

2632 Pamlico Drive
Shelby, NC 28152

January 13, 2014

Dr. Jack Hamrick - Chairman
Cleveland County Schools BoE
400 West Marion Street
Shelby, NC 28150

Dr. Hamrick,

As you are probably aware, many comments have been made in the past few years regarding actions taken or not taken by the Cleveland County School Board. Many things have been reported in The Shelby Star, many statements have been made during candidate forums by incumbents and challengers, and many rumors have circulated in the public. As an interested parent of CCS students and concerned taxpayer, it has been difficult to separate fact from fiction. I started attending Board meetings in August of this year in an attempt to figure things out for myself. While a few questions have been answered, many more remain.

I am submitting this letter with a list of questions that I would like to have answered by the Board. Please note that I purposefully waited until after the elections to submit the questions. My purpose is not to influence an election but to get to the facts. I would appreciate a response by the Board meeting on February 10, 2014. Please contact me at anytime if there are questions regarding my requests.

Respectfully submitted,
//signed//

Robert P. Queen

Copy to: (w/o receipts)

Roger Harris
Richard Hooker
Shearra Miller
Phillip Glover
Kathy Falls
Jerry Hoyle
Danny Blanton
Donnie Thurman

Questions for CCS Board of Education

1. Approximately two years ago, The Star reported that CCS was providing cell phones for school bus drivers.
 - a. Is this program still in effect? If so, how many bus drivers are provided with cell phones?
 - b. Are there any other CCS employees that are provided cell phones or reimbursed for cell phone usage?
 - c. Are the phones provided by CCS considered smartphones or basic phones?
 - d. Who is the cell carrier providing service and how much are the monthly costs for cell phones?
2. At a June 2013 Board meeting, David Pless indicated that the transportation department planned to install GPS on all the school buses. It appears that there was no Board action taken on this.
 - a. Does the Board have input into transportation expenditures or is this handled by the State Board of Education or DPI?
 - b. What prompted the use of GPS on buses? Has there been an issue of keeping track of buses?
3. According to personnel documents on the Board website, 227 employees (91 Licensed and 136 Classified) have resigned from CCS between November of 2012 and December 2013. This appears to be a resignation rate of over 10%.
 - a. What are the top three reasons given by employees for separating from CCS?
 - b. Is the Board or administration taking steps to improve employee retention?
4. During one of the candidate forums last fall, it became apparent that the four primary high schools are not on the same daily class schedule. This affects the number of advanced placement classes that students can take at a particular high school. The school systems have been merged for many years, why are the high schools still operating on different schedules? Is the Board taking steps to develop one standard schedule for the four high schools?
5. I understand the Board has contracted with The Star for communication/advertising services.
 - a. How many years has the contract been in place and what is the yearly cost?
 - b. What does The Star provide as part of the contract?
 - c. How many billboards have been used for advertising and what was the cost for each billboard?
 - d. Why was the advertising program started?
 - e. Did Skip Foster or any other Star employee have an individual consulting contract with the Board?
6. I understand several athletic facilities had to be upgraded to comply with Title IX requirements.
 - a. Were the upgrades initiated by a complaint from a parent or the public or directly from the federal government?
 - b. What was the total cost of the Title IX upgrades and where did the funds come from?

7. At Crest High School, the freshman academy was moved from a side hallway to the hallway next to the bus parking lot. If I understand the capital projects expenditure list, this required approximately \$17,000 for new storefront doors and \$7,000 for a new sidewalk next to the bus parking lot. Students at Crest have told me that they are not allowed to walk down the freshman hall unless they are freshmen. I understand the sidewalk was required to give non-freshmen a path to walk around the freshman hall.
 - a. Why was the freshman academy moved and who approved it?
 - b. Was the approving authority aware it was going to cost \$24k to accommodate the move?
 - c. Were there any other costs associated with actually moving the freshman class materials from one hall to another?
 - d. Why can't non-freshman walk through the freshman hall to get to their classes?
8. Much has been claimed about the cost of the new Central Services facility and Turning Point Academy. For the items below, please provide separate costs for Central Services and TPA.
 - a. What was the cost of the winning bid for the renovation of Shelby Middle into Central Services and TPA?
 - b. Provide a list of all change orders accomplished during construction. Please provide the cost for the change order and a one or two sentence description of what the change order covered.
 - c. Provide a list of projects completed at Central Services and TPA after the initial contract was closed. List projects accomplished by the prime contractor, sub-contractors, or third party contractors hired directly by CCS. Please provide the cost of each project and a one or two sentence description of the project.
 - d. Provide a list of projects completed by school maintenance or IT personnel. Please include the cost of the manhours and materials used in each project along with a one or two sentence description of the project.
 - e. Provide a list of any equipment, materials, or furniture purchased for Central Services or TPA that was not included in the lists above.
9. Regarding Central Services, provide a list of personnel who work in the Central Services building. Please include their title, salary, time in their current position, and a one or two sentence job description.
10. I understand CCS has an open account with Denver Restaurant Equipment Company.
 - a. Please provide a list of all equipment purchased since January 2008. Include the cost and where the equipment was originally placed.
 - b. Please indicate if any of this equipment has been moved to another location or to surplus.
11. I understand the Board has been sued by Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy, Piedmont Community Charter School, and Lincoln Charter School. The lawsuit alleges CCS underfunded them approximately \$102k for the 2009-10 school year.
 - a. Is this suit still active or has it been settled?
 - b. How much has the Board spent in legal fees defending the lawsuit?
 - c. I have read many of the court documents including a deposition by David Lee. According to his deposition, Mr. Lee transferred approximately \$4.8 million from the

current expense fund into a “special fund.” Was the Board aware of and did the Board approve the creation of the special fund and transfer of monies?

12. At the November 25, 2013 Board meeting, approval was given for three contracts with ESELPI for staffing services.
 - a. The agreement states that ESELPI will provide qualified personnel on an as-needed basis. Exactly what are the personnel qualified to provide? The agreement never specifically addresses the service needed.
 - b. What is the total cost of the agreements? Is there a “not to exceed” amount?
 - c. Why were three contracts needed?
 - d. The agreements were signed and dated by Nellie Aspel before receiving Board approval. One was signed in July of this year. If these contracts required Board approval, why did Ms. Aspel sign them ahead of time? If the contracts had not been approved, how would they have been terminated?

13. At the August 26, 2013 Board meeting, approval was given for a contract with Communities in Schools to provide support services for dropout prevention.
 - a. The agreement does not state exactly what the support services are. What types of services does CIS provide to CCS?
 - b. How does CCS know that CIS personnel or volunteers are qualified to provide the services?
 - c. Which schools are receiving services from CIS?
 - d. The contract was signed by Dr. Linda Hopper on August 8, 2013 before receiving Board approval. Does Dr. Hopper have authority to commit the Board to a contract? If the Board had not approved the contract, how would the contract have been terminated?

14. Please provide a list of the varsity football coaches and athletic directors for each of the four main high schools. For each coach or AD, please provide the following:
 - a. Base salary and local supplement
 - b. Additional monies for coaching or AD position
 - c. List of classes that the coach or AD teaches

15. What spending authority (scope and dollar limit) do the various administrators have without Board approval? Who has the authority to sign contracts on behalf of CCS or the Board?

16. Much has been stated about Dr. Boyles’ employment contract. Please provide the following:
 - a. A copy of Dr. Boyles’ employment contract including any addendums or extensions.
 - b. Provide a list of “extras” such as travel allowances, food allowances, extra vacation or sick time included in the contract. Assign a yearly value to any extras.
 - c. I understand Dr. Boyles can be awarded a yearly bonus. Please indicate the years that the bonus was awarded. Provide the amount of the bonus and the justification for the bonus. Please be specific on the justifications.

17. Please indicate how many work orders were sent to each maintenance division since 2008. I am not asking for a list, just a number.
 - a. What is the average time to complete work orders?

- b. How many work orders are currently back logged? If there is a backlog, what is the primary reason for back logged work orders?
18. Regarding capital outlay projects (painting, new flooring, new HVAC equipment, hardscaping, paving, irrigation, etc.),
 - a. How are these projects prioritized and budgeted?
 - b. Does each school have a budget for capital outlay?
 - c. How is it determined whether a project is completed by CCS maintenance personnel or private contractor personnel?
 19. Please provide a list of all homebound teachers. Provide information on how homebound teachers are selected and what their compensation is.
 20. After one of the candidate forums last fall, I asked Mr. Danny Blanton for a copy of the school credit card receipts he said he had. He provided a CD with a copy of numerous P-card receipts. As I understand, Mr. Blanton asked CCS for P-card records for 22 specific individuals starting in the year 2007. The records were provided to Mr. Blanton on a CD by CCS. There were approximately 6300 pages of information.

I have reviewed the receipts for the years 2009-2011. Please note that I ignored all receipts related to both maintenance divisions since they have already been investigated. I am providing a spreadsheet for each year listing questionable charges. Behind each spreadsheet are copies of the receipts for the items listed in the spreadsheet. While it is possible to read most of the receipts and tell what was purchased, very few of the receipts tell what the purpose of the purchase was. I will submit spreadsheets and copies of receipts for 2007, 2008, and 2012 at a later date.

For each receipt provided, please provide justification for the purchase. If the receipt is for food or meals, indicate who the parties were that partook of the food and what the purpose of the meeting/meal was.

21. A few receipts deserve special attention and additional questions:
 - a. There is a receipt from January 2009 where Ms. Jada Brown stayed at the Grove Park Inn. Total charged to CCS was \$896.99. According to the dates on the receipt, Ms. Brown arrived on a Saturday and departed on Monday. Ms. Brown reimbursed CCS \$155.05 for the room on the second night. However, there was no reimbursement for charges at the Spa or Spa Café. Please provide information as to the purpose of this trip, why it was on the weekend, and why CCS paid for spa charges.
 - b. There is a receipt from April 2009 where Ms. Jada Brown spent \$198.64 at Automasters for a Full Service Oil Change for a 2003 Ford Taurus. Was this Ms. Brown's personal vehicle? If so, why is CCS paying for maintenance on personal vehicles? Does Ms. Brown receive a monthly travel allowance as part of her salary?
 - c. There is a receipt from June 2009 where Ms. Jada Brown purchased a 2 5/16" Hitch Ball from Advance Auto Parts for \$12.91. Why does the nutrition director need a hitch ball?
 - d. There is a December 28, 2009 receipt where Mr. Gary Blake paid for meals at a Sagebrush in Morganton, NC. Total cost was \$28.40. What was the purpose of this trip?

Who was with Mr. Blake? It seems odd that there would be an official school trip between Christmas and New Year's.

- e. There are six receipts from March 15, 2010 where Ms. Cheryl Lutz purchased Wii consoles and games from Walmart. Each receipt totals \$214.42. PO 104358 was issued after the Wii's were purchased. Another PO (#104449) was issued on the same day for Wii games and 32" TVs. Were both of these PO's for the same items? Why did Ms. Lutz pay for each Wii game separately? The time stamp on the receipts show that Ms. Lutz paid for the six items in the same trip but swiped the P-card six times. Are there limits to the amount that can be charged on a P-card at a single swipe? What was the purpose of the Wii games? Which school(s) did they go to? Were they properly inventoried? Are they located at the same schools now?
 - f. There is a July 2010 receipt where Ms. Jada Brown purchased \$643.98 worth of cookies, peanuts, crackers, hand sanitizer, dip, and other items. What was the purpose of this purchase?
 - g. There are two August 2010 receipts where Ms. Jada Brown spent \$61.47 at Bath & Body Works. The receipts do not identify what was purchased. Are these receipts duplicates or two separate purchases? What exactly was purchased and why? What items does Bath & Body Works carry that are needed by a nutrition director?
 - h. There is a May 2011 receipt where Mr. Gary Blake spent \$298.83 at Don Ramon's for meals. Who were the others in attendance at the meal and what was the purpose?
 - i. There is an August 2011 receipt where Mr. Gary Blake bought 150 biscuits at Bojangle's for \$279.81. What was the food purchased for?
 - j. There are several receipts where Mr. Blake purchased meals at various restaurants. Notations on the receipts indicated that he was attending out-of-town athletic events for Burns or Crest. Some receipts are for single meals and others are for multiple meals. What is CCS or Board policy regarding purchasing meals for attending athletic events? I understand Mr. Blake has retired but did he have a monthly food allowance as part of his salary?
22. After viewing the P-card receipts, I have the following questions:
- a. What is CCS or Board policy regarding purchasing flowers or gifts for funerals, wedding showers, or baby showers?
 - b. What is CCS or Board policy regarding purchasing coffee for CCS personnel?
 - c. What is CCS or Board policy regarding purchasing food or restaurant meals for CCS personnel?
 - d. What is CCS or Board policy regarding tipping when purchasing meals at a restaurant? Is there a specific percentage or dollar recommendation or limit?
 - e. What is CCS or Board policy regarding purchasing snacks or refreshments for staff meetings?
 - f. When CCS personnel travel out of town for training or meetings, what is CCS or Board policy regarding compensation for use of a personal vehicle? Is a per mile rate used or actual expenses? If a mileage rate is used, what is the rate? If actual expenses are used, how are they determined?
 - g. If a PO is issued for a purchase, why are individual P-cards used to pay for the purchase? Can the purchase be paid for by Central Services?

- h. What P-card policies were changed as a result of the recent investigation into maintenance division purchases?
 - i. What is the approval process for P-card purchases?
23. I understand an internal auditor has been hired by CCS. Who is the internal auditor? Do they have forensic accounting qualifications? Has the auditor been instructed to review past purchases such as those listed above?