

Boone Council Hears Money Requests

Written by Gary Childers
Friday, 17 June 2011 08:57

Boone Town Council's Chambers were at full seating capacity for the public hearing on funding for Outside Agencies Thursday evening. Approximately eighteen people spoke before Town Council to express either thanks or disappointment concerning proposed funding levels for their respective agencies.

The Community Clinic and Hospitality House each had a representative present to thank the Council for their proposed funding. Mt. Alliance was well represented by Watauga High School student Sunny Fotta who thanked the Council for continuing their funding, by another student who read a letter of appreciation from a Mountain Alliance participant, and its advisory committee chairperson Tammy Jolly. Agencies with the largest contingencies present were the Public Library and Watauga Arts Council.

Five people spoke on behalf of the Public Library with the consistent theme being thanking the Council for funding \$11,000 of their \$15,000 request, but also expressing disappointment for not receiving their full request. County Librarian, Monica Caruso, and Children's librarian, Judith Winecoff, along with Library Board member, Audrey Hartley, expressed concern that the reduced funding could result in reduced programs and materials for the community; especially impacting younger readers who benefit from programs such as "Reading and Rolling", "Summer Slide", and "Raising a Reader". All speakers asked that the Council reconsider and find a way to fund the full \$15,000.

The Watauga County Arts Council had the largest number of people speaking on its behalf. This group was most adamant with its concerns since the Council's recommendation was to provide "none" of the requested \$7000 funding to the Arts Council for the coming year. Eight individuals spoke expressing either concern, disappointment, confusion, encouragement to the Council to reconsider its recommendation, or some combination of all the aforementioned. Mike Wise, president of the Arts Council, began the comments by pointing out many of the benefits an active Arts Council provides the citizens of Boone and the county claiming the Town gets a real bargain from all it gains with the \$7000 requested dollars. Most of the other speakers reinforced the belief that the funding would positively impact the culture, economy, and quality of living in the town and county. JoAnn Hallmark spoke to the importance of funds from the town helping the Arts Council secure matching grants from the state Arts Council. She also shared that Watauga's Arts Council received the 7th highest rating from the North Carolina Arts Council only falling behind the larger metropolitan communities in the state. Frequently applause broke out following the speakers' comments as a show of support from those who came but chose not to speak publicly.