Public Illegally Kept Away from School Board Meeting!!! Report by Robert A. Williams

If you go to the Cleveland County Schools Website under Board Meetings you will see no meeting was scheduled for August 14, 2017. If you go to Board.docs and surf around a little, you will find that there, hidden amongst a lot of stuff, was mention of a School Board Closed Session being held at James Love for August 14, 2017. Being as North Carolina Law requires Open Sessions before you go into Closed Sessions, I smelt a Rat. Also the location at James Love School made me smell another rat. Something weird was going on. Being as the location was at James Love School instead of the Central offices, and state law requires notification on changes of meeting time or location and no notifications were given, I smelt another rat on top of all that. I was not going to miss this August 14, 2017 secret meeting for the world.

I got there early too. I suspected that since I had written an article that, in part, reported the school board had not been updated in a public session on the progress at James Love on the new North Shelby School Project the Board wanted to sneak in a trip to the project so they could say that everything was going well, knowing that everything was not going well.

When I got there with time to spare, I walked around the outside of James Love to see what was going on with the new North Shelby Project. It was around 5:30 PM and not much was going on. I walked down a sidewalk to the very end and got a good overview. Since there were torrential rains the night before I knew the school board would not be doing much touring around out back where most of the dirt problems were. I didn’t much care to clean up my shoes either so I limited my inspection to the sidewalk only. I have been on many

construction sites. I know problems when I see them. What I did notice was lots of large earthmoving equipment, bulldozers and such. Big and deep ravines too. This place would be a disaster if any handicapped child in a wheel chair ever got loose on this roller coaster terrain.

Then I went back and entered James Love through the front door. The first person I saw was Assistant Superintendent John Yarbro. I asked Mr. Yarbro where the School Board meeting was and he said the "Media Center" right down the hall. As I walked down the hall I saw a room marked "Library" and kept on walking down the hall looking for a "Media Center." I came to the end of the existing hall, took a turn and on down and on down some more. I had looked at the original new North Shelby School Plans and I knew I was in the connecting corridor between James Love and North Shelby. So, I just kept on walking down that hall too. I was able to look out some windows to see what was going on and avoid the mud as well. I observed some only Hispanic workers (not wearing hard hats) putting some finishing touches on the flashing on this connecting corridor. Little did I realize this short inspection trip I was making all by myself would play big into what would happen later. But that is my MO. Look around as much before hand and make in-depth observations of the details that I see. This approach serves me well as I usually know when I am fed bull loney.

As I get back to the room marked "Library," but called "Media Center" (No wonder our kids are often confused) I see Superintendent Fisher and he tells me the meeting would be a Closed Session and I could wait in the reception area. It is still a few minutes early so I walk into the Library anyway. I notice Roger Harris, Donnie Thurman and Jeff Jones are not there. Jeff Jones did come in a few minutes later, but Roger Harris and Donnie Thurman did not. I make a quick inspection of the Board Members and Dr. Fisher.

Fisher is dressed in a very nice suit so I know he wouldn't be

going anywhere in the mud or any other dirty places (Clean places are hard to find on a construction site.) Nobody has on shoes that are suitable for a real inspection of a muddy construction site. No safety glasses or hearing protection. All this will become important very soon.

With a little time still, I get up and skim through some of the schools library books. Just what are these young children reading? More important, what are our Cleveland County Schools giving them to read? Every parent in Cleveland County with kids in school should be interested in this. One book especially caught my eye. It was about a fox invading a hen house and the hens attack the fox, threatening to kill the fox and have him for dinner. The book seemed to be justifying violence. A bit of sexism too. Parents, these are the questions you should be asking and acting upon.

One of the main reasons I wanted to see the opening of the meeting was whether or not the School Board followed state law in opening the meeting and going into a Closed Session properly. Rules of Parliamentary Procedures and state law precisely dictate how to open meetings and state laws are very particular that motions to go into Closed Session MUST Identify and for the record the exact law that specifies the very few reasons that Closed Sessions are allowed. Of course this School Board again ignored and violated the law. Bully Glover simply asks for a motion to go into closed session and someone says “So Moved.” The reason I take notice of such things is, if the School Board will not follow the little laws, they won’t follow the big laws either. This approach has also served me well in finding problems at CCS. Hey, if an organization doesn’t advocate finding and fixing problems they ultimately fail. Spending and wasting lots of tax dollars in the process. Actually, the whole $16 million new North Shelby School project is a failure, a total waste and was not needed. There was plenty of room to move the 80 North Shelby students to Shelby Middle School which has over 400 empty slots for

students. Go back and read other articles on this website about the failed new North Shelby School Project.

I leave the room at this point and go up the hall to the reception area. Around 6:30 PM I see architects Roger Holland and Chuck Hamrick arrive and wait down the hall with John Yarbro. Neither have hard hats, protective shoes, safety glasses or ear protection with them.

Around 7:30 PM the School Board comes out of closed session and again fail to follow the law as required before they adjourn the meeting.

Then, as I anticipated the reason they had the meeting at James Love, all the Board Members re-assemble, again, against state laws that determine an assembly of a quorum of school board members constitutes an open meeting and the public is entitled to attend, they are about to take a “secret tour” of the new North Shelby School construction site with Architects Roger Holland and Chuck Hamrick as their guides.

The only problem the school board had was a member of the public was there and wanted to attend this illegally noticed meeting masquerading as a so called tour. That member of the public demanded to go on that tour. That member of the public was me. Read on.

The school board members were handed out hard hats for the tour. I was told by Superintendent Fisher and Assistant Superintendent Yarbro that it was an OSHA Requirement that everybody had to wear a hard hat to go on the tour. I asked for a hard hat. They said they didn’t have any more hard hats. I reminded Fisher that I had already been down this hallway and observed only Hispanic workers on the job. And NONE of them were wearing hard hats. Fisher incorrectly says “They don’t work for me.”

We were standing in a doorway and as I looked down into the hallway, I saw Roger Holland and Chuck Hamrick without hard

hats. Fisher offered me a tour on another day. I said I want to go today with the school board. I am a member of the public and “I want to hear and see what the school board hears and sees.” What I really wanted was to hear any questions and comments from the school board as well as what the Architects told them. I already knew from my own experience on construction sites what I was likely to see and identify things that were wrong to see if anyone else on the school board would pick it up. Or the Architects. I pretty much knew that every member on the school tour, except Danny Blanton, knew absolutely nothing about commercial construction.

In the end I was not allowed to go on the tour because they said they didn’t have enough hard hats. Of course I had already counted heads and I knew two Board Members, Roger Harris and Donnie Thurman, were not there so that would have meant the two extra hard hats were hidden away somewhere just to say they didn’t have enough hard hats for me to have one. A pre-meditated lie, but I made them tell it. Checking with sources later it appears Roger Harris had gone at the last minute to the hospital with chest pains and Donnie Thurman had called in at the last minute that he had to stay home with a sick wife.

I say again, they would have had enough hard hats for everyone on the school board to have one and with two board members missing, there were two extra hard hats that they had hidden somewhere to keep me away from the tour.

As far as Superintendent Fisher telling me those Hispanic construction workers working without hard hats didn’t work for him, Fisher also said that he would “file a report.” Why should I believe anything Superintendent Fisher says when he has already told me so many lies. Same thing with the rest of the public, Why should any member of the public believe anything Fisher and the School Board has to say, especially in their press releases to the Shelby Star. By the way, no Shelby Star Reporter was present, so anything you read in the Star

about the North Shelby School progress is a CCS press release.

But, hey, I was the one who actually saw the Hispanic workers (and I still don’t know whether or not they were legal) working on a construction site without hard hats. I should be the one who makes the report to OSHA. Of course I know a little bit about OSHA rules and know steel toe shoes, safety glasses and ear protection is also required. So, the entire school board contingency needs to be reported to OSHA too.

And then there are all the laws that were broken by the school board that were likely only misdemeanors. But when two or more conspire to break the law, even misdemeanor laws, that conspiracy is a felony. I think I shall make a formal report to law enforcement just to see what our elected District Attorney Mike Miller will do with the criminal element on the School Board. I suspect nothing, just like on the Shearra Miller conflict of interest charge and the SBI Report about school Credit Card fraud. But one thing is sure, the DA will absolutely do nothing unless he is formally notified through the proper channels.

In the meantime folks, this is an Election Year for the School Board. Re-electing Danny Blanton and Electing Robert Queen, Kevin Whisnant and Rodney Fitch will go a long way in straightening out the criminal element at Cleveland County Schools.

See you on Election Day, November 7, 2017. Turn out to vote to make a change.