

Bad Blood at Cleveland County Schools–2024 Version!!

Editor's Note: *Nine years ago, Cleveland County Schools was full of crime and corruption. The pervasive CCS School P-Card scandal was running wild and the Democrat Controlled School Board was busy and fully consumed with aiding in the cover-up. Now it is 2024 and Cleveland County Schools is still full of crime, corruption and cover-up. And the now All Republican School Board, controlled by the Rogue Republicans of the CCGOP are even more busy and fully consumed with aiding in the cover-up.*

Folks, Robert A's last article titled Cleveland County Rumor Report contained a report of a malicious and anonymous letter that has been sent to various folks in Cleveland County. All School Board Members and candidates, as well as Commissioner Candidates and perhaps all the Commissioners and others, including Robert A, are reported as having received this malicious and defamatory letter. This false and malicious letter singles out Danny Blanton, Ronnie Grigg and Aaron Bridges with malicious, defamatory, hurtful and false and unproved allegations against them and their families. Robert A refuses to publish this letter.

However, Robert A did publish, in his last article previously noted, the repeated lie that accused Danny Blanton of stealing water from the Cleveland County Water. In this discussion Robert A noted that this false allegation had been completely disproved by Robert A's investigation years ago. Now Robert A has examined his old files and found that original report of his investigations years ago. That investigative report is now re-published in its entirety and shown below. Note that Robert A examined that original false report and concluded that it originates from within the Cleveland County Schools Central Offices. Now, Robert A. has

re-examined this new letter and concludes that it also originated from the CCS Central Services. Only this time the letter was not so precisely cut to remove the CCS letterhead and the print on the bottom of the letter. Also, the “new” letter was not so precisely folded as the original letter from nine years ago. Which indicates the person(s) who prepared and handled this new letter was not as skilled as the original letter. Perhaps the original letter was prepared by a secretary and this new letter was prepared by a man who is less skilled in such details.

Folks, Robert A's original report from June 5, 2014 is included below. Perhaps Robert A's original findings back in 2014 may help you discover the identity of the varmints and vermin that have republished such lies and scandalous misrepresentations here in 2024.

Bad Blood at Cleveland County Schools

By Robert A. Williams (June 5, 2014)

The letter came in April 22, 2014 to my PO Box in Fallston.

There was no return address so I knew it was political or from someone who had information for me but were afraid to speak out.

As it turns out the anonymous letter was supposedly turning in one of two allegedly crooked School Board members, this one was accused of stealing water from Cleveland County Water.

The accusation of stealing water first was made during the 2013 School Board Election against Danny Blanton-an eventual winner in the School Board race, so I decided to check this out myself.

I went over to the County Water office and made an appointment with Butch Smith for Thursday, April 24, 2014 at 9:00AM.

Butch is the County Water Manager.

I also called Danny Blanton and told him what was up. Danny

wanted to come to the meeting himself but his son had a major surgery at the VA Hospital in Asheville and family comes first. So, Danny called the County Water folks and approved them to release any and all records on his numerous accounts with the Cleveland County Water system.

Then I examined in great detail the anonymous letter and the envelope it came in. The letter itself had the top two inches and bottom inch or so cut off. Like the paper had a company letterhead and the person sending the letter used company paper but wanted to keep the source of the letter secret. The letter was cut off in a straight line that was square with the paper, like it was cut with a paper cutter and not a pair of scissors. The print on the letter was from a computer printer-not a typewriter. The fold on the letter was crisp, straight and even-like it had been run through a letter folding machine. This letter came from an office that is well equipped for handling paperwork.

The envelope had my name as "RAW" and my correct address were computer printed on a strip of adhesive paper that was then affixed to the blank envelope. The letter was stamped upside down and not run through a postage meter, which could be traced to the source. However, there was a printed strip with a barcode at the bottom of the envelope. The strip had my zip code and PO Box number.

So, looking at the letter and envelope, the bottom strip on the envelope matched exactly with every envelope I have received from the Cleveland County Schools and matched none of the envelopes I have received from other people or companies that was mailed elsewhere in Cleveland County. A review of CCS Credit Card receipts indicates certain individuals who work out of the CCS main office at 400 West Marion Street buy postage stamps using CCS Credit Cards. The letter's folds and spacing matched other letters that have come from Dr. Boyles's office at 400 West Marion Street.

My conclusion is the anonymous letter came from a person working at the CCS Offices on 400 West Marion Street who has an axe to grind with Danny Blanton, who has made a crusade out of cutting wasteful credit card spending at CCS. Next, who might that person be?

But let's get back to Danny Blanton and the County Water issue.

Hal Trammell and I traveled to the County Water offices near Lawndale per our appointment with CCW Manager Butch Smith at 9:00AM on April 24, 2014. Mr. Smith showed us an anonymous letter he had received that was exactly like the one that I had received. Except that the letter Mr. Smith had was a copy of my letter and was not cut off at the top. The envelope was exactly the same with all the same markings except for the name and address, which was also printed on a self-adhesive strip of paper then affixed to the letter. The envelope also was stamped and had exactly the same markings on the bottom, which indicated to me that the letter was sent from the Cleveland County Schools Central office at 400 West Marion Street. Mr. Smith said he had also received a similar anonymous letter about six months ago that he had trashed immediately as he didn't have time for such foolishness. He had kept this letter as we had indicated that we wanted to talk about it.

Mr. Smith stated (and provided a copy of the letter) that the County Water system had issued a letter to Danny Blanton in 2012 regarding the need for a backflow preventer at Blanton's residence. The North Carolina State Building Code, Section 608, requires a backflow preventer if there is a chance that backflow, back siphon or accidental cross connection from a non-potable water source can flow into the county water system. Danny Blanton challenged the County Water system's position on the backflow preventer and the issue was resolved.

Danny Blanton had about 18 separate accounts for water and none of the other properties needed backflow preventers. All

the County Water connections to Danny Blanton's properties had water meters that measured water flow and there were no situations where Danny Blanton's water meters had been tampered with to bypass the meter in order to "steal" water.

All water bills had been paid. Mr. Smith affirmed that Cleveland County Water had no reason to go after Danny Blanton for "stealing" water or for any other reason and considered the case closed.

Mr. Smith also went into the details of providing water to County Water system clients and the financial management of the system. The County Water system used one credit card and the usage of that one card was very well controlled. The Water system abided by their budget religiously and under the watchful eye of Mr. Butch Smith. None of the County Water system office staff would have had the ability to anonymously send out such a letter that accused Danny Blanton of "stealing" water under the watchful eyes of Mr. Smith. I specifically asked Mr. Smith if he believed anybody within his staff would have put out such a letter from his office and his answer was "No."

Based on our conversation with Butch Smith it was obvious that the County Water system is not accusing Danny Blanton of "stealing" water and has no intention on following up with any actions against Danny Blanton based on unfounded and anonymous letters. However, it appears the backflow preventer issue sparked some conversation among a person with some knowledge of County Water business with someone at the School system's Central Offices with bad blood against Danny Blanton. This bad blood perhaps beginning way back during the 2010 time frame and peaking during the 2013 School Board Election and continuing, especially since Danny Blanton won election to the CCS Board. During the 2013 Election fifty letters to prominent citizens and businesses were alleged sent out with similar false allegations of Danny Blanton "stealing" water from the County Water system. A letter to the editor printed

in the Shelby Star that congratulated Danny Blanton for being elected also resulted in the Letter to the Editor author receiving an anonymous letter accusing Danny Blanton of "stealing" water. The lady who received this letter sent us a copy of her anonymous letter, which was similar in content and writing style to the letter I received on April 22, 2014.

So, the facts of my investigation are this:

1. Danny Blanton never ever used water or took water from the County Water system that was not run through a meter and was paid for by Danny Blanton. The County Water system is not going after Danny Blanton for "stealing" water. This case is closed forever.
2. The anonymous letter that falsely accused Danny Blanton of "stealing" water originated from the Cleveland County Schools Central Offices located at 400 West Marion Street in Shelby.
3. The CCS person who sent the letter:
 - Had access to school system office materials, office equipment, stamps, had sufficient unsupervised time to do unauthorized activities and the sufficient motivation to do such things.
 - Had sufficient motivation that might be such things as making large numbers of questionable credit card charges using CCS P-Cards that Danny Blanton was trying to ferret out and put a stop to.
 - Must have had some contact inside the County Water staff or Board to have had knowledge of the backflow preventer issue. Some bit of true information on which to twist into a false allegation or a misleading statement.

There are a number of persons who fit under the description noted in the first two bulleted items above. We consider the top five "suspects" to be the top five persons with CCS credit cards who spent the most on questionable charges.

Questionable charges being for such things as hummingbird feeders, massages at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, very numerous charges at restaurants, etc. Since CCS provided to us the same records they provided to Danny Blanton and the Star, those top five questionable spenders in our sample of records are:

1. Cheryl Lutz
2. Jada Brown
3. Beth McCraw
4. Cindy Borders
5. Cindy Morrison

Of the top five names noted above and also compared with all other CCS credit card spenders that we have records for, only one person meets all three of the bulleted items described above. From what we have observed, we have concluded that Jada Brown is the most likely person to have sent this letter.

Of all the CCS staff Jada Brown has direct familiarity with person(s) involved with Cleveland County Water as well as meet all of the other criteria that we considered in our deduction of who would be the likely person or the ring leader of a group of persons who might send out such false allegations against CCS Board Member Danny Blanton.

Also, Jada Brown, Child Nutritionist Manager at CCS, is the person who charged massages at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville to a CCS credit card. In our opinion as taxpayers and concerned citizens, obtaining a massage anywhere is a personal decision with no regard to anything related to school

functions and should never be approved for payment by CCS.

Jada Brown's questionable charges on CCS credit cards far exceed the amounts of charges of the two people that were eventually forced to resign from CCS. The vast number of charges by Jada Brown requires her to spend large amounts of work time out shopping for things that appear were not properly justified, which means that much of her work time was unsupervised by the CCS Board or Administration. Many of her charges had no obvious connection to the duties of a Child Nutritionist. Many of Jada Brown's questionable charges included cookies, snack cakes, candy, energy drinks, crackers and such that should never be served to our children in a school lunchroom. Especially energy drinks that would tend to make a child "hyper." And, if so, would this perhaps increase the amount of Ritalin or other drugs prescribed to calm down "hyper" children-sometimes to their detriment.

But the story does not end here.

Another anonymous letter marked exactly like the previously described letter was received Tuesday, June 3, 2014. This new letter was clipped off at the top and bottom exactly as described regarding the first letter. Again, CCS Board Member Danny Blanton is accused of stealing water.

This time around, according to sources, Danny Blanton went to the Sheriff's Department and asked for an investigation.

Sources say other Board Members, CCS Chairman Jack Hamrick and others received the same letter. According to reports, Danny Blanton went over to the CCS Central Offices to pick up his copy of the letter wearing surgical gloves and carrying a Ziplock freezer bag to put his original copy of the letter in to prevent contamination of evidence. Sources say Chairman

Jack Hamrick instructed CCS staff not to give Danny Blanton his original letter, but to only give Danny Blanton a copy.

From this additional information, if true, there appears to be a conspiracy among certain members of the CCS staff and board members to stop Danny Blanton from doing the job the voters of Cleveland County put him into office to do. To REGULATE CCS!!! Jack Hamrick appears to also be obstructing justice by not allowing Danny Blanton to have his original copy of a letter addressed to Danny Blanton and only allowing a copy of said document.

Board Member Kathy Falls, in her continuation of Election Year bad blood has reportedly made a written statement that she "doesn't want to even be in the same room with Danny Blanton."

The Cleveland County Commissioners, especially Chairman Jason Falls, continues to do nothing regarding the out of control CCS school board. Indeed, doing nothing seems to be Jason Falls' MO as Commissioner Chairman.

Of course, this is nothing new-but it is continuing. We urge Sheriff Alan Norman to put his foot down on the illegal shenanigans at CCS, beginning with Jack Hamrick.

We also urge the public to put your foot down in the voting booth this year by single-shot voting for Willie B. McIntosh for County Commissioner. McIntosh was the only Commissioner to vote against school merger in the first place. Willie appears to have been right all along that merging our schools was not right for Cleveland County. Willie would never stand for the mess at CCS that is going on now.

Then in 2015, five school board members are up for election.

Folks, we need five good candidates to run against the five that are up for re-election. With five new school board members to go along with Danny Blanton, by the close of 2015 CCS can be swept clean of the mess and educating our children can go back to our number one priority.

Stay Tuned!!! This ain't over 'til it's over.

Editor's Note: The continuing credit card scandal, sex scandals, etc. at Cleveland County Schools are issues that have generated great public interest and concern amongst the citizens of Cleveland County. From a legal perspective, we believe those CCS employees, teachers, staff, administration and board are "Public Figures." Therefore, anybody named or alluded to in this or other articles are welcome to provide their comments, statements or opinions regarding our articles and those comments, statements or opinions will be printed in full and verbatim. That is more than the Star ever offers. Of course, we reserve our right to comment on your comments, statements and opinions as we believe appropriate.

Comment: A source within CCS called to report a small inaccuracy regrading Danny Blanton picking up his original letter.

My report incorrectly stated that Jack Hamrick directed CCS staff to not allow Danny Blanton to pick up his original

letter. Danny Blanton was indeed allowed to pick up his original letter. What School Board Chairman Jack Hamrick would not allow was giving the other board members a copy of their letters and providing the original letters and envelopes for the other Board members to Danny Blanton so that Danny Blanton could turn them all over to Sheriff Norman for analysis. It might be expected that DNA from licking the envelopes or fingerprints might be better obtained if as many as possible original documents could be obtained and analyzed.

I stand by my original statement that CCS Chairman Jack Hamrick is obstructing justice by not allowing the original letters to be turned over to the Sheriff's Department. I urge all board members to read their letters then provide them to the Sheriff with a minimal amount of handling.