

The Merger that didn't Merge!!! Equal Facilities a Bald Faced Lie—Truth Slips Out at CCS Board Meeting January 8, 2018 Report by Robert A. Williams

When you listen real close to the mostly propaganda put out at the CCS School Board meetings, occasionally you will hear a bit of truth. Or at least how the CCS Board really feels about School business. Especially when a Federal Investigation regarding Title IX Civil Rights violations hits at the same time that even more money is going to be funneled to Shelby High School because of the American Legion World Series. The CCS School Board have found themselves in a bind. A conundrum some would say. Read on for the story that gets deeper and deeper.

First, Title IX:

Simply put, Title IX of the US Civil Rights Act states it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender. After about 50 years of court cases and Supreme Court Rulings, Title IX has come to mean, in part, that schools have to have EQUAL sports and other facilities for both boys and girls. An even closer example of a Title IX Civil Rights violation has occurred when the Shelby High School BOYS baseball field has had millions of dollars spent on it in the name of the American Legion world Series while the Shelby High School girls softball team did not even have a field at SHS that they could play on. A formal complaint has been made, a Federal Investigation case has been opened and the CCS Board is nervous. Big time nervous.

On top of this Federal investigation and exactly at the same time, the ALWS Chairman Eddie Holbrook has written the CCS Board a letter (on County Commissioner letterhead) that ALWS wants permission to spend bunches of money (sources say another \$Million) to improve the SHS boys baseball even more so they can compete with others when the ALWS Home Location Contract runs out next year. Please forget for a while that for years we have been told that Shelby was the "permanent" home for the ALWS.. What's another big lie in the overall scheme of things in Cleveland County? CCS, the Commissioners and Cleveland Community College put out big lies all the time so nothing is new with big lies being told by the so called leadership in Cleveland County. About the only thing new in all this is the truth is finally coming out about the lies that have been told. We are in large part responsible for that. But sometimes the truth hurts. Especially for politicians like Eddie Holbrook during an Election Year.

So, at the January 8, 2018 School Board meeting there was an item on the agenda regarding the ALWS Chairman Eddie Holbrook's letter asking the School Board for permission to spend more money on the SHS boys baseball field. Sources indicate about another \$Million on top of Millions already spent on that ball field where CCS won't let the SHS girl's softball team or anybody else play on for that matter. That letter is attached at the end of this article for your convenience.

The presentation of this ALWS letter to the Board started slow with some fast talking by CCS Superintendent Fisher. Dr. Fisher completely left out anything about a Title IX Civil Rights investigation that I had notified the entire CCS Board as well as all of Cleveland County about a few days before the CCS Board Meeting. However, Board member Roger Harris immediately asked, in a benign way, was there any Title IX implications? Fisher goes on to say that they had looked at Title IX implications of the ALWS improved field about six

years ago and agreed to build a “comparable” softball field over at Shelby Middle School for the SHS girls softball team to play on. A fifteen second inspection of the SHS Baseball Field and the SHS girls softball field at SMS will indicate to every normal, sane and reasonable person that these fields are NOT comparable. Fisher goes on to say that he didn’t believe these particular additions noted in Holbrook’s letter would cause any Title IX problems, although Superintendent Fisher completely left out all the additions to the ALWS field that had been accomplished over the past six years. Fisher even made the completely unbelievable statement that right now the SHS girls softball field turf is in better shape than the ALWS field at SHS. (Hey, the CCS School Board will obviously believe any lie, big or small.)

Then Board Member Danny Blanton asks Fisher “are we having any Title IX investigations going on right now? Fisher said yes, but they were not facility related. Sources indicate the Civil Rights investigations are directly related to the ball field facilities. Bald faced lying by the superintendent directly to the CCS Board is a firing offense about everywhere else in North Carolina, but apparently not in Cleveland County.

Fisher goes on saying that we are responding to the Civil Rights investigation and have sent out emails to the Board. (Apparently in response to my previous article that I copied to the School Board.) But these emails must have been cover-up as the Board obviously was not up to speed with the issues. Not being up to speed is the Board’s fault. No, I should say it is the voter’s fault for staying home on Election Day. A good, honest and competent School Board would never stand for this kind of stuff going on. But hold on, we are not even to the good part yet.

The discussion goes on further about the ALWS involvement and Bully Glover even asked a clear and cogent question about who was sending the Holbrook letter as it was made on County Letterhead paper but signed as an ALWS letter. Fisher says it

was from ALWS based on how the letter was signed. Since Commissioner Eddie Holbrook is a County Commissioner and also the Chairman of the ALWS, there seems to be a conflict of interest. That is an issue for another day since I don't want to confuse the 52,000 registered voters in Cleveland County that stayed home on election day.

Finally, Board Chairman Shearra Miller asks the pleasure of the Board. Board member Roger Harris states, "Assuming there is no Title IX issues, I make the motion to approve the request." Danny Blanton seconds the motion with the same proviso regarding assuming no Title IX issues.

Since the motion is based on an assumption that there are no Title IX issues, the board starts to squirm. Much more discussion is coming.

The first thing Chairman Miller brings up is there is no guarantee there will not be any Title IX issues. Roger Harris says that was "an editorial comment (about no Title IX issues) more than anything else. Bully Glover joins in saying if there is Title IX issues they needed to talk again and possible not allow any more financial input (from ALWS).

Superintendent Fisher jumps back in saying that if Title IX becomes an issue because of ABC, the School Board would have to go back to ALWS saying ALWS has to also help implement ABC even if that meant more funding for the SHS girls softball team.

More discussion and Fisher says "anybody can make a complaint about anything" and if so, the investigation and any requirements thereafter might be well after the \$million for the present improvements are spent. Basically leaving CCS (taxpayers) responsible for straightening out the mess that the ALWS might already have caused. These folks are really squirming now.

Miller reminds the Board that the motion has not yet been

approved. Roger Harris suggests Fisher contact the CCS lawyer and get some legal advice about how likely approving the ALWS request would result in Title IX sanctions against CCS. There were lots of discussion by only a few Board members. The end result was the motion to allow ALWS to make improvements at the SHS baseball field was approved. Which was totally expected. Just think, if there are Title IX violations and CCS has to spend money, that would suit them fine. CCS always expects more money from taxpayers, which the money then disappears without a trace of benefit being done. Nothing is new here.

But, the discussion before the vote told the tale on the CCS Board explaining why the merger of all public schools in Cleveland County about 20 years ago never really merged the three school systems at all. It just made three school systems into one school district and basically left the old County School System, Burns and Crest facilities forever inferior to Shelby and Kings Mountain systems-at mostly County taxpayer expense. This is obvious as Shelby and Kings Mountain have auditoriums and swimming pools while Burns and Crest do not. And never will according to some of the particular CCS School Board discussion I will describe below.

Roger Harris went on and on with his understanding of equality amongst school facilities. To Roger Harris Title IX only required equality of facilities on a school by school basis. Burns, for example, according to Harris has no swimming pool. Therefore nobody, boys or girls, gets to swim at Burns so that makes that facility equal and not subject to Title IX requirements.

But what about equality between the various schools within the merged Cleveland County School system??? According to the CCS School Board there is no such equality requirements among the various CCS schools. No such requirement under Title IX anyway according to this School Board.

But maybe NOT so according to the actual intent of the law, which CCS is well known for not following the law or living up to all the promises made when the three school systems were originally merged (on paper) almost 20 years ago; but not fairly merged into one big and equal school system. If you dig even deeper, more than fifty years ago when these Civil Rights laws were passed, Cleveland County Schools were segregated with unequal facilities between white schools and black schools. It may be very likely that the Civil Rights Office of the US Department of Education will NOT take very kindly to the kind of logic the Cleveland County Schools, County Commissioners and the ALWS people use to justify grand facilities at one school in a district and poor to no facilities at other schools in the same district. I would speculate that the CCS Board is on thin ice with this issue.

Also, No school Board member brought up the inequality between Shelby and Kings Mountain vs. Burns and Crest. Or even between Burns and Crest. Nobody mentioned the auditoriums at Burns and Crest that Bully Glover used as a publicity stunt to get himself re-elected. Glover and the rest of the Board have forgotten all about those auditoriums. And swimming pools at Burns and Crest. Not a peep about that either. I would also predict that nobody alive in Cleveland County today will ever see swimming pools at Burns or Crest High Schools.

But don't believe me about any of this. Go to the CCS Website Board meeting broadcast erroneously titled January 7, 2017- perhaps to confuse you and prevent you from watching the actual discussion described above. Advance the Broadcast to 20 minutes and 30 seconds to pick up where this article starts. Watch in true amazement to see just how poorly your CCS School Board actually operates.

Folks, Elections have consequences. Voters had a chance to put Robert Queen, Kevin Whisnant and Rodney Fitch- all advocates for equality among school facilities- on the school board, because over 52,000 voters stayed home on Election Day 2017.

And those remaining few that did vote put a sexual predator on the school board. What more can I say regarding just how much Cleveland County residents have suffered from a School system that has failed us so badly. Stay tuned for the other articles regarding the January 9, 2018 School Board meeting. That's right, there is more.