

# THE WATCHDAWG REPORT

## Courthouse Renovation Update

We appreciate the community's continuing interest in our exposure of the Renovation Project issues. Please continue to reach out to Commissioners Williams and Gohagan to let your concerns be known.

Here's the latest:

Commissioner James Gohagan has responded favorably to our requests for information and shares our concerns about unclear project status reporting. He and incoming Presiding Commissioner Ike Skelton are including citizen experts on a walk-through of the project. Yours truly included.

Apparently Maintenance Supervisor Melvin Miller is a big player in this project. He was responsible for sharing project information with Veregy prior to bid (multiple walk throughs and scope of work discussions), and with other (where are they?) bidders during the "bid-process". It appears that there was never a bid package that provided multiple vendors with the same project information to enable "apples to apples" comparison for other bidders. Mr. Miller is identified in the bid advertisement that ran in the newspaper as the single point of contact at the county. Mr. Miller has signed various change orders, although we've not been able to ascertain exactly by who's authority. Typically, a project would have a responsibility matrix that documents who is responsible for what...we can't even get a contract scope-based status report, so it's not too surprising that this is also lacking.

It appears that no one person is accountable for this project. County Auditor Jimmy Laughlin seems to have been instrumental in engaging Veregy Group and securing the single bid award.

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## Merry Christmas Camden County!!

'Twas the night before Christmas, in our own Camden County,  
A new Presiding Commissioner is coming, Oh! what a bounty.  
We campaigned and voted, and we didn't cheat,  
In hopes that corruption, we could delete.  
All residents can sleep, secure in in their beds  
Their freedom protected; dreams of safe families dance in their heads.  
The meetings will be open, and citizens have a voice  
To help manage our county, with tax dollars spent by our choice!  
There's big change coming, we're all very pleased  
We elected a Commissioner that cares for our needs!  
We must stay vigilant, and always involved  
They need our input to help problems get solved.  
Sleep well, Camden County. You are the best.  
Commish's Skelton and Gohagan, thank you for stepping on up to this test.  
We know you'll be good, and look after our money  
Thank you for that. Government should be "sunny".  
With so much to worry about during these days,  
It's nice to know that we-the-people will have a say.

Merry Christmas!

## Renovation Update from Page 1

We appreciate Commissioner Gohagan, and his efforts to shine light on progress reporting and billing. It appears that Project Coordinator Brian Willey has left the project. Although unsuccessful in securing clear and professional project status reports from Veregy, we do think his intentions were to do good. It's interesting to note that Veregy comes to the Commission in public meetings with some Change Orders, but has secured signatures for other Change Orders from Mr. Miller, in private

The Commissioners need to step up and own this. Since no one person in the county has the skill set, it's better late than never to hire a well-paid professional to interface with Veregy Group. We need someone involved day-to-day who will insist on everyone abiding by the contract...including tracking the work against the scope described therein. Veregy PM Jason Trickey said he would do the work to translate their internal report into something based on the scope as we understand it. Let's get that! ...for Christmas!

We should have a clear schedule of when county offices will be moving back into the courthouse...ask your commissioner to see it. Currently county offices are rented throughout Camdenton...costing taxpayers thousands every month, over and above the \$7M construction project bill we're spending through the bond.

Speaking of the bond, it seems that contractor Veregy may have requested that the county consider a bond to save them from having to pay prevailing wage as they would have to if ARPA dollars were used. ...so, I guess we just do whatever they ask. Wouldn't it be great to know their profit margin on this one...you know, like super honest contractors provide to their clients? We don't even know the dollars associated with any specific area of the work...we just trust them...aren't we nice.

Thankfully, incoming Presiding Commissioner Ike Skelton appears to be on his way to full engagement on this project...no doubt the top issue of many he will have on his list. We know from previous conversation that open meetings with public input are important on his agenda...and we appreciate that access. Those meetings are a challenge to organize given the guidance of the Missouri Statute that governs County Commissions...and we hope he finds a way to allow the input and still have organized meetings that leave honest citizens satisfied. I think we're all waiting until January...and I get that...but for me this renovation disaster cannot go unattended for a moment...too much of our money is involved.

I have filed a Public Corruption complaint with the Missouri Attorney General's office. I submitted the September and November issues of the Watchdawg to help them understand the situation, and shared other findings from the documents provided under my Sunshine Request. The complaint is focused on the bid process for this project. Please be aware that Commissioner Gohagan and incoming Commissioner Skelton are aware and supportive. Let's dig in together and rid our county of arrogant politicians who think we don't see and don't care. This is our county, and we're moving forward to become a model of how counties can be successful by government working with the citizens. That means citizen involvement is more important than ever. Go to the meetings. Be involved. Bring your value to the table in our community.

I found an interesting map of how the voting by county in Missouri for the Constitutional Amendment to bring Big Weed Cronyism to our state. Camden County had 45% to 50% of voters saying “Yes”. It makes a good activist want to give up and just go fishing. Thank you to those who took the time to fully understand the threat and vote “No”. The Watchdawg will stand with you for freedom all day long.

The General Assembly begins their session in January. I expect to see the usual ups and downs, with most bills being last minute in March and April with unnecessary compromises as the RINOs we re-elected to their thing. It’s amazing to note that the State Senators who voted for last year’s gas tax increase got re-elected. Are low-information voters the culprits, or are we surrounded by moderates and liberals disguised as Conservatives who secretly support bigger government? It seems nowadays more and more folks assign every problem to “what is the government going to do to fix this?” Is there any other way to save our freedoms than to come together and figure out how to solve problems in our own community without “help”. It seems counterproductive, doesn’t it? We send them our tax dollars, but to stay free must insist they don’t use them for our benefit (as they describe benefit). It does make secession seem a good path forward...ah...wishful thinking for sure. Imagine a day when the governor of Missouri, supported by the General Assembly, tells the Federal Government that we are no longer willing to send tax dollars to support their Big Government Socialist Agenda. What a wonderful thought.

Is there any hope of saving our state and our country as long as low-information voters show up and vote on the virtue of a sound byte? Is this the main reason for our state and country’s current decline? Send me your thoughts to [Contact@watchdawgreport.com](mailto:Contact@watchdawgreport.com). Am I alone in my frustration?

According to the Trump/Republican campaign plan, Republicans will work to play the game to beat Democrats at voter harvesting and other legal denigrations of our system. I think it’s a good move in states where laws have not been updated and still allow it. Who in our General Assembly will be brave enough to introduce a bill that fully mimics the Florida voter laws with locally counted paper ballots? Will our State Senator Mike Bernskoetter and Representative Lisa Thomas come out and publicly support such a bill? Ask them!

Our very purple, fake red Missouri Senate Republicans have chosen Caleb Rowden as President pro tem of the Missouri Senate for the 2023 session that begins in January. We had heard that our Senator Mike Bernskoetter was a contender, but apparently he was unsuccessful. Maybe he’ll begin to think about the importance of the Conservatism he tells us he represents and perhaps fight against a left leaning agenda in this session...we’ll see.

Senator Rowden is from Columbia, and a known RINO. Get ready for a lot of needless compromising and subdued Conservatives in the next session. Why do you think more true Conservatives were not elected, and if elected, are not more vocal in defense of our freedoms and promotion of the people’s agenda? Voter fraud? Not impossible as we all have seen. Apathy is more likely the culprit. Low information voters choosing the name they recognize...are most citizens really that shallow? Yes. The answer is Yes. Conservatives must come together and learn how to win in this environment of misinformation. The truth is not sufficient...we need the sexiest rendition of the truth...whatever the heck that is.

As I write this, it's near 31 days before I am officially able to serve you. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to serve the people of Camden County to ensure their liberty and property are safeguarded...mainly from government.

I have been participating in various meetings and budget discussions for the past few months since our historic win. I appreciate 1<sup>st</sup> District Commissioner James Gohagan and 2nd District Commissioner Don Williams for the access to current happenings within the county and allowing my input. To that end, we have interviewed people for the position of HR director and Administrative Assistant for the commission. Those positions should be filled soon.

You'll also notice a sizeable increase in our county's Road and Bridge budget. Mr. Gohagan and Williams had already directed Auditor Jimmy Laughlin to make provisions for just said increase when I first sat down to go over the requested budget. It is fully the intent of the Commission to continue increases in the R&B budget to obtain the level of attention the public wants and deserves. Sadly, the cost of diesel fuel and asphalt will make great strides forward difficult.

As we look forward there will be several challenges. At this time, it appears the remodel is a bit of a mess. I'll be getting a closer look soon and have a better idea of where we stand and the remedies we can employ to keep things moving in a positive direction.

Interesting tidbit I was informed of one day, as a result of our win, all contracts with the county must be re-signed by the new incoming presiding commissioner. Many will be mundane and expected. Some may need a little deeper scrutiny; what better time for review?

Well, that's all I've got for now, may I leave you with this:

Since the dawn of time, man has exploited man in all its various forms, but none more egregious than one's own government. For the overwhelming majority of time, those governments were dictators, kings, rulers, Kahns and tyrants of all sorts. To speak out against them meant banishment at best, but usually meant death. For centuries mankind suffered.

And then it happened. A small group of people decided to do it different, to do it God's way. And in God's way there is only one king, King Jesus. As it was so eloquently written: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Ike Skelton

From The Watchdawg Editor:

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