

Foolish Cleveland County Commissioners roll SNAKE EYES!! In Economic Development Gamble with \$6 Million Taxpayer Dollar\$!!

Some time ago the Cleveland County Commissioners and the City of Shelby entered into some kind of Economic Partnership “Gamble” that seemed crazy at the time. And now, for Cleveland County Taxpayers, it is a \$6 Million plus disaster.

In general terms, the City of Shelby would acquire property in their name, transfer ownership to Cleveland County, Cleveland County would borrow \$6 Million to build a shell building for economic development purposes, **Cleveland County’s loan would be structured so that no payment was due for one year**, the property would be marketed for Economic Development purposes **and sold within that one year** so no payments were due, and then the operations of the Economic Development Project would be turned over to the City of Shelby.

A cursory review of this foolish partnership showed that the City of Shelby would get all the “gravy” in utility sales and **Cleveland County was taking ALL the \$6 Million Financial RISK** if the property was not sold within one year.

This arrangement worked several times in the past so the Cleveland County Commissioners decided to try “**throw the dice**” one more time. Perhaps because the Commissioner majority (Kevin Gordon, Johnny Hutchins, and Ronnie Whetstine) were up for reelection in 2024 and it would make a good re-election story if they could announce a new Economic Development success right before the 2024 Elections.

Their biggest problem was that the odds were against them. You might throw the dice or flip a coin and win a time or two, or even three in a row, but sooner or later, YOU ARE GOING TO Lose!!! The second biggest problem is Robert A Williams has a long memory, remembers these kinds of silly arrangements, checks up on them on an appropriate schedule, and reports to the taxpayers what the Cleveland Commissioners and others are doing with taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. And, this time Robert A Williams has signed up to run as a candidate for the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners in the 2024 Elections.

So, folks, about the middle of this past week Robert A begins to smell a rat. Not because of something he heard as a rumor or a tip. But, because of something he had not heard. News about the sale of the latest Shell Building sale. But Robert A knows the Commissioner's shady MO very well by now. Yell to the rooftop about any good news, or even "made-up" good news. Never utter even a peep about any bad news, especially around Election time. And Robert A had heard NOTHING about this last shell-building gamble.

Around mid-morning last Wednesday, Robert A calls the County Manager's Office with this simple Yes or No question. "Has the most recent Shell Building the County built been sold?" The person who answered the phone did not know and the person who would know had stepped out. So, Robert A asked her to pass that question along and get back to him. Then goes the expected run-around and phone tag. Several days and several calls later, Robert A catches a knowledgeable person in the office and gets the answer NO, the last Shell Building has NOT been sold. "Snake Eyes" Robert A thinks to himself. Then Robert A follows up with the next logical set of questions. When are the loan payments due and how much will the payments be? The message was, the person that knows that is out today and it will be next week before he's back in the office. OK, says Robert A. But, not to be delayed Robert A googles, "What is the loan Prime Rate (interest) as of today? The answer was

8.75 %. Add 2% and you get 10.75 percent as the most likely rate of interest that the County would be charged for a year-long loan of \$6 Million. \$645,000 interest plus the original principal equals **\$6,645,000 in new debt that Cleveland County will be obligated to pay the lender.** Plus, all the interest that will accrue during the loan payback period. Probably well over \$10 Million before things are said and done.

And, **NOT ONE buyer is in sight** the way our Economic Development Partnership is presently operating. Especially as highlighted by the **Project Sunrise** debacle where **Robert A** advised the Commissioners back in an August Public Hearing to deny, but the Commissioners voted 5-0 to Approve. Only to come back in December to vote 5-0 to cancel **Project Sunrise** in a sneaky way without question or discussion.

So, folks, here we are with a new \$10 Million debt on top of the 9 Million dollar PER YEAR cost overrun caused by the County Commissioner's mismanaged takeover of the County Rescue Squads. that Commissioner Kevin Gordon championed. All on top of the biggest cost overruns on the biggest construction Project in Cleveland County History-The Justice Center Project. All are continuously mismanaged by Commissioners Kevin Gordon, Johnny Hutchins, Ronnie Whetstine, Deb Hardin, and Doug Bridges. A financial suicide by a Board of County Commissioners who apparently would rather commit that suicide than listen to reason and good advice.

Surely it is apparent that new blood is needed on the CC Board of Commissioners. CCS School Board too. Starting with the 2024 Elections and smart CC Voters selecting the following Candidates:

For the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners:

- **Robert A. Williams**
- **Linda Layne**
- **Carter York**

For the Cleveland County Board of Education;

- **Samantha Davis**
- **Kenneth Ledford**
- **Matthew Canipe**
- **David Fisher**
- **Jay Carpenter**

Remember folks, vote on the 2024 Primary Election day, March 5, 2024. There are much, much less chances of ballot shenanigans when the ballots are cast, counted and vote count reported on the very same day. With everybody watching.