

**APRIL 2018**

**OPEN LETTER TO POLITICAL CANDIDATES AND CLAY COUNTY RESIDENTS:**

When I was a teenager, I remember this song by the Five Man Electric Band called Signs. The chorus went like this: “Signs, signs, everywhere a sign. Blockin' out the scenery, breakin' my mind. Do this, don't do that, can't you read the sign?”

Sometimes when I ride around the Historic Courthouse square in Hayesville, this song comes to mind again. Once, and it was not even an election year, I saw maybe a dozen signs around the square. During elections, I gave up trying to count the signs around the historic square wall. All these signs have taken away from the beauty of the courthouse and the square.

I hope the community realizes that under a previous set of Commissioners some years ago, the Historic Courthouse was vacated and essentially abandoned by the county. For this reason, it seems everyone felt it was okay to place their sign on the square for whatever event or activity they were planning, even if it would be months in the future. And, the county officials at the time did nothing to discourage or prevent it.

Well, it's a new day now and there is both a new owner of the property and a new lessee. The property is no longer abandoned or neglected. In December of 2016, the county signed a lease with the Clay County Communities Revitalization Association (CCCRA) and then transferred the property to the Town of Hayesville in January 2017, as the new owner and landlord. The lease remained in effect with the transfer. Both CCCRA and the Town have been working together to restore this Historic structure and grounds.

With the restoration to be completed this year, the courthouse building and grounds will again become the centerpiece for our community with more events, outside and now inside. We were hopeful that county residents, including political candidates, would respect this property as Clay County's beautiful historical courthouse that will be the showcase of the Town and County. However, it seems the numerous signs have begun to re-appear.

Of course, signs required by Town ordinance and signs for actual events on the square are permitted but even then, discretion should be used. Our goal, of course, is to preserve the beauty of the square and make it an attractive and inviting location that reflects the majesty of the Historic Courthouse.

So, our earnest plea is for all candidates or anyone wanting to place a sign on the historic courthouse square to please respect this beautiful “old lady” and honor her as our county's shining jewel to be treasured. And, because it will actively be used, we challenge those candidates who have already placed signs on the square to consider removing them.

Finally, we would ask that anyone wanting to place a sign on the square to contact us for permission before doing so. Let us all help the attractiveness of our small town to those coming to see what we have for them to enjoy.

“Signs, signs, everywhere a sign. Blockin' out the scenery, breakin' my mind. “

Doug Canup, Treasurer

CCCRA