Nov 21 School Board Meeting Separated the “Wheat” from the Chaff!! Only Dr. Danny Blanton wants to do what is right!!! Report and Commentary by Robert A

The November 21, 2022 CCS School Board meeting, led by Chairman Robert “Luke” Queen, was soooo very typical. Even though it was the first School Board meeting after the 2022 School Board Elections where the Sales Tax Increase Referendum-supposedly going to school projects was overwhelmingly defeated by the largest of margins and the LAST three Democrat School Board members were also defeated by almost as much margin as the Sales Tax Increase Referendum. Only incumbent School Board Member Dr. Danny Blanton, the lone Republican school board incumbent, won re-election with the highest vote counts of all eight school board candidates. Four Republicans and four Democrats. Also, Dr. Ronnie Grigg won election handily. Drs Blanton and Grigg were the only candidates for the School Board recommended by Robert A, although two other Republicans won election to the School Board. Making the School Board 100% Republican as soon as Drs. Blanton and Grigg and the other two Republicans are sworn-in at the December 12, 2022 School Board meeting.

Hopefully Republicans Aaron Bridges and Walter Scott Spurling will join in with Drs. Blanton and Grigg in doing what is best for education, our children and the taxpayers regarding the running and operations of Cleveland County Schools. There is much to be done.

It should also be noted at this point that the dirty, nasty and ugly Rogue Republican effort to defeat Danny Blanton failed in the 2022 Republican Primary School Board elections. And then failed again in the 2022 General Elections. And failed miserably, with Dr. Danny Blanton coming in as the top vote getter on both occasions. Followed closely by Dr. Ronnie Grigg on both occasions.

Common sense would have indicated that the Rogue Republicans; Robert “Luke” Queen, Ron Humphries, David Allen, Kevin Whisnant, Pam Keller, Rodney Fitch, Greg Taylor, Joel Shores, Wes Westmoreland, Guy Smith, Hayden Soloway and others would have learned this simple lesson. That the will of the people in Cleveland County was overwhelmingly behind Drs. Danny Blanton and Ronnie Grigg. That the Cleveland County Education system was broken badly and needed to be fixed. And the people in Cleveland County had full confidence in Danny Blanton and Ronnie Grigg, over everybody else, to be the leaders in the monumental task to fix CCS.

But, NOooo!!! The Rogue Republicans still have a majority on the School Board, as shown at the November 21, 2022 School Board meeting, and they intend to pull Danny Blanton down. Even if they have to destroy CCS and the education of ALL the children of Cleveland County in the process. (Remember this thought for later!)

The beginning of the November 21, 2022 School Board meeting started about 24 hours earlier when Robert A received the advanced notice of the school board meeting and an incomplete agenda of that meeting. Agenda Item 8.03 caught Robert A’s watchful eyes. The title of Agenda Item 8.03 is MEP/HVAC Projects at Kings Mountain and Shelby High Schools. Note that the HVAC systems for ALL four CCS high schools, according to CCS Chairman Robert “Luke” Queen need total replacement. For an experienced Engineer involved with large and complex HVAC Systems, like Robert A, this means, that for all four of the CCS High Schools HVAC systems needing total replacement at

exactly the same time, CCS has totally mismanaged system maintenance or that the CCS School Board Chairman Luke Queen is a fool. Or much of both. Especially since the replacement of the Kings Mountain and Shelby High School HVAC bids came in at $24 Million. Way more than CCS had funds for.

Another obvious indicator of corruption in this was that only ONE Bidder, Beam Construction, had bid on this work. From Robert A's 42 years of Engineering experience any project close to $24 million in scope will bring out bidders from far and wide. With only ONE exception. Since preparing such bids are expensive for the potential bidding contractors to prepare, any hint of past or present favoritism to one particular contractor is enough for all the other competitive contractors to not waste their time and money on bidding on projects that they have no chance of getting in the first place. Or. bid so high that if you accidently win the bid because the favored contractor was way too greedy, you will not come up short on the project. Robert A had the rare and accidental opportunity to review a Request for Qualifications that CCS recently sent out to various contractors. It was obvious to Robert A that (1.) CCS does not have the proper staff skills to prepare such documents to start with, (2.) The CCS prepared RFQ was too full of extraneous and vague requirements for any Contractor to bid on without inside information and, (3.) Beam Constructions was the only bidder and CCS finagled the legal process so that Beam got the job. But only after two downsizings (scope reductions). From $24 Million to the figure of $6.316 million, that CCS had funds for.

Robert A told you all that to tell you this: From a facilities operation and maintenance perspective, Incompetent leadership rules at CCS. (From an education standpoint, according to test scores, Incompetent leadership rules at CCS there too. But that will be a story for another article.)

Let's examine the Maintenance Department chain of command at

CCS. From the Maintenance Director to the School Board.
1.Maintenance Director: Chip Childers Experience and training in Roofing. No experience and training in Facilities Operations and Maintenance or HVAC known to Robert A.
2.Director of Operations and Maintenance and HR, Assistant Superintendent: Dr. Jennifer Wampler Experience and training, School Teacher, Principal No Experience or training in Facilities Operation and Maintenance PhD in Education of some sort.
3.Superintendent: Dr. Stephen Fisher Experience and training, School Teacher, Principal, Superintendent No Experience or training in Facilities Operation and Maintenance. PhD in Education of some sort.
4.School Board: All except for Danny Blanton: No experience or training in Facilities Operations and Maintenance. Luke Queen have College degrees in Civil Engineering, but no experience in Facilities operations and Maintenance.
5.School Board: Danny Blanton. Many Years of hands-on experience and on the job training in Facilities Operations and Maintenance at Cleveland County Schools.
6.Robert A: Degree in Nuclear Engineering, Minor in Mechanical Engineering. 42 Years of Professional experience and leadership positions in Nuclear and Mechanical Engineering as: Operations Engineer, Facilities Engineer, Maintenance Engineer, Design Engineer, Power Piping Engineer, Construction Engineer, Purchasing and Bid Evaluation Engineer, HVAC Consulting Engineer, Lead HVAC Design Engineering Supervisor for Westinghouse AP1000 Nuclear Plant Construction in the United States.

From the above noted levels of expertise, the top four levels of leadership (lack of) at CCS (Except for Danny Blanton) are completely incompetent in even discussing technical issues related to HVAC operations, maintenance and installations at Kings Mountain and Shelby High Schools as related to the November 21, 2022 School Board Meeting, Agenda item 8.03. They just don’t have a clue.

Realizing all of this incompetence and $Million$ of wasted Taxpayer dollars that would surely materialize, Robert A quickly developed a plan to help CCS and the School Board. If they were even smart enough to realize that they didn't know what to do in the first place. Robert A's plan was simple enough that even a child could figure out what to do.

First, Robert A knew that the so called "Scope Reductions" actually meant that a full replacement of HVAC equipment plan was OUT THE DOOR for CCS funds available and the project had become a Maintenance Project.

1. So, Robert A Googled "How should school districts manage HVAC needs?"
2. After spending just a few minutes, Robert A found a link to an article that fit exactly with what CCS should do under these circumstances. Robert A provided the link as well as copied the pertinent recommendations onto a simple document. The recommendation was to bid-out for an HVAC Preventative Maintenance Contract.
3. Now, Robert A, knowing how lazy and incompetent the School Board under Robert "Luke: Queen are, went on to the next step. Finding an appropriate industrial HVAC Contractor for CCS to reach out to. Note that the School Board would rather feed much taxpayer dollar$$$ to Beam Construction and Beam Construction does NOT do maintenance contracts except to farm them out and charge management fees, Robert A found an HVAC industrial contractor that was close and worked directly with the customer. Robert A added the link to that HVAC Industrial Contractor who specializes in Preventative Maintenance as well as added their information to Robert A simple document.
4. Robert A put all this together in a little simple five-page large print document, Links, info and instructions.
5. Then, Robert A emailed all this 30-minute tops document that fit all of CCS's needs to all the Full School Board under the title "Suggestions to resolve Agenda Item 8.03 MEP/HVAC Project Proposal for KM High and Shelby High."

At the November 21, 2022 School Board Meeting, the School Board Chairman Robert “Luke” Queen refused to even bring up this Million$ of dollar$ suggestion. Then called for a motion to approve giving the work to Beam Construction. The vote was 8-1. Only Dr. Danny Blanton voted against this boondoggle to feed unearned income to Beam Construction. And got growled at by Luke Queen in the process.

This was exactly what Robert A expected the School Board (except Danny Blanton) to do. Forget the results of the 2022 School Board Elections. Forget the will of the people of Cleveland County. Waste tons of taxpayer money on corrupt schemes when doing the simple, but right things would be simple, proper. legal and ethical.

The lines have been drawn. There are FIVE school board members up for re-election in 2024. Robert “Luke” Queen, Joel Shores, Ron Humphries, Rodney Fitch and Greg Taylor. All Rogue Republicans. The majority. And we have all seen how they have turned to the Dark Side and all have to defeated in the 2024 School Board elections to get rid of them. Let’s start recruiting their replacements NOW. Carefully selecting them to keep the Rogue Republicans OUT from control. It is doable folks.

Now, Robert A says stay tuned for Part II of this article. The rest of the November 21, 2022 School Board meeting is even more strange and sickening than this part. By the time the end of Part II of this article is published and read, Citizens might be ready to start signing up to run for the School Board. Maybe the Commissioners too. With 2024 marking the return of President Donald Trump into National Politics, voter turnout in Cleveland County will hit record highs.