

Contentions Raised Over Old WHS Site

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A contentious point raised at the Tuesday night Boone Chamber candidates forum came after comments of mayoral candidate Andy Ball, claiming that the Boone Town Council made concessions exempting the Watauga High property from new affordable housing rules being passed by the town during negotiations on what was then an \$18 million bid for the property. Ball said, "You talk about cooperation, you really need to look at the situation and what happened. We marked 150,000 gallons of water per day for the old High School site, revised the draft affordable housing ordinance to exempt the property." But in his next round of answers, Mark Templeton, whose family business had been high bidder in the early rounds, took direct issue with Ball's assertion, "The high school was not exempt from the affordable housing task force regulations." He went on to say, "One of the town council members urged the Affordable Housing Task Force to pass these regulations, because 'the high school is under contract and we need to get something done.'" The comments that Templeton referred to came out of the affordable housing taskforce meeting October 24th of last year, with council member Lynn Mason commenting, "You know again with the upcoming sale of the high school property, I mean I just think we've really got to get this in place but it goes hand in hand with the housing study." The new standards were passed in February, weeks before the study the council commissioned was available, a point made by councilman Alan Scherlen in being the lone vote against the regulations. Andy Ball pointed to minutes of the February 19th meeting of the Boone Town Council in which changes were adopted with the intent to allow the high school property sale to go through, but County Manager Deron Geouque said that the bidder at the time nor any of the subsequent bidders on the property found the ordinance workable for their projects.