

Remember the Massive P-Card Fraud at Cleveland County Schools a few years back? Do you ever wonder why NOBODY was ever Prosecuted?? We found out the WHY!!! at the Fair-of all places!! Gossip and arguendo by Robert A. Williams

Editor's Note: We call this information "gossip" and the analysis "arguendo" to protect our sources. (Notice that I said "sources"-plural, with an "s.") However, I believe every word in this article is true.

Folks, roll your memory banks back to around the 2009-2012-time frame. Cleveland County Schools had issued around 235 plus or minus "P-Cards" to top level Administration personnel in the general offices as well as in the schools. Each person that received a P-Card (like a personal credit card that was paid by CCS) signed a "contract" that the P-Card was only for official School System business and charges for personal use was illegal and not allowed. Any charge for personal use would be subject to criminal prosecution and the person accused would be responsible for their own personal defense attorney charges as well as paying back the illegal charges. A copy of this contract was placed in the CCS personnel file for each CCS employee that was issued a CCS P-Card.

The only thing was, then as well as now, the CCS

administration ignores the word "accountability." The use of the P-Cards was immediately abused by many and there was no accountability, much less any prosecutions. And, not only P-Cards were being abused by CCS employees for little stuff, high level CCS Administrators were having their personal residences worked on by CCS Maintenance personnel and materials were charged to P-Cards. HVAC units were replaced, side businesses were repairing appliances, etc., and all work and parts were charged to CCS. Bucket trucks, tractors, and other very expensive CCS owned equipment was "borrowed" and never brought back. The graft and corruption at CCS went on and on with no end in sight.

And then, Danny Blanton comes forward to run for the school board.

My first glimpse of Danny Blanton was at a County Commissioner's meeting. Danny Blanton speaks to the Commissioners, holding up about a ream of papers he alleges are proof of fraudulently approved P-Card receipts and other evidence of criminal wrongdoing at CCS. At the end of the meeting Blanton speaks to a reporter for the Shelby Star, offering to give her the evidence if she would print it. The Star Reporter declines the offer, just like the Commissioners also declined to do anything.

Danny Blanton ran for the School Board that year and lost. Two years later Mr. Blanton runs for the school board again and wins. As for me, I decide it's time to start attending School Board meetings too. Mostly to follow up on the allegations of crime and corruption. I would soon learn there was much more bad stuff going on at CCS. Like deficiencies in educational programs, discrimination, retaliation, waste, fraud, equipment and property in excellent condition that was sold as surplus (so insiders could give lowball bids), High level CCS officials taking their friends out on the weekends for meals at high dollar restaurants-paying with P-Cards and much more. And a massive and an ingrained cover-up apparatus working full

time. All the way to the top. The Superintendent and the School Board.

During all of this, the State Auditor is called in and identifies problems whose recommended "fixes" were never implemented. A "borrowed" bucket truck and a tractor that were never missed (or looked for) shows up anonymously on school property while the security cameras just happened to be disabled. Tony Wray returns some of the personal items that he was supposed to return. The SBI does an investigation and turns over their report to the Cleveland County District Attorney, Rick Shaffer, for prosecutions. But District Attorney Rick Shaffer never prosecutes even one person.

The School Board then brings in a special auditor who reports everything is fine. But School Board member Kathy Falls slips up at one school board meeting and blurts out that the auditor had been instructed to audit stuff "going forward" and not anything during the "problem" times. In fact, the auditor was given records to audit some people who had never made a single charge on their P-Card. School Board member (and cover-up master) Roger Harris says "mistakes were made but the intentions were good." However, many P-Cards get turned in.

It was time for me to do something. I file a Freedom of Information Act and Public Records request for information regarding P-Cards and equipment distributor records that I was assured would contain incriminating evidence. I had a friend start recording School Board meetings and such. School Board member (and cover-up master) Roger Harris says 'mistakes were made but the intentions were good.' The records I had requested were never provided. Only records that Danny Blanton already had copies of.

It was about this time that CCS Superintendent suddenly "resigns" his position at CCS. "It is time I spend time with my family" says CCS Superintendent Dr. Bruce Boyles. Boyles and the school board later start calling Boyles's

“resignation” a “retirement announcement.” People start accusing me, as the requestor of very specific and pertinent financial records from CCS, as the straw that broke Boyles’s back and lead Boyles to resign or take early retirement, whatever it was. Only thing was, after Boyles resignation or retirement date, Boyles starts the next Monday in a cushy high paying position at Gardner-Webb. So much for more time with the family.

All the while all us everyday citizens were wondering why all this crime and corruption went unpunished and unprosecuted. The School Board promoted insider Dr. Stephen Fisher to Superintendent in a surprise move after they said they were going to hire from outside.

Now, fast forward to the Cleveland County Fair on Saturday, October 5, 2019 to find out why nobody at CCS was prosecuted.

I ran into a “new” source. During our conversation, the topic gets around to CCS. The “source” tells me that, several years before; DA Rick Shaffer, CCS Supt. Bruce Boyles, School Board Chairman Dr. Jack Hamrick and School Board Vice-Chairman Phillip Glover secretly meet at the Depot Restaurant in Boiling Springs. In that meeting, DA Rick Shaffer offers CCS a way out of the SBI Report without anybody being prosecuted and likely to prison. Supt. Boyles must resign ASAP, otherwise charges must be filed against very. very many of the CCS top administration!!!

So, Supt. Boyles makes his surprise resignation at the very next school board meeting after this secret meeting. And before he finally leaves CCS, Dianna Bridges shreds many financial records and the “contracts” in every P-Card holder’s personnel file is removed and destroyed. A sinister planned scheme to protect the criminal corruption at CCS and on the School Board.

And where does that leave CCS? With a bunch of corrupt

administrators who can claim they did nothing wrong. When the opposite is the truth. CCS is run by a bunch of crooks and liars. And those that are not crooks and liars are afraid to speak-out lest they be fired. Except for Danny Blanton, who is kept shut-up and shut-down by the other eight school board members. To this very day.

I call on Shearra Miller, Richard Hooker, Phillip Glover, Roger Harris, Jo Boggs, Jeff Jones, Coleman Hunt, Dena Green, Stephen Fisher and others involved, but not mentioned, to resign immediately from any association with CCS. Otherwise, the citizens of Cleveland County will remove you forcibly in the 2020 and later elections.

I call on District Attorney Mike Miller to fire ADA Rick Shaffer.

I call on a new CCS School Board to fire Stephen Fisher if he does not resign, to hold an internal investigation and fire, for cause, any CCS employee who abused CCS P-Cards or conspired to cover-up such activity.

I make this "resignation only" position due to the fact that North Carolina Statute of Limitation Law for Fraud lasts only 3 years. Thusly eliminating criminal prosecution at this time. Perhaps if the citizens and voters in Cleveland County had ben paying better attention, there would already be a "new" school board that would have taken prompt action to get rid of the culture of crime and corruption at CCS.