

The Watauga County Commissioners and School Board held a joint meeting last night to discuss the status of the new Watauga High School. Architect Jennifer Sisak reported on several studies currently underway on the property. Soil Borings have been done and are being assessed. Wetlands have been identified and marked for protection. The only endangered species associated with the property is the bog turtle, but no actual turtles have been observed on the property. Sisak confirmed that there is a cemetery on the site, but a Graveyard Study has not located actual graves to date. Once located, graves will be disinterred and moved to another site. A Cultural Resource study is underway to reveal any significant archeological findings, and the group has received proposals from those hoping to do a traffic study. Once a firm is selected, they will commence a study to determine the impact of school traffic on surrounding areas. These studies, initial site planning and building design are expected to take about 11 months. Commissioner Jim Deal said they hope to begin construction in late summer, 2007.

The group is planning for an opening date of the fall of 2010. That means that current 8th graders will be the first students to attend a graduation ceremony at the new school. Tomorrow - news on the approved site plan and construction at-risk management company.