

Rare 5pm Friday Session Planned Over New River BHC

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While county commissioners in four of the five counties served by New River Behavioral Health Care adopted new provisions to the documents that created New River—documents now modified to shut it down—Watauga Commissioners emerged from their Tuesday morning meeting with some modifications to the plan—changes that have stalled the process of a system-wide agreement on a new board for New River. Late yesterday, the Watauga Commissioners announced a rare 5pm Friday meeting to take up the matter again. Watauga Commission chair Nathan Miller expressed concerns after their meeting Tuesday about the nearly million dollar price of payroll after the final Medicaid payment to New River two days ago—those payments are now cut off with the on-going investigation into financial matters. Watauga commissioners struck a section that would guarantee all New River jobs through the November 15th closing, as well as a section stating "the goal of an orderly transition to a new service provider," from the new board's task. The figure of some \$900,000 plus has been put forward to pay employees through October, and Wilkes commissioners told the Wilkes Journal-Patriot they were concerned over the pro-rata cost to Wilkes would be too high for them. Just what will come of the rare Friday afternoon session remains to be seen. Meanwhile, auditors continue to pour over New River's books, that while Zach Henderson, Chair of the New River Service Authority, is asking auditors search their bookkeeping for any evidence of "embezzlement or financial malfeasance of funds."