Cleveland County Sports Complex Update!! Willie Green Sets the Record Straight!!! Report By Robert A. Williams

Editors Note: The idea of a Sports Complex is not new or recently invented. A committee established many years ago to study building ball fields in Upper Cleveland County even got so far as 40 Acres of land in Polkville were donated to the County for the project before the lack of action by the Commissioners killed the project-but did not return the land to Polkville. The County rents the land out for farming and gives the proceeds ($2,500) to the secret Economic Development crowd.

The present City of Shelby's 10-year Master Plan calls for a Sports Complex and a partnership with a private business to operate, but such plans have languished for almost 10 years.

Now, Mr. Willie Green has proposed to the City of Shelby and to the Cleveland County Commissioners, at their Meeting on February 6, 2018, a solid and impressive plan for a very well thought out and planned Sports Complex in Shelby to be located between Holly Oak Park and the Shelby High School Baseball Field. Mr. Green purchased this land with his own money. In addition to training the local and surrounding counties student-athletes in private and group training, the proposed sports complex would also be made available to all four County High Schools sports programs for their practices at designated times and to the general public, depending on the final partnership agreement between himself and the County. Scroll on back to my article published Feb 8, 2018 for more details. At this February 6th Commissioner's meeting Mr. Green did not specify any particular form of agreement or contract as that

would be developed during negotiations after the Commissioners performed their own due diligence.

What Mr. Green did say was that he would be totally transparent and make all documents, financial and contractual and all other records relating to the partnership available to the public. Mr. Green offered no kickbacks or under the table payoffs to the Commissioners, their families or "friends" or anybody else. And, since Mr. Green's proposal on February 6, 2018, there have been various rumors, statements, false allegations and slanderous personal attacks floating around Cleveland that Willie Green is trying to basically "screw" the county out of a bunch of money and abscond with the funds. All this is a character assassination attempt to kill public opinion on the project without providing facts. All done through the back door-old time Cleveland County style dirty politics. Mr. Green has heard these allegations, as well as myself, in various forms and from various people.

So, Mr. Green and myself had a very detailed and comprehensive conversation regarding how this sport complex idea came about, what is offered, what will be gained by the county and who would pay for the project. Hang on folks, you are about to hear (read) something you have never heard before and may never hear again in the potential business arrangements between a private person and the Cleveland County Commissioners.

Read on:

The following is in Mr. Green's own words as best as I could write them down. My comments are in parenthesis.

Mr. Green's purpose in this discussion is to set the record straight and educate the public about his Sports Complex proposal.

Mr. Green did not provide or propose any financial arrangement for his Sports Complex proposal at the February 6, 2018

Commissioners meeting because he knew the county had certain North Carolina General Statutes (statutory) restraints with any private-public arrangement as he was proposing. Mr. Green wanted the county to do their own due diligence in finding out what they could or could not do under the law before starting any financial and contractual negotiations, as to do otherwise would waste a lot of everybody's time.

Around March 2016, two years prior to his February 2018 presentation to the County Commissioners, Mr. Green learned that the City of Shelby intended to spend $millions on the City Park and the McBrayer Park and relatively nothing on the historic Holly Oak Park. Mr. Green approached the City of Shelby with propositions to purchase, lease or a combination purchase or lease of Holly Oak Park and make Holly Oak Park open to all. The City of Shelby said land covenants did not allow the sale of Holly Oak Park but he might be able to lease a part of the park. Mr. Green's bankers were hesitant to make loans of $5 million for facilities that would be built on leased property.

In July of 2016 Mr. Green purchased 16 acres of private property land that adjoined Holly Oak Park and the Shelby High School baseball field that is used for the American Legion World Series. Mr. Green had this property cleared at his own expense. At that time the Holly Oak Park partial lease was still on the table, where the park would be used for sports outdoor training, summer camps hosted by former professional and college athletes and other sports related programs. But The City of Shelby later withdrew their offer to lease any Holly Oak Park property, despite their earlier written commitments of a detailed public private partnership with Mr. Green's company.

Mr. Green had previously determined that Cleveland County had no Parks and Recreation Department to serve the entire county, but through a partnership, the County could easily have one. In July of 2016 Mr. Green approached Cleveland County and was

told that they had no interest (although they had already accepted a transfer of 40 acres from Polkville for the construction of a Ballfield-sports complex). Mr. Green's research indicated there were many "indoor travel ball" events (basketball, volleyball, gymnastics etc.) that lacked local facilities but would bring in tournaments for over 40 weekends per year, with an economic impact estimate of $8-$10 million per year in weekend hotel stays, restaurants visits and retail sales. Compared to the American League World Series which brings in an event for only 10 days. County "leaders" at that time (Like Jason Falls) refused to talk to Mr. Green about his sports event hosting ideas.

To show there is a demand and dire need for an indoor sports training facility in Cleveland County. In May 2017, Mr. Green purchased with his own money, the Historic Old Cleveland Training School building located at 341 Hudson St. where the African American students attended school before desegregation. And he converted the former school gymnasium into an indoor turf field and weight room sports training facility, where currently many of our local student-athletes, college athletes who are from the county and athletes from other school districts are training together as one group(s) or as individuals. And travel baseball and softball teams from the county rent the facility on weekends for team practice.

After the February 6, 2018 presentation it was determined that according to NC General Statue on Public Private Partnerships, there were three options for a public-private partnership in a Sports Complex that Cleveland County could do:
Help financially with infrastructure cost. *(County presently builds "Spec" structures to help with economic development.) The County would not do this for Mr. Green, citing the NC Statue prohibits the county from assisting a private business in construction cost or site development.*

County build structures and lease back to Mr. Green to operate. The County again said No to Mr. Green *(although the*

County spends $Millions on the Old Courthouse and leases to Destination Cleveland County for $1 per year for 10 years with the option for another 10 years at $1 per year. The County even gave away the Old Doran Mill property for nothing, allowed the recipients to sell $1 million of scrap metal off the property, mill the old mill beams for flooring at the NewGrass Brewery and then the recipients gave the property back to the County.)

Mr. Green would finance the Sports Complex himself and the County would lease time for the facilities to be used by all four high school's athletic programs, and the public would be allowed to use facilities and its' amenities at certain set times during the week. The amount of the lease would be at "Fair Market Rates determined by a comparative analysis of other such Sports Complex facilities.

(Option three above seems to be the only way Cleveland County will do business with Mr. Green, an African American. Presently Cleveland County has not done business with any African American owned business.)

Where the Sports Complex stands at this very moment-Option 3: Mr. Green is set to finance the Sports Complex himself at a cost of between $5-6 Million. Mr. Green would operate the facilities and all Cleveland County has to do is provide Mr. Green a lease and service agreement, detailing the partnership of what will be given to the county and what will be received from the county. Mr. Green has provided Cleveland County a formal and legal proposal to do this. All that is necessary to close the deal is for Cleveland County to agree on a Fair Market Rate and sign the papers.

Editor's Note: I know of no other private person making such a good deal to Cleveland County on such good and fair terms. But knowing Cleveland County, the only reason such a project as this has been turned down is because of the following:
Mr. Green is an African-American.

Mr. Green has offered no kickbacks or under the table payments to anyone.
Mr. Green has stated that all records, documents, financials, etc. relating to the partnership with the county, will be available to the public for any taxpayer to inspect.

Cleveland County Commissioners are apparently not used to such honesty and transparency.

Here is a partial list of County Partnerships and groups receiving county funds or county financial backing that refuse to be honest and transparent with their documents and financial records like Mr. Green:
Cleveland County Schools Foundation
Cleveland County Schools
Cleveland Community College Foundation
Cleveland Community College
Communities-In Schools Board
Cleveland County Fair Association
American League World Series
Cleveland County YMCA
Destination Cleveland County
Cleveland County Economic Development Partnership
LeGrand Center
CCS Math Academy
Close the Gap
Health Department Board
DSS Board
Mental Health Board
Hospital Board
Cleveland County Fire District
Cleveland County Commissioners
(Ain’t this enough to make my point)

Folks, this is the scoop on the Sports Complex Mr. Willie Green has proposed to provide for Cleveland County. Built with Mr. Green’s his own money with the County only paying for the time that they use. Nobody, and I mean nobody has offered

Cleveland County and their citizens such a good deal. Why the Cleveland County Commissioners have not already jumped at this offer can only be determined by such logic as I have already provided.

Call your Commissioners and voice your opinion. Better yet, vote on Election Day. May 8th for the Democrat Primary Election. The on Primary Election for Commissioners. Then vote in the General Election on November 6. This will be your only way to have a say on anything in Cleveland County.