

Soucek ETJ Bill Becomes Law in 66 to 46 Vote

Written by Steve Frank

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State Senator Dan Soucek's bill to strip Boone of its powers of extraterritorial jurisdiction, rejected late Monday, was revived and passed in the House Government Committee Tuesday, is now law, passing the NC House this afternoon 66 to 46. Boone Mayor Andy Ball said the reconsideration came at the insistence of Representative Jonathan Jordan, the area's representative from Ashe, while others called the reconsideration a procedural trick. With the 20-vote victory for Soucek, the bill becomes law as local bills do not require the Governor's signature. But there was debate in the House before passage, representative Brawley from Iredell reading one of the many emails he received in opposition, saying he received only two in support of the bill. And even on the Republican side, Rep. Edgar Starnes, a Caldwell Republican who was not on the committee, attended Monday's committee meeting and spoke against the bill, warning that it would ultimately hurt existing property values. Starnes said, "This would be the only time in the history of North Carolina that we have removed a town's ETJ authority," and he called it, "A dangerous precedent." Mayor Andy Ball, found himself and the Boone Town Council facing a new reality. He issued a statement yesterday saying "Senator Soucek has yet to provide an example to justify his inflammatory comments against the Town of Boone, or explain his failure to notify the Town of Boone before introducing it, allowing the Council an opportunity to hear and address any concerns." He continued, "Council will now be forced to immediately reconsider all water policies in light of this bill becoming law, and consider whether water can continue to be provided to Boone ETJ properties or any unincorporated areas of the county. We are awaiting a detailed legal opinion on this bill's impact on residents of the Boone ETJ, and will continue to work to protect these property owners as we are able." Senator Soucek had his own comments for Boone, saying, "I still am flabbergasted at how mean and abusive the Town of Boone is. (Mayor) Andy Ball is today threatening to try to stop people's water now. It looks petty and vindictive and is an illustration of my entire experience with them. So when a government is that tyrannical, and abusing power so badly, sometimes action needs to be taken, and I think this was the case." More reaction of Senator Soucek and the Town of Boone on our news broadcasts beginning tomorrow at 6am on High Country Radio.