Phil Templeton, high bidder for the old Watauga High property, says that the town is going in the wrong direction with a task force drawing wrong conclusions about how to regulate housing for students. Templeton says that the proposals from the Affordable Housing Task Force will "significantly impact the development of student housing, including the project planned for a portion of the old Watauga High School property. This, along with restricting the grading necessary to develop the site, would lessen the value of that property and could jeopardize the pending sale." After the lengthy process the county took to reach a buyer, he said, "The loss of the proceeds from that sale would be very detrimental to the taxpayers of Watauga County."
His Letter:
To: Mayor Loretta Clawson and members of the Boone Town Council
From: Phil Templeton
There are a number of houses available for families and others to purchase or rent in town and the surrounding areas. In the meantime, the enrollment at ASU continues to increase as does the need for student housing. Students rent attic rooms, basements, spare bedrooms or other space often located in single-family neighborhoods. This leads to complaints over noise, parking, etc. being referred to local law enforcement.
The aim of the Affordable Housing Task Force appointed by the Boone Town Council was "to curb the proliferation of three and four bedroom student housing projects in town and create more housing stock suitable for families and the work force". (Three and four bedroom apartments have proven to be popular with students due to the efficiency of design, the privacy afforded each tenant and the shared utility costs which are frequently included in the rental.)
To curb the proliferation of three and four bedroom student housing, the Affordable Housing Task force is recommending that new student housing projects:

1. have a master bedroom 25% larger than the other bedrooms,
2. have a limit of two parking places per apartment unit,
3. have no single unit type which comprises more than 50% of the total units,
4. have no more than two unrelated students occupying the same apartment,
5. have a limit on the ratio of bathrooms to bedrooms,
6. have garages available for 25% of the apartments, and
7. have a building height limited to 50 feet.

Passing these proposed regulations will be counter productive to the goal of advancing affordable housing for families, the work force or students. Development costs will increase and will discourage the construction of new housing. Competition will be reduced and tenants will pay higher rental rates. Whether or not students sharing an apartment are related shouldn't be a requirement for permitted occupancy of student housing or for non-student housing units. Limiting any unit type to 50% of the total units built would serve no purpose. Garages are a luxury that few students can afford and building heights should be flexible in order to provide reasonable density and eliminate urban development sprawl.
The development of more remote projects will produce increased traffic on major highways and the Town of Boone will lose millions of dollars in potential property tax revenue. More student housing sites should be provided close to campus with water, sewer and other utilities available.
The sites should be located where residential neighborhoods will not be disturbed by the activities normally associated with student housing complexes.
The prospect of an over supply of student housing shouldn't be a concern for the task force. As

new student housing is built, older, sub standard units will be upgraded, converted to another use or demolished. The forces of market supply and demand will come into play just as it will when too many hamburger or pizza shops are built in Boone.

In addition to the points made above, if these proposed regulations are passed, they will significantly impact the development of student housing, including the project planned for a portion of the old Watauga High School property. This, along with restricting the grading necessary to develop the site, would lessen the value of that property and could jeopardize the pending sale. The loss of the proceeds from that sale would be very detrimental to the taxpayers of Watauga County.