New Courthouse and Jail Falling Apart, Leaking and Cold!! Water Leaking from Jail Endangers Public Records stored below!! Tarps draped over Court Files in Attempt to preserve Documents!! Clerks Ask for MY help Getting things Fixed!! Eyewitness Report by Robert A. Williams

Editor’s Note: Several previous articles regarding conditions in the Cleveland County Jail and the high turnover in the Sheriff’s Department have included reports of bad facility conditions in the jail that are not being fixed. Also mentioned previously in various articles is the fact that in a previous County Commissioner’s meeting, County Manager Brian Epley presented information to the Commissioners that they should consider building a new Courthouse and jail complex. Also note that I have previously requested from the Sheriff an actual tour of the jail facilities to see for myself, accompanied by the County Commissioners, just exactly what the problems are. This request has NOT been allowed to date. Most likely because the Commissioners would be out glad-handing for votes at the expensive LeGrand Center with their fancy catered meals and fine wines; instead of actually seeing for

themselves the problems that could possibly be fixed cheaply if done in time or spend many $Millions of tax dollars later to build new facilities that they would put their name on and get their pictures in the Shelby Star.

This article starts December 10, 2019 after I did a little court watching in the Willie Green v. Rick Howell (Shelby City Manager) lawsuit "Motion to Dismiss" hearing. (Also, the subject of a previous article.)

Since going through the security at the courthouse is always a pain, I try to get as much done with one trip to the Courthouse as I can. I had a list of things to look up at the Clerk of Court's Office. It is always a good experience at the Clerk of Court's office as they are always helpful in answering questions and pulling files for me to research. But I suppose they are not doing me any special favors; they are helpful to everybody.

In this particular situation, I was looking for the case file on the accused cop-killer Irving Fenner, Jr, regarding his 2009 arrest for Assaulting a Police Officer. A charge that was noted many times in news accounts of the killing of SPD Officer Tim Brackeen as an indication of how dangerous person the accused murderer Irving Fenner, Jr. was. Stay tuned for that upcoming article.

Anyway, I looked up the case number on the Clerk's Office public computer, wrote the number down on a scrap of paper and asked the Clerk at the window for the file for my inspection. This was my normal routine when I am doing research in the Clerk's Office. The Clerk invited me around and to the locked security door and let me in. They always provide a place somewhere so I can sit down out of the way and look through the paperwork.

The Clerk had some doubts on whether or not that 2009 misdemeanor case was in the file or "purged" as they

occasionally do with minor infractions that are this old. The Clerk allowed me to follow her into the records vault where those old cases are normally stored.

The first thing I noticed, after seeing how neat, organized and Christmas decorated the rest of the Clerk's Office areas were, was the unsightly, double-thickness, blue plastic tarps draped all over the many rows of file cabinets. I asked the clerk if they had a leaking roof. The clerk said it was for the jail area above. Then I looked up at the ceiling and saw the water damaged discolored tiles. The clerk looked for my requested file and said it was not there. That it must have been purged.

By this time, I was thinking about the County Manager telling the Commissioners that a costly and new Courthouse complex was needed. What I was seeing told me that the Courthouse that we had was not being maintained properly. I was thinking this water could be coming from a leaking roof above the jail which was above the Clerk of Court document storage vault. Of plumbing leaks from the jail, condensate leaks from the HVAC system or a combination of all the above. Clear and convincing proof that the building was not being maintained properly. What was also clear that water leaks such as this will soon develop mold. Mold that has gotten so bad at Burns and Crest High Schools that certain areas have been closed down. Moldy areas that the School Board and Commissioners refuse to talk about, although they are promising to build new multimillion-dollar new auditoriums at 50+ year old Burns and Crest High Schools to fool voter into re-electing the incumbents.

Then, the Clerk that was assisting me took me around to a corner office to see if a supervisor had any additional information regarding what appeared to be "purged" files. The supervisor confirmed the file had been purged, but gave me a print-out copy of what records still exist on that case file. Basically just a few things that will be the subject of a new article.

As I was now also interested in why the county was not maintaining county owned facilities properly, and mention the water leak, the supervisor said “it’s cold too.” Which the first clerk also confirmed. I then asked if the County Commissioners ever came around to check on things? The supervisor said, “they come around occasionally, but I think for other reasons.” Then the supervisor jokingly said to me, “maybe YOU can help us out” with our building problems. Clearly indicating that people around the courthouse and county government read my articles. I laughed and said, “sure.” But, little did she know that I had already decided to bring these conditions up to the County Commissioners; and, again, invite them on a Jail tour that should be expanded to also include the water leaks, temperature conditions, etc. in the buildings.

So, all you Cleveland County Commissioners, all y’all that report about all your meetings, soirées, catered meals and wine at the LeGrand Center. I want you to arrange with the Sheriff and all the folks down at the Courthouse a tour of those facilities, including me so I will know that you are actually there, to see for yourself that what needs to be done is not being done. And I, as well as all taxpayers, expect YOU to find out why it is not getting done and fix whatever needs fixing. Pronto!!!

Also folks, Stay tuned for what I found in that one page document regarding the cop-killer Irving Fenner’s criminal record. It might just blow your socks off about how young black males are mis-treated by the system. Poor, young, white males too.