,000 plus \$120,000 adds up to \$350,000 per year.

Since Fallston would allegedly get an additional \$25,000 per year by being annexed into the Cleveland County Fire District, it would be in Fallston's best interest to join the County Fire District. However, plans, boundaries and such have not

been finalized. Final plans could make all this increase just go away. It might be just an illusion in the first place as nothing is in writing-except Fallston Fire Taxes are going up 75%.

But two questions remain:

1. Where will this extra \$25,000 come from? Is it real money just an illusion like I stated above?
2. What happens when property is reevaluated and the value goes up? An 8.75 cent tax would generate more money than before. Who would get that money then? Nobody knows, nobody has thought about that.

Why shouldn't Fallston and Belwood get some answers before they commit to surrender their Fire Department? An insider says they were blackmailed. Previously Fallston always paid cash for all they needed, but the Commissioners made them stop paying like that and borrow money. Then the county reduced the amount of money Fallston was getting from their own taxes. Yet nobody said anything.

Now, let's add more thing.

Why did Jason Falls vote No, saying there were other ways? Why did Jason Falls NOT present his other ways for discussion. Jason Falls is up for re-election next year and Jason Falls has promised never to vote for a tax increase and to only serve two terms as a Commissioner. Has Jason Falls changed his mind about not running for another term? Was it the Commissioner's majority plan to vote for the tax increase so Jason Falls could vote against the tax increase, yet know that the tax increase would pass anyway? There is just too much stupidity going on here to suit me.

I say while there are three seats (a majority) in the Commissioners race in 2018, just get rid of the three incumbents and put in a whole new majority. A majority that includes members that will look after the best interests of

the Upper Cleveland County folks too. Just my opinion folks. 2018 is next year. This can be done and all the scandals going on in Cleveland County could be stopped immediately. Thinks about it.

But Remember, We have 2017 elections to take care of too. Run for office and all us disappointed people get out and vote. And, Don't forget the School Board Elections. Those characters need cleaning out too. I recommend voting for Danny Blanton, Kevin Whisnant, Rodney Fitch and Robert Queen (if he runs) for the school board.

On top of all that, I recommend attending the Town Hall meeting to be held Sunday night at 6:30 PM at the Fallston Baptist Church Fellowship Hall. Danny Blanton and Kevin Whisnant are putting this on regarding selecting a new principal for Burns High School. Come out. That is this Sunday, May 7, 2017. Be sure to bring some money to donate to Blanton's and Whisnant's campaign. That is my idea, not theirs.