

Cleveland County Fair—The Rip-off that keeps on Ripping off!!! Another \$150,000 Giveaway by County Commissioners!! Commissioner Doug Bridges in the Middle of a Conflict of Interest Situation!! Report by Robert A. Williams

During the 2018 Elections for County Commissioners, I attended a Candidate Forum that allowed questions and comments from the audience. A very good thing in my opinion.

Anyway, I made the comment and recommendation that the Commissioners NOT serve on any other boards or partnerships of any group that would be asking the County taxpayers for money. Which would put the Commissioner into a total conflict of interest situation. But Commissioner candidate Doug Bridges, who had also been appointed a Commissioner to fill the unexpired term of loser Jason Falls allowed himself to be appointed to the Board of the Cleveland County Fair. An organization that refuses to share financial information with the public and, therefore, has no accountability.

Not only that, the Fair Board has literally run the Fair into bankruptcy. And had to obtain a \$250,000 loan from the Commissioners (at ZERO interest) to open the doors of the Fair. A loan that has NOT been totally repaid. And why did they not go to a bank for a loan? That is an easy question.

Any bank would have inspected their books and denied their loan application.

Then the Fair wanted the county to let them take their trash to the landfill for free. An average cost of \$15,000 per year. So, the County basically gave the Fair \$15,000 and refuse to give anybody else in Cleveland County such a deal.

And, over the years, the Fair has brought in \$millions in cash and now they are broke. With no explanation given. And, with no appearance of Commissioner and Fair Board member Doug Bridges ever asking for an explanation of where all the money went to.

NOW it is June 4, 2019 and a Commissioner's meeting is tonight. The Commissioners withheld putting out their agenda for tonight's meeting until this morning. Obviously so nobody would have time to ask questions. The Commissioners did this on purpose as I looked on their website last night for tonight's agenda and it was not there.

Tonight's agenda NOW includes an item about the Fair. Staff Reports say that **"Cleveland County Government has partnered with the Cleveland County Fair Association on a landscape and fencing project on the E. Marion Street side of the Fairgrounds property."** The Staff Report goes on to say **"The Fair Association received a grant from the State of North Carolina for several projects on the property. One of those projects included replacement of the fence along Marion Street."** Then the Report states the Commissioners have budgeted \$150,000 to pay on the Fence project and the Fair Association will pay the rest.

If you go back up into the previous paragraph, you will see the report says the State of North Carolina has given a grant to the Fair for three projects, including the fence project. So, the Fair Association is basically paying out nothing out of their own pockets and the County Commissioners will be

giving away \$150,000 to the Fair under false pretenses. All under the noses of the Commissioners and especially Commissioner Doug Bridges.

Overall, Commissioners Doug Bridges and Deb Hardin have done the best of all the Commissioners, especially since they often attend School Board meetings, but it remains to be seen how they will vote on this \$150,000 giveaway to the Fair Association.

As for Commissioners Susan Allen, Ronnie Whetstine and Johnny Hutchins; they are up for re-election in 2020. And they have exactly the same voting record as the defeated and disgraced former Commissioner Chairman Eddie "Massa Eddie" Holbrook. If we replace these three with three good commissioners in 2020, that will be a new majority who can make the changes that Doug and Deb have been unable to make.

And the first change should be that NO Commissioner shall serve on any other county Board or Partnership-PERIOD!!! That way they will be representative of and accountable to only the citizens of Cleveland County. And have no conflict of interest situations that would so seriously cloud their judgement.