An informal complaint prepared by Waynesville area resident Monroe Miller and sent to Beth Wood, the N.C. Auditor, is unlikely to gain any traction, said a spokesman in the state office.

Miller prepared a 64-page document detailing why he believes the Haywood County 2011 revaluation and the county’s revenue-neutral tax rate calculation are faulty.

The complaint was sent to the five elected county commissioners and County Tax Collector David Francis, and was also sent to the press, and posted on Millers personal website.

Both problems, Miller noted in his letter to Wood, “may rise to the level that personnel from the Office of the State Auditor should investigate”.

Dennis Patterson, spokesperson for the N.C. Office of the State Auditor, said the state policy is never to confirm or deny a complaint or whether an investigation is taking place.

Miller’s complaint about the 2011-12 revenue-neutral tax rate, in a nutshell, is that the overall property values used to calculate the rate are in error and have thus skewed the published tax rate - one that ideally will result in no net gain or loss to the local government entity.

The revenue-neutral tax rate is one county commissioners must calculate prior to setting the tax rate when adopting a new budget using a proscribed formula. The revenue-neutral formula allows for a growth factor and is designed to inform taxpayers whether their county leaders are holding the line on taxes, raising them or lower them. The rate is an informational tool and imposes no obligation for county leaders who must balance a budget and ensure county services they deem necessary are covered.
Miller’s second complaint focuses on the recent property revaluation process, one he alleges has overvalued the lower-priced homes and under-valued the higher priced homes by a margin exceeding 15 percent.

County Leaders discussed the dilemma posed by very low sales numbers at length and even postponed property revaluation for a year to have a larger number of recent sales use in determining the worth of land or buildings.

During discussions about revaluation, the board recognized that the higher volume of sales in the lower-priced home category and fewer higher-dollar home sales would tend to raise values where the sales were brisker.

They ultimately concluded late last year that a 2011 revaluation might catch values at their lowest point before an economic recovery.

By law, commissioners must conduct a revaluation every eight years. The county was in year six, and could have postponed the process.

Miller routinely refuses to make comments on-the-record to news reporters. He has attended almost every public meeting held by the county commissioners for the past several years, prints a newsletter concerning his research on the issues discussed and takes the podium during the public comment portion of the meetings.

The results of his exhaustive research regarding state statues, financial documents and regulatory issues are often included in letters sent to state government or regulatory agencies.

[Editor’s Note: Update. As indicated in my public comments at the Sept. 6th County Commission Meeting [re: http://haywoodtp.net/pubII/110906PublicComments.pdf], “The complaint was submitted to a wide spectrum of agencies, including the Governor, and to my astonishment, the “package” was hand carried by one of those agencies to the desk of a director of an agency that I would have never guessed would be involved. They are currently evaluating it to determine their best course of action.” (So, it looks like there may be “traction” after all.) That agency will be disclosed on a cable television program Monday evening, September 12th, Citizens Speak, Channel 10 in Haywood County].