

Cleveland County scandals – what's next?

Shelby, NC – Presently, there are a couple of scandals that are still being discussed among the people. First, there is the issue regarding the president of Cleveland Community College, Dr. L. Steve Thornburg. Scandal number two concerns the recently resigned Cleveland County employee, Sam Lockridge, who headed the landfill, the animal shelter and the new gun range. In the first case, Thornburg was dealt a blow at the last meeting of the trustees on June 6, 2017, when they voted to not allow him to remain until December 31, 2017. In the Lockridge case, he was allowed to resign, after being on administrative leave (read that as with pay). Now, his resignation will be effective June 30, 2017.

Case 1, Dr. Thornburg has threatened the trustees and college with a lawsuit, allegedly due to what the Star ran in a story, after the last board meeting. My opinion, along with many others, is that Thornburg is merely wanting to make sure that he will be compensated at the least, through the end of the year, and if possible, even longer. I would say that's a bad idea, due to that little issue they call discovery. If he wants Cleveland County residents and many others across the map to read of his misdeeds and issues that he helped create, then a lawsuit would do just that. If the lawsuit does come to fruition, I say that it will do the man more harm than good, and all the crying in the world won't change that. He is responsible for the mess he has made, and he is not the only one that needs to be set free, from Cleveland Community College. He is merely one of many, who just happens to be the highest ranked. This mess is not just about the password fiasco. There are alleged other misdeeds, such as misuse of grant monies, less than factual numbers, grades, etc. being fed to the public in order to prop up their success.

Case 2, there are more stories coming out in regards to this particular story, and the alleged accusations are rising daily. The issue that seems to be the most talked about is the fact that the county allowed Lockridge to set his own terms as to when he would leave. If he is still employed through the end of the month, then he is still drawing a nice salary for the remaining weeks. Why is the man being allowed to do so? I recall an employee who was "let go" on the spot, with no pay, and actually not much of a reason. I realize that the county can hire and fire at will, but when an employee is terminated, except it's listed as a resignation, then something is terribly wrong. And therein lies the blame going to the commissioners. The county manager serves at the pleasure of the commissioners. The county manager hires and fires. When the county manager makes a bone-headed move, then the commissioners can weigh in on it.

Evidently, the commissioners, as well as the school board, can't seem to understand that as a board, they are in charge. The commissioners do not answer to the county manager, and the school board does not answer to the superintendent.

The Community College fiasco is the most difficult to comprehend, as related to the president and how long he would be allowed to stay. If all things were equal, there is no way a lone man could stand before 12 individuals, who all know the facts, who all know the consequences, and all know how the community as a whole feels about this mess...how can one man get his way? Thank God for some integrity on that board.

People are watching and people are reading. And people are understanding now that the local media is part of the problem. If there is no coverage, unless it's favorable, then the people won't have an idea that things are getting out of hand. It's up to bloggers and others, to lend a voice and become activists, and to hold those who have been elected and hired by those elected, accountable when problems arise. But the cover up continues, making matters even worse. Things are far

from over, on both accounts. Will the people see some honest to goodness decisions that will be made for the good of the people, or will it be more CYA by the powers that be, in order to not harm their mutual admiration society? We shall see. Rest assured, times have changed, and now people have an opportunity to be heard, and not be silenced by a system that had rather keep them silent. As I've learned a valuable lesson in the not too distant past, the best way to discredit most of these people, is to quote them!

[Ed: Reprinted with permission @ [Palmetto News-Opinion](#)]