

Commissioners: 'No' To Sales Tax Change

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Boone Mayor Andy Ball addressed the Watauga Commission last night in an attempt to sway the board to change sales tax distribution in the county from ad valorem back to per capita, giving the town of Boone. Ball told of the impact of the \$2 million loss in revenue to the town, which had to use reserve funds to balance the current year's budget. County commissioners took the opportunity to express their dismay over town action over the past two years that cost the county the \$19 million sale of the old Watauga High site—commission chair Nathan Miller expressing to Ball his frustrations that Ball refused meetings with Miller a year ago over the issues, and now is asking for a change at the last minute. Then the issue was raised by commissioner John Welch about the deal Miller worked out in changing the sales tax formula last year with the other three municipalities who would get a windfall from the tax change, Miller asking for some of that windfall back to the county to help fund fire departments, Welch saying that the towns could renig on the deal and leave the county holding the bag. Then representatives of Blowing Rock, Beech Mountain and Seven Devils spoke to ask for ad valorem to stay the distribution method, and a motion by Welch to change back, seconded by Billy Kennedy, failed 2 to 3. No motion was needed to leave the sales tax the same, and it will be left ad valorem for another year.