

County Budget Hearing Draws Crowd

Written by Steve Frank

Wednesday, 21 May 2014 07:58

Money issues for the Watauga County Commissioners to ponder were placed before them in their budget hearing last night, hearing from some agencies who received some county funds and a number of others who not only did not receive county funds, but have had Boone funds cut blamed on county action. Marjorie McKinney said, "I was absolutely appalled to see that there was no support for Hospitality House," that support not in the budget for the fourth year in a row; Kathy Parham from The Children's Playhouse said, "last week you voted to cut Watauga County's investment in the young children and families served by the Children's Playhouse to zero," and "Due to the change in the sales tax distribution you implemented last year, the Town of Boone also no longer invests \$4000 in the Children's Playhouse nor funds any nonprofit." Community Care Clinic representative Butch Butler said, "We've dealt with a complete loss of support from the town, and funding from the county is substantial to us, but it's still a substantial reduction from where we used to be." Joseph Miller of High Country Crimestoppers asked for \$500 annually for 'Tipsoft' Software, a new Crimestoppers tool that will cost the local organization \$1200 per year, saying the board would ask the same funding from Avery County. From the board of the Appalachian Theater, John Cooper said of county support for the theater, still at zero, "You would want that as your legacy of helping that to happen. It will be an amazing thing for this community." Lynn Mason gave a greater overview to commissioners of not-for-profit agencies in Watauga, saying "We are saving the county money by providing services that the county might otherwise have to provide. Non profits are businesses in our community that provide jobs like other businesses, spend money in our community, and improve the quality of life for all of us." Susan Poorman told of the plight of some Watauga County library employees, with children's librarians making something over \$17,000 in annual salaries, an amount she pointed out was below the poverty level for a family of four. The commissioners did vote to restore \$50,000 for a camp at Hardin Park School in the only budget action taken at last night's meeting, drawing praise from Delora Hodges, representing the Board of Education. The county 2014-15 \$57 million budget is in its final stages, with adoption to come in June.