More “Zipper Problems” at Cleveland County Schools??? —School Board calls Special meeting at 11:AM May 27, 2020!!!—Less than 20 hours’ Notice!!! —Report and facts by Robert A. Williams

Folks, I have long ago applied, in writing and in accordance with North Carolina law, to Cleveland County Schools to be notified of all school board meetings. Calling of School Board meetings; regular meetings, emergency and called meetings, according to North Carolina laws, all have detailed statutes that closely regulate the calling of such meetings and require adequate notice to the public who might want to attend these public meetings. The best I can tell is Cleveland county Schools broke the law badly in the Special Called Meeting for the May 27, 2020 called meeting. As for me, the meeting was over before I ever received my notification.

But I read through the agenda, several times, and found noting, on the surface, that was important enough to call for a special meeting. Especially since the schools are all shut-down, locked-down and little to nothing is going on at CCS. Therefore, I “smelt a rat.” A big stinking rat. And, when I listened to the meeting recording (the meeting was not live, but a call-in meeting for the school board), I quickly figured out what was going on. And the “who” and the “why” of this whole fiasco that was a long-time cover-up of a problem that would eventually surface. And apparently did arise-pun intended.

It was not a new discovery; it goes back for several years. And, my discovery was not from going to school board meetings or getting confidential information from “school” sources in the darkness of the night. I received my information about these goings-on at Shelby Middle School down at the Cleveland County Courthouse, of all places.

Several years ago, a “problem” surfaced at Shelby Middle School. Science Teacher Mindy Morrow was accused by CCS of allegedly stealing school materials and selling them on eBay. Morrow was charged and taken to Cleveland County Superior Court for a jury trial. I attended the trial, first thinking that CCS was finally clamping down on employees that were doing bad and illegal things. But, as the trial started and I heard some sworn testimony, I would soon change my mind.

But, let’s start at the start.

I arrived early on the day of Mindy Morrow’s trial. I went up front of the empty Courtroom and chose a seat right up front next to the jury box. That is my standard procedure for court watching. I get as close to the jury as I can. I pay attention and take a lot of notes. I hear what the jury hears and I see what the jury sees. Little did I know that I was going to hear MORE than the jury ever got to hear and I got to see MORE than the jury would ever get to see. Remember this point.

A few minutes later School Board Member Danny Blanton cane into the almost empty Courtroom and took a seat more like a Baptist on a Sunday-morning Preaching. More to the back of the room. That would soon change as the bailiff asked Danny Blanton to come sit on the row next to me as they wanted the jury pool to all sit together and not have any “civilians” intermingled with the jury pool.

So. Danny Blanton and I got to watch the selection of the actual jurors that would actually serve on that particular case. I took notes of their names. One juror, a woman with the

last name of “Turner” stated she was the wife of a Baptist Preacher in Upper Cleveland County. Another point to remember.

After the final trial jury was selected, Attorney David Teddy came over and informed Danny Blanton (who, like I said before, was sitting right next to me) that he, Teddy, was asking all school related witnesses or school related personnel to stay outside the Courtroom while the actual trial was going on. Danny Blanton got up and left and I asked Teddy what that was all about. Teddy replied that he didn’t want any witnesses to actually hear what any other witnesses testified too. Little did I know at that time what a wise and smart thing that was to do. I would soon find out why.

When the trial actually started, I was the only “civilian” in the Courtroom. There were the Assistant DA Sally Kirby-Turner, Shelby Police Department Officer Truitt, some clerk of Court people, Attorney David Teddy, Mindy Morrow, the jury, Judge Robert Ervin from Burke County and ME. In the end, I was the only civilian in the courtroom that actually got to hear ALL the testimony-not even the jury. Especially the jury. And I was shocked, even after all the shenanigans I have seen pulled in court cases in all my court watching days. This one took the prize for the most obvious miscarriages of justice. That is until the Capital Murder Trial of the accused Cop-Killer Irving Fenner, Jr. in the killing of SPD Officer Tim Brackeen came along. Note that the Fenner trial would re-unite ADA Sally Kirby-Turner and Judge Robert Ervin. Another major miscarriage of Justice in my book. But stay tuned folks, you ain’t heard nothing yet.

The trial began when ADA Sally Kirby-Turner called Shelby Middle School Principal Dr. Dustin Bridges to the stand. Bridges seemed to me to be articulate and thorough in his testimony. At first anyway. Bridges testified that the School was missing certain items and he was determined to catch the culprit. Good for you, I was thinking. But as testimony went on and on and on from Dr. Bridges, about Bridges personally

watching all the security video and on and on; I began to wonder just who was watching over the school while the principal was watching over security videos. The more Bridges testified to the most minute of details, the more I was beginning to understand that the "proof" of the matter was just not rising to the top of the minutia. True, Mindy Morrow had sold stuff on eBay, but no proof that the stuff Morrow sold was stuff that actually came from CCS and was still being used by CCS instead of stuff Morrow had bought at a yard sale..

Others testified about some minor details about this and that. I was beginning to think that surely there must be something in this case that would justify CCS taking all this time and effort, along with ADA Kirby-Turner, to justify bringing this case to court to start with. I am sure the jury must be thinking the same thing too.

Later in that first day, the Judge sends the Jury to the jury room so there can be some discussion that the jury was not supposed to hear. Legal arguments and such about the proceedings of the trial and such. Lots of "side-bar" stuff where the judge comes off the Bench and huddles with the ADA and Defense Attorney to discuss something totally off the record. The kind of stuff that makes me wonder what the hell is going on.

Then, while the jury is still in the jury room and not in the Courtroom, Attorney David Teddy calls former Shelby Middle School Principal Tim Quattlebaum to the stand. Tim Q. is sworn in, placed under oath and the testimony begins. And the testimony ain't nothing about Mindy Morrow stealing anything.

The questions asked to and answers given by Mr. Q. were in regard to whether or not new Shelby Middle School Principal Dr. Dustin Bridges was the subject of a complaint by Mindy Morrow alleging that Principal Dr. Dustin Bridges was having illicit relations with a certain female CCS employee/teacher

and showing her favoritism over other employees/teachers. The questioning and answering went back and forth a bit at a time and former Principle Tim Quattlebaum answered explicitly. “YES!,”, said Principal Quattlebaum, Mindy Morrow did make such a complaint as that to me, “AND SHE (Mindy Morrow) WASN’T THE ONLY ONE!!!”

I heard every word of that testimony and made my notes accordingly. However, Judge Robert Erving would not allow the jury to be called in for the jury to hear that testimony. No other school employee heard that testimony either. I was the only “civilian” person to hear that testimony and I remember it well. I realized right then and there that this whole effort by CCS was made as retaliation against Mindy Morrow for making a valid complaint about Principal Dr. Dustin Bridges, who was considered a “rising star” at CCS and worthy of a maximum cover-up effort. I truly believe that if the jury had got to hear that very same evidence and testimony that they would have, as I did, change their minds and they would have found Mindy Morrow NOT GUILTY.”

But the jury never heard that testimony and the trial continued. And, believe it or not, things actually got worse.

Morrow’s Attorney, David Teddy, chipped away at the items Mindy Morrow was supposed to have stolen from CCS and sold on eBay. Item by item was challenged and eventually the Judge ruled that every item CCS alleged Mindy Morrow had sold could not be proved to have been an item actually owned and in use at CCS. Except for one item, a $25 case for a laptop computer that might have been owned by CCS. This ruling by Judge Robert Ervin was also made at the end of the second day of the trial when the jury was not in the Courtroom.

Judge Ervin also allowed testimony from the CCS HR Director, Jennifer Wampler, who also did not hear former Principal Tim Quattlebaum’s testimony that ther jury also did not et to hear. Jennifer Wampler had made her own “record” of Mindy

Morrow's "Exit Interview" that did not include any allegations from Mindy Morrow about SMS Principal Dr. Dustin Bridges illicit relations with one or more women employees/teachers at SMS and give them favorable treatment at the expense of other SMS employees/teachers.

At the start of the third day of the trial, Defense Attorney David Teddy correctly made closing arguments to the jury that the only matter under consideration was the questionable $25 computer case and correctly stated that nobody had conclusively proven that that particular case that Mindy Morrow had sold on eBay had ever belonged to CCS as well as other yard sale items that Mindy Morrow had sold on eBay.

Then ADA Sally Kirby-Turner gave her closing arguments to the jury saying that Mindy Morrow had stolen every item that CCS had alleged, even though Judge Ervin had ruled the previous day that all but one item had not met the burden of proof that was necessary to "rise beyond a reasonable doubt." Judge Ervin also did not instruct the jury of that fact.

Most egregious of all was the judge allowed Jennifer Wampler's testimony, and her own accounts of what she (Wampler) said Mindy Morrow did or did not tell her, to be seen by the jury. Attorney David Teddy raised cane that Jennifer Wampler's own notes did not meet the standards of evidence against Mindy Morrow. The Judge ruled that the testimony and notes "were NOT evidence but could be used to establish the "credibility" of Jennifer Wampler.

By then, the jury was totally confused about the items that had or had not been excluded by the judge. Between the jury and me, I was the only one that actually heard the Judge's ruling to that effect. But, for the life of me, I could not understand why the Judge did not allow the jury to be properly told that there was only one item in question-the $25 computer case.

Then, the jury is sent to the jury room to decide its verdict. But the jury is hung. Three times the jury wants to hear more instructions on Jennifer Wampler's Testimony and especially about her notes. Each time the Judge tells the jury that Jennifer Wampler's notes "were not evidence," but an indication of her credibility as a witness." From all appearances the Juror named Turner, the Preacher's wife from Upper Cleveland County was at least one of the holdouts on the jury.

Now, consider this. If you are on jury duty and the Judge tells you something "is NOT EVIDENSE," what do you do? The answer is simple. If you DO NOT have "evidence" to find somebody guilty, you say NOT-GUILTY. That is what I would have done. Not because I had already heard things that the jury MEVER got to hear, but because that is the basic principle of Justice in a criminal jury trial. An accused person is innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt by a jury of their peers. No evidence is NO EVIDENSE, no matter how it is "dressed-up" by a crooked judge.

The jury members who were hung eventually gave up and voted Guilty. Later I learned from people that I know who were in the original jury pool, that many people on that particular jury were tired of the long trial and just wanted to go home. The person who was telling me tis said that a fight almost broke out in one of the other jury rooms (there were multiple trials going on during that particular Superior Court session) among some women who were just determined to get the trials over with and go home, no matter if there was justice or not.

That being said, I believe no jury anywhere would have convicted Mindy Morrow of anything if they had heard what I had heard. I would have hung that jury 'til hell froze over.

Now, let's fast forward to the Special Called School Board Meeting of May 27, 2020. And wonder why there was such a fuss while Schools were closed down by order of the Governor?

This Special Meeting agenda was benign and unnecessary when looked at with the naked eye. No reason at all for a special meeting.

That is until you hear the audio recording of the meeting. And whose name pops up???

Right in the middle of this closed down school system, Shelby Middle School Principal **Dr. Dustin Bridges is going to be transferred to Number Three Elementary School as Principal**. Only school board member Danny Blanton has the gumption to ask "is there a reason for this transfer." CCS Superintendent Dr. Stephen Fisher goes into his "fast-talking" mode. Something he does whenever he knows he can't dazzle you with brilliance, so he has to baffle you with bull-shit. Fisher goes on and on that by demoting Bridges from a Middle School to an Elementary School is in reality a promotion for Bridges and provides him an extra opportunity to excel. But, don't believe me on this. Go to the CCS website for yourself and listen to Fisher's "fast talking." I have mentioned this "fast-talking" mode several times in other articles and I can tell Fisher is working on it. But that old habit is hard for him to break when he is cornered with a question about something he is trying his best (or worse) to cover-up.

But there is MORE!! This Special Called Meeting has a closed session on the agenda. Right after the Dustin Bridges transfer (demotion) announcement. The Closed session is the only unknown in the agenda capable of covering up a present major situation that would justify calling such a meeting to begin with. The Closed session is to discuss a personnel matter per North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)6.

That law is stated below. The underlined part of the law is what is allowed in closed session and the non-underlined part is what cannot be discussed in closed session.

(6) To consider the qualifications, competence,

> performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee. General personnel policy issues may not be considered in a closed session. A public body may not consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, appointment, or removal of a member of the public body or another body and may not consider or fill a vacancy among its own membership except in an open meeting. Final action making an appointment or discharge or removal by a public body having final authority for the appointment or discharge or removal shall be taken in an open meeting.

For a Special Meeting to be called per the noted NC General Statute only the part of the law underlined and in large letters justify such special treatment.

Again, that part says: **or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee.**

This is serious business. A complaint, charge or grievance against a school board member or an employee. Knowing that Principal Dr. Dustin Bridges, already named in Cleveland County Superior Court as having problems keeping his zipper up, has been demoted, in the name of a promotion. And just before the Closed Session in the Special Called Meeting agenda. Therefore, a conclusion based on deductive reasoning has to be reached that there are most likely others involved in this matter. And likely Dr. Dustin Bridges' "consort" who has fallen from his graces and is now filing, or has filed, a lawsuit against Cleveland County Schools.

Imagine that. More lawsuits arising in Cleveland County from improper leadership from a county or city governmental

agency???

But, don’t believe me. Ask School Board members Shearra Miller, Richard Hooker, and Roger Harris who are running for re-election what the heck is going on here?? Also ask Phillip “Bully” Glover, Jack Hamrick, Danny Blanton, Jo Boggs, Coleman Hunt and Dena Green too. You have the right. These folks have asked for your vote in the past so you can ask for the truth now. Ask them about the Court Case I described. Ask about this questionable meeting on May 26, 2020. Ask them when they are going to resign from office and be done with the shenanigans.

Also, ask DA Mike Miller why the DA’s office dropped the Death Penalty in SPD Officer Tim Brackeen’s killing. Where the DA’s star witness identified Irving Fenner, Jr. as the killer, saying she “could see his face well in the bright street lights,” while Brackeen’s body-cam showed total darkness. Ask the Shelby City officials that too. Including Police Chief Jeff Ledford and the bevy of black ministers Chief Ledford showed the body cam footage to soon after the killing. And ADA Sally Kirby-Turner showed the footage to the public after announcing the plea-bargain deal for Fenner.

Stay tuned folks. You will never get the truth of the matter anywhere else, but here. And Election Day 2020 is getting closer and closer.