Cleveland County Schools—Much to do about Nothing!!! Special Called School Board Meeting-January 25, 2022!!! Closing Schools in Shelby!!! VERY few showed up!!! Only 2 Spoke to the School Board! "Nobody knows anything" one person said!!! Report, observations and conclusions by Robert A. Williams

Four words describe the January 25th 2022 Called School Board meeting"

A WASTE OF TIME!!! or A WASTE OF MONEY!!! Depending on your mood. The only good thing I can say about this meeting, or whatever you want to call; it was a perfect example of what NOT TO DO when you are an elected school board member when the school board is obviously hiding information from the public. Be obvious about it!!!

The first problem for the Rogue Republicans on the Cleveland County School Board is to explain why they hired expensive consultants to do a "facilities assessment" and then call a special meeting for January 25, 2022 that has absolutely nothing to do with assessing facilities. And everything to do with counting students at various Shelby elementary schools

and deciding none of these schools were at full capacity. That moving some students around to different schools to fill up certain schools with under-capacity that would allow you to shut down two of the elementary schools. Just about any 9th grade High School student about half way through an Algebra 1 class with a C+ average could figure that out in about 15 minutes.

So, why hadn't the $14 Million renovated CCS Central Offices chock full of PhD's. and Master Degrees galore already have this all figured out years ago? Why the Rogue Republicans had to spend big bucks for an architect team to do this simple task? This kind of poor planning and poor leadership is beyond me. Perhaps someone should ask Rodney Fitch, Luke Queen, Ron Humphries, Joel Shores and Greg Taylor about this sometime soon. Before they have to think about something a bit harder and they hurt themselves trying. Do they have a case of "phronemophobia?" (The fear of "thinking!")

Folks, this is what happened at the Special (that was not special) Called School Board Meeting held January 25, 2022.

Without belaboring this point, the school board voted 9-0 to hold a "Public Hearing" on this date. North Carolina Law has special rules for "Public Hearings" so Luke Queen changes the name to a "Public Meeting." Then to a "Public Forum" and back to a so-called "Public Hearing" as listed on the Agenda for this January 25, 2022 meeting.

The Public, by the way, was not fooled a bit by the School Board shenanigans. They just went into the "ignore" mode and mostly stayed home.

As you walked into the CCS Central Offices front door, there was a table spread out with the Meeting Agendas and Public Participation Sign-up sheets. Nobody was there to inform citizens that they had to sign-up before the meeting to speak to the School Board. Only one person signed up to speak. Ms.

Nannette Leonhart signed up because she has attended many meetings and knows that you have to sign up or the School Board will not allow you to speak. The school board, under Chairman Robert “Luke” Queen does this to silence the public. And when you do sign up, you are only allowed three minutes.

The meeting started like any other meeting with an Invocation, a Pledge of Allegiance, adopt the Agenda and such.

Then the so-called Operations Committee, as noted on the agenda, gave a presentation to the public. Only thing was, there was no presentation to the public. The hired consultants gave a presentation to the School Board. The School Board had copies of the presentation in advance. The Public never got any advance copies (Except from me in previous articles).

The Presentation was projected on the auditorium Screen. And as I was seated on the very front row, all by myself, I could hardly read a word that was on the presentation or any graphs or maps.

Then Superintendent Dr. Stephen Fisher presented “something,” I don’t know what to call it, that basically states what he always states, CCS is so good and wonderful that all things have been evaluated and can be accomplished in an effective efficient manner. Basically, propaganda and indoctrination meant to deceive the public or whoever is watching the meeting video.

One thing Dr. Fisher pointed out many times was that the closing of two schools would NOT result in any CCS employee losing their jobs. Apparently forgetting that the basic reason for consolidating students into efficiently run schools at full capacity would reduce the waste of inefficient use of administrative staff. Sure, the same number of students would be consolidated into less facilities, but the number of teachers, teachers aids, bus drivers, lunchroom staff, etc. would be basically the same, but two sets of administrative

staff would mostly NOT be needed. Anybody with any business sense would immediately recognize Superintendent Dr. Stephen Fisher for exactly what he is. A tax and spend liberal government bureaucrat. Spend every dime this fiscal year and ask for more next year. Of course, the loss of administrative staff needs doesn't necessarily mean the surplus administration folks would immediately lose their jobs. CCS has attrition in the form of retirements, resignations, etc. that requires additional hiring on a regular basis. Just as the students are shifted from one school to another to achieve efficiency, shifting Administrative staff around and not hiring additional staff would accomplish the same thing. The same concept. Good leadership knows how to do this and not have to lose trained and experienced people.

After Dr. Fisher was finished, School Board member Phillip Glover stated that he was concerned about the TIMELINE of this school closing.? "Is there a rush to get this done?"
Mr. Glover stated that moving so many classrooms full of students right now would surely cause a halt to teaching students and suggested that and movement of students be delayed until times that school would already be out for the summer.

Dr. Fisher stated that there was "NO Shot Clock" to this Shelby school closing project. Making one wonder who was in charge" The School Board or Fisher.

The fact that School Board member Phillip Glover had been moved to ask such a simple, logical and basic set of questions as noted above, told me that the public was not the only ones kept in the dark by Luke Queen, Rodney Fitch, Ron Humphries, Joel Shores and Greg Taylor. Just another example of bad leadership by the Rogue Republican controlled school board.

Then, the Public Participation.

Ms. Leonhart, as previously noted, was the only person who had

actually signed-up. Ms. Leonhart points out several technical discrepancies in the Report and then sits down. Ms. Leonhart notes that there was a discrepancy on page six of the Report. And then asks if the closed schools would be disposed of (Sold as surplus)? School Board member Danny Blanton replies that, by law, any surplus real property had to be first offered to the Cleveland County Commissioners before the property was offered up for sale to the public. This comment drew the ire of Luke Queen as he once again tried to shut down Danny Blanton by saying that the sale of the property did NOT have anything to do with this meeting. Blanton would not have anything to do with Luke's phony rebuke. "She (Ms. Leonhart) asked about selling the property and that was the proper response" Blanton told Luke.

Chairman Robert "Luke" Queen, obviously relieved that nobody else had signed up to speak was ready to move on to something else. Danny Blanton speaks up again saying that there were likely others that wanted to speak to the School Board but did not know they had to sign up. Luke surely wanted to move on, but seeing me almost directly in front of him in the front row knew he would be well "blasted" by me if he called a special Public Meeting and then refused to allow the public to speak.

Luke Queen calls out to the very small audience in attendance and asks if anybody else wanted to speak. One lady raises her hand and approaches the podium.

The lady introduced herself as Clare Montgomery and then simply asked why the school board had not hired a local architect firm to do this study? Then she stated "people don't know what is going on" with this school closing and other things at CCS. Clearly implying that the school board should be thinking about and communicating with the people more regarding what the school board was doing. "Amen" I was thinking as Ms. Montgomery walked back to her seat.

Luke Queen then stated that the reason no local architect was

selected was because no local architect had submitted a bid.

Then Luke called on Fisher about any announcements. Fisher replied that NO canvass of people who would be affected by these student transfers and school closings had been contacted. NO WONDER THAT HARDLY ANYBODY HAD SHOWN UP for this Public hearing. (By design, of course.)

Danny Blanton stated that he had phone calls and Facebook requests for information.

Fisher states that there would be more information at the February School Board Meeting.

Stay Tuned!!!

Hey, Kings Mountain folks!! You are next!!!