

County Broke after So Many Give-Aways??? Now Having to borrow on Credit??? And other Hairbrained and expensive ideas!! –Report, Gossip, arguendo and conclusions by Robert A. Williams

The agenda for the July 2, 2019 Commissioner's Meeting has some mighty suspicious entries. Mostly hidden, but suspicious nonetheless. Entries regarding county financing.

But first, let's add up some yearly give-aways.

- The American Legion World Series Baseball, Inc. \$4,000,000 through 2017. All those millions and lies told about every dollar. Like they don't use any Cleveland County Tax money at all, but that turned out to be the biggest lie of all. Another \$400,000 so far this year for 2019. Probably more to come.
- The \$3,000,000 shooting range that was not going to cost Cleveland County taxpayers a dime. And then the county pitches in \$350,000 to \$400,00 per year for operations. Just another lie.
- The LeGrand Center that would bring in \$Millions. Built at a \$22,000,000 debt that the taxpayers have to pay off. On top of the \$350,000 to \$500,000 per year to keep the LeGrand Center Director, former Commissioner and a financial loser for everything he touches, Jason Falls.
- The Earl Scruggs Center that was supposed to bring in

\$220,000,000 over ten years. They can't even pay their light bill without the \$350,000 to \$500,000 taxpayers kick in every year.

- The Fair. The county taxpayers are coughing up \$150,000 for a fence that is not needed.

My arithmetic says that up to \$1,950,000 per year in taxpayer dollars for losing projects-that I know of. All based on lies and mis-representation. All a waste in an officially designated "Dying County."

That is the background for what I saw in the July 2, 2019 Commissioner's Meeting agenda. A relatively short agenda without many places to hide financial manipulation. So, they didn't even try, much, to hide the facts.

In the Consent Agenda section of the Agenda-a section with many relatively small items all lumped together that the Commissioners vote one time to approve all the items without much, if any, discussion. One item caught my eye. It was titled Emergency Medical Services Capital Lease agreement. I thought that, maybe, the County was leasing new ambulances or something.

That "or something" turned out to be new stretchers for the ambulances. For \$523,617.60. Over a half million for stretchers??? There is more. The lease is for 7 years at \$74,802.43 per year at ZERO Percent financing. Oh yeah, at the end of the lease for \$1 you get to keep the stretchers.

If you watch TV at all, you should catch on to this type of a deal. Like the Nothing down, no interest for a year commercials that suck in folks that are broke to purchase low quality products that fall apart before they are paid for. Of course, there is interest, high interest, included in the price of these stretchers. And each stretcher is most likely very overpriced to begin with. No information on how many stretchers or why we don't just purchase a few at a time and

pay as we go.

And then there is the credit application. It is like one you might see from a used car lot who is frequented by illegal immigrants and others with little to no credit.

On top of that, there is another item in the Consent Agenda section titled: "Finance—Set Public Hearing for Bank Installment Financing."

Bank Installment Financing??? Doesn't Cleveland County have enough money in the bank to pay for stretchers for the EMS ambulances??? Without having to go to the high interest banks like the County did to finance the \$35,000,000 loan to build the new North Shelby School Project as well as sell Clearwater Paper \$4,600,000 in land for \$1. And foot half the bill (half of \$23,000,000) for the City of Shelby to put in water and sewer lines to the Clearwater expansion. All the while the commissioners put up the new North Shelby School as collateral for the loan. As well as James Love Elementary School and the brand new paid for \$23,000,000 Health Department Building too.

And, let's not forget that in the 2018-2019 fiscal year the county paid over \$7,000,000 to "service" our debts and only made \$350,000 in interest on our investments. And the \$1.950,000 give-aways calculated for this very year and noted above.

So, what can we make of all of this obvious debt burden relative to cash on hand?? And now the desperation financing???

There can only be one conclusion. Cleveland County is broke!!! Cleveland County must have told the Bond Rating Agencies so many lies that we have a relatively good rating. But the County is afraid to apply for a bond issue because our true financial situation would be discovered by the sharp bond money lenders. And our financial cover-up and lies discovered.

And the Commissioners put these items, hid these items would be a better description, in an obscure Agenda section on a meeting during the July 4th week where low meeting turnouts are expected. I expect the County Manager will read out the items on the consent agenda all in a row, a commissioner will make the motion to approve them all. Another commissioner will second the motion and all the commissioners will vote to approve. Without one word of discussion.

A done deal from start to finish that is the present Commissioner's MO. Come on 2020 and the Commissioner elections. Cleveland County can't stand any more of this kind of phony-baloney financial doings.

And, just as you might think you had heard it all about the stunning waste, incompetence and plain old stupidity running through the County Offices and under the noses of the County Commissioners, there is third and totally unbelievable item on the July 2, 2019 Commissioners Meeting Consent Agenda. I almost missed it myself as it was well hidden "tick" getting ready to bite Cleveland County taxpayers to suck even more blood out of a dying county. It is no wonder we are called a dying county!!!

The item title is: Department of Social Services – Community Care (N3CN) Agreement

This agreement is a 21 pager that is filled with everything related to healthcare, except for the healthcare. I read through the 21 pages twice and all I could find was a bunch of paper-pushers services-for a price. Maybe something for the Health Department, but nothing I could see for the DSS.

Then I find the "weenie" in the County Staff Report prepared by Elliot Engstrom, the County staff attorney. I could not believe my eyes.

This N3NC, short for North Carolina Community Care Network, Inc, is nothing but a data base that charges for its services.

And the fools running the Health Department and the fool commissioners bought into it back in January of this year-for the Health Department. Now, DSS, who Always wants to access data bases to check out their boyfriends or girlfriends, want to access this database too. No good reasons are given. But, lo and behold, DSS will have to pay too. Double the cost!!! According to lawyer Engstrom, the Health Department and DSS answer to different Boards, so they can't share. The county will have to pay twice for the same access to the same database.

If history is a guide, it is clear that the foolish Commissioners will most likely approve such stupidity.

And it is STUPID too. The County should have taken over both the Health Department Board while they were taking over the DSS Board. Or, better yet, not have signed up the Health Department until the County had a better understanding to begin with on what their database needs actually are.

Of course, Crazy me, has a solution. Commissioners, make the Health Department terminate their lease agreement with N3NC. Then get your act together and fire the Health Department Board as the law allows-just like the DSS Board. And then start all over again with N3NC, but ONLY if it can be very helpful AND worth the cost. Well proven, I would say that access to this database is helpful and worth the cost.

After that, reevaluate the performance of the Health Department Director (the one that got you into the Federal Lawsuit regarding sexual misconduct and discrimination), then the folks at DSS (the ones that got you into the DSS related Civil Rights Federal Lawsuit filed just two weeks ago) as well as the County Manager and anybody else incompetent enough to get you into a double pay situation such as this. And then make some well needed personnel changes.

Or, do nothing! And let us voters make those personnel changes

that I have previously suggested. That is get rid of three commissioners in the 2020 elections and elect new commissioners who are not afraid to say NO to nit-wit and hairbrained ideas such as this.