

School Board Breaks Record for Cover-up at Jan 28, 2019 Meeting!!! Moved Meeting Place without telling anybody, Recording devices defective (most likely on purpose), Sound too low and often silent!! County Commissioner Doug Bridges Present And taking Notes!! Report by Robert A. Williams

Editor's Note: Folks, if the Cleveland County School Board worked as hard doing the right things instead of covering up the bad things they do, CCS would be the best school district in North Carolina. Perhaps in the USA. Although, in these days and considering global competition, that ain't saying very much. As most experts on such things that are not afraid to speak up have stated for years.

This is the fourth article in a row regarding the most recent example of waste caused by negligence and poor planning by the CCS School Board and administration. If you consider that five years ago CCS discovered a broken \$100,000 bucket truck and other major implements returned to school property without even noticing the equipment was ever gone—relative to this newest example of the negligent waste of \$10,000 worth of surplus chairs—you realize not one bit of improvement has been

made in CCS inventory control. Only excuses and methods of covering up have improved. And that, folks, is nothing to brag about.

It was obvious that this January 29, 2019 School Board Meeting was going to be trouble for the phony image of CCS being a well-run organization. This is due to the recent episode of \$10,000 worth of surplus chairs being ruined, totally due to negligence at the simplest level. Also, it is a new year and next year (2020) is a brand-new school board election year with five members up for re-election. Well documented examples of unnecessary waste is not a good record for Jo Boggs, Shearra Miller, Richard Hooker, Roger Harris and Jeff Jones to run on in the 2020 elections. So, something had to be done to minimize the most recent news of a wasted asset.

The right thing for the school board to do would have been to find out all the details of what went wrong and figure out how to fix them so this would never happen again. But what the school board did at the Jan 28th meeting was exactly opposite to what they should have done.

The first thing was to move the meeting to an obscure part of the Central Offices basement that is probably the farthest away from the well-equipped auditorium where their meetings are usually held. (Note that the \$14,000,000 Central Services building has an auditorium and Burns and Crest High Schools do not have auditoriums.) This change of meeting location was not announced in accordance with NC State Law. And certainly not conducive to public participation.

This new location did not have the video and audio equipment to reliably record the meeting as the usual meeting place had. Perfect for having technical difficulties with the limited equipment so the meeting videos would be end up as useless. Which, was indeed what happened. The meeting videos are basically worthless. And cannot be recovered.

On top of that the sound was very poor so as to be mostly worthless too. This was helped along by most meeting school board participants who plainly refused to speak into their microphones. Except for Danny Blanton who did make a point of speaking into his microphone. So, Blanton's voice could be heard, although not well due to the recording volume being turned way down. Just about everybody else was not heard clearly in the school system recording of the meeting. So obvious as a planned scheme to cover-up from the public what actually happened.

Then the camera used to record the meeting was apparently turned off during the beginning of the meeting. When the school video actually started, Superintendent Fisher was at the podium speaking unintelligibly for 18 seconds when the sound dropped out entirely.

All in all, these folks are not stupid. Corrupt but not stupid. They had available their regular meeting place where all the recording "bugs" have been worked out. But they chose to change to this location, knowing full well that the recording capability were suspect at best. In other words, this "waste" of time was a cold and calculated attempt to draw attention away from a problem. To cover-up in one way or another.

The only thing the poor recordings actually showed in my earliest attempt to view the meeting was that Board member Danny Blanton had investigated the episode of the wasted chairs with little to no assistance from anyone else. Nobody in the school administration gave any authoritative information about anything. There most used statements that could be heard were "I don't know." No other school board member made a lick of sense about anything. They didn't know anything either. To which, at one point, Danny Blanton suggested that "every school board member resign" so new board members could be appointed that would actually do something to right all the wrongs at CCS. The best excuse Superintendent

Stephen Fisher made about all the waste was that to correct the problem "it is easier said than done." Obviously meaning they (CCS) were not going to do anything about anything. All the time ignoring the fact that inventory control is a basic function of every organization. Including the running of a school district.

Now, in evaluating the "Strategic Plan" part of the agenda that was entirely non-existence on the school's recordings, the only thing that is clear is that the schools currently do not have any strategic plans in place. They mention strategic plans sometimes when asked questions about building new schools or other capital projects, but when I asked to see those strategic plans, they never provide them.

I am totally convinced they have no strategic plans for anything. Especially auditoriums for Burns and Crest High Schools. And why should they? Burns and Crest High Schools are over 50 years old. Why build new auditoriums onto 50+ year old schools. Especially since student demographics have not been developed on where new schools ought to be. (Wouldn't it be a better idea to develop information showing school needs for the NEXT 50 years, then build those new schools where they need to be-and with auditoriums and swimming pools?)

Whatever was discussed at this January 29, 2019 school board meeting regarding a strategic plan is unknown to me because it was lost in the recording snafu. What should have been discussed, at a minimum, is as follows:

1. Danny Blanton's Workforce Development information from his appointment by the Commissioners to the Region C Workforce Development Task Force.
2. School system asset control and accounting.
3. The development of a comprehensive school security plan.
4. Danny Blanton's idea about a "Trade School" to be located at the old North Shelby School to offer vocational training to high school students that has been improperly phased out of CCS over the years. This Trade School would be to bridge the

gap (a wide gap at that) for students in CCS now so they can be better prepared to go to work or take more advanced training at Cleveland Community College after they graduate from CCS.

5. Better reading and writing education so students can better comprehend the world around them, read instructions and learn questioning attitude, innovation and critical thinking techniques and associated skills.

6. How to actually “close the gap” whenever and wherever “gaps” actually exist.

7. Do “money hole” programs such as Head Start, Smart Start, More at Four, Communities in Schools, the Math Academy, Early College, Turning Point Academy, etc. actually have any measurable results and attributes that clearly justify their existence?

8. New school construction needs and schedules. Including best ways to finance. Also including more community based but perhaps smaller schools. K-12?

Like I stated above, what was actually discussed in regard to strategic plans was lost due to, in my opinion, on purpose due to the need the School Board must be feeling to cover up for their total lack of leadership. There is one other way to document the Strategic Plan discussion—the official School Board Minutes. Which will be up for approval in 2-3 weeks. Probably in the School Board’s rush to cover up for the January 28th meeting, they forgot about the Board’s legal requirement to take minutes of the meeting. We will be patient and recover those minutes of this Jan 28th meeting and report what the minutes actually say. And make it available for all to see. Sometimes you just have to be patient and let the cover-up crowd cover up themselves when the truth finally comes out. Ask former Commissioner Chairman Eddie Holbrook about that. And how it feels to be removed from office by the vote of the citizens you have been dumping on for so long.

Now, along political lines, it has been reported that newly elected Commissioner Doug Bridges attended most of the Jan 28,

2019 School Board meeting and took lots of notes. Good for Commissioner Doug Bridges for getting a first hand look at what goes on at CCS.

I recently recommended that newly elected Commissioner Doug Bridges take over the Commissioner Chairman position and Commissioner Deb Hardin take over as Vice Chairman. I was disappointed when that did not happen. Perhaps, with more first-hand observations, my recommendations will come to pass. Sooner than later. Especially since Commissioners Susan Allen, Ronnie Whetstine and Johnny Hutchins will be up for re-election in 2020. All tainted with their long-term Eddie Holbrook association of waste in the \$\$\$Millions. Including a \$1,000,000 check in county funds directly to Holbrook's ALWS, Inc. Plus, another \$4 Million in smaller checks. A real rip off transfer of tax dollars that has been denied for years. Folks, you will soon see the proof of that.

Stay tuned for the CCS minutes and other items of great interest that will soon be coming your way.