Part XVII: July 11, 2017-A Day that Will Live in Infamy At Cleveland Community College!!! –Shannon Kennedy to be Next President of CCC??? –Board of Trustee Gridlock, Lie Detector Tests, Conflicts of Interest Allegations and Total Board Incompetence Cost Taxpayers and Donors $200,000 with more losses and scandals sure to come!!! Report and evaluations by Robert A. Williams

Editor's Notes: While writing Article Part XVI (Published July 8, 2017) about the CCC Board of Trustees meeting held June 11, 2017 regarding the many scandals and the leadership crisis at Cleveland Community College, which have been magnified ten times over by cover-up, gridlock, and what appears to be all around bumbling (seemingly on purpose) by the CCC Board of Trustees, and the planned schemes by the CCC Administration the following thought became obvious:

“Perhaps it is time to just pull the plug on Cleveland Community College and Cleveland County students go to Gaston College, Isothermal or Catawba Valley Tech in Hickory.”…Robert A. Williams in CCC Part XVI Article. I would now modify this a bit to leave off the word “Perhaps” and add “have the State Board of Community Colleges completely take over the running of CCC.” As it is now certain after the July 11, 2017 CCC BoT meeting that the CCC Board of Trustees are not capable, as a group of individual trustees with enough of them to cause gridlock so their own agenda to keep a lid on the bad things that have happened and are still happening can prevail. I was relatively late in coming to this conclusion.

The James G. Martin Center for Academic Renews reporter who first broke this sordid mess at CCC back in her April 4, 2017 article concluded her article early on by saying “If trustees aren’t willing to fully investigate potential whistleblower claims, which seems to be the case now, the onus is on North Carolina’s State Board of Community Colleges and other higher-level policymakers to do so. If that doesn’t happen, innocent college instructors may be mistreated, students may end up shortchanged, and taxpayer funds may be wasted on questionable or poorly managed programs.”

It is sad to say that the scandals swirling around CCC have now been traced back to the hiring of Dr. Shannon Kennedy, her rapid and controversial rise to power and dual enrollment program problems surfacing as early as 2005. Now the scandals have been exposed and Dr. Steve Thornburg is still on the job pending his $200,000 payoff. And the CCC Board and the scheming administration seems to be heading toward promoting Dr. Shannon Kennedy to President of Cleveland Community College. Read on. I bet when the pieces of the puzzle are put together in this article every reader with the most basic level of comprehension will come to the same conclusion as the James C. Martin Center Reporter and as I have come to those same conclusions.

July 11, 2017, 11:30 AM, Cleveland Community College, Shelby, North Carolina.

I walked into the CCC Jack Hunt Campus building seconds behind 2017 School Board candidate Kevin Whisnant. Mr. Whisnant, uncertain where the Board of Trustees Board Meeting was to be held, waited for me at the top of the stairs. I showed Mr. Whisnant where the Board Meeting was to be held. We were the first of many that were coming to attend the BoT scheduled meeting. Little did anybody expect at that time, but a planned scheme by CCC Administration to "trick" the Trustees had already began. Read on!!

As we were still very early, Mr. Whisnant and I were waiting outside the President's Office door when CCC President Dr. Steve Thornburg came out the door pulling a lectern that had sheets of paper attached to it. I asked Dr. Thornburg if that was where you want us to sign in to attend the meeting? Dr. Thornburg said, "no, this is the sign-up for people who want to speak to the Board during public participation." I immediately "smelled a rat" as this public participation signup sheet already had a number of signatures already on it, before it ever hit the light of day. I did not recognize any of the several signatures on that sheet. However, since I have attended County Commissioner meetings and School Board meetings for years, I have learned to pay attention to even the slightest detail of what goes on in Board meetings. And when there is some deviation, there is a reason for it that will soon play out if you pay close attention. Read on and I will explain to you the significance of those pre-signed public participation sign-up sheets during the course of the Board Meeting.

As the time for the meeting to start (12 Noon-sharp) came near and more and more citizens were coming in, we all went into the Board Room and found a seat. I immediately recognized that the CCC Board and Administration had read my previous article criticizing the "fancy meal" that they had at taxpayer

expense. Fine china, lily white custom monogrammed (cloth napkins, silverware, steaming hot serving trays and a full and fancy meal. This time they still had all the fancy china, etc. but the meal was a single large scoop of chicken salad and a sandwich roll. Plus a very small individual dish containing some grapes or black olives. I was not close enough to tell which.

Since I happened to have found a seat close to the head of the big shiny table, I reminded Chairman Greg Melton that according to North Carolina law, the Board of Trustees had gathered together at 12-Noon and that is when the meeting actually began, And that just simply changing the agenda to show the meeting started at 12:30 PM so the Trustees could eat their meal did not satisfy NC Law regarding changing the time, place or date of a Board meeting. Mr. Melton immediately turned around, left and came back with Ms. Shante Martin, an attorney with the NC State Community College Association. Ms. Martin explained that they had posted a time change on the President's Office door and that was all they needed to do to change the time of the meeting. Well, I was not going to have any of that. I informed Ms. Martin that posting a sheet of paper on the President's Door at a Community College that happened to be closed for the summer did not meet the standards of public notification according to the law as it was stated. Also, I said, the Board of Trustees would have had to vote at their last meeting before the change of schedule for the meeting and they had not done so. Ms. Martin had no answer for that. But again, this was the first time a lawyer had attended a CCC Board of Trustee meeting. Again, I smelled a Rat!!! Bad legal advice telling the Board that what they did was right when it was obviously wrong. Something was up. In just a few minutes I see Ralph Meekins, the CCC Board lawyer. Later there would be a third lawyer. Something was definitely up.

Anyway, there were 18 to 20 of us siting in those

uncomfortable fold up chairs at the 12-Noon meeting start time and we were not about to leave. We sat there and watched the Board eat their meal, such as it was, until 12:30 PM. Then it was announced that there were a number of people who had been standing outside and the room fire safety capacity would be exceeded. Therefore the meeting was relocated to a much larger room downstairs.

Upon observation I had concluded this group of Trustees were really not ready for prime time. They were also not ready to comply with the open meeting laws of North Carolina. The whole deal with the meals and all was just a small indication. Governmental bodies such as the CCC Board of Trustees are supposed to conduct their business in public. This meet and eat stuff behind closed doors as they had been doing and are still trying to do is a relic of long ago. They only got by because nobody questioned them. That might be fine as long as things are running well. But folks, these guys and gals on the CCC Board of Trustees have refused to face the facts. Things are not going well at CCC, there are scandals at every turn and this College, Administration and Board of Trustees are all under a microscope. And they don’t even get the fact they are not even conducting their meetings in accordance with the law. Normal governmental agency Board meetings are held in meeting rooms and don’t include fancy meals eaten in front of the public that is paying the bills. Especially when important donors like Mrs. Patsy Rose, three members of the LeGrand family (Stuart, Brian and Brendan), former Board Chairman Ellis Monroe and noted philanthropist Charlie Carrigan are treated so poorly. Rude behavior by CCC, bordering on uncouth. (It was noted that Sheriff Alan Norman, Wayne King and Allen Langley did not eat their prepared meal in protest of such a waste of taxpayer dollars.) Read on folks. I am just starting to tell this tale.

So, now we all go to the much larger meeting room downstairs. When I enter the room I see the horseshoe shaped arrangement

for the Board Members on one end of the room and many rows of chairs on the other end of the room for the public. More importantly, I see that most of the chairs for the public are filled up front by people with CCC identification badges. Apparently CCC employees who are on the payroll. Those of us who were not CCC employees were forced to sit in the very back rows.

But that didn't last long. When the Board meeting was called to order, us in the back could not hear a word. There was no sound system. I smelled another Rat right off.

So, I pick up my clipboard that I always bring to meetings to take notes on, stand up and make my way around the right side of the room to right up to where the Board members were sitting. I should have also brought my chair as I now had to stand for the duration. But I could hear it all. I saw Stuart and Brian LeGrand and others do the same as I had done over on the left side of the room. We intended to hear what was going on in this public meeting no matter how hard the CCC Administration and (some on the) Board tried to keep us in the dark or, in this case, out of hearing range.

The first item on the meeting agenda was regarding ethics and reports of unethical behavior. From all the minutes of previous CCC Board of Trustee meetings, no conflict of interest was ever brought before the Board although several board members had obvious conflicts. This time was different.

Board member Wayne King had brought up the fact that CCC does business with Westmoreland Printers which is an obvious conflict of interest in accordance with the law as Board member Wes Westmoreland is the owner of Westmoreland Printers and stands to gain by his business with CCC. In general a CCC Board member has a conflict of interest when, among other things he or she "derives any income or commission directly or indirectly from the his business with CCC." So, Wayne King is 100% correct. (This same situation also seems to apply to

Board members Allen Langley and Greg Melton, whose terms ran out June 30, 2017.)

However, the lawyers, Ralph Meekins and Shante Martin said no, everything was all right. Wayne King wasn't having any of that. He stated in his reading of the law that the law basically meant what the law says and he was not accepting the "advice" of the attorneys to the contrary.

Westmoreland apologized to the taxpayers of Cleveland County if he had made a mistake by any misinterpretation of the law and said he would refuse any future printing business with CCC.

Editor's Note: Wayne King was totally correct to not blindly accept the two attorney's advice. He had read the law and the law was clear. Wayne King as a board member, is personally responsible for his own vote (as are the other board members) no matter what the consequences are. And the lawyers are not. You take their advice at your risk, not theirs

Wes Westmoreland was right too. Sort of. Westmoreland cannot change his past dealings with CCC but he swiftly corrected his mistake by refusing to do any more printing work for CCC. (However, Westmoreland did not offer to resign for his transgressions as many would consider appropriate.) Wouldn't it be nice if all board members, including Westmoreland would take that approach on all the issues at CCC. This was not the end of it though. Read on.

The next item of business on the agenda was the swearing in of new Board of Trustees. Michael Cheng and Betty Carrigan were sworn in by the Cleveland County Clerk of Court Mitzi Johnson.

Editor's Note. Four Board of Trustees members terms ended June 30, 2017.
1. The vacancy created by former Board Chairman Ellis Monroe's resignation in disgust a few months ago was filled by the County Commissioners with Commissioner Jason Falls. The

Commissioners also appointed Falls for a full term back in June.
2. The Commissioners appointed Michael Cheng to replace Greg Melton
3. Governor Roy Cooper appointed Betty (Mrs. Charlie) Carrigan to replace Allen Langley.
4. The School Board has not appointed anybody yet to the seat held by June Yarboro. Our information is that Mrs. Yarboro has smartly informed the CCS Board that she does not want to be re-appointed to the CCC Board. It is expected that the School Board will make their appointment at the CCS Board meeting July 24, 2017. That appointment may be contentious as we have been informed that former board member Allen Langley, who was originally appointed by the Governor and whose term expired, now wants to be re-appointed to the CCC Board by the CCS Board. Some hanky-panky appears to be going on here. Especially since another highly qualified person has expressed an interested in being appointed to the CCC Board by the CCS Board. Also note that CCC Board of Trustee member June Yarboro, whose term expired June 30, 2017 attended the July 11, 2017 CCC Board of Trustee meeting and voted in that meeting. Perhaps her vote was illegal and may have otherwise caused a continuation of gridlock in several 6-6 tie votes in this July 11, 2017 meeting as there were only eleven legitimate Board members present. Thus negating any possibility of a tie votes that are coming up shortly in this highly controversial meeting and possibly making, along with other situations, the vote to pay Thornburg $150,000 null and void. Someone on the Board of Trustees needs to ask their many attorneys about that.

Now some fireworks in this meeting that was to end up lasting nine hours. The next item on the agenda was a report from the nominating committee and the election of new officers for the new 2017-2018 term. For this Item, the presiding officer of the meeting was turned over to Board Secretary Dr. Thornburg.

The Nominating Committee Chairman, Lamont Littlejohn, with much explaining reported that the Nominating Committee (which were not named) had recommended Wes Westmoreland as Chairman and Jason Falls as Vice Chairman. Then in what appeared to be a clear departure from normal parliamentary procedure (Robert's Rules of Order) Rev. Dr. Littlejohn made the nomination in the form of a motion. Then Wayne King immediately makes a "substitute" motion to nominate Jason Falls as the Board of Trustees Chairman citing Westmoreland's conflict of interest that was previously discussed but not resolved to King's (and possibly others including myself) satisfaction.

The Board meeting entered into a period of confusion, bordering on chaos. Thornburg was "confused" and asked multiple times for legal opinions on parliamentary procedural rules. (I thought Thornburg knew better than this but throwing the Board into a total state of confusion might have been his plan all along, especially for later on in the closed session to come,) A vote on the substitute motion was a 6-6 tie (remember Yarboro's possible illegal vote) therefore it did not pass. Then the vote on the first motion also tied, so it did not pass either. Then Jason Falls and Wes Westmoreland were each asked to give a little speech on why each of them wanted to be chairman.

Then they decided to vote on the same motions again although neither of them passed the first time around. The substitute motion was voted on first and another 6-6 tie. Then the first motion was voted on and the results were 6-5 to pass. Board member Gordon Hamrick had abstained from voting that time. Then the question arose about how could Hamrick have voted all the previous votes and then abstained. And more discussion.

The wind up of all this was that Wes Westmoreland was declared Chairman and Jason Falls was declared the Vice Chairman. Westmoreland, at this point, took over as the presiding officer for this July 11, 2017 CCC Board of Trustees meeting.

Next on the agenda was the new Public Participation section. These minimum rules as mandated by state law require 15 minutes be set aside in every meeting and each participant be allowed up to three minutes.

Editor's Note: Remember the Public Participation sign up sheets that Thornburg had brought out before the meeting even started and no one but myself and Kevin Whisnant were present? The sheets that already had names on it? Get ready, the dirty dealing planned scheme I smelt a Rat about is coming to be right now.

Chairman Westmoreland Calls the first name on the list.

Betsy Stach: CCC was such a fine institution, so happy to work there, everything positive, no problems with CCP or anything else.

Next:

Kevin Proctor: : CCC was such a fine institution, so happy to work there, everything positive, no problems with CCP or anything else.

Next:

Betty Taylor: More of the same but stated a little different.

Next:

Jonathan Davis: CCC a beacon of Hope. More of the Same

(Sources report that Jonathan Davis told Exec VP Shannon Kennedy that he was thinking about resigning during all the mess at CCC and Kennedy allegedly responded "No, then we will both look guilty.")

Next:

Susan Ubanski: First speaker to not deliver a preordained positive message that CCC was the best thing since sliced

bread. Susan had recently quit CCC in disgust and was speaking up.

Then, Westmoreland stated the 15 minutes were up.

Editor's Note: From the start the planned scheme was to fill the public participation time up with positive messages about CCC, throw off on anybody who said otherwise and basically make a show for the Board members. Especially the new board members that all the allegations were a hoax perpetrated by just a few disgruntled employees.

But then, Chairman Westmoreland, with many names still on the list , asked the Board if they would extend the time. And they did. The planned scheme had failed, partially anyway.

The next speaker was called:

(?) Zomora: (I did not get the first name.) Stated support for Ginger Bullock and those that were speaking out about the many problems at CCC. Said Bullock was a professional who stood up to CCC leadership and would not support sub-standard teaching. Said Bullock had stood up "when others were not courageous enough" to stand up for fear of retaliation.

Next:

Brendan LeGrand: Stated problems at CCC was not a "family quarrel," that problems were serious and not getting better. Said that there was enough proof two months ago to terminate Thornburg for good cause. Thornburg placed Board of Trustees article in Star, wanted to make better deal for himself. Recommended no deal with Thornburg, hire interim President immediately and move along resolving the rest of the issues and scandals.

Chairman Westmoreland then recognized former CCC Board of Trustee member and former Chairman Ellis Monroe as well as Greg Melton.

The Board Approved the minutes of the June 6, 2017 BOT meeting unanimously.

Then Allen Langley (No longer a Board member) was asked to provide a status report on the various outstanding allegations to be investigated by a third party investigator.

The report basically was that the Board would need to approve $1,787 for a third party investigator and $850 for lie detector tests for President Thornburg and Exec VP Shannon Kennedy. (Outside the meeting discussions indicated these lie detector tests were intended to verify whether or not Thornburg and Kennedy had had an affair.)

Editor's Note: Most would say any government agency is in deep do-do when they have to administer lie detector testing to their two top managers. I am sure this will be explored in other articles.

Then the agenda called for a closed meeting.

Editor's Note: NC law has very strict requirements on what is allowed to be discussed behind closed doors. The law also requires that the motion that must be made to go into closed session is very specific about the purpose of the closed session.

Rev. Dr. Lamont Littlejohn made the motion to go into closed session, which was seconded and passed unanimously. However, that motion appears to be illegal in accordance with North Carolina law, which could make everything agreed upon in the closed session and voted on afterward null and void. This CCC Board of Trustees doesn't seem to get it that NC Law has to be strictly followed in the process and administration of what this board does. Read on, there is much more.

The Board goes into closed session in the original Board room where this meeting started. The meeting included the CCC Board of Trustees, their two lawyers and then Thornburg and his

lawyer, Bob Yelton.

This closed session orders pizza around 7:30 PM and comes out of closed session around 9:00 PM. Seven hours in closed session plus two hours for the regular meeting equals nine hours total. This is probably a record in the history of CCC BOT meetings.

Of course nobody waited seven hours for the closed session. Especially the Star whose reporters were not there to cover the meeting in the first place. But the CCC Board of Trustees issues a press release to the Star which basically the Board had come out of the closed session and had agreed to give Thornburg $150,000 plus around another $50,000 for time due by July 31, 2017. Thornburg's last official day on the books would be that July 31, 2017 date. Thornburg would agree not to make any more claims against CCC. By the time the vote was taken, Board member Bill Turpish had left the meeting. Wes Westmoreland abstained from voting, Wayne King, Jason Falls and Sheriff Alan Norman voted against giving $200,000 (or anything) to Thornburg and Board members June Yarboro, Chris Turner, Larry Hamrick, Lamont Littlejohn (all the CCS school board appointments) plus Gordon Hamrick, Plus new Board members Betty Carrigan and Michael Cheng voted for giving Thornburg that $200,000.

Editor's Note: The $150,000 that will be given to Thornburg is allegedly going to be misappropriated from county funded allotted to CCC for roof repairs. The whole CCC Board of Trustees have apparently joined in with certain CCC administration people in the misappropriation of money. A criminal enterprise. So, what can we expect not from this crowd in the future. As for Thornburg, his paid time off began early as he left out last week on FMLA paid leave and will not come back to CCC. I would say that Thornburg certainly has more love for money coming into his pocket than the best interest of CCC or any of the students.

Then the CCC Board of Trustees took one more illegal action before they adjourned. They decided to hold a meeting at 7:00 PM July 17, 2017 to interview an interim president brought forward by the personnel committee. I would recommend the "good" board members demand a thorough search with many candidates. I recommend this for one specific reason. With Thornburg gone, this crowd may say all the problems are solved and Shannon Kennedy is the next President of the Cleveland Community College. Some might laugh at that suggestion, but I would bet that thought (and goal) is raging through the minds of the high level bureaucracy at CCC.

Also note that sources indicate Dr. Shannon Kennedy is scheduled, in the very near future to represent, CCC at a meeting of Presidents of NC Community Colleges.

The meeting was adjourned.