

County Commission Asks for Probe of Todd Fire

Written by Steve Frank
Thursday, 08 May 2014 15:54

The Watauga County Commission, following an executive session last night, voted to ask for an investigation into expenditures at the Todd Volunteer Fire Department, and the Watauga Sheriff's Department began that probe this morning. Commission chair Nathan Miller said that audits of all the county's fire companies turned up small bookkeeping issues, but that larger questions were raised about payments from the Todd Fire Department, leading to a suspension of funds for the department until documents were turned over to the county. The county action came after action of the county Fire Commission, according to Miller, "The fire commission passed a resolution... to withhold the money from Todd due to discrepancies." And he said, "So to clear the air...last night the county commissioners voted 5 to 0 to instruct the county manager to request the Watauga County sheriff's department to look into the financial dealings of the Todd fire Department." Miller says that the Todd board reports that they have approved all of the expenditures, and he replied that it was a good thing for the probe to take place as nothing will be found and it will vindicate them. I asked Miller how the Watauga Sheriff's Office might proceed, and he said they are qualified to handle financial crimes, but that they have the option of calling in the SBI for help. I asked Miller that if the investigation shows that expenditures broke any law, what action might be taken by the county, and he said in an extreme circumstance, the county can dissolve the fire department, but that causes its own problems for fire coverage and insurance rates.