

Eddie Holbrook-By the Numbers!! Ronnie Whetstine and Doug Bridges too!!! Report and Arithmetic by Robert A. Williams

Incumbent Eddie Holbrook has been a commissioner for 12 years. Ronnie Whetstine, appointed to fill the vacancy created by the death of Commissioner Ronnie Hawkins, 2 years in office. Doug Bridges, appointed to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of loser Jason Falls, has one year in office. These three commissioners have exactly the same voting record.

Another thing about appointed commissioners Whetstine and Bridges is they were appointed by the Republican Executive Committee with the expectation that they would follow the lead of Democrat Eddie Holbrook. To the discredit of both Whetstine and Bridges voting records, that is exactly what they did. Followed the lead of Eddie Holbrook instead of being their own person in representing the best interest of the citizens of Cleveland County.

But, no matter the reasons, Holbrook, Whetstine and Bridges are joined at the hip with their voting record and there are facts and figures associated with their voting records that they all have to take the credit or the blame for.

Since Whetstine and Bridges are in lockstep with Eddie Holbrook's leadership, lets look at Holbrook's claimed numbers and do some arithmetic.

- Economic Development-Unemployment down to around 4%.

Since an unemployment rate of 5% is considered FULL employment

by most experts, Cleveland County is at FULL Employment. Full employment means everybody that is qualified of being hired for a job has a job. Yet, these commissioners have voted for a 2018-2019 budget that spends around \$7 Million to recruit new businesses, for more Jobs, Jobs, jobs as Eddie Holbrook likes to say.

But, why would we spend \$7 million per YEAR to bring in new businesses when Cleveland County doesn't have the available workforce to fill the old jobs, much less any new jobs?

Also, if Cleveland County lowered their spending by that \$7 million, which would reflect a tax cut of about 8 cents per \$Hundred evaluation, new businesses would come to Cleveland County just for the lower taxes. And all us taxpayers would have \$7 million more in our pockets to spend. Wouldn't that be nice? A \$300 extra Christmas present for a family of four.

So, why don't Commissioners Holbrook, Whetstine and Bridges do what is best for the taxpayers in Cleveland County instead of wasting \$7 million???

Is it perhaps because the Commissioner's numbers just don't add up to begin with?

The Cleveland County DSS reports that 20,000+ people are on Foodstamps because of unemployment or underemployment. Since this is over 20% of the total population of Cleveland County, which is shrinking because people want to get the heck out of Cleveland County as soon as they can, how can the 4% unemployment rate be anywhere close to correct? And don't ask me, ask Eddie Holbrook, Ronnie Whetstine and Doug Bridges. They get the DSS reports too. And they are in charge.

So, something is amiss with the unemployment numbers at 4%. They take credit for 4% but the actual unemployment rate has to be much higher. Somebody is lying and it ain't me. I'm just taking the numbers the Commissioners give out and doing some simple arithmetic.

1. The Sale of the Hospital (and all other CC Healthcare facilities except for the Health Department), Cleveland County's most valuable asset.

Did I say SALE? The numbers say the Commissioners gave the hospital away.

Here are the facts and associated numbers regarding the Commissioners secret sale of the Hospital.

- Before the sale, the Carolina's Healthcare folks were paying \$1.4 Million per year rent on the Hospital facilities.
- The Commissioners never investigated what the true worth of the Hospital actually was. Negotiations between Carolina's Healthcare and the Commissioners were kept secret so nobody else would know that the hospital was for sale, limiting better offers than what Carolina's Healthcare wanted to pay. Exactly opposite of what a prudent seller of property would do.
- Carolina's Healthcare wanted all of Cleveland County's Healthcare facilities which included the Hospital in Shelby, the Hospital in Kings Mountain, the hospital in Boiling springs, Cleveland Pines as well as the County Health Department Building-minus the Health Department. Health Departments don't rake in enough profits to suit Carolina's Healthcare.
- Carolina's Healthcare offered Cleveland County \$100 Million for all the facilities.
- Payment on that \$100 million would be \$23 Million for Cleveland County to build a new Health Department next to DSS.
- Payment would include payments of \$3 Million per year for the remaining \$77 Million with Cleveland County holding the note at ZERO percent interest for 27 years.

Now, consider a Charlotte Observer article dated Feb 6, 2013 titled "Compensation Jumps for Top Hospital Executives" showing 10 Carolina's Healthcare Executives who were all making well over \$1 Million per year due to big raises very

soon after the sale of Cleveland County's medical facilities at rock bottom price.

Also consider that the Commissioners spent that \$23 million on a new Health Department facility over at DSS, which they hocked, along with James Love Elementary School and the new North Shelby School so they could give about \$35 Million in incentives to the Clearwater Paper expansion as well as pay for the new North Shelby School. Off course the loans the County signed in on were at a high interest rate. And, that is the good news.

The bad news is that the \$77 Million NO INTEREST loan to Carolina's Healthcare, if the county had been like everybody else and got all their money when the Hospital sale closed and invested that money at only 3%, that would have brought in \$2.310,000 per year just in interest. Or almost double the Rent. Or \$62.4 Million over 27 years just in interest. And, Cleveland County would still own the Hospital worth well over \$100 million.

Basically the Commissioners gave away the Hospital. But, then, those poor top Executives at Carolina's Healthcare might not have received such big raises and bonuses. Big enough to kick-back lots of under the table bonuses to some Commissioners or the ALWS. But proof of that would be hard to find. Not impossible, but hard.

2. Jobs, Jobs, Jobs.

Just how many jobs is the question. And what is the pay?

Commissioner Eddie Holbrook claims he brought in 8,000 jobs in one claim. In another Mailer Holbrook claims 5,000 jobs. One of Tim Moore's latest political ads or mailers claims 4,000 jobs for Cleveland County as I recall-but I can't find that particular ad right now. Anyway, there is a big discrepancy in job numbers, even in Eddie Holbrook's own job numbers. Why won't the commissioners come clean with their own job numbers?

The least they could do would be to list the Company with the number of jobs and pay scale on a spreadsheet and provide that info for confirmation. When they just claim one number one day and another number on another day, who can trust anything that they say?

Also, Commissioner Holbrook claims 87 companies have been brought in by his economic development efforts. Name them and how much help (\$\$\$) did they receive is my challenge to Commissioner Holbrook, Doug Bridges and Ronnie Whetstine. All the people ever hear about is Clearwater Paper and a handful of others.

Capital improvement according to Eddie Holbrook has been \$6.5 Billion one day and \$6.1 Billion on another Day. That \$0.4 Billion difference is actually \$400 Million. A pretty big amount by Cleveland County standards. Also, such staggeringly high amounts in the \$6 billion range are exactly what the Duke Power Plant expansion at Cliffside and the Kings Mountain Energy Center power plant brought in as capital improvement. All of which came in with not one red cents worth of help, assistance or advance knowledge from Eddie Holbrook and the entire Economic Development Partnership. Yet Holbrook, Bridges and Whetstine are taking credit for it. What lies. On top of lies.

No jobs or Jobs with low pay. DSS reports over 20,000 Foodstamp recipients. The reason being unemployment or under-employment. Under-employment being part-time jobs or jobs with such low pay that the recipients qualify for Foodstamps. It is reported that some teachers, teacher's assistants and CCC instructors also fall within this category while folks like Eddie Holbrook knocks down \$125,000 plus big benefits at CCC without any provable job description that I have been made aware of-and I have asked.

3. Workforce Development-Failures of:

Cleveland County education has failed the students of our schools as well as the Community College. The Cleveland County Schools have graduated almost half of their students who are not proficient in reading and math. Two skills that are totally necessary to find a good paying job anywhere. The Community College has failed too because they do not have proficient students coming up through CCS and have concentrated their efforts on such gimmicks as "dual enrollment" and dumbing down classes so more CCS students can get into programs that they will ultimately fail in.

In short, Workforce development begins with first grade reading and grade school math. Get behind there and the whole system fails. No matter how much is spent on advanced manufacturing facilities at CCC, the student feeding into such programs will fail at high rates. The problem has to be fixed at the core and the overall success will only be in the long term. There are no short cuts in the process, though that is what CCS and CCC are wishing and hoping for. And, all the better students can't wait until they can leave Cleveland County for good jobs and never look back. In every honest evaluation the case is proved for the statements in this paragraph. The only bright spot is Dr. Jason Hurst, President at CCC is an expert in Workforce Development and will work through all these problems over time if the CCC Board of Trustees will let him do what is necessary And CCS is brought to task.

Bottom line with today's workforce in Cleveland County is there are not enough sufficiently skilled workers in Cleveland County to fill the available skilled jobs in Cleveland County. Eddie Holbrook's Economic Development Partnership have recruited businesses with the lure of low wages and those businesses are finding out they have a low wage workforce but also an unskilled workforce.

And, Eddie Holbrook has been a major part of the problem. His 12 years in service as a commissioner encompasses a whole

generation of students from First Grade to Graduation. All the problems have come to pass under Eddie Holbrook's watch and Holbrook's programs, such as they are, has totally failed our students. If all the problems at CCS and CCC were fixed instantaneously, it will still take a generation of students to get where Cleveland County needs to be. But an instantaneous cure will never happen with Eddie Holbrook, Doug Bridges and Ronnie Whetstine because they have a record in office. A bad record but they will never admit to it. And if you will not admit to the problems and do what is necessary to fix them, they will never be fixed.

The answer is clear and has to happen during this election:

