

Blust Holds Out for Hearing on Old WHS Demolition

Written by Gary Childers

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The agenda moved smoothly during the Watauga County Commissioners meeting Tuesday evening until they came to a presentation of the bids for the demolition of the old high school. County maintenance director, Robert Marsh, shared that 15 companies had visited the property with 12 submitting bids for its demolition. The low bid of \$328,000 was submitted by NEO Corporation from Canton, NC. Mr. Marsh shared that NEO could be ready to begin the demolition process as soon as June. At that point Commissioner David Blust asked when a public hearing had been scheduled on the matter of the demolition of the old high school and was informed that one had not been scheduled. From that a vigorous discussion ensued among the Commissioners questioning the need for a public hearing, Commissioner Jim Deal, "What is the benefit of a public hearing? Are we going to find information that we don't already know?" David Blust, "I would like to hear from the citizens. I've heard from so--and I'm not talking two or three--I've heard from a lot of folks who have something to say." Vince Gable, "I'm sure there's some concern on both sides. The main thing is the liability we're looking at and the fact that, when this building is demolished, this property is, I think, going to be more valuable to us. I haven't heard any negatives." But Blust insisted, saying, "Well, I want to go on record saying I want the public to be able to come before us and talk about it." In the end, after pointed discussion and good natured barbs Commissioner Blust persevered and the other Commissioners agreed to approve a public hearing on the demolition of the old high school on June 5th at 8:00 am.