

TODD SUTTON'S STATEMENT AT NEWS CONFERENCE – January 2, 2020

Thank you for coming and allowing us this opportunity to give our version as it relates to the recent articles that have been ran on Joco Reports as it relates to the integrity of the Johnston County Board of Education. First of all, let me state that I think it's the responsibility of every media outlet here today to report the facts and to do so after having properly vetted and confirmed the information that you have been previously given today which has not been the case for one particular media outlet in the past several months. With that being said, I am going to go through with you today and address each and every allegation that has been made and published by this particular media outlet and my intent is to answer your questions and to clear the minds of all of the citizens of Johnston County as it relates to criminal activity, corruption and mishandling of the publics funds as well as any conflict of interest.

Financial

As it relates to corruption and deception leading to the financial problems of the Johnston County school system that is totally untrue. First of all, we have had the most recent financial audit dated October 4th, 2019 conducted by Anderson, Smith and Wike PLLC out of West End, NC an independent audit company, tasked with the responsibility of insuring all processes and controls are in place so as to properly safe guard the school systems money. At the conclusion of this audit the auditors gave the school system a clean bill of health as it relates to the financial stability of the school systems money. In addition, there has been no evidence presented by anyone to me or anyone on the Board of Education or the Superintendent that would indicate anything different from the auditor's findings. I would also like to state for the record that there are 3 Board of Education members serving on the finance committee, which consist of myself, Teresa Grant and Ronald Johnson. At no time has anything been brought to our attention with respect to misappropriation or cover up on the part of any employee of the JCPS. It should also be understood that the finance committee reviews all proposed budget items and after being reviewed the Superintendent then presents the budget to the to the Board of Education for approval, all of which have received a unanimous vote.

Conflict of Interest

In regards to the conflict of interest issue, prior to being elected to office, Mrs. Zukowski informed her company of the possibility of serving on the board of education at which time she requested Johnston County be assigned to another representative. This has been reconfirmed as recently as December 3rd in an email from Renaissance Learning to our board attorney. Both of which confirmed that there was no conflict of interest.

Causby Meeting

As stated in the most recent press release by Dr. Causby as it relates to the School Finance Officer purposely misrepresenting and signing fictitious documents, Mr. Johnson stated, that Dr. Causby had said that to Teresa Grant, Ronald Johnson as well as myself in a conversation on October 3rd, 2019. Unfortunately, Teresa Grant was unable to be here today and after speaking with her she has no recollection of Dr. Causby making that statement and nor do I. In regards to a forensic audit being requested I also have no recollection of him ever requesting such. However, Mr. Johnson was told in the board meeting in open session on December 10th by board member Terri Sessoms that if in fact he had evidence of financial records being purposely misrepresented or fictitious documents in regards to the financial records to bring them forward and she would fully support and welcome a forensic financial audit. I can assure you that the rest of the board concurs with Ms. Sessoms' recommendation and advice.

Sexual Harassment

In regards to the allegations of sexual harassment and sexual assault. I was informed of specific details in a meeting with RJ on December 3rd however, I was not given any evidence. As I have previously stated I immediately informed then Chairman Mike Wooten what had been shared with me by Mr. Johnson. An appt. was made to meet with Johnston County District Attorney, Susan Doyle on December 5th. At which time the information that Mr. Johnson had shared me was relayed to District Attorney, Susan Doyle and she was asked to conduct an investigation. At that time, she stated that the SBI would not or could not get involved without evidence of a crime being committed. On December 10th, District Attorney Doyle texted me and informed me that no investigation could be completed by her office without being supplied the evidence. Again, it was stressed with Mr. Johnson the importance of providing the evidence that he had, to the appropriate law enforcement agency and or District Attorney's office and the need for the victims to come forward so that it could be properly dealt with. My question is – and I feel any other reasonable and prudent person would be – is how a law enforcement officer be given and provided the evidence that has been stated to me that they are in possession of and that the law enforcement officer not take such evidence as they would in any other case that they may be investigating and take that information of probable cause before a magistrate and or the District Attorney and obtain warrants for the arrest of the perpetrator and then arrest said perpetrator placing it in the judicial system where it belongs to be handled appropriately. This to me is inexcusable to know that there is a possible victim and or victims of such a crime being committed against them and that they are not being properly supported in this obviously traumatic experience. Withholding all of the evidence does not afford the school system the opportunity to do what is right for its employees.

Yesterday, January 1st, Mr. Johnson partially shared with me some audio recordings of evidence with respect to one victim concerning sexual harassment and sexual assault. Because of this and the level of concern that this raises, I asked Mr. Johnson to share this information with the superintendent so that proper action can be taken by the JCPS to appropriately address this issue if in fact it is found to be true. At this point, Mr. Johnson has agreed to do so, and I assure you that as Chairman of the Board of Education along with the rest of the board members we intend to see this to completion.

It is time for all the drama to cease and desist as it relates to the well being of our children in Johnston County so that we can provide a safe and educational learning environment for them in which to exist. It is also time for the parents of these children to be assured and supported in knowing that their children are receiving the best education possible. We cannot accomplish this within the environment that has existed over the last several months. These distractions must stop! It is time for our children and their education to be the center of our attention and to eliminate all the self-serving behavior that has existed up to this point! I plead with each one of you to partner with your Board of Education and our interim Superintendent to cause this to become a reality not only for our students and parents but also importantly for our staff. Each one of you here today has a responsibility to make this happen, be it the media, be it the parents, be it concerned citizens to cause this change.

Thank you for your time and commitment to partnering to making our schools better.