The Day of the Suits!!! Cleveland Community College Board of Trustee Meeting September 11, 2018– CCC Students are "NOT READY from High School!!!" Report by Robert A. Williams

Breaking News!!! The Cleveland Community College Board of Trustees has finally resolved all their previous scandals, complaints and lawsuits. All problems are solved in one fell stroke. The BoTs fixed everything by installing brand new American and State flags, properly placed with fancy new poles with a gold painted eagle at top and a collage of artistic picture enlargements to their Board meeting room. Plus, all the male BoTs wore what appeared to be brand new tailored dark suits (just a few wore very conservative dark sportcoats and well coordinated slacks), fresh haircuts well polished shoes, bright white shirts and "power" ties. The whole thing was a sight to behold. Especially BoT member Allen Langley's flawless two-tone "Spectator" shoes. The kind made famous by jazz musicians, gangsters like Al Capone and dancers like Michael Jackson and Fred Astaire,

The meeting started on time and advanced formally through the agenda. There were, strangely, no persons signed up for Citizens Participation. Actually, there was only one non-college related citizen in attendance. Me. And I was dressed as usual in blue jeans, a casual shirt that was not tucked in, Doc Martens "cherry" high top work shoes that I got from GoodWill and my trusty clipboard that I always take to these

meetings to take notes on (as the official board meeting minutes do not always fairly and accurately describe what actually took place in the meeting as required by state law). I was the only person in the meeting that did not meet the apparently new CCC BoT meeting dress code. And I have decided never to address the Board during
Citizens Participation for several good reasons. One, they unfairly limit your time. Two, they never comment or do anything about what you speak about. Almost never that is. They did finally start their meetings with a Pledge of Allegiance after a year of twisting their tale verbally and in articles. Well, it is election year and the people that appoint the BoTs are up for election this year. And, on that point, Commissioner Eddie Holbrook who is also the CCC Senior Dean of Development and Governmental Relations was absent, again, from this meeting. Which leaves us in an even bigger quandary about what Dean Holbrook actually does at CCC for his $125,000 salary plus benefits. Holbrook doesn't teach any classes that I am aware of and very seldom reports to the CCC BoT during their meeting. This is just something for the voters to sort out as the BoTs never will.

Most of the BoT business meeting involved illegal acts as I will explain. North Carolina Law requires local governmental entities, such as the CCC Board of Trustees, to conduct their business in official meetings that are open to the public. What the CCC BoTs do is assign their Board members to various committees such that no committee contains a "quorum" of board members that would in itself kick in the NC Open Meetings laws regarding public access and scrutiny. These committees do their business in private (secret) and then draft a summary report. This report is then "transmitted" to the other BoTs for discussion at the official meetings. At the official meetings such as the one held September 11, 2018, the reports are brought up by the chairman who asks if there are any questions, comments or discussion. In the majority of occasions there are no questions, comments or discussion. Then

the Chairman calls for a vote “to approve the report as presented.” Theses reports are hyperlinked to the agenda and are available on the CCC website if you want to look them up. The vote is usually to approve. And I say usually as I don’t ever recall a report not being approved unanimously.

However, there were several items that took place in this meeting that are of note.

One particular notable item was a report that new President Jason Hurst and several BoT members had toured Greenville, Isothermal and Gaston Community College’s Advanced Manufacturing Facility as there is a need to understand what the needs are for such a facility at CCC. Of course the Advanced Manufacturing Facility at CCC had been approved and funded well before Dr. Hurst arrived at CCC and there was not a clue about what to put in the facility. It is certainly a good thing that someone is pushing doing a little research before committing $$$millions. The thing about this tour, besides no one from the public, like me, was invited, is that the industry base in Greenville, Rutherford and Gaston College is different than Cleveland County. Therefore, the logical thing to do is determine from Cleveland County research what is needed for Cleveland County or just have Cleveland County students go to Greenville, Isothermal or Gaston for training and save those $millions for facilities that are truly needed for Cleveland County. Such a path as Cleveland County took here leads one to wonder if those grants were applied for only to give work to Architect Roger Holland.

Another item of note was CCC employees are going to get an increase in salary. $1,200 or 2% of salary-whichever is more. That means those on the low end of the salary scale who may qualify for foodstamps now may not qualify for foodstamps when they get the raise. And Senior Dean Eddie Holbrook will receive $2,500 more, even though he doesn’t do anything to start with that I can tell. Those who were wrongfully terminated get nothing.

Then, most importantly, during a report by Laura Bowen regarding past performance of CCC as compared with State expectations as well as other Community Colleges. CCCC scored low on most items based on past information, some going back to 2010. My first thought was this past information is pretty much worthless as Past President Steve Thornberg is gone. On a second thought, these past performance measures prompted new President Jason Hurst to state that he would better identify the problem areas and develop “Action Plans for improvement by the nest meeting” (-in two months).

Also, of just as much interest about this CCC Performance Report was when new BoT member Robert Queen raised an important question. Queen asked “Why are our English and Math scores so low?” Even more important than having a BoT member actually reading the material and asking important and intelligent questions was the answer. The “students were not ready from High School.” Followed by “that is why we encourage them (students) to take English and Math in the first one or two semesters.”

So, now we have President Jason Hurst apprised of a problem and tasking himself to develop “action plans.” Now we have BoT member Robert Queen asking questions that pinpoint exactly where and what a problem is in a public meeting for all to hear. And, although I was the only member of the public in attendance and this problem “students are not ready from high school” is politically incorrect as it will cause CCS heartburn as they are now officially “outed” for not doing their job, that is enough. This article will be sent to the CCS Board of Education and citizens of Cleveland County so they will also know CCS is outed. Commissioners and commissioner candidates will know too as this is a matter of high public interest and concern for them too. Especially during this election cycle.

But I could have and have told all the above that CCS records indicate 46% of graduating seniors are not at grade level. The

fact that BoT member Robert Queen asked that important and specific question and got an honest and informed answer during an official CCC BoT meeting is “revolutionary” for Cleveland County. This shows that there are indeed jewels of intelligence and plain talk hidden within the administrative muck and mire at CCC that is just waiting for the right opportunity to show themselves with some bit of safety from being fired. I do have to wonder if Ms Laura Bowen will end up regretting her honesty as others have been fired for doing exactly the same thing-being honest. I also wonder if Queen’s question and Bowen’s honest answers will make it’s way into the meeting minutes. Or whether the BoT will cause this incident to just fade away to protect their buddies at CCS and their own residual culture of corruption at CCC?

But don’t you worry about that. All you have to do is stay tuned as I am on top of this story. But, it would be nice if other members of the public also start attending these meeting with me. As the old saying goes, Never give up! Never surrender!!!

Editor’s Note: After the meeting and a trip to the college library, I returned to the Board meeting room for the sole purpose of examining the picture collage without distraction as I could not see the pictures clearly from the audience seating area. One of the first pictures I saw was an enlargement of the scandalous former President Steve Thornburg and some woman whose identity is unknown to me locked into a very close embrace-a hug. That was the final straw for me as an indication that the BoTs just don’t get it. And this new “facade” of fancy new men’s attire is just that-a facade built for the sole purpose of covering up the rotten state of affairs at CCC that has not yet been fixed. And that the BoTs don’t intend to fix anything more of substance. But, Like I said, stay tuned.