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April 28, 2014

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

Dr. Bruce Boyles
Cleveland County Schools Superintendent
400 West Marion Street
Shelby, NC 28150

Dr. Hamrick and Dr. Boyles,

My comments tonight are to provide rebuttal to Dr. Boyles' presentation and board member comments at the last meeting.

The receipts presented were obviously handpicked. I don't disagree that there was a legitimate reason for the purchases. However, the documentation presented to justify the purchases was not included with the receipts given to the public in past records requests. Even Dr. Boyles couldn't find the documentation for one of the receipts.

But - what about purchases where employees bought fuel for their personal vehicles, what about the purchase of a 4-wheeler at Christmas time, what about the instances where purchases were split into multiple transactions so as not to require a purchase order, what about the dozens (if not hundreds) of receipts where employees purchased single or double meals at local restaurants (these were obviously not awards banquets or travel meals), what about the school principal that purchased meals when travelling to away football or basketball games, what about the receipts where the superintendent took individual board members or administrators to lunch? There was no explanation for these types of purchases.

Apparently, the State Auditor's report was ignored. Section one of the report states: "School District Employees Misused Procurement Cards." Section two states: "Internal Control Deficiencies Contributed to Employee Misuse of School District Assets." Section three states: "School District Employees Did Not Follow Policies and Procedures." To the average citizen, those headings give a pretty clear description of what happened, but you keep telling us that there wasn't really anything wrong and that we need to move forward. As far as the public knows, only two employees resigned, a third was reassigned, and roughly \$4,000 of over \$36,000 in unauthorized charges was repaid. This is not sufficient disciplinary action.

Some of the board member's comments were pretty passionate. Some of you accused certain ones of the public for keeping this credit card issue stirred up. I guess I'm one of those. You indicated that money had been wasted doing the credit card investigation and responding to public records requests. We were also likened to children trying to step on and knock down your school system sand castle. Let me remind you that the public did not cause this situation to happen. It was the employees who abused the system, it was the department heads and directors who also abused the system and allowed it to continue, and it was the superintendent and board who did not immediately stand up, take responsibility, and put this to rest three years ago. How much money has been saved because the p-card abuse was made public? You seem to have forgotten that we, the citizens and taxpayers of Cleveland County, own the sand that you are making your castle out of. If you would quit kicking the sand in our face and hear us out, we might just get you some concrete and steel to use instead of sand.

On a final note - just because I and others are challenging the board and administration's actions does not mean that we don't support our students and teachers. We are not trying to destroy the system around them but make the educational environment better.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert P. Queen