Trouble in-Paradise-Part I: Shooting Range Gets More $$$!!! Uncovered Secrets of the Cleveland County Commissioners!! Discovery, analysis and report by Robert A. Williams

With all the Emergency Declarations declared by the Cleveland County Commissioners and NC Governor, because of the so-called deadly COVID-19 coronavirus, you would think the Commissioners would have cancelled or rescheduled their April 7, 2020 Commissioner's meeting. You would have thought they would have rescheduled their March 17, 2020 meeting too. Especially since there were two "Public Hearings" on the agenda for that meeting. The Commissioners did tell the County Department Heads not to come. I attended the March 17th meeting but stayed home for this past Tuesday's meetings. Maybe because the Shelby Star Coronavirus Map shows the ground-zero epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cleveland County is so close to Fallston. Where we have as many victims as the rest of Cleveland County put together. I figure since Upper Clevelanders, "U-pers," have to travel to Shelby for so many things-because Shelby gets all the county funding, Shelby is where we caught the virus to begin with.

But, anyway, I have requested in writing that the Cleveland County Commissioners (along with the School Board and Cleveland Community College) provide me with their meeting notice as well as their agenda. It is part of the NC Public Records laws that they are supposed to obey. But they fudge

delivery of the notices of meetings, sometimes less than 24 hours.

The Commissioners have developed a way to fudge the truth even more and more. And use their sneaky tricks at almost every meeting. Sometimes several times in the same meeting.

It is called the “Consent Agenda.” Consent agendas are supposed to be routine matters that are so simple that they do not need any discussion. A bunch of routine matters that can all be voted upon at one time without discussion or explanation. At the April 7, 2020 Commissioners meeting, there were 10 items on the Consent Agenda. I was not present, but I would bet that all ten were approved with a single vote and without a peep of discussion. Call your favorite Commissioner and ask them whether or not that is true.

However, the first item on the Consent Agenda was the minutes for the March 17, 2020. I WAS present at that meeting and I know for a fact that the minutes these do-do commissioners voted to approve was not sufficiently correct to meet State Law requirements. But that happens so often that nobody cares except me. But it is a violation of state law and violators of the law are crooks. So, our commissioners are crooks. I believe I could prove that many times over in a “real” court of law.

But there is more. Much more. And newsworthy too!!!

One puzzling item was a $364,662 movement of cash from the Employee Wellness Fund to Prescription Drugs. I suspect the Commissioners themselves are hooked up with the Employee Wellness Fund in one way or another. Ask your favorite commissioner about that. I suspect you will be lied to.

Another item was a $50,000 fund transfer to Social Services. Designated to “Outside Poor.” My suspicion is that is the $50,000 reported in the Star as the Commissioners donation to the United Way. A taxpayer donation would be a better term.

Again, Ask your favorite commissioner.

An item for $18,279.03 going to EMS. There were 28 pages of accounting fluff-stuff, but I couldn't determine exactly where one red cent of that money went for. I do recall plenty of anonymous complaints of massive waste by a new EMS Director, a reported Romeo, who was run out of Iredell County for messing around with a county commissioner's daughter. Ask your favorite commissioner about all this too. I suspect you will be lied to.

And, then there was the secret Shooting Range Expansion. The Foothills Shooting Range, run under the Cleveland County Health Department of all places. A $3,000,000 plus shooting range that has always operated in the red-about $350,000 of tax-dollars lost every year, has somehow gotten themselves into a major expansion that the public knew nothing about. But the Commissioners and the Wildlife Commission agreed to Feb. 19,2019. A 107.14-acre expansion to the skeet and trap area. From the entries, there is a $487.500 state Wildlife Commission grant to build the expansion on the 107.14 acres the county is providing as their part of the secret deal.

But, hey, Speaker of the House Tim Moore is "bringing home the bacon" to Cleveland County. Can Tim Moore be blamed because the Commissioners let the "bacon" turn rancid and be wasted. So, who cares if the Commissioners waste the Wildlife Commission's funding? Cleveland County Taxpayers will be OK. Right! Right?

Wrong Again folks. The "Devil is in the Details." Under the secret agreement for Cleveland County to get the $487,500, they have to put up $161,833.33 using direct taxpayers tax dollars. The County (Commissioners) are responsible for all the maintenance, upkeep and modifications. Provide the property 107.14 acres. Provide all maintenance, management and operations staffing.

But, that ain't nothing compared to what else the foolish commissioners agreed to. The Commissioners agreed to allow the Wildlife Commission the "right of first refusal for the management of the whole shooting range if the Shooting Range agreements are terminated by the Commissioners.

Even that wouldn't be so bad if the County Commissioners would just terminate this big money losing Shooting Range fiasco and be done with this bad idea. But NOOoooo! The foolish turned stupid commissioners also agreed to repay the Wildlife Commission all their funding grants, around $3,487,500 (prorated) if the commissioners terminate the Shooting Range agreement in less that 40 years.

And, remember, the commissioners sold this shooting range idea as something that would not cost the county a dime. Commissioner Johnny Hutchins preached this message day in and day out. Disgraced and Defeated former Commissioner Eddie, "Massa Eddie" Holbrook too.

Also, remember this is Election Year and Johnny Hutchins and Ronnie Whetstine, partners in crime are up for reelection with little to no competition from the Democrats. I feel sure they will say that there is No Trouble in Paradise regarding the Foothills Shooting Range in Cleveland County. You can be the Shelby Star will soon be singing praise to how wise and smart the Commissioners were in getting the Shooting Range deal. This is something I predict with certainty from all these many years of attending Commissioner's meetings.

But, then, I just happened across an article in the Raleigh News and Observer regarding the Wake County Commissioners terminating an agreement with the Wildlife Commission for a similar shooting range near Raleigh.

But, don't believe me. Ask your favorite commissioner about this and make you comments. Also, here is the link to the Raleigh News and Observer article.

Aren’t you ashamed for voting Commissioners Johnny Hutchins and Ronnie Whetstine back into office? Shame on them and more shame on YOU dirty trick Republicans and TEA Party-ers!!!