

KAFITZ RESIGNS

Written by Steve Frank
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The Kafitz era with the Watauga County Schools is soon to be past—but the cost for his short tenure will continue for nearly another year and a half. In a press release late yesterday afternoon from the Watauga Board of Education, it was announced that Dr. David Kafitz and the Watauga County Board of Education have mutually agreed to a buy-out of his contract as Superintendent. The release says the Board will pay Dr. Kafitz's salary and benefits for seventeen (17) of the thirty nine (39) months remaining on his contract in the amount of \$186,110.

Evidence of issues with Kafitz surfaced publically in a school board meeting around Christmas when board member Barbara Kinsey made a somewhat cryptic public statement, apparently responding to complaints about issues within the school system. Then Kafitz came under fire early this year when an incident came to light as an apparently outraged superintendent took issue with a discount on his bill at the Mellow Mushroom on King Street in Boone using a band booster card. With that made public, an incident from November surfaced in which board of elections supervisor Jane Hodges recounted being insulted and threatened by Kafitz with the loss of her job over an election law violation at Green Valley School during the general election. The Board of Education has been in negotiations with Kafitz since then to arrange his departure, with over three years left on his initial contract with the county schools.

As stated in the press release, "By law, state funds may not be used as severance pay. The amount will be paid from the school system's unencumbered local fund balance." State law does strictly prohibit funds budgeted to be used for such purposes, to the point that the State Board of Education wants to see exactly where funds to pay for such a separation come from. In the release, Dr. Kafitz has agreed to assist with transition, working in the office during the month of April, and then will take vacation leave during the month of May. The release concludes with, "Dr. Kafitz and the Board agree that this arrangement is in the best interest of all parties and the buy-out shall not be construed as an admission of any guilt or wrongdoing of any kind by either side. His last official day as an employee will be May 31, 2013. Both parties wish each other well in the future. Neither party will comment beyond this joint press release."