County budget big topic at meeting

The business of running Macon County is getting more complicated requiring a clear path and milestones every step of the way. On Saturday, commissioners attended a four-hour planning session to outline priorities and to plan for next year and into the future. Though numerous subjects were discussed, with every priority dependent on money, the development and life of the budget was key and discussed at length.

“We need to discuss the budget process, the responsibilities of commission liaisons and a revenue neutral position for 2007-2008 for setting the property tax rate after budgeting,” said Commission Chairman Charlie Leatherman. “We want the appeal process to be over before we set the rate after budgeting.”

Funds needed for schools

With the Macon County Schools budget requiring 40 percent of the total levy by the county, the school system’s needs were a big issue at the commissioners’ planning session Saturday.

Superintendent Dan Brigman briefly outlined immediate and future needs for the school system which includes repairs, renovations and new construction county-wide.

Funding concerns commissioners — especially with new construction costs at the $200 per sq. ft. mark.

Needs versus funding also spawned discussion concerning community versus consolidated schools and real versus perceived student growth in the county.

Instead of spending millions upgrading and repairing Iotla, Cowee and Cullasaja elementary schools and to alleviate crowding and prepare for growth, Brigman proposed combining Iotla, Cowee and Cullasaja into a K-5/6-8 “school-within-a-school.”

“It will cost millions to renovate those schools and bring them up to code. By using the school-within-a-school concept we can save $1.2 to $1.6 million a year in operating expenses,” he said.

The two schools would be...

**See BUDGET page 15**

**Housing talk spawns child care questions**

By Susanna Hearn

Initial exploration into the need for affordable housing in Highlands has raised concerns about the availability and affordability of childcare and shopping.

The Affordable Housing Committee met at Hudson Library on Jan. 26 to discuss information gleaned from three major employers in the Highlands area — the Highlands Police Department, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, and Highlands School.

“In my opinion this is a whole lot bigger than just affordable housing,” said committee member Bill Nellis. “It gets into affordable community issues. If we look just at affordable housing we’re doing it with blinders on.”

According to committee members’ survey of employers 90 percent of candidates are married in a dual income household with the woman usually making the commute to Highlands. The hospital also has a number of single mothers working on its staff adding to the childcare concerns.

Despite the concerns about affordability within the community employers are excited about the project. “One thing we asked the three employers was how many employees and how much their income is,” said Ginger Slaughter. “They even gave us rough numbers for income. They were delighted we were doing this.”

With the majority of employers...

**See BUDGET page 15**

**Lady Highlanders beat Blue Ridge, drop tough game against Rosman**

By Christopher Potts

The Lady Highlanders (13-11, 3-1) soundly defeated the Lady Bobcats of Blue Ridge on Thursday, Jan. 25. Photo by Noel Atherton

The Bobcats get into a rhythm, damping down on the defensive end with 13 steals and 9 total deflections. Katie Bryson capped off a huge rivalry win with a stat-stuffed night, scoring 15 points, 9 rebounds, and 6 assists. Allison Wynn followed with 13 points and 7 assists with Toni Schmitt adding 12 points and 5 assists. Kate-Marie Parks posted 7 points and 7 rebounds. Briebrye...

**See LADY page 10**

**Weekend Weather:**

**Friday:**

- Cloudy
- High: 39°F
- Low: 20°F

**Saturday:**

- Partly Cloudy
- High: 35°F
- Low: 18°F

**Sunday:**

- Sunny
- High: 31°F
- Low: 17°F

**See FUNDS page 3**

Jessica Gagne maintains possession of the ball during the Blue Ridge game, Thursday, Jan. 25.
The time for change has come

If our tax reval is any indication of anyone else's in the county, the value of our home is now 50 percent higher than it was three years ago and all it's gotten is older.

We can all rant and rave over the reval increase, but the truth is, the county is going to get its money and Highlands will continue to supply about 50 percent of the county's property tax revenue.

Like it or not, the county needs the money. I was at the commissioners' planning meeting Saturday and everyone has their hand out to the county these days.

The 2006 tentative property value pending adjustments and appeals is approximately $8.3 billion.

So, maybe its time we rethink the tax process. Since real estate is the engine that runs the county, maybe a transfer tax levied each time a property sells would be a fairer way to tax.

Six counties in the state already do this and it takes the pressure off the general citizenry – especially those who are just trying to get by.

The county sets the transfer tax – say 1/2 percent or one percent of the selling price – and the buyer pays it at the time of the sale. The money goes to the county; the revenue is steady and property taxes could even decrease.

Now I know those who are liquid enough to buy houses often would be against this and I understand why. But why should normal working people who don't want to or can't own more than one home have to pay more in property taxes because they are surrounded by people who drive the real estate market up by buying multiple homes or flipping them?

Remember, the county bases the reval on the current market value of property which keeps rising in Macon County.

Kim Lewicki
Publisher

Let's talk about...the old ways

Creativity is missing in the development of land (and IMPACT fees).

BMPs are just that: Best Management Practices. When it comes to building on steep slopes (or anywhere for that matter), let's put the onus on the developer — it either works or work stops.

Why must the town, county, or state come up with a way “to do it?” You figure it out at your expense and not at the expense of the taxpayer and the environment.

Karen Hawk
Highlands

It's a complex dilemma

Dear Editor,

Don Swanson’s column, “What Happened... (Part 2),” in the Jan. 25 issue of Highlands’ Newspaper tells the tired, neoconservative story that our schools have gone to hell in a hand basket since the good old days.

He says that if only we had God, prayer, and creationism in schools, things would be so much better. The extreme right literature he quotes supports the notion that schools are anti-Christian and when the ACLU, NEA, American Humanist Association, and John Dewey removed prayer, and creationism in schools, things would be so much better. The extreme right literature he quotes supports the notion that schools are anti-Christian and that they should be problem solvers and learn to think.

I wonder if Swanson’s explanation comes from the far right websites and not from experience. I have been privileged to work for many years with thousands of teachers in hundreds of schools and I have never seen anti-God teaching. Many things may be wrong, but schools and teachers are, for the most part, where positive values are taught and modeled.

John Dewey, by the way, was committed to learning that was active; that things may be wrong, but schools and teachers are, for the most part, where positive values are taught and modeled.

Karen Hawk
Highlands

A note to developers

Dear Editor,

We reserve the right to edit submissions. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands’ Newspaper. Please email letters by Monday at 5 p.m. There is a 500-word limit without prior approval.
Sarah Houston

Sarah Houston, age 46, of Highlands, N.C. died Tuesday, January 30, 2007 at a Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. She was born in Franklin, N.C., the daughter of Colie and Carrie Spies Shealy. She was a pharmacy technician and was of the Baptist faith.

She is survived by her husband of 29 years, William “Bill” Houston, two sons, Chris Houston and his wife, Mandy of Highlands, NC and Charlie Houston and his wife, Kristen of Marietta, GA; three sisters, Alene Tuitty of Henderson, NC, Betty Simons of West Columbia, SC and Annie Kirby of Pelion, SC; three brothers, Alvin Shealy of Henderson, NC Robert Shealy of Masses Lake, WA and Tommy Shealy of Columbia, SC. A number of nieces and nephews also survive.

Funeral services will be held Thursday, February 1 at 11 a.m. in the Chapel of Bryant Funeral Home in Highlands with Rev. Walter Wilson and Rev. William Wooten officiating. Burial will be in the Buck Creek Cemetery. Pallbearers will be Michael Houston, Larry Houston, Tommy Houston, Daniel Houston, David Simms, and Jim Simmons. Honorary pallbearers will be Sherry Simms, Madge Munger, Mael Ivestor, Kay Billingly, Nancy Tilson and Frankie Beck.

The family will receive friends Wednesday from 6-8 p.m. at Bryant Funeral Home in Highlands. Bryant Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

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**O B I T U A R Y**

**SCHOOLS continued from page 1**

separate so school populations wouldn’t mingle, but the same administration area, kitchen, cafeteria and media center would be used. “The long-term impact will represent a substantial financial savings,” said Brigman.

To build the school within a school, a 20-30 acre tract of land is needed. Large tracts of relatively flat land are not only hard to come by in Macon County but expensive. “Land is an issue,” said Commissioner Charlie Leatherman.

Commissioner Ronnie Beale said he favored community schools — small schools close to the communities they serve — over consolidated schools but did understand the financial ramifications. He suggested tearing down Iolta Elementary School which sits on about 32 acres and building the consolidated school there.

“We already own the land; we’d have to get water and sewer out there but there are two good roads in and out of the area,” he said.

All the commissioners said they needed information on current and future school population growth to justify a new school.

“I could be persuaded but I need to know more,” said Commissioner Brian McClain. “It makes sense to use property we already own. And I think children get just as good an education on one piece of property than another. But the statistics I’ve seen indicate that in the last 10 years the number of students in Macon County hasn’t increased.”

Sources claiming a decrease cite page 127 of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2006 – an audit report which says that in 1997 Macon County enrollment was 4,085 and in 2006 it was 4,072.

Brigman uses two sources to show enrollment increase – the actual Average Daily Membership (ADM) taken from first month of each year beginning 2001-’02 through 2006-07 and enrollment data taken from the 2006 Statistical Profile Manual, Public Schools of North Carolina, from 2000-’01 through 2005-’06.

“Using the ADM figures, the overall six-year change from 2001-2006 shows an increase of 266 students or a seven percent increase,” he said.

In 2001-02 there were 4,064 students; 2002-03 — 4,111; 2003-04 — 4,113; 2004-05 — 4,147; 2005-06 — 4,252; and 2006-07 — 4,330.

“Using the enrollment data from the statistical profile manual shows an increase of 158 students or a four percent increase,” he said.

In 2000-01 there were 4,280 students; 2001-02 — 4,326; 2002-03 — 4,315; 2003-04 — 4,332; and in 2004-05 — 4,438. Districts don’t have the data from the 2005-06 profile yet.

“During our research, we noted a slight variation in student enrollment when comparing the profile with our actual SMS (Student Information Management System) data, which is typical,” said Brigman. “The term enrollment data is all inclusive of any student who enrolled in our system during the academic year; therefore, these two figures will vary somewhat. Consistency is key as well as source of information to gain a better understanding of district growth,” he said.

Brigman said the current school population is being served with the support of 27 portable classrooms housing greater than 12 percent of the student body.

“In reference to growth predictions, accurately predicting growth in any school system or community is virtually impossible due to the wide range of variables that impact growth,” he said. “The best predictor we have to consider when planning and providing adequate space is historical growth data.”

Commissioner Leatherman, a teacher, reminded the board that education today isn’t like it was 20 years ago. “The state has

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5 lots - 2.15 acres. Plus, 3-bedroom, 2-bath home on two levels. Cathedral ceilings, stone fireplace, spacious decks, two-car garage and gorgeous landscaping. Offered at $12 million.

**Laurel Branch at Skyline**

This beautiful home in Laurel Falls at Skyline, is sophisticated yet charmingly rustic. Bright, open plan with top-line kitchen appliances, dining and great room with cathedral ceilings, open and covered decks, guest quarters, a master suite all on nearly 2 acres with 2-car garage with apartment. Offered at $1,495,000.

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**FORUM continued from page 2**

County officials know of scenarios where part of a transaction is paid in cash and the other part mortgaged but the full transaction isn’t always put on the deed or recorded at the courthouse. County Manager Sam Greenwood said the county can only go by the recorded figures when assessing market value.

The part-cash scenario is great for those who are liquid enough to pay cash for homes for the purposes of keeping their taxes low, but in the end everyone suffers because the county isn’t getting the true fair market value figure.

A way around this practice would be to ask the General Assembly to pass a law requiring closing agents to disclose and record at the courthouse the full price of a transaction – cash paid and the price listed on the deed.

To pay for expanding schools, infrastructure, libraries, recreation facilities, animal shelters, law enforcement, incarceration and increasing operating expenses, the county depends on proceeds from the property tax (among other fees and taxes).

At least a record of the full price of the transaction would mean everyone pays their fair share of property taxes. Silly, I know.

Whether full disclosure or a transfer tax, people will continue to flock to and buy real estate in Macon County. Life in urban and suburban America is getting crazier and crazier. People want what Macon County has to offer and they will continue to pay for it.

Market values in Macon County are only going to increase. Citizens can either request something be done about it or pay the consequences.

If this year’s reveal sent you reaching for a nitroglycerin pill, wait until 2009. It’ll be far worse.

The time for change has come.
Macon County teachers earn National Board Certification

On Jan. 9, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) announced that six Macon County teachers — Simeon Hickman at Highlands, Gary Buchanan at Franklin High, Melissa Cabe at Cullasaja, Josh Johnson at Franklin High, Sarah Lowell at Cartoogechaye, and Rena Sutton at South Macon — have achieved National Board Certification for the 2005-2006 school year.

This brings the Macon County total of National Board Certified teachers to 32.

National Board Certification is the highest credential in the teaching profession, and participation is voluntary. Teachers achieve certification through a rigorous performance-based assessment that takes between one and three years to complete and measures what accomplished teachers and counselors should know and be able to do. Certification is currently available to educators in 27 fields.

Through the NBC assessment process, teachers document their subject matter knowledge; provide evidence that they know how to teach their subjects to students most effectively; and demonstrate their ability to manage and measure student learning.

The NBC certification is reciprocal, which means once earned, a teacher can teach in any state without additional certification. As part of the process, teachers build a portfolio that includes student work samples, assignments.

An independent, multi-year study of North Carolina’s National Board Certified teachers and elementary student performance released in March 2004 found that there is a correlation between certification and improved student performance.

Last week’s decisions and events...from my perspective

Last week, the Board of Commissioners began the approval process of the ETJ zoning map by accepting the R1 areas as R1-ETJ which is identical to R1 in town. We again listened to those who wanted variance from what is proposed in their areas. Even though we heard from many citizens at the public hearing the week before, we continued to have dialogue with them at this board meeting. The big issues involve home-based businesses and areas of commerce which have existed for many years.

Currently, several commercial areas on the map are zoned R4 which does not allow for expansion of the business, but they are grandfathered for use as the business now stands. Their requests are to be zoned B5 which allows permanent use of the land for commercial use and expansion if desired. They have a point in their request because they were there years before residential homes began to build up around them. However, the Planning Board and the Town Board need to further examine home-based businesses and occupations and define precisely what “grandfathering” means in regards to future expansion or rebuilding. It’s likely some changes are due in these ordinances.

The Board is trying to be fair to all those in the ETJ area and protect the community as a whole from unwarranted intrusions. In doing this we are all “locals” regardless of how long we have been here, and we want the best decisions for the community as a whole.

Members of the Town Board have also been in good discussions regarding reorganization of our activities at Town Hall. At the last meeting we voted to begin the search immediately for a new Zoning Administrator and a Code Enforcement Officer. To take care of some work immediately, we have temporarily hired an enforcement officer. He will fill the gap now and possibly even help later with enforcement of stormwater and other zoning regulations. We also are considering revamping the administrative and business area of Town Hall to make it more up to date and efficient. In that way, the Town Administrator,
"The Young Adult Art Program" began a year ago at the Bascom-Louise Gallery in the Hudson Library. A Grassroots Grant from the Arts Council of Macon County made the start-up for this class possible. It was the vision of art teacher, Kathy Evans, to provide a class for adult individuals with disabilities to experience self-expression and artistic creativity through the use of various media. Each student worked independently on his or her art projects, and participated in the student art show last spring.

This fall the class was discussing what it would have to do to sell its artwork. It investigated the potential market and what might sell. From that small "seed" of an idea, "The FAC-tory (FAC, coincidentally is the abbreviation of the new Fine Art Center scheduled for completion in 2008) Girls' cottage industry blossomed.

The class decided that a beautiful, utilitarian, souvenir gift from Highlands would be something that people would buy. An artisan spoon maker donated a variety of cherry wood spoons, forks and salad servers. These are then embellished with hand painted designs, sanded, sealed, signed and dated by the artists. The process of taking a simple idea and bringing it to fruition has been a lot of hard work that has produced some exciting results.

The "FAC-tory Girls" selling hand-painted solid cherry spoons

The ‘FAC-tory’ Girls selling hand-painted solid cherry spoons

Richard Betz, will be freed up to manage more efficiently.

I doubt the board will go to a “Manager-Council” system which allows the manager to do all the hiring and firing. The board wants to maintain this responsibility. This is an ongoing process and because we will be hiring new people, we need more space in our Tiny Town Hall. Soon we will be hiring an architect to design a completely new and efficient Town Hall.

The Board of Directors of the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital has recently made important changes in its bylaws which call for a “Governance Committee” to oversee activities of the board, recommend new board members to the board and be involved in the on going education and appraisal of board members. To that end this committee, which I chair, has recommended and the board has approved three new members of the board. They are:

- Charles Sheehan, a seasonal resident with vast experience on hospital boards in Florida and who has been very supportive of our hospital through good times and bad;
- Griffin Bell, Jr., an attorney, a full time resident of Highlands, chairman of the Highlands Planning Board and board member on the Community Care Clinic;
- Dr. David Register, an anesthesiologist and past chief of staff at the hospital.

Each of these people has a deep desire for the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital to be a vital full-service hospital.

Congratulations to John McCall and Bob Zoeller for being named "Firemen of the Year" at the recent annual Highlands Fire and Rescue Department banquet and award ceremony. I regret I was out of town and unable to attend this wonderful occasion. Both John and Bob retired after 20 years of superior service to the department.

We on the Highlands plateau are fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers in service to their community. They train hard for the important work of protecting the community and each one of these people is to be commended for his dedicated work under the very capable leadership of James "Popcorn" Manley. I understand that the food catered by Nick Moschouris was outstanding.

Two of the FAC-tory Girls at Peak with their wares at Peak Experience.

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... LETTERS continued from page 2

Has OEI decided the issue on drink sales?

Dear Editor,

As a member of the Appearance Commission, I recently participated in the review of a new addition to the Rib Shack. Submitted by OEI, the current owners of the Rib Shack, the proposed addition will be a bar for the restaurant. Wine, beer, and mixed drinks can be served from the bar. Under current North Carolina law, private sports clubs can operate a bar for its members and serve the general public. There is even a provision for operating a bar at a facility that is off the premises of the club. OEI's plan for a bar at the Rib Shack and its current bar at Madison’s, the proposed addition will be a bar for the restaurant. Wine, beer, and mixed drinks can be served from the

Submitted by OEI, the current owners of the Rib Shack, the proposed addition will be a bar for the restaurant. Wine, beer, and mixed drinks can be served from the

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Let's see LETTERS page 8

Wat, there's more! Both the Baptist and Islamic religions frown on having sex standing up, but for different reasons. The Muslims are big on the procreation of children and are trying to outdo the Catholics. Having sex standing up is not conducive to that endeavor. It's a gravity thing. Baptists, on the other hand, frown on having sex standing up because they fear someone might see them and think they're dancing.

Of course, Jeremiah was a one-hump camel and the desert was the beach sand behind the Habboor Grand Resort on the gulf in Dubai. I know you have been wondering, so let me tell you there are no two-hump camels in Dubai. Write that down.

Hello Highlanders, we are in the Middle East and guess what? I have just located 2.4 million friendly Muslims that like Americans...a lot. Of course, they think George Bush is a bonehead with an IQ of 50 but they have forgiven us for electing him...twice. As usual, we traveled on the beaten path and not once did we feel uneasy, not even when we were the only Americans surrounded by thousands of Muslims at a scary place called Global Village.

This country is on fire with growth and western culture. The Muslim people are polite and smile often. There's just a smidgen of middle class and the rest are the very rich and the very poor. Why would the richest Islamic country in the world act so friendly toward westerners? M-O-N-E-Y.

They have already built the tallest hotel and the tallest office building in the world and they're just getting started. This place reeks of money. When Dubai's oil supply runs out in a few years the country will thrive nicely on worldwide tourism and plans are in the works to lure Americans to their soil. The way things are looking, only the rich will make the journey. Maybe I'll publish a pamphlet titled, "How to survive in Dubai on only $800 a day.

Moving on, one of the first things I noticed after arriving here was the incredible resemblance between the Baptist and Islamic religions. For example, both religions frown on drinking, dancing, cheating, watching pornography, general carousing and hanky-panky. Soooo, as you probably already know, when Baptists are so inclined to participate in such activities, they slip off to another town, like

Highlanders sneak off to Atlanta. Well, guess what? Muslims slip off to Dubai for such shenanigans which might include libations, belly dancing clubs, not wearing their dishdasha and Gutra (typical robe and headgear). They may even entertain a Russian hooker (a shanda).

This is scary. If you enjoy a glass of wine with dinner, then you better take a taxi to your restaurant or friend's home. There is zero tolerance for alcohol and any detectable amount gets you an automatic 30 days in the slammer. Deaths resulting from drunk drivers are non-existent. Taxis do a brisk business and fares start at 80 cents. Also, when the cab stops in heavy traffic, the meter stops.

Flipping the bird and using profanity in public will also get you an automatic 30 days in the clink. Instead of cursing, Muslims insinuate each other's mother when they argue. "May the fleas of a thousand camels nest in your mother's moustache" is my favorite. Did Johnny Carson got his material from the Muslims or did the Muslims watch the Johnny Carson show?

Next week I will report on how a retired Miami Beach cop on a fixed pension can afford to frolic in Dubai for several weeks without being thrown out of the country. Don’t miss it.
I hate it when we lose a war.

In his State of the Union address George W. Bush stated that we must not lose the war in Iraq.

Mr. President, what the American people tried to tell you in November, what Congress is trying to tell you now and what I want to say is that we have already lost.

I hate it when we lose a war. I hated the loss in Vietnam and I hate the loss in Iraq. We lost this one a long time ago. It was over before we lit up the sky above Baghdad. We had blown it by the time the first tank crossed the frontier. Long before the Iraqi Army disappeared, only to reapar as insurgents, or we pulled down Saddam’s statue, this was one that got away.

The lesson of Yugoslavia should have been applied to Iraq. The death of strong man Tito and the dissolution of the Soviet Union provided a choice for the citizens who decided that they were not Yugoslavs after all. They formed six nations: Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia. A seventh, Kosovo, may soon gain independence. Our defeat resulted from falling to recognize that success was impossible. We failed to realize that the Iraqis hated us more than the despotic Saddam, and that on their lunatic, zealous fringes, they hate each other almost as much as they do us. We failed to realize that there is no “Iraq” without the presence of a frightening man, strong enough to hold together what the international community caballed together out of peoples with little in common and deep rooted animosities.

We expected to be welcomed as liberators, but were attacked as invaders and occupiers. We expected the Iraqis to celebrate, as one, the overthrow of Saddam. I don’t know where we got that notion. We failed because we thought that if we could get the Iraqis to write a constitution, that document would be a cherished symbol of nationhood. We thought that elections would create a government of nation unity. We thought that if we could get the Iraqis to write a constitution, that document would be a cherished symbol of nationhood. We thought that elections would create a government of nation unity. We thought that if we could get the Iraqis to write a constitution, that document would be a cherished symbol of nationhood. We thought that elections would create a government of nation unity.

The first is the emergence of a Saddam-like leader who could hold the country together in a grip of terror. He would probably be Shia and would punish the Sunni minority in much the same manner as Hussein abused the Shia majority. This is loathsome outcome and one which would render the loss of American lives, American wealth, and American prestige a total waste.

Unfortunately further sacrifice of American military, dollars, and international standing will not change the eventual outcome.

The only other avenue to stability is the appearance of a charismatic, messianic leader who could transcend tribal, ethnic, and religious differences, present a vision of a unified Iraq, and convince the disparate population that economic development, unity, safety, and emphasis on this life are a better option than poverty, instability, constant danger and focus on the next life.

There must be millions of moderate Iraqis who would welcome such a vision, plain people caught between the warring factions, folks who pray at the appointed times and attend mosques regularly, but who want to raise their families in safety with clean water and a dependable supply of electricity, people who want a decent job, education for their kids, and a better life for the next generation. These are people who want to go to the market or answer the door without fear.

I wonder if there are enough of them, Sunni, Shiite and Kurd with the will and the courage to link arms, march the troubled streets of Baghdad, and chant, “We are one!” I wish I could say that I believed it. I wish that I believed that they, and we, could win.
Note: As a little aside to last week's article, how right was I on that officiating debacle during the Duke vs. Clemson game? Oliver Purnell should speak up a little more next time.

This upcoming weekend is the Super Bowl, and like the majority of football crazed fans out there, I will be parked in front of a giant screen TV somewhere with chips, cheese dip, and soda in hand. Usually everyone around me has things backwards: talking during the game while waiting for the commercials (which I hope are better this year because they haven't been the same since Terry Tate showed up) and trying to shush everyone when the Budweiser horses charge across the screen.

I'll be cheering on Peyton Manning and the Colts this year. So what if the Bears are in the NFC, they beat the Saints and I wanted a Saints vs. Colts matchup. Chicago has some good sports teams, and right now they have Rex Grossman, who goes from hero to goat in one play at least twice a game. Sorry Bears fans, you lost my vote after that game.

Enough complaining about the Saints (sound familiar anyone?), onto the topic at hand: Peyton Manning. 6'5, 230 pound quarterback. Laser, rocket arm. He has talent, personality, is funny… you get the picture. There's a reason all of those advertising executives hired Peyton for everything from phones to credit cards. Manning is a national icon right now, compared immensely to Dan Marino. Marino is a Hall of Fame quarterback who owns numerous NFL records that Manning is on pace to break during his career, barring injury. Manning is also considered to be the best quarterback to never have won a Super Bowl, while Peyton's critics proclaim he will never win the big game. Manning and Marino also share the same passion for advertising: Marino peddled Isotoner gloves for years, and now he pushes Nutrisystem meals and Hooters restaurants. Mmmmm, I can smell the irony, and it smells like wings.

Sports in general have these two categories of athletes; those who fill up the stat sheets and those who win championships. Stat stuffers include Alex Rodriguez in baseball, Tracy McGrady and Gilbert Arenas currently in the NBA, and LaDainian Tomlinson along with Manning in the NFL just to name a few. All are considered great players in their own rights, but compared to Michael Jordan, Babe Ruth, Larry Bird, and Tom Brady, they are missing the title of champion of the sport at least once.

Manning has the opportunity to win the big game and truly cement his status as a champion instead of a stat stuffer on the football field. I'll be jumping up and down with glee if he pulls it off, Manning's the type of guy who deserves to win, just like Phil Mickelson did after years of coming up short. There is one bright side to all of this though. Even if he doesn't win… at least we have another year of Manning commercials to look forward to. "Let's go insurance adjusters, let's go!" Questions, comments? Email me at cpottswriting@gmail.com

... LETTERS from page 6

As an active and concerned citizen of Highlands, I wonder if the spirit of the laws governing the sale of alcohol is being compromised? Another provision in the laws regulating the sale of alcohol allows a community to hold a referendum as to whether the people of the community support the sale of liquor by the drink. By OEI operating bars at the Rib Shack and at Madison's, we now have the de facto sale of liquor by the drink in Highlands without the people having any say so about the issue. If OEI was operating a bar on the premises of their private sports club, I would not be raising any concerns; however, this is not the case. The bars in question are in public restaurants within the business district of Highlands. A concern I have is that OEI can continue to build, or acquire other restaurants in the town and open new bars. I also worry about the implications for other restaurant owners in town. Will the other restaurants in town feel pressure to create "sports clubs" in order to offer the same alcoholic beverages?

Several decades ago, the community held a vote on serving wine in restaurants. Are we now at a point where a similar referendum needs to be held concerning liquor by the drink? This letter is not a position in favor or against the liquor by drink issue. I am simply asking that if one business has unilaterally decided that it is appropriate to serve liquor by the drink in Highlands, shouldn't the citizens and community organizations also have a voice as to its appropriateness for the community? I believe an open review and decision on this issue where civic, religious, business, legal and educational stakeholders in the community are able to express their views is in order.

Patrick Taylor
Highlands
The Islamists are coming...

Sometimes I wonder if I'm crazy and everyone else is sane, but then I get over it and reaffirm that the reverse is true.

I have watched for decades as Islamist attacks U.S. interests all over the globe and our officials treat these incidents as offhandedly as mosquito bites. Perhaps it can be rationalized that up until the first attempt to destroy the World Trade Tower, these attacks occurred overseas. Why they should have been ignored until the first attempt to destroy the World Trade Center, these attacks occurred overseas.

According to the best information available, 823 U.S. military personnel died in Iraq in 2006. According to the most recent information available, in 2005, 874 people were murdered in New York state. 883 people were murdered in Florida, and in Los Angeles and environs, over 1,000 were murdered. The ongoing effort to end murder has been all that successful lately, but do we dare to send law enforcement personnel home? Of course not.

So why do many of our brilliant legislators insist that our troops must be withdrawn? Why do others suggest that we need to sit down and seek advice from Iran and Syria? Why did Neville Chamberlain come back from a “talk” with Adolph Hitler proclaiming everlasting peace six months before it hit the fan? Because he was a fool just as those who advocate “talking” or “negotiating” with our enemies are fools. These people are out to kill us. You and me. It is their religion, it is in their blood, it is in their hearts. Their entire existence revolves around dying for the cause, that is, killing the infidels. You and me. They teach their small children to chant “Death to the US”. “Death to the UK”. “Death to Europe”. They teach their children to hate you and me. They will lie to their goals, they will lie to stall us so they can build their strength, they lie because it’s accepted in their culture.

For years, President Bush heard “we need more troops on the ground, send in more troops, our manpower is stretched to thin,” upon the advice of his top military advisors, he agrees to send more troops to Iraq, with a specific, measureable purpose, and is met with widespread opposition in Congress. We must change our “stay the course” strategy, they cry, so Bush increases troop strength and they say it won’t work. It seems the only choice left is to cut and run.

We tried that in Viet Nam, and we should have learned the consequences of letting Washington politicians run a war. Didn’t work then, won’t work now.

Iraq is the focal point of the war at this point, but it is far from the only place where we should be concerned. We are facing World War Three, and being in denial is suicide.

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The Conservative POV

Don Swanson
Feedback is encouraged. Email swandonson@dnet.net

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Highlanders demolish Bobcats, survive late Tiger charge

By Christopher Potts

The Highlander Men routed the Blue Ridge Bobcats Thursday night 95-40. The Highlanders stepped on the throat of the Bobcats early and did not let up.

Darin Keener started the offensive rally with 8 of the team’s first 10 points. Constant pressure on defense forced several turnovers against the Bobcats and crisp passing led to numerous uncontested shots on the offensive side of the ball for Highlands. Most of the Blue Ridge offense came in the 4th quarter after Coach Butch Smart pulled his starters.

Alex Schmitt made the highlight of the night with a dribble drive into the lane where a triple team allowed him to deliver a behind-the-back pass for an easy lay-up. The Highlanders had 4 players in double digit scoring led by Darin Keener and Nick Kerhoulas with 16 points apiece. Jason Aspinwall followed with 15 points, Alex Schmitt had 14, Arthur Reynolds scored 9, and Andrew Billingsley scored 8. Luke McClain added 6 points, Ezra Herz had 5 points, and Adam Hedden, Chris St. Germain, and Hunter Leffler each contributed 2 points each in the runaway victory.

Daniel Plotts and Ryan Milkey were the high scorers for the Bobcats with 16 and 13 points respectively.

The Highlanders followed their success with a tough victory against the Rosman Tigers, 46-44. The boys had a tough first quarter, unable to find the bottom of the basket while the Tigers outscored them 9-4. The Highlanders came out rolling in the 2nd quarter, pounding the Tigers for 20 points while forcing several turnovers to keep Rosman out of any offensive rhythm.

After another quarter of staunch defense and a solid offensive effort, Highlands looked to coast to a victory. Rosman stormed back in the 4th on the legs of guard Whit Gal- loway. Rosman cut the score to 46-41 in the final minute of play and forced Highlands to win at the free throw line. Rosman would only cut the lead to 46-44, failing to capitalize on two sets of empty free throw trips by the Highlanders.

Alec Schmitt swished 2 free throws with seconds left on the clock to end any chances of a comeback. Schmitt notched 18 points, 7 assists, 6 steals, and 4 rebounds on the night. Jason Aspinwall followed with 11 points and 8 rebounds. Nick Kerhoulas scored 10 points and 3 rebounds, and Arthur Reynolds added 4 points and 2 rebounds. Andrew Billingsley added 3 points 2 rebounds while Darin Keener had 2 points, 2 rebounds, and 2 blocked shots.

Galloway led the Tigers with 22 points and Charlie Bradley scored 8 points.

The Highlander Men played Swain Tuesday, Jan. 30. See next week’s paper for the story. The boys will face conference foe Hiwasee Dam Friday, Feb. 2 at 8 pm. A win for the Highlanders will keep them atop the conference standings.

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Nick Kerhoulas flies to the basket to make a shot during the Rosman game. Photo by Noel Atherton
Dr. Toby Lindsay to reopen medical practice in Cashiers

Family physician Toby Lindsay, MD, who has been working full-time in the emergency room at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, is reopening his medical practice in Cashiers next week.

The new offices of Cashiers Medical Associates will be located in Suite A 4 of the Mountain Laurel Shoppes complex off Slab Town Road in Cashiers. Dr. Lindsay will begin seeing patients at the Cashiers office on Tuesday, Jan. 30, and appointments can be made by calling 743-7826.

Lindsay, who practiced in Brevard for 14 years, opened an office in Cashiers in April 2005, but closed his office in January of 2006 and became a full-time physician in the hospital’s emergency room. He will continue to work part-time in the hospital’s ER after resuming his primary care practice.

“We are very pleased to have another primary care physician in regular practice in the area,” said Ken Shull, CEO and President of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. “The community survey conducted by the hospital two years ago, as well as what we’ve been hearing from many area residents, clearly tells us that the area needs more primary physicians. We are pleased that Dr. Lindsay is answering that call by reopening his practice.”

Results of a mail survey of 11,000 area residents conducted by the hospital showed that one quarter of year-round residents in the Glenville-Cashiers-Sapphire communities say they don’t have a local physician and 34 percent said they leave the area for all or part of their primary care.

“I’m looking forward to getting back to serving the primary care needs of people in Glenville and Cashiers, now that my wife and I are living in Cashiers and getting involved in the community,” Lindsay said. “I hope I will be able to fill an unmet need for more primary care physicians in the area and develop long-lasting relationships with patients in the years to come.”

April Lindsay, a specialist in early childhood education, is director of the Hampton School in Cashiers. The couple moved to Cashiers from Brevard last fall.

A native of High Point, NC, Dr. Lindsay earned his medical degree from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill in 1991 and completed both his internship and residency in family practice at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC, finishing in 1991.

He joined Brevard Family Practice in Brevard later that same year, and practiced as part of that group until 2004, when he opened an independent practice, Davidson River Family Medicine. In addition to his private practice, Dr. Lindsay has also worked as a part-time emergency room physician throughout his career; first at Swain County Hospital in Bryson City and later at Angel Medical Center in Franklin, as well as at Transylvania Community Hospital in Brevard.

He is an adjunct instructor with the Department of Family Medicine at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine. He is board certified in family practice and a member of the American Academy of Family Practice and the North Carolina Academy of Family Practice.
John Kerry announced this week that he will not run for President in 2008. I don’t think any capable observers who pay attention to details such as political appeal and fund-raising strength thought that he had a snowball’s chance anyway. But since my long-time acquaintance, John Kerry, has taken himself out of the race, I thought I should do the same.

I met John Kerry in Woolsey Hall at Yale, in 1963. I was a junior, and an officer of the Yale Political Union, when sophomore Kerry showed up to join the Union. He was a year older than me, but a class behind me. That’s because I’d skipped the 11th grade. He’d repeated the 12th grade.

Kerry came to the Union to make a name for himself. He was dressed like an assistant professor with leather elbow patches on a brand-new jacket. And he made sure everyone knew that he’d been educated in Europe and spoke fluent French. Given his style, I didn’t bother to mention that I spoke French, also.

He did make a name for himself. It was “insufferable.” The principal differences between Kerry then and Kerry now, is that he has more wrinkles and more money. Otherwise, he’s the same. It’s a sad commentary that this hollow social climber came so close to becoming President in 2004. It’s good he’s out of the 2008 race, although other candidates remain in the race who shouldn’t get near the White House without a visitor’s pass.

Still, his example of announcing the obvious, that he’s not running in 2008, encourages me to do the same.

I’m out of the 2008 campaign. To eliminate any wiggle room in this declaration, I add Sherman’s words: “If nominated, I will not run. If elected, I will not serve.”

What are my reasons? These items disqualify me from running:

- I do not have a single “friend,” in the U.S., or elsewhere including China, who would donate $1 million to my campaign, or would hustle that amount of money from other “friends,” who are interested in certain favorable decisions by the White House. Furthermore, if anyone offered me $1 million, and obviously had an ax to grind in some public issue, I’d tell them to take a hike. (That is exactly what I did, 30 years ago, when a multi-millionaire sought to purchase my services with a shady “contribution.”)

- I have never attempted to fashion a statement on any issue to offer soothing words apparently to groups on different sides of the issue. Instead, in speaking and writing on public issues my whole adult life I’ve always stated my opinion in plain English, plus the reasons for it. I’ve never pulled my punches to avoid offending individuals or groups to whom I was speaking.

And, on those occasions when age maturity or additional facts caused me to change my position on any subject, I did not pretend this was somehow a continuation of my old position. Instead, I explained in plain English why I was wrong before, and why I think my current position is better.

- I have never changed my position on any public issue because large numbers of people disagreed with me. I respect Galileo. Pushed to recant his conclusion that the Earth revolves around the Sun, he agreed to stop saying that. But he added, “And yet, it still moves.”

- I have led an ordinary life, which means there are events in my life which would cause harm to me, or to my family, if they were trumpeted about by opponents as if those mistakes were all there was to my life.

So, my conclusion on running for President is obvious. I am ill-equipped to run. If I ran, I would be defeated. Therefore, I won’t run. Still, it is gallling to me to see people run for President who have less knowledge, experience, and integrity than I and tens of thousands of other Americans have. We would have better public officials if fewer candidates offered only “talents for intrigue and the little arts of popularity,” as Hamilton, Madison and Jay warned in the Federalist. But that’s a story for another day.

About the Author: John Armor is a lawyer specializing in constitutional law, who may again be a candidate for Congress in the 11th District of North Carolina. John_Armor@aya.yale.edu. He and Mead will alternate columns.
Students in Macon County asked to compete for five free semesters at SCC

Win a $4,500 scholarship to Southwestern Community College in the college’s Academic Challenge which will be held Thursday, March 15, on the Jackson campus. First-place winners will receive five semesters free at SCC, along with a $1,000 book budget, for a total value package of $4,500.

The competitive challenge consists of two separate events – one for high school juniors and seniors from 8:30 a.m. - 1:45 p.m. and one for adults beginning at 5 p.m.

Part one consists of an academic test in writing where students will be given a 30-minute writing assignment. That is followed by multiple choice tests in math, natural science and computer knowledge, with 20 questions in each section.

Participants can then select a fifth testing area which will also consist of 20 questions. The subject areas or concentrations to choose from are automotive, business/accounting, computer engineering, culinary, early childhood, health science, history and literature.

The top five winners from the academic component will move forward to the interview process where five-person panel will ask questions to gain insight into the winners career goals, interest in SCC, and how SCC can be a part of their education future.

Second-place winners in both the student and adult category will each receive tuition and fees for one semester ($700 value), third-place winners each receive a $250 SCC scholarship, fourth-place winners receive a $100 gift certificate to the campus bookstore and fifth-place winners receive a $50 gift certificate to the campus bookstore.

Residents of Jackson, Macon or Swain counties, or the Qualla Boundary are eligible. Registration information is on the SCC website at www.southwesterncc.edu/acadchallenge.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Guerin at 586-4091, ext. 377.

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Small town living as spiritual practice

One day I found myself yelling at a customer service person on the telephone and it occurred to me that the anger I was expressing was way out of proportion to the problem I was complaining about. I realized I was taking out my anger and frustrations about a whole host of other problems on this poor anonymous person. I would never have spoken that way to someone I knew, or even to a stranger right in front of me. But the anonymity of the telephone and modern systems such as call centers removed the humanity from this person (in my mind at least).

When I contemplated moving to Highlands almost 19 years ago, the thought of living in a small town scared me. I spent the first half of my life in cities: St. Louis, Chicago, San Francisco. I was used to the anonymity of cities where no one knew you. Small towns are famous for their gossip — I hated the idea that people I didn’t know would be privy to intimate details of my life.

As the years have passed I have come to think differently about the lack of privacy in a small town. I believe that living in a small town can be a spiritual practice.

In a city I can go into a supermarket or a bank and act like a jerk because that person doesn’t know who I am, and chances are I’ll never have to interact with that person again, so who cares what they think about me and how I’m behaving?

But in a small town that anonymity doesn’t exist. If I am rude to the checkout person at Bryson’s, I will see that person next week, and the week after that. Or if I am angry dealing with the clerk at the post office, I will see that same person over and over again every time I need to mail a parcel.

In Highlands you’re being observed even when you’re driving! Surely one of the safest places in modern life to vent frustrations is in the car (based on observations of people’s hand gestures while driving the highways). But here people know your car and if you are careless or rude you can be sure someone will notice.

Living here has made me aware of how my words and actions impact other people’s lives. It has made me aware of how I am affected by my emotions: if I’m in a bad mood I treat everyone and everything indifferently at best, but if I’m in a good mood I am engaged and interested. The highest praise I have heard about a person is that they are consistent in their behavior towards others; no matter what is going on in their lives they are gracious and thoughtful. This is the standard to which I aspire, and living in Highlands is helping me.

In the book Reading Lolita in Tehran, author Azar Nafisi writes about how great novels unveil the complexity of human nature: “A great novel heightens your senses and sensitivity to the complexities of life and of individuals, and prevents you from the self-righteousness that sees morality in fixed formulas about good and evil…”

She also has a fascinating theory of what it means to be a villain in a novel: “It is not accidental that the most unsympathetic characters in Jane Austen’s novels are those who are incapable of genuine dialogue with others. They rant, they scold. This incapacity for true dialogue implies an incapacity for tolerance, self-reflection, and empathy. Later, in Vladimir Nabokov, this incapacity takes on monstrous forms in characters such as Humbert Humbert in Lolita...Thus, Dr. Sloper [a character in Henry James’ Washington Square] commits the most unforgivable crime in fiction — blindness. Pity is the password, says the poet John Shade in Nabokov’s Pale Fire. This respect for others, empathy, lies at the heart of the novel...This, I believe, is how the villain in modern fiction is born: a creature without compassion, without empathy.”

In a small town we see each other’s emotions: if I’m in a bad mood I treat everyone and everything indifferently at best, but if I’m in a good mood I am engaged and interested. The highest praise I have heard about a person is that they are consistent in their behavior towards others; no matter what is going on in their lives they are gracious and thoughtful. This is the standard to which I aspire, and living in Highlands is helping me.

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The Bible is the Word of God and it should be read by all men to learn of their Creator. We declare this because the Bible is not just another book. It stands by itself before men because of its author. Christians hold that the Bible is the Word of God, infallible and inerrant in its original autographs.

It is God that stands behind the human writers and so, we must take special care in reading the Bible. There are those books that deserve no more than a scanning. They are simply frivolous and full of nothing but pure foolishness. These types of books don’t change our lives, and failing to read them, loses us nothing. However, the Bible deserves our most careful attention and close study, because it brings us the Word of God and the plan of salvation.

When you begin to read documents that have an impact upon your welfare, your family, your freedom, or your estate, you look them over and read them with attention to every detail. What about the Bible which deals with your eternal destiny, how do you read it, only at the last hour of the day when you are tired and unable to give it your undivided attention? Is this not the book that deals with the rules of life, the reasons for death, and lights the path to heaven?

All other books are the works of men alone. They are filled with the limited knowledge of frail men and are full of the errors of the carnal mind. When we read them, it is important that we consider their ideas with great care. Not all therein is truth. Not everything in their covers comes from wisdom. Not all on their pages is profitable. The Bible, however, was written by men who wrote “as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” My friends, there was no ordinary human inspiration involved here, but a supernatural intervention. What we received in the Scriptures was not the words and ideas of men but the word of the living and true God. This should cause us to read it with the greatest of confidence. We should understand, to distrust it, is sin, and to reject it, is contempt of heaven.

What is the Bible but the word of truth and the light of life. From its pages comes freedom for all who will receive it; it is the only source of wisdom for fools and understanding for the simple. It is in the Bible we find strength in times of trouble and comfort in times of adversity. In its pages is found the light needed to walk through this life and the words of comfort most appreciated when death comes.

How much should you read the Bible? You must read it regularly and with great frequency, read it until it is so ingrained in you and is a part of your heart. When you have committed yourself to such reading, you will echo the same sentiment the prophet Jeremiah did when he said, “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty” (Jeremiah 15:16).
... BUDGET from page 1 rates because the real doesn’t always take into effect what’s needed in the budget.” The commissioners agreed to move up the budget deadline so the public can be more involved. “The public needs time to look at the budget and to express their concerns,” said Commissioner Jim Davis. “We have to have a more open to the public.”

County Manager Sam Greenwood will present a “revenue neutral” budget to the board in May 2007. It will likely be available to the public shortly thereafter. “The property tax revenue projected for this fiscal year will be the basis for next year and the tax rate will be adjusted downward to reflect that revenue amount,” said Greenwood. “This means that for county operations and major agencies supported in part by the county such as the schools, the only additional property tax revenue will come from the yearly growth in the tax base not associated with revaluation.”

Greenwood said county departments will begin working on their budget in March and he’d like to have a working budget in place for the last two weeks of June so it can easily go “live” July 1, 2007. Capital facility expansion throughout the county has commissioners considering going to the public with a bond referendum to raise the funds needed. Commissioners have been assigned as liaisons to county departments to help them determine their capital projects needs.

“The commissioners plan to move rapidly on the facility planning process to be ready for the next retreat in July 2007 which is set to address prioritization in preparation for a possible bond referendum,” said Greenwood. “Each department will begin development of its major capital needs defined as new buildings, renovation, additions, and equipment costing more than $100,000. Operating capital outlay will be addressed through the regular budget process.”

Greenwood said the county is at critical budgeting crossroads. “Our needs are exceeding the growth in our tax base every year and we have to look at other means to finance capital projects,” he said. “In the past we had some flexibility because we were able to take money after a debt is retired and use it for future appropriations. Our debt service is decreasing and will be largely retired by 2013.”

Future county capital facility projects including school needs are estimated at $30 million.

High Country Cafe
Down home favorites everyday!

Breakfast & Lunch
6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m
Sunday through Friday;
Saturday, 7 a.m.-1 p.m.
526-0572
Cashiers Road next to the
Community Bible Church

Stop in for slow-cooked BBQ, Ribs,
Fried Chicken, Hot Wings and other
Southern favorites that’ll have you
coming back for more.

Season’s Sampler
Catering Available
LUNCH & DINNER
461 Spring Street • 526-2626

Pescado’s
Burritos
In the middle of 4th St.
Open for lunch
Mon-Sat. • 526-9313

Hill Top GRILL
“Quick Service Not Fast Food!”
Hamburgers & Fries
Sandwiches & Salads
Ice Cream & More!
Open for lunch Mon.-Sat.
Now Trans Fat FREE
At 4th & Spring streets...on the hill
526-5916
$10 minimum with credit card

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Commissioner Brian McClellan suggested the county consider a zero-based budget approach to force departments to justify their funding every budget year. “You go back to square one with the process instead of basing what’s needed on the previous year,” he said. “Instead of taking the budget and adding a percentage increase you take a look at each department and decide what is needed.” He said the process can’t be done by every department every year, but it could be phased in a couple of departments a year on a rotating basis.

Commissioners discussed beginning the zero-based budget process with the Environmental Health Department. “Considering the Septic approval process mass we should start there first and go line by line position by position to see what areas need more and what needs less,” said Commissioner McClellan. “Pick a department each year and from that basis we can justify to the public what we’re doing with the budget.”

Greenwood suggested a trial run this year with the Environmental Health Department. “Then in July you can sit down and see how the run went and decide if you want to do it for all departments.”
On-going

Every Tuesday, beginning Feb. 13, Women's Bible Study, Beth Moore's study of Daniel at Community Bible Church Fellowship Hall. All ladies invited. Call the church at 526-4685 to order your book.

• It's Girl Scout Cookie Time. Order Now: Delivery in February. Eat 'em, freeze 'em or donate 'em. Highlands Brownie Scouts Troop #219. See your local Brownie Scout or email to HighlandsBrownies@hughes.net. Booth sales start mid-February.

• StepAerobics at the Rec Park, 4-5 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays. $5 per class.

• The Macon County Art League exhibits work at the Bascom-Louise Gallery in the Hudson Library through Feb. 15.

• Beginner Classical Yoga Group meets On Mondays, 5:45-7 p.m. at Highlands Yoga and Wellness, 464 Carolina Way. Mats and blankets provided. Learn the basics and improve your health. Other classes available. Call 526-8880 Ashby or Chad.

• Yoga Classes at the Rec Park. Mondays and Wednesdays. Bring your mat. $7 per person per class or $50 for a monthly pass.

• Angie Jenkins on the piano at the Old Clayton Inn on Fridays and Saturdays for dinner.

• Beginners Clogging class Tuesday, 6-7 p.m. at the Sapphire Valley Community Center. Come have lots of fun and exercise. Call 743-7663.

• Health Tracks at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital will have Osteoporosis prevention exercise classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays of each week from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Free with HealthTracks Membership or $8 per class for non-members. Call Jeanette Fisher at 828-526-1FIT.

• Health Tracks at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital is offering a total body and muscle-toning workout exercise class at 9 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Free with Health Track Membership or $8 for non-members. Contact Health Tracks at 828-526-1FIT.

• Health Tracks at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital is holding Pilates classes on Mondays and Wednesdays at 4 p.m. Cost of the class is $10 per session or $8 (each) for 10 sessions. Contact Health Tracks at 828-526-1FIT.

• A Grief Support Group is held every Friday from 10-12 at the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital for anyone who has lost a loved one through death or is dealing with a progressive illness with a loved one. If interested in attending, please contact Helen Moore (Hospital) 526-0727 or Martha Porter (Chaplain at HCH) at 787-1463.

• Every Tuesday Weight Watchers meets at the Highlands Civic Center. Weigh-in is at 5:30. The meeting starts at 6 p.m.

• Live music at Fressers in Helen's Barn every Friday at 7 p.m.

• Live music at Cypress Restaurant every Friday at 9:30 p.m.

• Live music at the Westgate Plaza in Oak Square from 7:30-9:30 p.m., every Friday.

• Thursday, Feb. 1 meeting at 5:30. HCH) at 787-1463.

• Angel Medical Center is sponsoring an American Heart Association Basic Life Support for Healthcare Professionals (CPR) class from 6-10 p.m. at SCC's Public Safety Training Complex in Franklin. Attendance at both nights is required. The cost is $50. Call the PSTC at 828-360-0951 to pre-register.

• Hurricane Creek at Instant Theatre on Main

Friday, Feb. 2

• Highlands Little League Baseball signups for ages 5-14 are at the Rec Park from 3:30-6:30 p.m. Cost is $50 for first child, $45 for second child. Birth certificate mandatory. Call John Shear at 526-2251 or Monica Vinson at 526-9107.

Saturday, Feb. 3

• Yoga and Juicing, One-Day Cleanse, 11:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday night juice pick-up. All-levels. Call 526-8880 to pre-register.

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a four-mile moderate hike (with an elevation change of 700 feet) on the Georgia Bartram Trail near Clayton, passing a small waterfall near the start and a 45 foot waterfall along the way. Meet at Westgate Plaza in Franklin, across from Burger King, at 9:00 a.m. or call leader for an alternate meeting place if coming from Highlands or Cashiers. Drive 58 miles round trip. Bring a drink, lunch, and wear sturdy, comfortable shoes. Hikes are limited to 20; reservations are required. Call leader Doug Deane, 864-718-9265, for reservations or more information. Visitors are welcome, but no pets please.

• Angel Medical Center is sponsoring an American Red Cross blood drive from 10:30 am to 3 p.m. The hospital is located at 120 Riverview Drive in Franklin, NC. Please call 369-4166 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

• Hurricane Creek at Instant Theatre on Main Street in Oak Square at 8 p.m. $20 per ticket includes complimentary beer, wine and mixed drinks. Call 828-342-9197. Only 75 tickets available.

Sunday, Feb. 4

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a 3-4 mile, easy-to-moderate hike to Rough Run and High Falls. The hike is mostly on level ground except for the last 200 yards where some scrambling over rocks is necessary which could be icy. Meet at the Cashiers Wachovia Bank (in back) at 9:00 a.m. Drive 20 miles round trip. Bring a drink, lunch, and wear sturdy, comfortable shoes. Hikes are limited to 20; reservations are required. Call leader Walter Taylor, 743-6977, for reservations or more information. Visitors are welcome, but no pets please.

Friday and Saturday, Feb. 16 & 17

• Instant Theatre Company presents a Highlands first at 8 p.m. The EMan is coming to town. Al Ernst is the EMan, the big E, the King of Comedy guaranteeing to lighten your load. Straight from Las Vegas, comedy clubs and the Carnival Cruise lines, Al brings you an “All You Can Eat Comedy Buffet.” Only 2 shows, 65 seats a night will be available. Complimentary wine and cocktails will be offered as well as EMTs will be standing by with oxygen. Make the call and reserve your space at the Laugh Buffet.

Saturday, Feb. 17

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a seven-mile, moderate-to-strenuous hike on the Ethon's Rock Trail through beautiful forest to the west bank of the Chattooga River. Meet at the Highlands Bank of America at 9:30 a.m. Drive 24 miles round trip. Bring a drink, lunch, and wear sturdy, comfortable shoes. Hikes are limited to 20; reservations are required. Call leader Jim Whitehurst, 526-8134, for reservations or more information. Visitors are welcome, but no pets please.

Sunday, February 18

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a moderate hike on trails and backcountry roads near Oak Square.
Ambassadors to challenge local ‘All Stars’ Feb. 27

Having delighted and dazzled local audiences last winter, the internally-acclaimed Harlem Ambassadors basketball team will return to Highlands this month to challenge a special team of local all-stars. The Ambassadors, which tour Europe and Asia, as well as North America, will make a stop at the Highlands School Gym on Tuesday, Feb. 27. The show will start at 7 p.m. and advance tickets are $10 for adults and $5 for students and seniors. Tickets will be $15 at the door, and kids under four are free. Due to setup requirements, the doors will not open until 6:30 p.m.

Proceeds from the event go to the Mountain Top Rotary Club of Highlnds, which uses the proceeds to fund a number of projects throughout the community. Advance tickets are available from any club member, at the Highlands Chamber of Commerce, Drake's Diamond Gallery, and Fressers Eatery.

The show features high-flying slam dunks, dazzling ball handling and comedy routines led by Ladé Majic, queen of the show, and the only woman player/coach of an all men's professional team. She has played in more shows than any known opponents, but no pets please.

Highlands Annual Chili Cook-off, Salsa, and Cornbread Competition will be held at the Conference Center from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. Entertainment will be provided by Hurricane Creek.

The Harlem Ambassadors return to play local basketball stars 7 p.m. in the Highlands School gym. Advance tickets are: adults $10, students and seniors $5, available at Fressers, Drakes Diamond Gallery, the chamber of commerce, $15 at the door.

The show features high-flying slam dunks, dazzling ball handling and comedy routines led by Ladé Majic, queen of the show, and the only woman player/coach of an all men's professional team. She has played in more shows than any known opponents.

The Ambassadors have taken the team to 39 states and 19 foreign countries. The team is the leading provider of entertainment to the United States military, having performed at more than 120 different bases worldwide, and for troops in the front lines in both the Balkans and Korea. The Ambassadors have also put on shows recently for Marines guarding prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

“We are extremely proud of our relationship with the military,” Moss noted. “The Highlands Hometown Heroes team, will be composed of former Highlands School players, local community leaders and others. The night of fun will also feature a raffle for the game ball used that night (to be awarded at half time), and team souvenirs will be on sale. The Highlands PTO will be selling refreshments. Corporate sponsors for the event are Mitchell’s Lodge and Cottages, Fressers Eatery and Highlands-Cashiers Hospital.”

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The Harlem Ambassadors will return to Highlands this month to challenge a special team of local all-stars.
**POLICE & FIRE REPORT**

The following is the Highlands Police Dept. log entries for the week of Jan. 24-31. Only the names of persons arrested or public officials have been used.

**Jan. 26**
- The dept. provided mutual aid to the Scaly Fire Dept. It was cancelled en route.

**Jan. 27**
- The dept. responded to an alarm at the hospital which was set off by a smoking belt in a washing machine.
- The dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers. The call was cancelled en route.
- The dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at a residence on Scenic Drive where a person had fallen. The victim was transported to the hospital.

**Jan. 29**
- Twice, the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers. The call was cancelled en route.
- The dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers. The call was cancelled en route.
- The dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at a residence on Buck Creek Road. The victim was DOA.
- The dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at the Farmer’s Market. The victim was transported to the hospital.

**Jan. 30**
- The dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers. The call was cancelled en route.
- The dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at a residence on Buck Creek Road. The victim was DOA.
- The dept. was first-responders to assist EMS with a medical call at the Farmer’s Market. The victim was transported to the hospital.

**Jan. 31**
- The dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers. The call was cancelled en route.

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**REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS**

**Town of Highlands**
- 0516895, 134 LAURELWOOD DR UNIT 22 LAURELWOOD, TAYLOR H GRANT, 1/5/2007, $539,000., BENSON ROBERT T JR, $554,360.
- 0517276, 441 WHITESIDE MOUNTAIN RD, HORVATH INC., 1/5/2007, $950,000., BERRY ROBERT ANDREW, $1,356,240.

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**SCHOOLS from page 3**

mandates which we must follow including the number of students allowed in a class. Years ago you could have 42 students in a class. You can’t anymore. Plus, there are special populations the state mandates we service. That means more classrooms and more teachers. So even if the population isn’t increasing we need more classrooms which translates to bigger schools,” he said.

Commissioners also heard results of a school board work session Jan. 8, which prioritized immediate needs and ways to fund them. Funding would come from proceeds of the Otto School sale of $252,400 use of the unlocated balance of the public school building fund of $335,305.34 with a 75-25 match from local government of $111,667; $77,099 from the NC Lottery and $2 million in QZAB to partially fund East Franklin renovations and expansion. Even with the public school funds and county match another $18,333 would be needed.

Commissioners will discuss school needs and trends during a combined commission and school board meeting, Feb. 12 at 6 p.m. at Shoney’s in Franklin.

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