

Citizens Rule in Cleveland County!!! Commissioners Reminded of that Five Times Tonight!!! Ill Conceived Sales Tax Increase Defeated by Wide Margin!! Eye Witness Report by Robert A. Williams

The foolish Cleveland County Commissioners, all Republicans, got a major comeuppance on this gorgeous November 5th 2019 Election Day. In five large doses.

But, first remember that today was election day and the commissioners, instigated by County Manager Brian Epley and high-level officials in the Cleveland County Republican Party, had foolishly voted to place a referendum on the ballot to increase sales taxes. A purely deceptive thing to do as this is an odd numbered year when voter turnout is usually very low. A genuine planned and devious scheme it was. The commissioners promised everybody a piece of the action. Schools, Cleveland Community College and every municipality were promised funding of some sort. Clearly to gain voter approval, although no exact plans were ever disclosed on who would get what. I told the commissioners I voted against the sales tax increase and hoped it would fail, as they had not given the public any confirmation on what the extra money would be used for.

So, on this fine day for an election, voter turnout was very low, much as expected. And the Cleveland County Commissioner's Meeting was that very evening. At the Commissioner's meeting

was where the action started.

At the Citizens Participation part of the meeting agenda, I was the first speaker. I reminded the commissioners that public input was very important and that the commissioners just let public comments go in one ear and out the other. That was the first warning that the commissioners did not heed as they cut me off before I was finished. Another speaker voiced concerns about the safety of horse drawn carriages travelling on state roads. That speaker was cut off too.

Then came the public hearings.

The first public hearing was about some text approvals to a zoning ordinance placing limitations to the location and use of garages and carports at private residences. I had not planned to speak about this item, but being the only member of the public that was present at that time, I spoke up. I stated that I was against the invasion of county government into the rights of citizens to determine for themselves what THEY want to put in their garages and carports. The commissioners paid me no attention and voted unanimously to approve the text changes with some shall tweaking about how only vehicles that are capable of operation could be put into garages and carports.

The second public hearing was whether or not the Commissioners should abolish the Health Department Board and the Commissioners take over that function. The County Staff Attorney started his presentation by stating that "citizens are the boss" and then comes the commissioners in the administration organization chart. I spoke again on this matter. First saying that I was AGAINST the commissioners taking this action although I stated I agreed with everything that Engstrom had said. My concern was with the Commissioners themselves not being worthy of taking control of the Health Department as they did with the DSS. I based all my arguments on this particular Board of Commissioners NOT paying any

attention to the citizens of Cleveland County and rattles off a number of reasons why I had come to that conclusion. The commissioners again voted unanimously to take over the Health Department Board functions.

The next item on the agenda was to set up a Health Department Advisory Board. Lawyer Engstrom suggested to the commissioners to abolish the old Health Department Board and reconstitute the same Board members back into office as an advisory Board. Not one peep about requiring more accountability or transparency. And, apparently ignoring the fact that the Commissioners, County Manager Brian Epley, Health Department former Director Dorothea Wyant as well as former Health Department Supervisor Sam Lockridge are under a Federal Lawsuit alleging sexual harassment. Where was the Health Department Board oversight when all this happened??? Anyway, the Commissioners voted unanimously to abolish the old board and bring the old board back in as the new advisory board. Was that stupid or what?

Then the meeting was adjourned and I headed over to the elections board to get the results of the sales tax increase vote results hot off the press.

At the end of the day, the citizens showed the Commissioners in no uncertain terms who was boss. The citizens voted overwhelmingly AGAINST the Sales Tax Increase-exactly as I had recommended. The commissioners had ignored the facts that I brought up three times tonight and that lawyer Elliot Engstrom brought up again-that the citizens were the boss. And the Fifth time being the citizens themselves with their strong body slam defeat of this phony sales tax increase referendum pushed by the Republican commissioners and other Republican so-called leaders.

I don't expect this particular Board of County Commissioners to get the lessons that just got shoved down their throats tonight. But that is OK. There are three commissioners up for

re-election in 2020. A majority that can be defeated in one fell swoop, with a NEW Board majority that will bring sanity back into County Government. Sanity AND accountability, transparency and fiscal responsibility.

These incumbent commissioners remind us of all the old sayings; you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink, you can't teach old dogs new tricks and such. But the facts are clear, A new commissioner majority elected in 2020 can immediately make the changes necessary on the Board of Commissioners that have been lacking for so long.

So folks, stay tuned!!! Signup dated for commissioner candidates are only several weeks away. All we need is three good commissioners elected and it will be happy days in Cleveland County Schools can be made accountable, CCC, DSS and the Health Department too.

And this is do-able. We got rid of Commissioner Eddie Holbrook in the 2018 election despite Holbrook spending \$68,000 to get elected. Lots of money cannot buy elections in Cleveland County anymore. Informed voters have proved they can make important decisions, we will do it again in 2020. I will do my part and so can you. Record turnouts are expected in 2020. We can all enjoy the light of day that informed voters can bring to us on election day 2020!!! As for the incumbent commissioners, they had their chance and blew it. We owe them no sympathy.