Shelby TEA Party Throws Best Candidate Forums of All Time!!! Report by Robert A. Williams

The Shelby TEA Party held a candidates Forum on August 17, 2017 for the Democrat Candidates for the Cleveland County School Board prior to their Primary Election on September 12, 2017. They also invited the Republican School Board Candidates to their July meeting although the Republicans do not have a Primary Election this year.

Despite Democrat School Board Candidates Phillip "Bully" Glover, Tommy Greene and Guy "What's his Name" Suttle snubbed the TEA Party invitation without even a reply or a Thank You. I suspect this will be reflected on Election Day when the people get to cast their vote-For Someone else. Candidates Dena Green, Coleman Hunt and representatives for Barbara Romich (Ron Spicer and Ginger Bullock) attended the 2017 Democrat School Board Candidate Forum and were cordially received.
This event put on by the Shelby TEA Party and moderated by Member Bill Turpish was the best candidate forum I have ever attended. The forum was a combination Candidate Introduction, TownHall and Listening tour for the candidates as well as the audience. It went like this.

Introduction/Debate: Moderated
The Candidates were given six minutes each to introduce themselves and explain why Democrat voters should vote for them in the Democrat Primary.

Barbara Romich (Represented) started first. Thirty Eight years of teaching experience K-College Level. Against wasteful

spending and inefficiency, a go-getter, innovative, not a professional politician and totally for education-real education for the children.

Dena Green was next. Dena's "Home Run" quote was "with the right leadership, education in Cleveland County can prosper." A product of a Cleveland County Education, Gardner-Webb, Business Training, Masters Degree in Accounting. Four kids-all successful. Member Shiloh Baptist Church. Major volunteer at schools and with groups supporting schools at every level from PTO to others for years. Substitute Teacher at every level.. "Education has a special place in my Heart." Also: it is a time to step forward, be honest and transparent, all children in all zones matter and there is a need for transparency.

All well said.

Coleman Hunt was next. (Summarized from Mr. Hunt's prepared statement.) Grew up on a Cleveland County farm and started school at Green Bethel-a segregated school. Started at Crest High in 1967 – 11th grade-at the end of segregation. Learned to play football and won scholarship at Gardner Webb. Finished Gardner Webb and went to work at Crest High School, moved around over the years. Eleven years Principal at Washington Elementary, which went from low performing to top performing. Says will work with School Board so teachers can be successful. Parent of two children who now live elsewhere. Said it was time to give back.

Now, the real action began. A TownHall type Question and Answer period. This audience was the most well informed of any audience at any Forum I have ever attended.

TownHall:

At this point the candidates answered questions from the audience. This audience, as stated previously, was well informed regarding issues related to education, Cleveland County Schools and the various related problems and

educational issues.
School Choice:

Dena Green-for,
Barbara Romich-for,

Coleman Hunt stated he did not advocate school choice. Mr. Hunt also insinuated that Charter Schools were not public schools. Moderator Bill Turpish reminded Mr. Hunt that Charter Schools were indeed public schools. Betsy Harnage, the Cleveland County Register of Deeds and a Board member of Pinnacle Classical Academy, was chafing at the bit to add to that discussion, but Moderator Turpish's response suited Harnage sufficient to add her comments later in the Forum.
Audience member Larry Moore asked the candidates to "define a quality education." Each candidate stumbled a little to a lot on this question.

Barbara Romich said parents must be a part of decisions.

Coleman Hunt said "not having to take remediation classes. Kids are ready."

Dena Green probably said it best that a quality education is when the education "is sufficient to meet the needs of the student to be successful in their career."

Larry Moore followed up with some statistics regarding Cleveland County Schools.
65% of students going to Community Colleges need remediation. There is a difference between what Politicians say and what actually happens. Cleveland County students are NOT getting a quality Education. Barbara Romich added, "This must be addressed." Valerie McCoy added that a quality Education included a child being able to read and write in cursive and be ready for a vocation. "Our children can't sign their name," she said.

Moderator Turpish added that CCS has no plans for teaching

vocations. Barbara Romich (Representative) said that CCS should send students to Cleveland Community College for vocations-in dual enrollment programs. Teaching vocations in high schools is too expensive for each high school to have vocation equipment. This did not go over well with the audience. Myself included. A lady in the audience who I did not know presented a statistic that about 15% of high school students go to college. 6% to four year colleges and 9% go to community colleges. That leaves 85% that do not go to college. It appears that high schools better teach vocations or 85% of our high school graduating classes will go unemployed. (School Board Member Danny Blanton often makes that same point.)

Coleman Hunt stated he did not have the answer on how to fix these statistics, “but it is a concern.”
Dena Green said the “Central Services dollars that were supposed to be saved from the merger should have gone to teachers.” That she liked input from the public and “Waste should be weeded out.”

Inequities between High Schools:

Dena Green said she had personal knowledge of inequities. It was her “pet peeve” to make equal.
Coleman Hunt incredibly said that merger left inequities, but enough was being done and there was no need to address this.
Barbara Romich said that CCS should have used merger savings to enhance a quality education for students.

Student Funding Issues:

Betsy Harnage stated that Charter School funding was only 73% of the funding for traditional public schools (with much better results by the way) and asked the candidates what they thought about this?

Dena Green said “100% of funding should follow the student.

Coleman Hunt dodged the question.

There was some interruption and I did not hear Barbara Romich's representative answer that question.
Vouchers:

Dena Green supports vouchers. "It should be the Parents choice where their child goes to school."

Coleman Hunt was against vouchers but stated if the state went along he would not fight it.

Barbara Romich stated that she was against vouchers because vouchers were "a slippery slope" and the money needed to be kept within Cleveland County and for public schools only.

Where should the Power be? State or local?:

Coleman Hunt said the power should be with the State with collaboration with local school boards. Was against Federal Control.

At this point the Forum mostly turned into a "Listening Tour" for the Candidates as many in the audience knew more about the various problems (in education and some problems not in educational processes) in Cleveland County Schools than the candidates did.

Listening Tour:
Brendan LeGrand stated 55% of county tax revenue went to the schools which used much of the money to cover up scandals and waste. (Like the unnecessary new North Shelby School-$16 million wasted, Central Services renovation $14 million wasted, etc.) CCS was "just protecting their own." There was some discussion and Coleman Hunt stated that he would have to get some facts. Mrs. LeGrand reprimanded Mr. Hunt a bit by commenting, "we have the facts. Why don't you, with 40 years experience in Cleveland County Schools, not have the facts?"

Guy Smith correctly stated "publicity dollars are wasted" when State laws require school aged children go to school anyway.

Mrs. LeGrand correctly added that her own research into records showed Cleveland County Schools had spent several hundred
thousands of dollars with the Shelby Star in billboards and other “consulting” services that added not one dime to education.

Larry Moore brought up the fact that professional positions within the Central Services like Human Resources, Operations, Purchasing, etc. were not filled with persons trained in those fields but people with Teaching Certificates. This has been confirmed as true.

Dena Green brought up the fact that her husband, a two time Super Bowl winner-now retired, had applied as a Football Coach and was not even offered an interview because he did hot have a teacher’s certificate.

Guy Smith brought up Common Core. Coleman Hunt replied that was up to the state.

Billy Scruggs brought up the fact that school buses had traveled his road for 30 years and not would not drop off his grandson at his house. Mr. Scruggs related that School Board Member Jo Boggs had told him it was illegal for a school bus to go down his road. Mr. Scruggs also related that he had also called School Board Member Kathy Falls about the bus situation and stated that the child would get soaked in the rain. Kathy Falls told him “that’s what they make umbrellas for.” Dena Green replied that she had similar bus route problems with her own children and stated “this is a big deal.”

In more discussion about Common Core, Valerie McCoy asked, is 2+2 not 4 anymore.

About then it was time to go.

Many folks were surprised that I did not ask even one question or speak up one word during this very extensive and

informative Candidate’s Forum. Hey, I was too busy taking notes so I would get this article down correctly as no other media was in attendance. I believe I have done what I set out to do. Get the facts out correctly.

Also Folks, Remember that the Democrat School Board Primary Election will be held September 12, 2017 and I believe early voting will start in late August. Registered Democrats and Registered Unaffiliated voters can vote in this Primary Election for the Democrat School Board Candidates. There is no other primary election this year except this one. As I am a registered Unaffiliated voter I plan to vote in this Election.

I recommend voting for only two candidates, Dena Green and Barbara Romich. Read this article, gather information from other sources and I believe you will agree that these two Democrat candidates are the best the Democrats have to offer. Of course the final selection for school board members will be in the General Election held November 7, 2017.
A marked up official Sample Ballot for the Democrat Party Primary Election for School Board is attached for your convenience.

[gview file=”http://citizensforgoodgovernment.org/online/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Marked-up-Sample-Ballot-School-Board-2017.pdf”]