

New NRBHC Board in Place; Shut Down Planning Next

Written by Steve Frank
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Now, as of late Friday afternoon, county commissioners in all of the five counties served by New River Behavioral Health Care adopted new provisions to the documents that created New River—documents now modified to shut it down. Watauga Commissioners found their meeting room full

—seats occupied by mostly New River employees and supporters—who wanted to speak, who wanted some assurance that something was being done. But while there was no public comment included on the agenda, commissioners assured those gathered that they are working toward a solution that will save some jobs. But the cost of the shut-down caused Watauga Commissioners to modify three areas of the five-county agreement at their meeting last Tuesday, causing all the commissions involved to reevaluate their votes, then vote again. Watauga Commission chair Nathan Miller expressed concerns about the nearly million dollar price of payroll—some \$900,000 estimated to pay employees just through October. Wilkes commissioners told the Wilkes Journal-Patriot they were concerned over the pro-rata cost to Wilkes would be too high for them. Watauga commissioners in fact struck the section of the agreement that would guarantee all New River jobs through the November 15th closing, as well as a section stating "the goal of an orderly transition to a new service provider," from the new board's task. According to Miller, the other counties agreed, and Watauga commissioners made only minor changes before voting 4-0 for them.