

Connection to Greg Lindberg just the tip of the iceberg of former Sen. Wesley Meredith's long history of corruption.

Meredith received nearly \$40K from Lindberg associates after filing a bill tinkering with NC insurance regulations.

Meredith received nearly \$40K from Lindberg associates after filing a bill tinkering with NC insurance regulations. “Two years ago, then-state Sen. Wesley Meredith of Fayetteville filed a bill tinkering with North Carolina insurance regulations. Within six weeks, Meredith’s **reelection campaign account received nearly \$40,000 from now-indicted Durham-based insurance magnate Greg Lindberg and his associates.** Lindberg was indicted last month on federal bribery charges. The money came from Lindberg and his wife, from executives at Lindberg companies and their wives, and other executives and people associated with Lindberg’s companies.” (Fayetteville Observer, 4/10/19)

Meredith’s S509 was backed by Lindberg’s company and would have changed the rules around the type of investments insurers can make. “Meredith, a Republican who lost his reelection bid last year, didn’t return messages left Monday and Tuesday with staff at his landscaping business in Fayetteville. In 2017, Meredith co-chaired the Senate’s committee on commerce and insurance. His Senate Bill 509 was a complex piece of insurance regulation dealing with “transaction requirements and prohibited investments for insurers.” It was backed by Global Bankers Insurance Group, which Lindberg owns.” (Fayetteville Observer, 4/10/19)

Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey opposed the bill and it never got a hearing. Lindberg, his associates and former NCGOP Chair Robin Hayes were indicted for trying to bribe Causey. “Meredith’s bill never got a formal hearing. Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey said the department opposed the bill except for a single section dealing with mortgage investment rules. Lindberg, two of his associates and North Carolina Republican Party Chairman Robin Hayes have been indicted on accusations they conspired to bribe Causey by funneling money to his reelection campaign.” (Fayetteville Observer, 4/10/19)

Meredith received \$39,250 from Lindberg associates and their spouses in April and May of 2017. (NCSBE

Name	Address	Profession	Employer	Committee	Date	Amount
AUTUMN KARLINSKY	2670 CYPRESS LANE FORT LAUDERDALE FL33332	HOMEMAKER	HOMEMAKER	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	5/9/17	1,000.00
RICHARD FIDEI	800 CYPRESS BLVD. APT. 102 POMPANO BEACH FL33069	ATTORNEY	GREENBERG TRAUIG, PA	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	5/7/17	1,000.00
STANLEY JACOBS	7234 CARMEL COURT BOCA RATON FL33433	LAWYER	GREENBERG TRAUIG	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	5/2/17	500.00

SCOTT BOUG	145 MARSTONS MILL DR MOORESVILLE NC28117	ACTUARY	GLOBAL BANKERS INSURANCE	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/28/17	5,000.00
PAUL BROWN	320 WEST 87TH STREET NEW YORK NY10024	INSURANCE	GLOBAL BANKERS	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/27/17	500.00
LOU HENSLEY	167 VINEYARD DR MOORESVILLE NC28117	CEO	GLOBAL BANKERS INSURANCE GROUP	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/17/17	5,000.00
JENNIFER HENSLEY	167 VINEYARD DRIVE MOORESVILLE NC28117	HOUSEWIFE	HOUSEWIFE	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/17/17	5,000.00
CHRISTOPHER HERWIG	908 COWPER DR RALEIGH NC27608	FINANCE	ELI GLOBAL	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/15/17	5,000.00
GEORGE LUECKE	131 OAKLAND AVE HARRISON NY10528	INSURANCE	ELI GLOBAL LLC	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/15/17	500.00
GREG LINDBERG	3406 STAGECOACH ROAD DURHAM NC27713	INVESTOR	ELI GLOBAL, LLC	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/15/17	5,000.00
RAYMOND MARTINEZ	8320 HARPS MILL ROAD RALEIGH NC27615	VICE PRESIDENT	GLOBAL BANKERS INSURANCE GROUP	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/15/17	250.00
TISHA LINDBERG	3406 STAGECOACH RD DURHAM NC27713	HOUSEWIFE	HOUSEWIFE	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/15/17	5,000.00
TRISH LUECKE	107 BARKRIDGE ROAD MORRISVILLE NC27560	HOUSEWIFE	HOUSEWIFE	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/15/17	500.00
TONI-ANN HERWIG	908 COWPER DR RALEIGH NC27608	LAWYER	NOT EMPLOYED	WESLEY MEREDITH FOR SENATE	4/15/17	5,000.00

(NCSBE, retrieved 9/24/19)

Meredith employed absentee ballot and voter registration fraud in his 2003 race for Fayetteville City Council, but a US Attorney could not prosecute after witnesses could not be located.

The NCSBE found at least 27 attempts to acquire or fraudulently vote absentee attributed to Meredith's 2003 campaign.

State Board of Elections Investigator Attempted to Contact Meredith Regarding Voting Irregularities About the Election; Investigator Spent 10 Weeks Investigating Allegations. “On Election Day in 2003, an investigator from the State Board of Elections stopped at Cardinal Landscaping to visit owner Wesley Meredith. Meredith wasn't in. He was at the Neil Currie building on the Fayetteville Technical Community College campus, campaigning for the City Council. The building was the site of the Cross Creek 14 polls that day. Meredith said he called the investigator but hasn't heard back. Questions about whether there were voting irregularities in the election remain unresolved. Marshall Tutor, the State Board of Elections investigator who contacted Meredith, said Wednesday that he spent 10 weeks investigating allegations in Meredith's race. 'It was time consuming. It was a big case and took time to cover all the bases,' Tutor said. Tutor said 'our concern is the number of aliens that appeared to be registering to vote.' He said he heard rumors of people voting in more than one precinct, 'but I didn't investigate that aspect.' Results of his investigation were turned over to Cumberland County District Attorney Ed Grannis. Claire Hill, an assistant district attorney and chairwoman of the Cumberland County Board of Elections, said the information was given to the U.S Attorney's Office for eastern North Carolina. Hill said the information is still being investigated. A spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's Office said no charges have been filed. The office does not comment on investigations. Meredith said Wednesday that he is unaware of any investigation.” (*Fayetteville Observer*, April 29, 2005)

N.C. Board of Elections Identified At Least 27 Attempts to Acquire or Fraudulently Vote Absentee Attributed to Meredith in 2003 Election. “On November 21, 2003, the Executive Director of the North Carolina Board of Elections requested assistance of the U.S. Attorney's office of possible voter registration fraud and absentee voting violations related to Wesley Meredith. “An investigation by this office as initiated after Terri Robertson, Director of the Cumberland County Board of Elections, expressed concern regarding absentee ballot requests for the November 4, 2003, City of Fayetteville election. Possible violations of numerous election laws and campaign reporting laws have been identified. Thus far we have identified at least 27 attempts to acquire, and in several instances, to fraudulently vote absentee ballots. There are two confirmed non-citizens that were registered and voted in the municipal election. It appears the irregular activities can be attributed to one of the candidates and others known to support him and to involve activities in Virginia. We are mailing a summary and report of findings developed by our investigator, Marshall Tutor.” (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)

U.S. Attorney declined prosecution Since because witnesses could not be located even though federal law covers “Conspiracy to Stuff the Ballot Box With Illegally Registered Voters And Casting Absentee Ballots In Their Names, Such As The Case Here.” “On July 26, 2005, the chief of the Criminal Division for the U.S. Attorney of the Eastern District of North Carolina declined prosecution in the Meredith matter since it was not related to a federal matter and some witnesses would not be located. “The United States Attorney's Office has completed its review of the summary and report of findings developed by Marshall Tutor, Investigator, State Board of Elections in regard to the above-captioned investigation. The office has also reviewed federal election laws and their applicability to the described findings. At this time, the office is declining prosecution in the Meredith matter. The focus of federal election laws in nonfederal elections has been on fraud involving state action. The federal law in this Circuit does cover conspiracy to stuff the ballot box with illegally registered voters and casting absentee ballots in their names, such as the case here, but the best witnesses who could speak directly to such conspiracy in this case are illegal aliens who have not been located. The case may present violations of state election law that would be stronger. The files are thus returned for your use. I inferred from our meeting with Ed Grannis that his office would need recuse itself from any action; for that reason, you may wish to take the matter up with the North Carolina Attorney General's office.” (Letter from Office

of U.S. Attorney to North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett, July 26, 2005)

Meredith hired Roy Fuson to register voters, Fuson registered voters and requested absentee ballots without voters' knowledge

State Election Board Investigator Found that Meredith Enlisted Roy Fuson to Register Voters In and Out of District for 2003 City Council Election. “According to North Carolina State Board of Elections Investigator Marshall Tudor, “Drug informant Melissa Fuson contacted the Cumberland County Board of Elections office and reported her brother, Roy Fuson, had been promised money and landscaping job possibilities by candidate Wesley Meredith. Roy Fuson was to get people to register and vote in the District 5 council race regardless of where they lived. He was also told by Meredith to meet him on Saturday, November 1, in order to get a list of people, some of whom were dead, for Roy to go on election day and vote for each one at the various polling places. Roy Fuson did not meet with Meredith on November 1, though Meredith called him several times.” (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)

Registration Forms and Absentee Ballots Were Forged. “Fuson told Tudor he registered his mother, who lived in Maryland at that time, to his address in Fayetteville, NC – 1503 Westlawn Avenue. Fuson said he gave Meredith the registration form and absentee ballot unsigned, and both were later found to be forged. Additionally, handwriting on the forms was the same for “Roy Fuson, Melissa Fuson, Karen Fuson, Katie Lawson, who lives with her parents and Damion Lalli, who lives with his parents are all the same except for the signatures.” (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)

- **Melissa Fuson was Unaware of Her Voter Registration Form.** Melissa Fuson told Tudor that she knew nothing about her voter registration form. Additionally, her name was misspelled, and her birth date was incorrect on the form. (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)

State Investigator Reported That 3 of 4 People Registered at 207 N. Virginia Avenue No Longer Resided There. “According to North Carolina State Board of Elections Investigator Marshall Tudor, four people (Starr M. Ray, Wendy Marie Everett, Timothy Blake Moore and Paul Anthony Leonard) registered to vote from 207 N. Virginia Avenue in Fayetteville, NC, but only one of them, Leonard, resided there in 2003. Leonard was a friend of Wesley Meredith's and owned the residence at that address. Tudor wrote that, “none of the other persons listed above have lived at this residence since 2001 when Wendy Everett leased it. Mr. Leonard received no other ballots by mail. Ballots to the above address were returned by the Postal Service to the Cumberland County board of Elections office, and were mailed out again and were not returned. The absentee requests for Ray, Everett, and Moore were typed exactly alike and appeared to be signed by the same person. Moore's request had the wrong birth date. Starr Ray formerly resided at 612 Forest Drive which also is a focal point of this investigation.” (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)

State Investigator Reported That Residents at Haymont Apartments Were Unaware of Absentee Ballot Requests in Their Names. “According to North Carolina State Board of Elections Investigator Marshall Tudor, Elliott Boatman, formerly of 612 Forest Road, Apt. 7C, was in the military in 2003 and stated he did not request an absentee ballot. He said the writing looked like that of “Sam” (Samuel Thomas Jr.) who owns the property. Tudor wrote, “When I told Sam of the fraudulent absentee ballot request from Haymont Apartments, he asked if any of the ballots were cast. Interesting question as it seems he must know the ballots were never sent. I told him I wanted to meet with him soon to check

some handwriting samples. (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)

- **Lucille Wray Knew Nothing of an Absentee Ballot Request in Her Name.** “According to Tudor, “Lucille H. Wray, formerly of 612 Forest Road, Apt. 7D, supposedly requested an absentee ballot be mailed to that address. According to her son Sterling Wray, who has power of attorney for Lucille Wray, she is in a nursing home in Fayetteville and has been totally paralyzed, and unable to speak since 1996. Sterling Wray said he knew nothing of the absentee ballot request. Michael J. Adams, has lived in this apartment since 1996. He is employed with an earth moving company owned by Wesley Meredith. I have his statement in which he claims to know nothing about the absentee ballot request.” (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)
- **A Third Absentee Ballot Request with the Same Handwriting Appeared for a Man Who Moved From Haymont Apartments in 2002.** According to Tudor, “Theron Edward Corse moved out of 612 Forest Road, Apt. 7D in August, 2002. He was on the faculty at Fayetteville State and may be living out of state. The handwriting for these three requests appears to be the same.” (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)
- **Investigator Reported All 6 Signatures Appear to Be Forgeries.** According to Tudor, “The six signatures on this sheet are believed to be forgeries. The Eric Gibson signature looks similar to the Starr Ray, Timothy Moore, Wendy Everett signatures. The address in Virginia where the absentee request forms were mailed to by the Cumberland County Board of Elections is occupied by AFLAC, with Tim Brown listed as consultant. Timothy Clifton Brown, supposedly residing at 205 S. McPherson Church Road, registered to vote on October 8, 2003 and voted one stop absentee on October 30, 2003. The link between Tim Brown and Timothy Clifton Brown has not yet been investigated.” (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)

Three people registered to vote from a Meredith-owned property, voted absentee, but then their registration cards came back undeliverable.

State Investigator Reported That 3 Unknown People Registered to Vote from a Wesley Meredith-Owned Property. According to North Carolina State Board of Elections Investigator Marshall Tudor, “John C. Slater, Miguel Jose Seda, and Ignacio Domiguez, supposedly [resided] at 211 Woodside Drive. This property is owned by candidate Wesley Meredith and occupied by Thomas P. Roberts, who has given me a written statement. Mr. Roberts and his girlfriend have lived there since November, 2002, and he does not know any of the other people mentioned above. All three voted one stop absentee and later their verification cards came back as undeliverable. Cardinal Landscaping payroll department denies knowledge of any of the individuals and say they have never worked for Cardinal Landscaping.” (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)

A state investigator was told that former VP for Business and Development for Meredith’s company, Cardinal Landscaping, was told to vote outside his district.

A state investigator was told that former VP for Business and Development for Meredith’s company, Cardinal Landscaping, was told to vote outside his district. North Carolina State Board of Elections Investigator Marshall Tudor wrote that in a statement from Douglas Austin, a campaign worker for the 2003 Kirby Campaign, one of Meredith’s employees was asked to commit voter fraud. According to the statement, “The person in question is Don Melvin based on a license tag check. He was formerly VP for Business and Development for Cardinal Landscaping. Mr. Melvin stated to Mr. Austin and others that he lived outside Fayetteville but was voting where Wesley Meredith told him to vote.” (Letter from North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Gary O. Bartlett to Office of U.S. Attorney, November 21, 2003)

Meredith paid Leslie McCrae Dowless and others for “getting out the vote” during the 2010 and 2012 elections.

Name	Address	Transaction Type	Date	Amount	Purpose
DAVID HUNT	PO BOX 26210 FAYETTEVILL E NC 28314	Operating Exp	11/07/2012	200	GETTING OUT THE VOTE
RANDY KAHA	1064 71ST SCHOOL RD FAYETTEVILL E NC 28314	Operating Exp	11/07/2012	200	GETTING OUT THE VOTE
JAMES SMITH	PO BOX 27398 FAYETTEVILL E NC 28314	Operating Exp	11/07/2012	200	GETTING OUT THE VOTE
MCCRAE DOWLESS	FAYETTEVILL E NC	Operating Exp	11/01/2010	375	GETTING OUT THE VOTE
JERRY LESANE	FAYETTEVILL E NC	Operating Exp	11/01/2010	250	GETTING OUT THE VOTE
JERRY LESANE	FAYETTEVILL E NC	Operating Exp	10/18/2010	2250	GETTING OUT THE VOTE
POLLY MESHAW	FAYETTEVILL E NC	Operating Exp	09/21/2010	700	GETTING OUT THE VOTE
POLLY MESHAW	FAYETTEVILL E NC	Operating Exp	08/24/2010	375	GETTING OUT THE VOTE
POLLY MESHAW	FAYETTEVILL E NC	Operating Exp	07/14/2010	350	GETTING OUT THE VOTE
POLLY MESHAW	FAYETTEVILL E NC	Operating Exp	07/08/2010	500	GETTING OUT THE VOTE
				Total: \$5,400	

(NCSBE, retrieved 9/24/19)

Dowless is the “political operative” indicted with committing absentee ballot fraud for the 2018 congressional campaign of Mark Harris.

Meredith paid Dowless \$375 in 2010. (NCSBE, retrieved 9/24/19)

Dowless was indicted on charges related to collecting absentee ballots in the 2018 primary and 2016 general election. “McCrae Dowless, the political operative at the center of the 9th District election fraud case, was arrested Wednesday after being indicted on charges related to collecting absentee ballots in the 2018 primary and 2016 election. Dowless, 63, faces three felony charges of obstruction of justice, two charges of conspiracy to commit obstruction of justice and two charges of possession of absentee ballot. The indictment from Wake County District Attorney Lorrin Freeman said Dowless’ actions “served to undermine the integrity of the absentee ballot process and the public’s confidence in the outcome of the electoral process.” (Charlotte Observer, 2/27/19)

Dowless worked for Republican Mark Harris during the 2018 election. “During the 2018 race, Dowless worked for Republican Mark Harris, who appeared to win on election night with a razor-thin margin of 905 votes. The State Board of Elections refused to certify the results, however, after questions emerged about Dowless’ alleged ballot-harvesting scheme. Harris did not respond to a message seeking comment Wednesday. He testified during a State Board of Elections hearing this month that he hired Dowless after the 2016 race, when he saw that his opponent Todd Johnson had racked up 221 out of 225 absentee ballots cast in Bladen County during the Republican primary, which Harris had lost.” (Charlotte Observer, 2/27/19)

Meredith used his position to land lucrative contracts for his landscaping business, he even tried to push legislation that would help his company win business with public school districts.

Meredith Said That His Landscaping Company Would Not Benefit From A Bill That Authorized School Construction From A Company For Which Meredith’s Company Was A Metcon Subcontractor. “A collection of construction interests is pushing the bill. Ferris is president and CEO of SFL+a Architects and the development company FirstFloor K-12 Solutions. A group interested in local economic development called Robeson for Advancement is lobbying for the bill. The group’s manager is Aaron Thomas, president of the construction company Metcon. Patrick Ballantine, a former state senator and GOP gubernatorial candidate, is the group’s lobbyist. The bill’s main sponsor is state Sen. Wesley Meredith, a Fayetteville Republican. He owns a landscaping company that has won work as a Metcon subcontractor. Meredith said he isn’t pushing the bill to benefit his company. “This is a way to build schools,” he said. Meredith said he would start moving the bill through Senate committees this week.” [News and Observer, 6/19/16]

Meredith Owned Cardinal Landscaping And Was Questioned As To Why They Were Allowed To Bid For Schools’ Landscaping When Other Companies Were Not. “Horry County Schools staff asked Metcon, a contractor working with First Floor on the new schools, for the landscaping bids on the same day Johnson sent a complaint to the school district. The district repeated the request for weeks and, when the bids were finally turned over, the bids raised more questions. [...] Mark Wolfe, the district’s executive director of facilities, wanted to know why Cardinal Landscaping was allowed to bid for all of the schools’ landscaping when other companies weren’t allowed to, an email shows. Cardinal Landscaping, a company in Fayetteville, North Carolina, is owned by North Carolina Senator Wesley Meredith.” [CBS - 13 WBTW, 7/12/17]

- **Cardinal Landscaping Ended Up Landing Two Jobs And \$773,944 Worth Of Work After Submitting The Lowest Bids For The Projects.** “Cardinal Landscaping ended up with landscaping jobs for two schools and \$773,944 worth of work after submitting the lowest bids for the projects, according to documents provided by First Floor.” [CBS - 13 WBTW, 7/12/17]
- **Metcon Eventually Allowed All Of The Companies To Bid On All Of The Jobs After Originally Stating That They Chose Cardinal Because They Trusted “Their Pricing And Competence” And Their Ability To Handle The Workload.** “Ryan Parker, a project manager for Metcon, said he asked Cardinal Landscaping for the bids because he trusted “their pricing and competence,” according to emails obtained by News13. Parker claimed allowing Cardinal Landscaping to bid on all of the projects would give a “baseline in knowing where the numbers shook out.” Wolfe said he didn’t understand the explanation because it seemed logical to let all of the companies bid on all of the schools. Parker also argued Cardinal Landscaping was the only company that could handle more than two jobs. “I don’t agree with the implication that the bids were not competitive,” Parker wrote. “Nothing was bid shopped.” [CBS - 13 WBTW, 7/12/17]

Meredith Attracted Attention To The Project Because He Sponsored A Bill That Would Have Allowed School Districts To Pay For School Buildings By Using Money Saved Through Consolidation Money Traditionally Spent On Staff And Operations Could Be Used For Building Payments. “Senator Wesley Meredith attracted the attention of North Carolina’s then-state treasurer as

his bill moved through the Senate in 2016, around the same time Robbie Ferris was trying to sell his \$1.4 billion plan to Robeson County. The legislation would've allowed school districts to pay for school buildings by using money saved through consolidation; money traditionally spent on staff and operations could be used for building payments." [CBS - 13 WBTW, 7/12/17]

Meredith's Original Bill Ended Up Failing But He Meredith Introduced Similar Legislation With More Protections For School Districts And School Funding In March 2017 During The Bidding Process For Landscaping At Horry County's New Schools. "The bill failed later in summer 2016 and Ferris' plan for Robeson County didn't move forward. Meredith introduced similar legislation with more protections for school districts and school funding in March 2017 during the bidding process for landscaping at Horry County's new schools. The legislation failed again and, according to Metcon president Aaron Thomas, Cardinal Landscaping won the jobs afterwards. "Obviously, I couldn't reward him for moving legislation for me because it didn't move," Thomas said. "The guy files a bill and it doesn't move at all. I don't understand how that correlates." Meredith didn't respond to an email from News13 asking about the legislation and his company's work in Horry County." [CBS - 13 WBTW, 7/12/17]

Meredith Was Quoted By The News And Observer As Saying He Was Not "Pushing The Bill To Benefit His Company." "The News & Observer echoed the treasurer's concerns in its own editorial. The paper's reporting described "a collection of construction interests" pushing the bill, including Robbie Ferris and a lobbying group run by Metcon president Aaron Thomas, which is now working on Horry County's five new schools alongside First Floor Energy Positive. Meredith's company hadn't yet won any bids on Horry County's new schools, but the paper was already questioning his motive to sponsor the bill. It claimed he had previously won work as a Metcon subcontractor. "Meredith said he isn't pushing the bill to benefit his company," the paper wrote." [CBS - 13 WBTW, 7/12/17]

Cumberland County Commissioners hired Meredith's company for a \$3.1M contract even though it did not have experience with the type of complex work needed.

Cumberland County Commissioners Accepted Project For Cardinal Landscaping at a Cost of \$3.1 Million in September 2007. According to Cumberland County Commissioners meeting minutes for September 17, 2007, "Bids were received on July 12, 2007 for the Courthouse Plaza renovations and Parking Lot improvements. The low base bid was submitted by Cardinal Landscaping, Inc. in the amount of \$3,195,148.90 ... At the Facilities Committee meeting on September 11, the project engineer gave a summary of the project with specific details on how the significant expansion of the project scope impacted the actual cost compared to the original project estimate. The project engineer recommended that \$280,000 could be reduced from the project without significantly impacting the scope of the project ... The base bid, less the project reductions of \$280,000, plus the alternates and the contingency, bring the construction contract to a total of \$3,140,080.90." The commissioners approved the project with a unanimous vote. ([Cumberland County Commissioners, Meeting Minutes for September 17, 2007](#), accessed 4/2/10)

Courthouse Plaza Project Was Expected to Take 300 Days to Complete. The September 17, 2007 Cumberland County Commissioners meeting minutes included a note on the Courthouse Plaza Project contracted to Cardinal Landscaping that reads, "Note: It is expected the project will begin in October of this year and will take approximately 300 days to complete." ([Cumberland County Commissioners, Meeting Minutes for September 17, 2007](#), accessed 4/2/10)

Cumberland County Board of Commissioners Did a Poor Job Estimating Cost of Renovation Project. According to the [Fayetteville Observer](#), "the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners is poised to extricate itself from an embarrassing situation with about as much dignity as anyone has a right to expect. After the lowest bid for the contract to renovate the courthouse plaza came in half a million dollars over budget, the commissioners did two things: They faced up to the fact that it was their projection, not the bidders' expectations, that had missed the mark. They ordered County Engineer Bob Stanger to massage the specs and scale back the project, an effort that brought the low bid, submitted

by Fayetteville City Councilman Wesley Meredith, closer to what they were prepared to pay. Meredith's Cardinal Landscaping stands ready to do the job, as revised, for \$2.9 million rather than \$3.2 million. That sets the stage for a reconciliation of high hopes and fiscal realism." [[Fayetteville Observer](#) opinion, 9/15/07]

Cumberland County Facilities Committee Consulted with County Attorney About the Project and Three Bids Which Were All Over-Budget. According to the [Fayetteville Observer](#), "the lowest bid to renovate the Cumberland County Courthouse plaza and parking lot is about \$500,000 over budget. The low bidder was Fayetteville City Councilman Wesley Meredith, who owns Cardinal Landscaping Inc. His bid totaled about \$3.1 million. On Tuesday, the county's Facilities Committee met in closed session to consult with County Attorney Grainger Barrett about the project and the three bids, which were opened July 12. The other two bids, both from out of town, were \$3.9 million from Paul Howard Construction of Greensboro and \$3.3 million from ValleyCrest Cos., which is headquartered in Calabasas, Calif. County Engineer Bob Stanger and Jeff Reitzel, a professional engineer with Moorman, Kizer & Reitzel, which designed the proposed plaza and parking lot renovations, joined the committee in the closed session. In open session, committee members, without discussion, voted 3-0 to defer action on the three bids." [[Fayetteville Observer](#), 8/15/07]

Meredith's Firm's Bid was Accepted After Engineers Re-Examined Design and Found that 2006 Estimate was Unrealistically Low. According to the [Fayetteville Observer](#), "A Fayetteville city councilman's company is awarded the contract for renovations at the Cumberland County Courthouse plaza. What happened: The committee voted 3-0 Tuesday to accept a bid by Cardinal Landscaping, owned by Fayetteville City Councilman Wesley Meredith, to renovate the courthouse plaza and parking lot. Why it matters: The project would include improvements to outside lighting, walkways, drainage and building security. Meredith's bid was almost \$3.2 million, compared to a 2006 budget estimate of about \$2.5 million. Cardinal Landscaping had the lowest bid in August after the county advertised for bids three times. On Tuesday, engineers said they re-examined their design and found that their 2006 estimate of \$2.5 million was out of date and unrealistically low. The committee agreed to reduce the scope of the project by \$280,000, which would reduce Meredith's bid to \$2.9 million. The work will take about a year." [[Fayetteville Observer](#), 9/12/07]

Under State Law, the County Must Accept the Lowest-Bidding Company as Long as it Met Specifications for the Project and was Capable of Doing the Work. According to the [Fayetteville Observer](#), "Under state law, the county must accept the lowest-bidding company so long as it meets all specifications for the project and is capable of doing the work. David Lawrence, a professor of public law and government at the N.C. Institute of Government, said in an e-mail Tuesday that local officials may consider factors other than price, but they must document why they reject the low bidder. Stanger said all three bids are good until Sept. 1, when the county would have to seek new bids or delay the project until the market changed. Cardinal Landscaping submitted its bid on the county's third request for proposals, Meredith said." [[Fayetteville Observer](#), 8/15/07]

Meredith Said His Company Does General Contracting Work Such as Water and Sewer Lines, Curbs and Site Development. According to the [Fayetteville Observer](#), "Meredith started Cardinal Landscaping 21 years ago with little more than a lawn mower and a pickup. Today, most of what his company does, he said, is general contracting work, such as water and sewer lines, curbs and site development. 'After 21 years, you evolve,' Meredith said. 'To survive you have to adapt.' Meredith, who did not attend the Facilities Committee meeting, said he could not comment about what happened until county officials updated him. After the meeting, Commissioner Billy King, chairman of the Facilities Committee, said the committee had no problem with Cardinal Landscaping, but he declined to say what was discussed in closed session. King said Stanger and County Manager James Martin recommended Cardinal Landscaping." [[Fayetteville Observer](#), 8/15/07]

Cardinal Landscaping Won Contract Even Through it was the Largest and Most Complicated Project the Company Had Undertaken. According to the [Fayetteville Observer](#), "Cardinal Landscaping

won the contract for the renovation, amid concerns about the cost of the project and the company's ability to handle it. Officials thought the project could be done for as little as \$1.8 million. Cardinal Landscaping's \$3.2 million bid was the lowest quote received by county officials. Meredith, a retired Army sergeant who served as a combat engineer with the 82nd Airborne Division, founded Cardinal Landscaping in the 1980s. By September 2007, however, Cardinal Landscaping had yet to manage a project of the size and complexity of the courthouse renovation when commissioners gave Meredith the contract, according to county records. Meredith said Cardinal Landscaping has held a state general contractor's license for about six years. But he said the plaza renovation was the most complicated project it has undertaken. 'It is the most intricate,' Meredith said, 'the project with the most moving parts.' Nevertheless, the project engineer, Moorman, Kizer & Reitzel Inc., told county officials that Cardinal Landscaping was up to the job. Jeffrey B. Reitzel, a principal with the Fayetteville-based firm, didn't return a call seeking comment." [Fayetteville Observer, 8/2/09]

Meredith's company did an "unacceptable" job and had to redo work several times, delaying the project.

As of August 2008, Cardinal Landscaping was Redoing Entrances and Remaking the Rear Parking Lot; Meredith Blamed Weather and Suppliers for Delays. According to the *Fayetteville Observer*, "Though it's open to the public, the front plaza isn't finished. Benches still have to be installed, and the entrance area of the Law Enforcement Center is under construction. Cardinal Landscaping, which built the new plaza, is redoing the entrances and remaking the rear parking lot, which, to the dismay of hundreds of courthouse employees, has been partly fenced off, shut down and torn up. The county has bought several parking lots in the vicinity to ease the parking crunch... The work is supposed to be finished Sept. 18. Cardinal Landscaping has gotten behind, said owner Wesley Meredith, because of weather and supplier delays. But he said he is confident he'll have most of it finished on time. Stanger, the county engineer, said he expects the project to be finished in mid November." [Fayetteville Observer, 8/7/08]

Cardinal Landscaping Demolished and Re-Laid a Concrete Plaza Because County Officials Said the Concrete Finish Done by a Subcontractor was Unacceptable. According to the *Fayetteville Observer*, "Contractor Wesley Meredith on Monday began demolishing the new concrete plaza at the Cumberland County Courthouse. Meredith, president of Cardinal Landscaping Inc., is having to replace the year-old plaza because county officials said the concrete finish done by one of his subcontractors was unacceptable. Cardinal Landscaping won the \$3.2 million contract in 2007 to renovate the plaza and a parking lot." [Fayetteville Observer, 10/13/09]

Sellers Concrete Finishing Failed to Replicate the Proper Color and Impressions Were Left in the Concrete. According to the *Fayetteville Observer*, "For the plaza, the subcontractor — Sellers Concrete Finishing of Fayetteville — was supposed to reproduce the color or surface texture of a pre-construction sample. Instead of a beige shade matching the courthouse exterior, the plaza concrete turned out closer to stark white, blinding people exiting the building on sunny days. County officials also noted some impressions were left in the concrete by finishers who placed boards over wet concrete while they worked. Meredith said Sellers tried smoothing out the knee-board impressions by grinding, sandblasting and other techniques. 'None of those worked,' said Meredith, who is also Fayetteville's mayor pro tem. So Cardinal Landscaping is starting over." [Fayetteville Observer, 10/13/09]

Efforts to Fix the Color and Sheen from Blinding on Sunny Days Made the Problem Worse; Concrete is Slick and Hazardous on Rainy Days. According to the *Fayetteville Observer*, "But so far on the plaza, Sellers Concrete Finishing cannot replicate the color and surface texture of a pre-construction sample panel that the Meredith subcontractor showed county officials. County Engineer Robert N. Stanger said he is mystified. 'We didn't tell the contractor to do something he couldn't do,' Stanger said. 'He demonstrated to us, 'Here's a finish that I can provide.'" Instead of a beige shade matching the courthouse exterior, the plaza cement turned out closer to stark white. Visitors exiting the courthouse on cloudless days can be blinded by sunlight reflected off the plaza. Meredith said Sellers

Concrete Finishing initially told county officials the color issue would correct itself in six or eight months. That hasn't happened, he said. Stanger said the contractors have tried acid-staining and grinding the concrete to get rid of the sheen. If anything, Stanger said, the attempted fixes have made the problem worse. The concrete is now so slick it could be hazardous on rainy days, when puddles form on the plaza." [Fayetteville Observer, 8/2/09]

Adjoining Area was Sealed and Resealed Improperly Three Times Causing Cracks. According to the Fayetteville Observer, "County officials had other problems with the courthouse renovation, according to records of meetings on the construction's progress. The records show county officials complained about 'knee board' marks left in concrete slabs. The impressions came from boards put down across freshly set slabs so workers could kneel to smooth other cement. The work around the adjoining Law Enforcement Center also was faulted. 'The cracks in the asphalt along the driveway behind the LEC that were initially sealed improperly, and subsequently, resealed improperly by a second contractor,' read the minutes of a January meeting, 'have been resealed.' County officials instructed Cardinal Landscaping to help engineer MKR mark on a drawing 'the area where these cracks, which have now been sealed a total of three times, are located.' There is a one-year warranty on the work of Cardinal Landscaping and the subcontractors, Meredith said. But the bright glare from the overly smooth courthouse plaza remains a sticking point. 'It's a problem for the contractor,' Stanger said. 'It's an inconvenience for us. We're going to get what we paid for, one way or the other.'" [Fayetteville Observer, 8/2/09]

Meredith Hired Another Subcontractor to Fix the Plaza at a \$39K Cost to His Company; Re-Do Would Take Three Weeks (November 2009). According to the Fayetteville Observer, "Meredith hired Greensboro-based Paul Howard Construction Co. Inc. to fix the plaza. Meredith said he has reached a settlement with Sellers, which won't be paid for the original plaza work. Meredith is paying Howard about \$39,000 for the do-over. Meredith said the repairs won't cost county taxpayers any more than the original construction cost. To reduce courthouse disruptions, Howard employees will work through the night for a week to take up the flawed concrete. About 5,000 square feet of faulty concrete will be cut into 3-foot squares with a radial saw, Meredith said. Then, a pin will be inserted into the center of each square and the concrete block will be pulled up, he said. Pouring a new concrete plaza and finishing the surface should take another two weeks. Meredith said his second attempt at constructing the plaza should be done by early November." [Fayetteville Observer, 10/13/09]

Project was Supposed to Wrap Up in September 2008. According to the Fayetteville Observer, "But county officials are running out of patience. The project consisted of installing new drainage, lighting and landscaping as part of improving security around the plaza on the Dick Street side of the courthouse. A parking lot at the rear of the building off South Cool Spring Street also was redesigned and repaired. Construction began in December 2007 and was supposed to wrap up last September, according to county records. Meredith said county officials finally accepted all of his work on July 15. Everything, that is, except the plaza concrete." [Fayetteville Observer, 8/2/09]

Meredith Knew First Subcontractor had No Experience with New Project and Said in Hindsight He Should have Hired a Subcontractor with More Experience to do the Finishing. According to the Fayetteville Observer, "The problems with the plaza stemmed from a relatively new concrete-finishing compound that W.R. Grace & Co.'s construction products division sold to Sellers, according to Meredith. The compound, called Top-Cast, doesn't require sandblasting to finish the concrete. 'Grace had recommended we use the Top-Cast product because it was less abrasive,' Meredith said. 'When you sandblast, sand goes all over everywhere, on your windows and all.' But Meredith said Sellers had no experience using Top-Cast. In hindsight, Meredith said, he should have hired a factory representative or a subcontractor with more Top-Cast experience to do the finishing. 'I think it was just a learning process,' said Meredith. Meredith said he is confident that Howard will do a better job. The company has successfully used Top-Cast on a Raleigh project, he said. Cardinal Landscaping has yet to bill the county for the plaza work, Meredith said." [Fayetteville Observer, 10/13/09]