

Moscow on the Cahaba

Chapter II Part I

“The Balloon”



As this chapter of the continuing saga - **“MOSCOW ON THE CAHABA”** – begins, we see Boris Bad–E–Noff , quasi-star of the radio show/column who, in prior episodes, aspired to become Shelby County’s premiere “Appointed Professional Planner” (APP), standing beside the “Competent and Assertive Announcer” (CAA).

Boris, collecting his thoughts as he prepares to deliver his opening lines, recalls the rift between the two - the rift a secondary story line in the preceding chapter is now apparently buried. How deep? Well - the phrase “let the games begin” may well fit this situation.

Setting the stage for this, the first installment in the unfathomable future of “BORIS” and the “sustainable development” movement, the “announcer”, undaunted due to his inherent professionalism, also reflects on the rift in the preceding chapter. The CAA recalls that his stipend for the last chapter of this saga was based on “words spoken”, until Boris complained to upper management that the payment method was, in essence, “piece work” – a capitalist concept.

The CAA approaches the microphone and says:

Since the close of our last “Epic Episode” (EE) of “Moscow on the Cahaba Part VIII – The Finale,” Boris, the enlightened socialist, eternally optimistic, has set his sights on higher aspirations. Readers/listeners will recall that Boris’s high hopes to secure a position with Shelby County as a “Hired Professional Planner” (HPP) was destroyed when it was revealed that a joint “sustainable transportation” presentation by Dudley DoRight and Nell Fenwick won the hearts of the Shelby County staff.

The winning concept embodied in the enclosed photo is provided for followers of Boris's escapades that have not had the opportunity to see the magnificent “sustainable development” transportation device. After adoption of DoRight and Fenwick’s program, Shelby County was lifted from its transportation quagmire and ably secured elusive federal grants.



We join Boris as he crafts a text message to the love of his life on his PDA (Personal Data Assistant).

Boris:

Natasha, darling Poopice - I, Boris, who once aspired to become Shelby County's first "Appointed Professional Planner" (APP), have learned my lesson – never trust a guy in a red hat with a blonde in a side car. But, enough of that – Boris always says - never recall past failures - it hinders optimism!

Poopice, I have my sights on a far more lucrative employment opportunity – employment that will permit Boris, your true love, to possess the authority to implement the three pillars of "sustainable development" – social, economic and environmental¹ – I will become the Director of Code Enforcement (DCE) for Shelby County, Alabama. Neat – yes!

My resolve to aspire to such a lofty goal came when Shelby County's Hired Professional Planner (HPP) informed me, after accepting DoRight's offer, that I was nothing more than a figment of someone's imagination, designed to needle individuals of his stature that hold high the banner of "sustainable development".

Needless to say, my dear Poopice, I am no more a figment of someone's imagination than "sustainable development" is a concept designed to protect the "inalienable rights" of the individual.

Poopice, never let it be said that Boris would let minor details prevent him from telling a good story.

Why, just the other night, I went to a meeting in Elmore County, Alabama. Residents of the County were upset over their proposed "comprehensive plan". They claimed that local government wanted to take away some of their property rights, which in essence, would be a "taking". In an attempt to bolster their claim, the following quote from Elmore County's Comprehensive Plan was presented:

“The Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution generally states that private property must not be taken for public use without just compensation. Simply defined, a taking occurs when a public agency either condemns property to build public projects (also referred to as eminent domain) or physically occupies or damages property. In the case of a government regulatory action (such as subdivision regulations), a “regulatory taking” is considered to be an action that so interferes with the use of private property that it has the same effect as a physical appropriation.”

“In most cases, the test of whether an action is a taking is whether the regulation denies an owner of all economically viable use of the property. It is important to note that the courts have been very clear on this last issue; a taking does not occur simply because a regulatory action may impose limits on the use of property. The Takings Clause is often misconstrued as a prohibition against any regulation that either decreases property value or prohibits individuals from "doing what they want with their land." A loss of potential market value is not enough to trigger a takings claim.”

“The remaining use does not have to be the owner’s planned use, a prior use, or the highest and best use of the property.”²

Of course, Poopice, the attending Elmore County Commissioners, “politicians of enduring faith and professional ability”, jumped the hurdle of abrogated property rights without breaking a sweat. They politely nodded and said, “Yes, the 'comprehensive plan' may say all those things - but this is a proposed plan – it is not official!”.

Boris was so impressed and proud that the politicians successfully skirted the issue. You see, Poopice, a “proposed plan” is a trial balloon designed to feel out opposition. If sufficient opposition raises its ugly head, the politicians will delete the questionable tenets, adopting only the portions that appear to be noncontroversial. Later, when the opponent's resolve falters, the rest of the plan is adopted and wal-la! - Socialist employment opportunities are created – Code Enforcement Officers - etc. etc. AND etc.!

Poopice, I hear the announcer tapping his foot – it is a sure indication that this text message is coming to an end. I just want to say, before he cuts me off, that I am going to include in my next email to you a picture of your special one “Boris” in his training uniform.

The CAA steps to the microphone and closes this Epic Episode with the following:

CAA:

It is time to bring this escapade – err uh – Epic Episode of Moscow on the Cahaba to a close. Tune in next time, when perhaps, maybe Boris the “Aspiring Code Enforcement

Director” (ACED) will reveal his “Training Tools and Techniques Designed for Aspiring Socialist Officers” (TTTDASO).

Footnote

1. Paula J. Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs

“Within the United States, concrete action on sustainable development takes place not just at the national level, but at the state and local levels as well. Furthermore, it rarely involves only the government; much more often, it happens in partnerships involving business and civil society.”

“...the three "pillars" of sustainable development -- environmental protection, economic development, and social development -- must go hand-in-hand. Because each pillar is integrally linked to the others, effective pursuit of sustainable development requires a balanced approach that integrates all three components.” <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itgic/0402/ijge/gj02.htm>

2. Elmore County’s proposed Comprehensive Plan Section I pages 9 & 10. View the plan at: <http://www.carpdc.com/>