

Kinsey; Shot Across the Bow at Watauga Schools

Written by Gary Childers

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In an unusual action during the Watauga Board of Education meeting Monday night, newly elected Board member, Barbara Kinsey, came to the podium to share a prepared statement with the audience, saying “All of us have begun to hear rumors, receive emails, letters, have telephone conversations, and direct one-to-one conversations with Watauga County educators and citizens. These communications concerning problems or perceived problems—every single one of us had promised that transparency would be a major priority if we were elected. I am here then to bring all these issues to light and to let all of you know who have corresponded with us that we hear you.”

Kinsey stated the problems they had heard about were that;

- if teachers disagreed with administrators about teaching strategies they were fearful for their jobs if they spoke up,
- the elementary schools should not each have unique cultures but all be doing the same thing at the same time,
- technology was being implemented before county infrastructure could allow its use in all homes,
- and educators were being spoken down to by administrators instead of seeking collegial working relationships.

Mrs. Kinsey closed by sharing an example of what she believed the relationship of the central administration and BOE should be with the students and teachers. The example was the “Old Well” on the campus of UNC Chapel Hill. She referred to the dome of the well as representing the students and their families which she stated was, “the purpose for us being here”. She described the columns supporting the dome as the teachers and principals in the schools. She concluded her example by saying the floor and foundation are the Board of Education, superintendent, and central administration providing support for the top. This last example reinforced her earlier comments when she stated that Watauga County schools had moved away from administrators speaking down to educators decades ago and had learned that greater success was achieved working side by side. Mrs. Kinsey shared that she and the other Board members will be encouraging this method of doing business in the Watauga County School system. No comment was made by the superintendent or other central administration following her statements.