

Boone Council, Watauga Commission Agree

Written by Steve Frank

Thursday, 21 November 2013 08:46

There were some uncomfortable moments getting the conversation started as the Watauga County Commission ventured to the Boone Town Council chamber for a face-to-face meeting taking on one of the many points of contention that have caused conflicts between the boards—that of representation on the Boone Planning Board of residents from the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction, or ETJ. But within a few minutes, the discussion—and the disagreements—were off and rolling, Watauga Commission chair Nathan Miller, “We appointed five people for six slots. Now I can name the people. Y’all only submitted two names. So in your ordinance, it says if we deny yours, we have to hold a public hearing. It doesn’t say if we appoint for ones that you don’t supply names we have to hold a public hearing. So in my opinion y’all didn’t follow your own ordinance by requiring us to have a public hearing.” That comment followed up by commissioner Perry Yates, “And the other thing that bothers me with that answer is that you say ‘conflict of interest.’ Everybody in this room has opinions and we’re all not going to see alike. Do you vet people who don’t agree with your policies and not take them. What do you consider a conflict of interest?” For a time, it appeared the discussion would be county attorney verses town attorney, but the boards took back the discussion. Eventually, after nearly two hours of discussion, disagreements, and diatribe, there was some agreement—and a process worked out between the boards and their staff members. Some of the points—that Watauga will take any number of applicants from the town—they had required at least two; that the town and county will communicate on upcoming vacancies and set a policy to deal with unexpected vacancies, and that the town will adopt a process for the county more in line with their own. That plan that will be put on the table tonight before the Boone Town Council, and at that point, we’ll find whether there will really be a resolution both sides can abide with.