

CHEROKEE COUNTY

STATE OF GEORGIA

GRAND JURY PRESENTMENTS

**TO: The Honorable N. Jackson Harris
Chief Judge, Superior Court
Cherokee County, Georgia**

**The Honorable Ellen McElyea
Judge, Superior Court
Cherokee County, Georgia**

**The Honorable David L. Cannon, Jr.
Judge, Superior Court
Cherokee County, Georgia**

We, the members of this Grand Jury, chosen and sworn to serve the May 2014 term of the Superior Court of Cherokee County, hereby submit the following report and recommendations.

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, heard 219 bills of indictment, returned 219 true bills and 0 no bill.

PRESENTMENT 1

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, commend Superior Court Chief Bailiff Jane Johnson, Bailiff Johnny Champion and Bailiff Fay McCurry and all bailiffs for their diligent assistance in arranging materials for Grand Jury proceedings, managing the schedule for cases to be presented, coordinating Grand Jury payroll, and ensuring that the proceedings ran smoothly.

PRESENTMENT 2

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, commend District Attorney Shannon Wallace, each of her Assistant District Attorneys and staff members, and each law enforcement officer and investigator associated with the cases brought before this Grand Jury

during this term for their professionalism and hard work and for their service and commitment to Cherokee County.

PRESENTMENT 3

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, would like to recognize and sincerely thank all of the law enforcement officers with the Cherokee County Sheriff's Office, Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad, Canton Police Department, Woodstock Police Department, Holly Springs Police Department, Ball Ground Police Department, the Georgia State Patrol, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Natural Resource, for their hard work in serving and protecting the citizens of Cherokee County.

PRESENTMENT 4

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, sincerely thank the Honorable Judge Ellen McElyea for her professional and informative empanelment and orientation of this Grand Jury.

PRESENTMENT 5

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, sincerely thank Jessica Moss for her informative overview of the Solicitor General's Office and for presenting concerns about safety and security in the Historic Courthouse.

Recommendation:

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, recommend that the Cherokee County Board of Commissioners immediately implement the proposed security improvements to the Historic Courthouse presented to this Grand Jury by County Manager Jerry Cooper. We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, also recommend that the Board of Commissioners allocate additional funding to the budget in the near future to provide for additional law enforcement officers and security scanning equipment to equip the Historic Courthouse with the same security measures as the Frank C. Mills, III, Cherokee County Justice Center.

PRESENTMENT 6

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, express thanks to Don Stevens, Chairman of the Cherokee County Airport Authority, for his informative presentation about the Cherokee County Airport Authority and all of the improvements and additions to the Cherokee County Airport.

PRESENTMENT 7

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, sincerely express our thanks to Cherokee County Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad Commander Phil Price for his informative presentation about the drug epidemic in Cherokee County. This Grand Jury encourages all Cherokee County citizens to be proactive about drug related activity. Any citizen that is concerned about drug related activity in his or her area can send CMANS an anonymous tip by going to www.cmans.org/news/tips-contact or by calling the anonymous tip line at 770-345-7920. Commander Price assured the Grand Jury that all tips are investigated.

PRESENTMENT 8

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, sincerely express thanks to Amy Economopoulos and the staff of the Anna Crawford Children's Center for their tireless efforts in serving and protecting at risk and victimized children in our community. Through the presentation of Director Economopoulos, we learned that Cherokee County is at the forefront of child abuse investigations and prevention resources provided to children and parents in the State of Georgia through the Center. Anna Crawford Children's Center is a non-profit organization that provides forensic interviews for children suspected of being physically or sexually abused and also provides treatment services to these children and their families at no cost to the families. The Center is funded by grants and donations through various fundraisers, the largest being the Holiday Lights of Hope, and not by the Cherokee County taxpayers. The Center offers training programs, such as "Darkness to Light," which helps parents and other individuals that care for children to recognize the signs of child abuse, and provides training for forensic interviewers from around the State of Georgia through their "Child First Georgia" program. This Grand Jury encourages the public to learn more about the Center by visiting their website at <http://cherokeechildadvocates.org>.

Recommendation:

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, recommend the Cherokee County School system implement the “Darkness to Light” program into all schools within the County in order to assist those that care for our children while they are in school, as well as parents, in recognizing the signs of child abuse.

PRESENTMENT 9

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, sincerely express our thanks to Captain Bert Love of the Cherokee County Sheriff’s Office and Special Agent in Charge Kim Williams of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation for their hard work and tireless efforts in investigating the Ball Ground Recycling Project and for their very thorough investigation into all potential criminal activity related to this project.

Recommendation 1:

After listening to multiple days of testimony from Captain Love and Agent Williams, as well as being provided the forensic audit completed by McClendon and Associates and reviewing the Grand Jury presentments from all of the prior grand juries that investigated this matter, we, the May 2014 Grand Jury, do not find a prosecutable criminal case with regards to the Ball Ground Recycling Project. We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, further note that the Office of the District Attorney has committed hundreds of hours to the investigation of this matter over the past twenty-six months receiving support and advice from local, state, and federal authorities. We recommend that no further county or state resources be expended by the District Attorney’s Office, the Cherokee County Sheriff’s Office or the Georgia Bureau of Investigation on any criminal investigation or attempted criminal prosecution of the matters relating to the Ball Ground Recycling Project. Instead, this Grand Jury recommends that all county resources be dedicated to aggressively seeking a buyer for the Ball Ground Recycling facility and mitigating the financial losses that this project has needlessly cost the taxpayers of Cherokee County.

Recommendation 2:

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, thank the prior grand jurors and citizens who encouraged the investigation into the matter of Ball Ground Recycling. This Grand Jury further encourages the citizens of Cherokee County to be diligent and engaged with regards to our local government in order to stay apprised of major financial decisions and the potential pitfalls of county contracts which may significantly encumber the County. This Grand Jury would encourage all citizens to attend the Board of Commission meetings or to watch these meetings online since these meetings are recorded and maintained at www.cherokeega.com/Transparency/meetings-by-year-boc and to be actively engaged in the actions of our county government.

Recommendation 3:

We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, were informed by law enforcement that the current County Attorney is not a full-time county employee, physically located in Cherokee County. We, the May 2014 Grand Jury, recommend for both fiscal and logistical reasons, that the County Attorney for Cherokee County be a full-time, in-house, salaried county employee, whose office is physically located in Cherokee County; rather than a contractual, hourly employee.

Respectfully submitted this 12th day of August, 2014.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Alford', written over a horizontal line.

Sean Patrick Alford
Grand Jury Foreman

CHEROKEE COUNTY

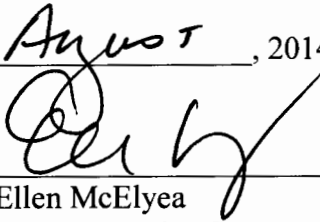
STATE OF GEORGIA

ORDER

It is ordered that the within and foregoing Grand Jury Presentments having been read and considered, the same be filed.

It is further ordered that a copy of the Presentments, along with a copy of this Order, be sent to the Cherokee Tribune for publication and the usual fees paid thereon.

This the 12 day of August, 2014.



Ellen McElyea
Judge, Superior Court
Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit