

The Watauga County budget for 2013-14 is on the table, and was on the conference room table late yesterday afternoon and into the evening. County Manager Deron Geouque presented a brief at Tuesday's commission meeting, outlining a budget with no tax increase, but a number of increases for departments, agencies—and county employees. The county commissioners sat down with the Watauga County Board of Education and school staff, and Assistant Superintendent David Fonseca talked about major changes and challenges for the school year, including implementation of a new core curriculum. Fonseca said that a new curriculum without new funding is creating a number of issues, especially how to fund the training. Watauga Commission Chair Nathan Miller had questions about the school's \$3 million fund balance, and Fonseca explained that the system will have to use some of that, but the amount is the recommended as a safety net for the schools. Sheriff Len Hagaman told of the challenges his office is facing with rising requirements and rising costs, asking for funding beyond Geouque's recommendation. The budget will face the public hearing before adoption, which has to come before June 30th.