New County Property tax evaluations are in YOUR mail boxes!! 35-50% Increases are Common!! Don’t “Boo-Hoo” to me. I told you so!!! And YOU Stayed Home!!! Prediction: 2022 Elections to be hotly contested!! Report, evaluation, predictions and “Ha-Ha’s” provided by Robert A. Williams

I have told this story many times. In 2008 at the height of the Housing bubble, Cleveland County evaluated all the property in Cleveland County for tax purposes. At that time home sales were booming and prices were hitting the ceiling because the financial “crooks” on Wall Street had rigged the system. Many, many homes were sold to those who could not afford to pay the balloon payments. Later in 2008 Wall Street collapsed and millions of homes were foreclosed-on. The Stock Market tanked and the biggest recession since 1929 hit just about everybody everywhere in the United States and around the world. Even China laid off millions of their sweatshop workers.

And what did the Cleveland County Commissioners do?? They collected their property taxes at the inflated valuation in 2008 and kept property taxes high until 2016. They had to re-

evaluate in 2016 because North Carolina Law required them to. At least every 8 years. But, for all those 8 years when Cleveland County citizens were suffering, the County kept property taxes artificially high because they were funneling Million$ into Eddie Holbrook's American Legion World Series and other boondoggles. All the while they froze county employee pay because the County was broke. The Commissioners even sold the hospitals and healthcare facilities in Cleveland County for pennies on the dollar. Losing BILLION$$$ in the process. I have previously written about that too. Look it up.

Since the property values in 2016 were still lower than the high in early 2008, the 2016 evaluations were lower so folks got a bit of a break. But, not for long.

State Law says the counties have to re-evaluate every 8 years as the maximum. But state law doesn't prevent counties from re-evaluating more often. The property values were increasing after 2016 and the ALWS and Eddie Holbrook still had their hands in the county taxpayer "cookie jar." The Commissioners, under the direction of County Manager Brian Epley who was under the direction of Eddie Holbrook decided in 2018 to re-evaluate property in 2021. Three years early. Then re-evaluate again in 2024 at the end of the 8-year period.

This was no surprise to me as I predicted this was going to happen. When I heard the first news about re-evaluation, I wrote about it. Several times I wrote about it. When the Commissioners held the required Public Hearing to authorize the early property reevaluation, I was the first in line to speak against the early reevaluation. Of course, besides being the First in line to speak against the reevaluation, I was also the last in line. I was the only "citizen" in the house to speak for or against the reevaluation. I spoke against the reevaluation for exactly the reasons I noted above.

As a side note, I spoke three times that night against the reevaluation. I spoke three minutes during the Citizens

Recognition against the revaluation until I was cut off. Then there were two Public Hearings that night. I spoke during the First Public hearing that was about something else, but I spoke 5 minutes against the reevaluation before I was cut off. Then the Public Hearing for the revaluation came up and I spoke five more minutes against the reevaluation until I was cut off again. To my knowledge, me speaking three times against the reevaluation for a total of 13 minutes was a record. Getting cut off three times in the same meeting was also a record.

But, none of that mattered anyway. Commissioners Susan Allen, Johnny Hutchins, Ronnie Whetstine, Doug Bridges and Deb Hardin all voted for the reevaluation. Note that Commissioner Eddie Holbrook did not get to vote for the reevaluation as he was defeated in the 2018 Election-but is still running things through County Manager Brian Epley. It was a done deal and everybody knew it. And now I have my reevaluation notice in the mail and so does everybody else in Cleveland County that owns “Real” property. Houses, buildings, land and such.

At least I spoke up when it counted and everybody else stayed home. So, I get to say, “I told you so” with a clear conscience. My only consolation since my evaluations are now much higher, just like most everybody else. There are those that are buddies with the right people and their property reevaluation is likely to be not so high. It is always that way. I suppose it is payback for donating $68,000 to Eddie Holbrook’s losing reelection campaign in the 2018 Elections.

But that is NOT the end of this story.

The Commissioners still have to set the County tax RATE. The old tax rate is 57 cents per $100 in property evaluation.

But, remember, Brian Epley and the Commissioners are sneaky about their tax rates. By sneaky, I mean they lie. They lie a lot.

It used to be that there was only One Tax rate in Cleveland County proper. From that particular tax rate, money was supplied to the pre-merger Cleveland County Schools and “piddling” amounts to the various municipalities. Only Shelby and Kings Mountain had city tax rates over and above the County Tax rate. Towns like Fallston had no city tax, or fire tax, school tax or anything else except for sales tax.

Then, over time, the County tax rates stayed high and additional taxes were levied for schools, fire protection, town taxes and such… Now, for example, Property taxes for Fallston include the following:

57 Cents County tax
15 cents School tax
5 cents Fallston tax
8.75 cents Fallston fire tax
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85.75 cents total Property tax = when you do all the adding and other ciphering’s.

If the Commissioners keep the 57 cents county property taxes. My tax BILL will be calculated as follows:

Property reevaluated value divided by $100 times 0.8575 (85.75 cents) + my tax bill. Same ciphering as your tax bill.as yours.

If my reevaluation is $25,000 higher, my increase in out of pocked would be $25,000 dived by $100 times 0.8575 which equals $214.38 EXTRA on my tax bill. Not a small amount for a small-town boy like me. But, the same ciphering as everybody else that that did not show up at the Commissioner’s Public Hearing to say NO NEW TAXES! Like I did.

And that is not the end of this story either.

This is where the lying will start. Big time! When the tax bills come out.

The Commissioners will know that if large tax dollar increases come out, there will be a big out-cry in Cleveland County at the end of 2021. Right before the election signups for the 2022 Elections.

And who are the Commissioners coming up for reelection in 2022. Doug Bridges and Deb Hardin. Of course, there will be another reevaluation in 2024 when Commissioners Johnny Hutchins, Ronnie Whetstine and Kevin Gordon will be up for reelection. But elections that far out are usually not thought about very much. Although two large tax increases in a row and 2024 being a Presidential could turn everything upside-down. Especially if President Donald Trump runs again. Or Tim Moore runs for President or Vice President.

Note that my prediction is Tim Moore will run for the US Senate in 2022 for the retiring (or imprisoned traitor) Senator Richard Burr seat. If Tim wins the US Senate seat in 2022, he would have a perfect shot at President or VP. North Carolina being a swing state and all. Of course, also depending on what his actual role might or might not be in the ongoing fiasco with the Cleveland County NEW School Board Majority. Association with the NEW CCS lawyers, the NEW Commissioner's lawsuit lawyer, Martha Thompson. The Kings Mountain Casino and all. That is a story in the making.

Back to the Commissioners reevaluation of your property and the Tax rate.

One thing is for sure, NO MATER WHAT, your tax bills are going UP in 2021. Even if the County tax Rate is lowered to the point that the tax dollar REVENUE before and after reevaluation are the same. The school tax, city tax and fire tax RATES will remain the same, the increase in property valuation will cause an increase in YOUR tax bills. And mine too.

But you can rest assured that this kind of "revenue neutral"

approach to setting the County Tax rate will not happen. First, why would the Commissioners waste time on reevaluating property unless they get something out of it. Especially since the County is broke. This is where the big-time Commissioner lying will kick in.

The Commissioners will bring out County Manager Brian Epley to explain that lowering the County Tax RATE a cent or two per $100 valuation will be “Revenue Neutral.” Of course, that will be a blatant lie. If you call Epley down on that, YOU will be told that the State has mandated “formulas” for calculating “Revenue Neutral” and the County HAS to abide by State Law. The same excuse the County used to stop paying Southern Power Company the incentives the County promised to pay Southern if they would build a $500,000,000 power plant in Cleveland County. Now Southern Power built the $500,000,000 power plant in Cleveland County and the County Commissioners are refusing to pay. Now the County is in a Federal Lawsuit for the $Million$ in incentives that were promised. More than promised, the County is under contract to pay. Of course, what it means is if the County has to pay, me and YOU have to pay. That is likely the reason for the reevaluation in the first place.

The bottom line is the “Revenue Neutral” term is a big lie all by itself. The County will say that “Revenue Neutral” means something entirely different that what the dictionary says “Revenue Neutral” means. It is an old politician’s gimmick to lie to the people and then lie out of lying to the people in the first place.

Those kinds of shenanigans are about to start. Just as soon as the actual tax bills hit the Post Office.

Also, the Political issues, the 2021, 2022 and 2024 Elections, Commissioner elections, Senatorial Elections and then the Presidential Elections. More about that later.

Stay tuned!!! It is YOUR pockets that are about to be picked. Mine too.