

Commissioners Appoint New County Manager–Brian Epley – Kerri Melton Appointed Assistant County Manager–Former Commissioner and Interim county Manager Jason Falls totally Gone for unknown reasons?? Report by Robert A. Williams

Shelby-Breaking News!!!

The January 16, 2018 Cleveland County Board of Commissioner's meeting Agenda contained an "Early Business" section where a new County Manager, Brian Epley was appointed by unanimous vote by the Commissioners. A special called meeting, with one item on the agenda-a session closed to the public-was held January 8, 2018 to discuss Epley's contract. The terms of this contract was not provided by the Commissioners although it is public record. A Freedom of Information Act/NC Public Records request is being submitted (along with an advanced copy of this article) to the Commissioners to provide this contract as well as the minutes to the Closed meeting held January 8, 2018. This will be provided as soon as it is received. Mark you calendar to see how long the Commissioners take to provide this information. Do not hold your breath.

Another part of this Early Business consisted of the just appointed County Manager-Brian Epley- to "announce" filling of a "Assistant County Manager" position by Kerry Melton. This is

a new position that has not been previously discussed in open session as noted in a search of previous meeting minutes. The Commissioners then voted unanimously to give Kerri Melton a vote of confidence in this new position, even though she has been unofficially called the "Assistant County Manager" for a long time.

Also note that NC law requires all County Business to be conducted in public meetings except for certain limited items that are heard in Closed session. By law NO actions can be taken in Closed Session, only in open sessions. The business of selecting and appointing a new County Manager and creating a new position such as the Assistant County Manager are not limited by NC law to closed session and all the business related to these activities should have been held in Open Meetings and described in the official Minutes of those open session meeting. Which was not done. Kind of like selling the Hospital a few years ago.

Such actions by the Commissioners as occurred in this Early Business portion of this January 16, 2018 Commissioner's meeting came about somewhere outside of open meetings and is clearly in violation of NC law. Such actions as this have occurred over and over again and been the subject of many articles I have written over the years and sent copies to each Commissioner. It is not like this is the first time and they did not know the law. As you are reading this article now, you probably read many of these articles in the past.

The appointment of Brian Epley as County Manager and the announcement of Kerri Melton as the new Assistant County Manager brought to an end the term of Jason Falls as the Interim County Manager. Something is amiss about the whole Interim County Manager-Jason Falls situation. Jason Falls was an elected County Commissioner (term ending December 2018) and an appointed Board of Trustee (term ending in 2020) at Cleveland Community College when former County Manager Jeff Richardson announced his resignation. There are provisions in

North Carolina law that allow Commissioners to take over as County Manager and be paid the County Manager's salary for as long as it takes to find and hire a new County Manager. Perhaps even to hold this triple role (Commissioner, County Manager and CCC Trustee as well as run for re-election as commissioner) for an extended period of time. Yet Jason Falls resigned as Commissioner and as a CCC Board of Trustee when he didn't have to take the County Manager's position. In fact Doug Bridges was appointed to fill the Falls vacancy until the next General Election, which is in November of this year.

So, what's the deal with Jason Falls? As of 6:30 PM January 16, 2018 Jason Falls is a political nobody. For somebody that publicly considered running for the US House last year against Patrick McHenry, Jason Falls has found himself to be at a political dead end.

Although I personally consider the political demise of Jason Falls as a happy ending to a sad Cleveland County story, I still smell a rat somewhere in this situation. Somehow I must speculate that Jason Falls must have gotten caught up in some secret scandal or personal situation that he had to leave office because of. That would be well and good as far as I am concerned except for the possibility that somehow Jason Falls is escaping some sort of justice. And in a period of time Falls might try for some sort of political comeback. As I originally supported Jason Falls for the Commissioner's office, I quickly learned my lesson. So, If Jason Falls deserves to be held up for public justice, then he deserves to be held up for public justice. Along with anybody that might be helping Jason Falls cover up for any misconduct that Falls might have done. Many in Cleveland County already know that similar such "stuff" has already occurred in an elected office held by a Cleveland County resident. We have let that sleeping dog lie. Perhaps wrongly.

More news later about the rest of the January 16, 2018 Commissioner's meeting.