

## Watauga Commission Airs Smoky Mountain Issues

Written by Steve Frank

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Watauga County Commissioners expressed issues with two items on their agenda regarding Smoky Mountain Center—but not related to the presentation on the agenda. Smoky Mountain's audit was on the agenda, but slow reimbursement and a move to cut local boards of commission out of board representation came forward. First, Watauga Commission chair Nathan Miller asked the Smoky representative to take his concerns about slow reimbursement—a problem Miller has seen before, “Part of New River Behavioral Health Care's problem...was the slow payment and problems with payments from Smoky Mountain.” He went on to say that now on the board of Appalachian Regional Healthcare, he's seeing the same problem, “They're reporting slow payment and payment problems with Smoky Mountain to the tune of about a million dollars.” He asked the Smoky representative to take the concerns back to the office and seek a solution. Miller said he is also seeing a move to remove commissioners from the larger board of Smoky, “the LME's, their lobbyist down in Raleigh, was pushing to get the counties off the board.” The boards rep to Smoky, Billy Kennedy, said he sees conflicts from the Smoky administration, “The executive director thinks that they're boss, but really they're working at the direction of the board.” The board will take a resolution to the state about the board, and promised to be watching Medicaid reimbursements from Smoky as they have a new Medicaid waiver to administer.