What 2013 RE sales mean for the county, citizens

Those who have been keeping up with the real estate market this past year know that sales are on the upswing over the previous year.

Our contributing real estate writers who offer their take on the market each week in “Investing at 4,118 Ft.” have explained the ups and downs of the market from a professional’s point of view.

While looking over the real estate transactions for 2013, readers will notice that in many cases, the price a piece of property sold for is less than its last appraised value, which was in 2007. Because of that discrepancy, citizens are likely to expect the new reval—to mean a decrease in property taxes.

However, Macon County Tax Appraiser Richard Lightner says there is a lot that goes into devising a tax rate.

“What citizens will see in this year’s real estate transactions is the difference between the market conditions in 2007 (assessed value) and present conditions by comparing it to the reval,” Lightner said.

MC’s new recreation facility set to open Spring 2015

By Brittany Burns

Macon County’s recreation department employees have been working to get the Parker Meadows property ready for development. “The park was very overgrown when we purchased it,” said Macon County Recreation Park Director Seth Adams. “We have basically been cleaning it up. We have

Birth links family to firefighter and paramedic

This isn’t a Christmas story exactly, but it will evoke feelings of joy and hope as one year comes to an end and another begins. At 2:30 a.m., Oct. 12, a 9-1-1 call went out about a woman in Clear Creek who was in labor.

Austin Reese, (19) a Highlands Fire & Rescue volunteer, who lives in Clear Creek, was the first-responder on scene at the Passmore residence. Sarah Sanford, 21, was having contractions—in labor with her third child who

Former OEI CEO sentenced for crimes

Last week, Mario Clothinho Gomes, former CEO of Old Edwards Hospitality Group (OEI) in Highlands, was sentenced to 52 months in prison and three years supervised probation upon release for his part in a kickback scheme that took place during his tenure at OEI from 2004-2008.

In February 2012, a federal jury in Asheville convicted Gomes on two counts of wire fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud following a three-day trial. According to documents filed in court and trial proceedings, for two years Gomes used his position to orchestrate a series of kickbacks from vendors and contractors who performed services for OEI.

During the conspiracy Gomes, along with his co-conspirators, was able to designate where the kickbacks would be sent.
Dear Editor,

2013 was a much better year for Western North Carolina than was the previous year. The unemployment rate has dropped down to 7.4% in November from 8.9% when the year started. Every county in North Carolina had lower unemployment rates. Financially the state is slowly recovering from where it was. Every major group in the state from colleges to the DOT to the public and private schools all need more money to operate. Jobs are the key to adding revenue to the state and our Governor McCrory is doing his best to make that happen. Nationally, North Carolina’s unemployment rate has dropped down to number 35 from Number 49 just 11 months ago.

With New Year’s approaching I would like to suggest a New Year’s resolution to everyone for the coming year. Buying products that are made in the USA or at least in North America would be a big help. Working people in the USA are the people who spend their money here. Buying stuff made in China or other Asian countries does not do a lot for our economy or North Carolina. I saw where the chicken from China is coming to the USA. I think we all can get along fine without buying chicken from China for a lot of reasons. Supporting local businesses is a great way to help improve the economy in our state. People who work here spend their money here. Too many of our people have been out of work for over a year. Supporting our local businesses will do more to help the poor and unemployed people than anything else. Income inequality will never be solved with welfare checks and foods stamps card.

I hope we can agree that Jobs are the best way to overcome income inequality. Let us make 2014 the year we get our unemployment rate down to 6% or below. Merry Christmas

Jim Mueller
Glencoe, NC

...RE SALES continued from page 1

(sale price). Normally, the assessed value would be lower than the sale price, this late in an assessment cycle. However, the recession has taken a toll on pricing and also on the number of foreclosures. Many sale values are the results of forced sales and thus are not arm market sales as defined by all appraisal standards. “What does all of this indicate? The market values have dropped on vacant land the most and next on moderately expensive homes. This decrease in value by law cannot be recognized in the assessed value until the reassessment of 2015. At that time we will consider all of the qualified market sales through 2014 and apply to them to the values for 2015.

“Many people believe that a drop in value equals an equal drop in taxes. That isn’t always true. By law, the county has to have a balanced budget and in order to get that, the county adds all of the revenue up from all sources and subtracts it from the needed revenue. The difference is then divided by the total assessed value and a tax rate is determined. Once the tax rate is applied to each individual property, a tax bill can be calculated. If the change in an individual property is less than the median property change, the property will have a lower tax bill. The overall assessed value of the county drops, the new revenue neutral tax rate will be higher than the present tax rate as defined by general statutes,” he said.

According to Lightner, the Macon County Tax Office is building the Schedule of Values that the Board of Commissioners will review and adopt in the summer of 2014. After that the schedule will be applied to all of the properties to get an estimated value for each property. At that point a final review of property values will be done.

“If all goes as planned, an estimate of value for each property will be sent to the owner of record in December of 2014 or January 2015,” said Lightner.

The following are the Real Estate Transactions for the Town of Highlands, Highlands Township and Flats Township (Scaly Mountain) through Dec. 20, 2013.

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Re: RE SALES continued from page 1

The next edition of Highlands Newspaper will be Thursday, Jan. 9. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Obituary

Dr. E. Val Hastings was born April 1, 1921 in Manistique, Michigan, son of Edward James Hastings and Clara Ranson Hastings. He passed away peacefully December 16, 2013 in Cashiers, NC. He was pre-deceased by his first wife, Rosemary Pfaller Hastings in 1993 and his son, Paul Geoffrey Hastings in 2006.

Dr. Hastings is survived by his wife, Doreen Davies Hastings; children Peter J. Hastings and wife, Babs of St. Simons Island, GA, Valerie Crockett and husband, David of Charlotte, NC, Julie Westphal and husband, Eric of St. Simons, Island, GA, Kathy Cable and husband, Robert of St. Simons Island, GA and Ann Hastings, daughter-in-law of Atlanta, GA; grandchildren, Rosemary Haley, Kelley Galvin, Courtney Anglin, Mark Crockett, Julie Dalton, Haley Denley, Ned Hastings, Hastings Westphal, Amanda Cable and Rob Cable; great-grandchildren, Austin, Maddie, Paddy, James, Cameron, Grady and Libby. Dr. Hastings was a caring physician, dedicated teacher, avid golfer, loving husband and wonderful father and grandfather.

Dr. Hastings attended Marquette University and received his B.S. Degree and was a 1944 graduate of Marquette Medical School. He then enlisted as a medical officer in the U.S. Army serving at numerous medical installations and hospitals including Oliver General Hospital in Augusta, GA as assistant chief of laboratory services. After leaving the Army, Dr. Hastings returned to Augusta in 1952 to become the pathologist at St. Joseph Hospital and to join the faculty at the Medical College of Georgia. After 35 wonderful years at St. Joseph, he retired in 1987. In 2001, he retired full time to Cashiers, NC where he enjoyed spending time with his family and friends. One of the greatest highlights of his life was an invitation to join the Augusta National Golf Club in 1963. While a member of the Augusta National Golf Club for 50 years, he served on numerous committees for both the Club and the Masters golf tournament. During this time he developed many lifelong friendships and numerous memories at the Club he treasured.

In addition to the Augusta National Golf Club, he was also a member of multiple prestigious golf clubs in the United States. One of Dr. Hastings’ lasting legacies was as a founding member of Wade Hampton Golf Club in Cashiers, NC.

A private graveside service will be held in Augusta, GA on January 18, 2014. The family will receive friends following the service at The Pinnacle Club from 2-4. This summer, close friends will host a celebration of his life in Cashiers.

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Milestone

On Sunday, December 15th, Samuel Craig was awarded the Boy Scouts highest honor, the Eagle Scout Rank. Samuel is the first Eagle Scout in Highlands Troop 207 since 2001. Pictured (from the left) are Kay, Samuel, Leah Grace, and Thomas Craig.

The next edition of Highlands Newspaper will be Thursday, Jan. 9.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Annual ‘Resolution Run’ set for Jan. 1

A New Year means a new chapter in your life: new opportunities, new adventures. Want to start 2014 off right? Resolve to meet at the Town Hall at 9 a.m. on January 1 to start it off with a run.

“For those of us interested in maintaining a lifestyle that revolves around health and fitness, it’s a wonderful opportunity to set some new goals, have fun, and meet other like-minded folks,” said Highlands Roadrunners Club President Richard Betz. “We welcome everybody in the community to join us, whether they are runners or not.”

The Resolution Run has no entry fee and offers no T-shirts or trophies. Those interested in participating simply gather in front of the Town Hall at 210 North Fourth Street on Wednesday morning, January 1, at 9 a.m. and run a three-mile loop at a relaxed pace around the downtown area of Highlands, returning to the Town Hall. Walking breaks for new runners are encouraged. The run is held “come rain or shine or ice or snow,” but Betz maintains that the weather has been flawless for several years, though a little on the chilly side on some occasions.

“Running is a great way to stay in shape, not only for young people but for old guys like me,” Betz says. “Our running club has been successful in attracting and encouraging a pretty broad demographic who want to stay fit and achieve measurable goals.” The Club welcomes both men and women, and all age groups are represented, from those in their teens to those in their 70s.”

So if you would like to be a “Resolutionary” in 2014, plan to join the Roadrunners on January 1 in front of the Town Hall building at 9 sharp.

...CRIMES continued from page 1

spirators – Greg Fuselier of Metarie, LA, and George Mathis of Franklin, NC, – fraudulently inflated invoices submitted to OEI. Once invoices were paid, Gomes and his co-conspirators shared the proceeds of their scheme. Gomes also had an addition added to his home which he billed to OEI with the assistance of his co-conspirators.

At the time of the crimes, according to evidence introduced at trial, Gomes made $190,000 annually.

On Wednesday, Dec. 18, in U.S. District Court in Asheville, Judge Martin Reidinger sentenced Gomes – he has been out on bond since convicted in February 2012.

According to testimony, the government estimates the loss to OEI at between $400,000 and $1 million. Judge Reidinger will rule on how much restitution Gomes must pay at a later hearing.

Co-conspirators, Mathis and Fuselier, who each testified against Gomes at his trial pled guilty to mail fraud. They each were sentenced to probation and ordered to pay $878,000 in restitution.

The investigation for the case was handled by the FBI. The prosecution of the case was handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Corey Ellis of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, in Asheville.
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Thanks to donations from members of the community, law enforcement agencies from across the region were able to take each of 180 Macon County children on a $100 shopping spree. Pictured are Highlands School Resource Officer Mike Jolly with La-Donna (8) and Diane (10). Photo by Vickie Carpenter.

‘Shop with a Cop’ is Christmas!

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filled in a pond that was located where the big ball fields will go. We had the hay cut off of it and mowed the property to give it a more finished look. We have also been cutting trees that are to be removed once the grading starts. Our guys have been doing the little things that will save time and money once the real construction begins.”

With the recent approval of the $500,000 in North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) money, Adams and his crew is about to begin the real work on the development of the new recreation complex.

The Macon County Board of Commissioners unanimously voted to purchase Parker Meadows more than two years ago. Since that time, the county has been working to secure PARTF money to develop the property into a recreation complex estimated to generate $6 million annually into the local economy.

During the December meeting of the board of commissioners, Adams announced that the Parker Meadows project had been approved for a $500,000 dollar for dollar matching PARTF grant to begin Phase 1. With the county’s matching obligation being made when the property was purchased, now all that is left to do is formulate a schedule for the property development.

Adams informed commissioners that the county will be awarded funds after work on the recreation facility is completed, making it necessary for Adams and commissioners to prioritize construction plans. Commissioners instructed Adams to work with Macon County Planner Matt Mason to begin detailing the process and plan of action to allow the project to begin this spring with a completion date of spring of 2015 in mind.

“By the state fully funding Macon County the $500,000, it was an affirmation of what a great project this is,” said commission chairman Kevin Corbin. “These grants are very competitive and there were over 80 projects under consideration. The location, what we have planned, and the future economic impact of the project all helped us to get the funding from the state.”

Adams reported that the state’s 2013 PARTF funds totaled $45 million with 80 projects vying for the available dollars. Out of the 80 projects that applied, just over half, 48 projects, did not receive any funds from the state this cycle. The projects that were funded were mostly small improvements projects, with only seven significant projects in the state being awarded funding, Macon County being one of the seven.

According to Adams, he plans to work with Mason over the next month to develop a schedule to present to commissioners in January. He plans to have cost estimates on specific parts of the project to break down the construction plans. Phase 1 of the project, the portion approved for PARTF funding, outlines the development of two adult softball/baseball fields that will have the ability to be converted for youth league sports, a soccer field, walking track, renovations to the clubhouse, a playground and picnic pavilion as well as a 60-car parking lot.

Based on a study of neighboring counties who have similar recreation complexes and hold ball tournaments, Economic Development Director Tommy Jenkins informed commissioners in November 2012, that the county at large stands to generate $6 million each year in costs associated with holding tournaments. In addition to lodging, gas, dining, the county can generate revenue based on holding tournaments. Jenkins reported that a 24-team ball tournament averaging, 25 players per team, would bring 600 people into Macon County. On average for lodging, meals, fuel and other necessities, each person would spend, on the conservative side, $125. For a two day tournament, that would generate $150,000 and with a rollover multiplier (the number of times one dollar would be returned to the community) of 1.73, a 24-team tournament would mean $259,500 for the local economy. That quarter of a million dollars in one weekend does not include the revenue that would be generated for the rec park in tournament entry fees and concession sales. A 48-team tournament would have an economic impact of more than a half a million dollars, all in one weekend for businesses in Macon County. According to Jenkins’ economic impact study, with one adult and one youth tournament a year, there would be a minimum of $4.7 million and a maximum of $9.3 million generated for local businesses in one year.

The next edition of Highlands Newspaper will be Thursday, Jan 9. Happy New Year!
...RE SALES continued from page 6

JOHN WY., 10/14/2013, $75,000, "HINES, JAMES L., III", 489340
7530846756, "WYANOCK ROAD", "O'HARRA, DAVID C.", 10/17/2013, $39,9000, "VIDMAR, JEFFREY L.", 18290
7530854365, 224 WYANOAK RD, "SAADAT, MOHAMMAD A.", 10/17/2013, 0, "FEDERAL NATIONAL MORTGAGE ASSN", 379690
7530852600, 163 WYANOAK RD, "O'HARRA, DAVID C.", 10/17/2013, 0, "FEDERAL NATIONAL MORTGAGE ASSN", 379690

B. TRUSTEE, 5/22/2013, 490000, "CUSACHS, BARBARA B.", 4/10/2013, 270000, "TRAGESSER, LARRY E.", 4/30/2013, 0, "FEDERAL NATIONAL MORTGAGE ASSN", 295870
7540126000, 241 HOLT RD, "HUGGINS, TIMOTHY J.", 1/1/2013, 335000, "STAPLES, WILLIAM C.", 360800
7540119323, 6 ZERMATT CIR, "ZIMMERMAN, ADAM E.", 5/23/2013, 338500, "BRIDGE, ANN S., TRUSTEE", 467700
7540120637, 151 HOLT CIR, "HERSHON, JUSTIN", 3/13/2012, 0, "FEDERAL NATIONAL MORTGAGE ASSN", 295870
7540124600, 230 SHELLEY LN, "JAFFE, MICHELE", 1/27/2013, 335000, "STAPLES, WILLIAM C.", 360800

See RE SALES page 9

Pizza

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## Highlands Township

### 280 Transactions

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<th>OWNER_NAME</th>
<th>DATE_RECEIVED</th>
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<td>...RE SALES continued from page 8...</td>
<td>...See RE SALES page 10...</td>
<td>...Highlands Newspaper - Thurs., Dec. 26/Jan 2, '13-'14 - 828-526-3228 - Page 9...</td>
<td>...Mountain fresh grocer cooking for Highlands - Open at 7 AM and Sundays at 8 AM...</td>
<td>...WALK IN OR CALL AHEAD TO RESERVE...</td>
</tr>
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**2013 Year-in-Review**

**JANUARY**
- Judge Downs to fight for local magistrate: Raleigh legislators decided a year and a half ago – in July 2011 – to do away with the part-time Highlands magistrate position as of Jan. 1, 2013.
- Commission discusses school safety: Sheriff Robert Holland showed – in a big way – why he is against teachers carrying guns in schools and why he believes a Student Resource Officer (SRO) should be in every Macon County School.
- NC flu at highest level in a decade.
- County postpones ‘park’ purchase: Macon County commissioners deliberated long and hard on whether to proceed with the purchase of the Parker Meadows property – a purchase the board voted unanimously to make on Nov. 13, 2012.
- Jeremy Keener was named “Fireman of the Year” and department says good-bye to Manley.
- Early work has begun for 2015 implementation – the two-year countdown has begun.
- TV producer Miranda Dotson wins Emmy for covering Raleigh tornadoes.
- State of Highlands pool discussed: County Commissioner Jim Tate and County Manager Jack Horton met with Highlands Commissioner Brian Steihler and Town Manager Bob Frye to discuss the state of the pool at the Highlands Rec Park.

**FEBRUARY**
- Highlands Plaza to change: A much needed face-lift to the upper Highlands Plaza 9.60-acre parcel coming.
- Jury awards $6 million in wrongful death case: After a day and half of deliberation in civil Superior Court, a jury found the 2009 death of Elizabeth Preston Coram was caused by the conduct of Larry Murray and Adam Hicks, and awarded the Coram estate $6 million in damages.
- Sweepstake parlors close down in county.
- The Stephen Ham vs. Mayor David Wilkes case was set to be heard in Macon County Superior Court Monday, but the case was dismissed. “Steve voluntarily dismissed his claim without prejudice which gives him the right to re-file the same claim within a year,” said Town Attorney Bill Coward. “That rendered moot the town’s motion to have the case involuntarily dismissed.”
- I-pads could replace books in county schools: Highlands School was first on the list. The purpose of the program will be to provide feedback and to gain specific information about the proposed use of iPads to replace or supplement textbooks in the classroom.
- Highlands’ utility woes discussed; Citizens who can’t afford utilities in August, can’t afford them in January.
- Repairs at HS to begin over Spring break: The $1.5 million in improvements to Highlands School is set to begin as early as March 25.
- New pool and repairs in works for Rec Park.
- BOE to fund completion of Highlands batting cage.

**MARCH**
- Operation ‘Something Bruin’ nabs two from Macon County. ‘Operation Something Bruin’ stemmed from illegal bear hunting but include an array of state wildlife and game law charges. Some suspects could also face federal charges.
- Drastic cuts destined for school system: Facing yet another budget shortfall this fiscal year, the Macon County Board of Education is now considering an entire laundry list of possible reductions to its current expense budget, in order to finish out the academic year and start school again next fall including teacher positions.
- Macon County schools evaluated for their safety, found lacking. The evaluation called for more than $363,000 worth of work.
- Town budget may include intake valve and Big Creek work: Estimated construction of the intake is $2 million with up to 80% “principal forgiveness.” The town would pay $20% of that. The funding application has been submitted and is pending approval.
- BOE chops at budget for April 15 deadline: By whittling away at the 2013-2014 current expense budget, the school board has decreased the original $2+ million figure requested of the county to $1.1 million.
- NC Highway historical marker for André Michaux approved for Highlands: There will soon be four historical markers in Highlands and that’s saying something for a town Highlands’ size with an historical marker for French pioneer botanist André Michaux.
- Summer concerts in K-H Park a go.
- Highlands joins municipalities against state takeover of water: According to Save Our Waters WNC, North Carolina’s General Assembly (NCGA) is about to take the unprecedented step of seizing a municipal-run water system.
- Directors of NC libraries travel to Raleigh to oppose state funding cuts for public libraries Hudson Library represented.

**APRIL**
- Counterfeit 50s and 100s found in Highlands: A visiting trio tried to pass counterfeit 50- and 100-dollar bills in town
- Highlands a Top 12 America’s Small-Town ArtPlace: ArtPlace, a collaboration of leading national and regional foundations, banks, and federal agencies committed to accelerating creative placemaking, included Highlands as one of the top 12 art places in the country.
- A “brew pub” is planned for Town Square above Wild Thyme Gourmet Restaurant, so the Planning Board worked on an ordinance regarding Microbreweries.

**See YEAR IN REVIEW page 12**
**2013 Year-in-Review**

- USFS is bringing Albie McCall's cabin back to life: at its current location on Wayah Way above Dry Falls on US 64 west. Articles found in and around the cabin during excavation – a golf ball, a toothbrush, quilts, and more – became subjects of a multipart series by this reporter which opened long-closed windows about life in early Highlands.
- Code of Conduct discussed by boards: Rules of Procedure were a subject discussed at both the Planning and the Zoning boards last week, but Planning Board members had the most to say about two items – conflict of interest and attendance.
- Queen Becca Johnson and her King, Parker Sims at Highlands School's Junior-Senior Prom held at OEI's The Farm.
- HCLT earns national recognition: The Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust has achieved land trust accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission (LTA), an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance.

**MAY**
- Employee/dependent insurance plan changing: For more than a year, the town has been considering changes to its employee/dependent insurance coverage which could represent a significant savings to the town.
- Macon County schools to contract private drug screenings for athletes: Starting next year, Macon County Public Schools will use an outside contractor to drugscreen its athletes.
- ‘Red Dog’ Rescue: A posse of caring Highlanders was recently out in force attempting to capture a pregnant red dog.
- Town Board takes first stab at FY 2013-'14 budget OK’s free utilities to 3 entities. At Commissioner Steihler’s recommendation, the Chamber of Commerce, the ABC Store and the Highlands Playhouse will each get free utilities as of July 1, 2013. He reasoned that they are either entities that occupy town-owned buildings or are quasi-governmental in nature – specifically the ABC Store.

**JUNE**
- Highlands site of ancient Scottish wedding: A romance that was rekindled through Facebook resulted in an ancient Scottish wedding in Highlands for high school sweethearts Kelly Cochran and Scott McDuff.
- Reading skills increasing with ‘reading’ program: At last week’s Macon County Board of Education meeting members voted unanimously to renew its Lindamood-Bell contract for one more full-year. The cost is $170,000 but administrators, teachers and the board agree students have benefited from the program which just finished its second year.
- Zachary Field deal struck; park to grow: Thanks to Macon County Commissioner Jim Tate, the expansion of Zachary Park on Buck Creek Road has come to fruition. The board voted 3-2 to swap a parcel not contiguous with the park boundaries for an almost equal part that is contiguous.
- Students behind bill that makes fake weed illegal: The increased use of synthetic marijuana spawned the formation of the local group “Citizens Against Synthetic Marijuana” whose core includes Cassidy Ledford, Casey Holland, Adrian Martinez and Elizabeth Ellis.
- Steihler throws hat in ring for Mayor: Last week Commissioner Brian Steihler verified Face Book postings and rumors that he will be running for mayor this November 2013.
- Planning Dept. says ‘no’ to OEI’s off-premise event signs: According to Interim Planning and Development Director Josh Ward, the town’s Land Use Committee – made up of Commissioners John Dotson and Eric Pierson – agreed with staff that amending the ordinance to allow OEI’s off-premise sign would open a Pandora’s Box.
- Utilities big subject at budget hearing: The town’s FY 2013-'14 $13,189,591 budget passed with little fanfare Thursday night except for a passionate discussion about free utilities initiated by the Howland family.

**JULY**
- ABC Store gave town $83,733 in 2012: The state of the Highlands ABC Store has been the subject of several Town Board meetings since last year – culminating this budget year with free utilities. The reason behind the move is to offset the store’s decrease in profits since it moved from the town-owned building which is now the Police Department to its bigger, more expensive space in Highlands Plaza.
- Satulah mountain trail wars brewing: Public access to the Satulah Mountain Trail has been a bone of contention in Highlands for years. Though a comfortable arrangement appeared to be working, recently a number of people have been harassed by property owners as they attempt to go to the trail on foot, by bike or vehicles.
- BOE fills 37 teacher positions New superintendent sworn in: Last week, with the last minute extra $220,000 the Macon County Commission allocated the school system for current expenses for FY 2013-'14, the Board of Education (BOE) began in earnest filling teaching and administrative positions previously on the chopping block.
- Week-long storms cause havoc in Western NC: Landslides triggered; rivers flood; events cancelled: Fourth of July festivities fizzled out in Highlands, Cashiers and Franklin as days of unrelenting heavy rain that continued into the weekend covered Western North Carolina.

**AUGUST**
- Pat Hedden celebrates 25 years at HCCDC: Most everyone has someone who has made a positive difference in their lives. For the many children who have, and will, go through the Child Development Center in Highlands, that person is Pat Hedden.
- Five SROs now in Macon County schools: Macon County Sheriff Robert Hol-land is a big proponent of a Student Resource Officers (SRO) in each of the county’s 10 schools – if you count Macon Early College.
- Bond pleads guilty to wire & mail fraud: He unlawfully retransmitted satellite TV programming to over 550 customers. It’s taken over a year and a half for an anonymous tip called in to Highlands Newspaper late December 2011 to be proven true in court.

**SEPTEMBER**
- Citizens cry for covered pool: With a new regulation – size pool at the Highlands Rec Park in the works, there is a groundswell forming in the community calling for a covered pool – at least during the cold months. The reasoning: Investing in a new pool would make more sense if citizens could use it more than three months.
- Town Board removes Planning Board member: In an unprecedented move at a special called Town Board meeting last Friday, commissioners voted unanimously to remove a Planning Board member and appoint another.
- Tourism on the upswing: The Highlands Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center recently announced that visitors to Macon County spent $135.76 million in 2012, an increase of 7.6% from 2011 which ranks Macon County 30th among North Carolina’s 100 counties.
- Relay for Life gives short of $100k mark: Committee asks community for help.
- Woodruff to build Performing Arts Center.
2013 Year-in-Review

Bldg: During his opening comments, Mayor David Wilkes announced that Jane Woodruff has decided to provide the town with a Performing Arts Building.

• DNet to provide Fixed Wireless to Highlands area: Thursday night the board agreed unanimously to allow DNet to provide Fixed Wireless services to the citizens in and around Highlands.

• Churches expand child care options in Highlands: A nonprofit collaboration between the Highlands United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation could fill a vacuum for full day child care opportunities in Highlands.

• Highlands Farmers Market shuts down: Due to numerous exhausting rounds between the founder of the Highlands Farmers Market and the town, the market that was supposed to run every Saturday morning through October ended last Saturday, Aug 24.

• Citizens out to raise $2 million for MAMA: For residents living in the mountains of North Carolina, where mere geography can make access to medical attention difficult, the Mountain Area Medical Airlift, affectionately known as MAMA, can make all the difference.

SEPTEMBER

• Farmers Market in K-H Park thru Oct.: If all goes as planned, the Highlands Farmers Market will put down stakes in the Kelsey-Hutchinson Park on Pine Street every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Sept. 7 through October.

• Highlands School feeling state’s budget cuts: Macon County Schools opened Monday, Aug 26 for the 2013-2014 school year and though Raleigh may seem worlds away from the mountains of Western North Carolina, its reach has been detrimental to the quality of education right here in Highlands.

• H-C Hospital and Mission sign MOU: Highlands-Cashiers Hospital (HCH) and Mission Health have finalized a non-binding memorandum of understanding (MOU) for HCH to become a full-member hospital of Mission Health. Mission Health is North Carolina’s sixth-largest health system and the region’s only not-for-profit, independent community hospital system governed and managed exclusively in western North Carolina.

• Change in county line could mean more property tax money for Macon: Survey now underway by N.C. Geodetic Survey in Raleigh. The survey will take a year or so to complete and will cost between $10,000 and $15,000 — all on the state’s tab.

• County appoints interim manager: Macon County is expected to have a new county manager in place no later than January 1, 2014. Mike Decker appointed interim.

• Highlands Gateway signs are completed: All four of the Highlands Gateway signs are now installed, and all the signs around them have been removed to focus only on the Gateways.

• Work to begin on Parker Meadows rec complex: Last Tuesday night, in a split 3-2 decision, county commissioners voted to allocate $21,000 from the county’s fund balance to begin the process of developing the Parker Meadows property into a recreational facility. Commissioners Paul Higdon and Ron Haven voted against the motion.

• Changes coming to Sign Ordinance: At a special called Planning Board meeting Monday night, members took a “walk-about” town to see how proposed changes to the Sign Ordinance might change the look of the business district.

• Main Street Coordinator position meets lukewarm response: Citizens and commissioners took issue with was Mayor David Wilkes’ request for a Main Street Coordinator.

• Citizen urges TB to deal with ‘Jake Brakes’: Mike Little requests the town curb the use of Jake Brakes within its limits.

• New pool hangs in the balance: It’s too early to say if the new pool will be nixed for this budget year but it’s a possibility. At Thursday night’s Town Board meeting, Town Manager Bob Frye said since the bids to build the new pool have come in over what has been budgeted, the pool project has slowed.

• NC teacher salary increase rank last in the country: At Monday night’s Board of Education meeting, board members saw proof regarding what North Carolina teachers already know … NC is dead last in teacher salary growth in the country.

• Bear attacks, eats dog in town: Early the evening of Friday, Sept. 20, the Reese family suffered the unimaginable when a 250 lb. bear literally ate their 13-year-old beagle, Tinkerbelle.

OCTOBER

• BOE discusses ‘gun and teacher tenure’ laws at mtgs.: Members grappled with the ramifications of recent legislation affecting school districts across the state.

• Candidates line up for Highlands Town Board: Q & A series begins: Donnie Calloway, running for Town Board Commissioner, incumbent Amy Patterson, running to keep her seat on the Town Board, Michael “Bud” Rogers, running for commissioner, Brian Stiehler, running for mayor; Pat Taylor, running for mayor; Incumbent Gary Drake who is running to keep his seat but said “Thanks but no thanks” to participating in the 5-week Q&A in Highlands Newspaper.

• Another bear attack; husky dog dead.

• Government Shutdown hits Macon: During the last game of what is being called their best year yet, Highlands Boys Soccer team played Elkin in the 3rd round of state games. They tied 2-2 at end of game, then played two sections of 10-min. overtime, still with no score, then did one 5-min. sudden death (where the first score wins) and they scored about 4 minutes in with the final score 3-2; Highlands’ loss.

• Robinson to challenge Jim Davis for NC Senate seat: Last week, Sylva resident Ron Robinson announced that he is challenging incumbent North Carolina Senator Jim Davis for the District 50 seat in the 2014 election.

• Citizens rally against Jake brakes: Pushing for an ordinance.

• MC Teachers, TAs to get 2% supplement: In a split vote Monday night, the Macon County School Board voted to give teachers and teacher assistants the 2% supplement they have been receiving for several years.

NOVEMBER

• New Mayor and crew on board: November 5, 2013 Election Results: Mayor: Patrick Taylor: 260 votes (59.77%); Brian Stiehler: 174 votes (40%). Commissioners: Amy Patterson: 294 votes (37.07%); Donnie Calloway: 270 votes (34.05%); Michael David “Bud” Rogers: 121 votes (15.26%); Gary Drake: 106 votes (13.3%). A total of 434 of Highlands’ 889 registered voters (48.8%) turned out to vote – 399 voted at the polls; 21 voted at one-stop voting and 14 voted absentee. Those newly elected will take their seats at the board table during new business at the December Town Board meeting.

• Town Board to consider business-friendly changes to sign ordinance: At the November 21 Town Board meeting, commission will consider the Planning Board’s recommendations concerning amendments to the sign ordinance – recommendations that may be considered more “business-friendly.”

• MC Schools ready for new 3rd grade EOQs: Legislation that went into effect the 2013-14 school year.

• Town Board selects new Town Attorney: At a special called meeting Tuesday, Nov. 5. the Town Board voted unanimously to hire Attorney James Kent (J.K.) Coward, Jrs Highlands Town Attorney.

• Help with Affordable Care Act comes to MC: A grassroots effort to help uninsured and underinsured Macon County citizens sign up for insurance through the Affordable Care Act was announced at Tuesday night’s Macon County Commission meeting.

• During the last game of what is being called their best year yet, Highlands Boys Soccer team played Elkin in the 3rd round of state games. They tied 2-2 at end of game, then played two sections of 10-min. overtime, still with no score, then did one 5-min. sudden death (where the first score wins) and they scored about 4 minutes in with the final score 3-2; Highlands’ loss.

• Robinson to challenge Jim Davis for NC Senate seat: Last week, Sylva resident Ron Robinson announced that he is challenging incumbent North Carolina Senator Jim Davis for the District 50 seat in the 2014 election.

• Town Board says No’ to off-premise signs and extra holiday; ‘yes’ to dark fiber rate.

• Holland part of Governor’s NC School Safety Task Force.

• County looks at new solid waste options as landfill ‘fills’ up. About 30,000 tons of garbage is accumulated in the county landfill annually and trash from the Highlands Transfer station accounts for about 7,300 tons of that.

DECEMBER

• Coalition to begin work on K-H Park: A half dozen local community organizations are coming together to make the tract now known as Kelsey-Hutchinson Park into…well, a real park.

• Franklin native to be youngest county manager in county’s history. Commissioners unanimously voted to hire Franklin native Derek Roland as the next county manager. At 28 years old, Derek Roland is the youngest manager in the county’s history.

• Harrell first HPD chief to graduate from NC Justice Academy Mgmt. course.

• Holland part of Governor’s NC School Safety Task Force.

• Community looks at new solid waste options as landfill ‘fills’ up. About 30,000 tons of garbage is accumulated in the county landfill annually and trash from the Highlands Transfer station accounts for about 7,300 tons of that.

• Highlands School seniors Tyler Mungar and Ellie Cate Beavers were named King and Queen at the Homecoming Dance at the Performing Arts Center on Saturday, Dec. 7.

• School administrators to receive supplemental for 2013-14 school year; too.

• New members take their seat at the table: At the Thursday, Dec. 12 Town Board meeting, Macon County Clerk of Court Vic Perry swore in Commissioners Amy Patterson and Donnie Calloway and Mayor Patrick Taylor.

• Zoning Board OKs SUP for new restaurant: A new Asian restaurant is coming to town. At the Dec. 11 Zoning Board meeting, the board unanimously approved a Special Use Permit (SUP) for the Asian House which will be located in Helen’s Barn.

• Highlands new pool on track: Disposal of demolished concrete point of discussion.

• Mario Gomes sentenced to 52 months in jail.
Walk to everything from this log home located on Foreman Road. Ready for your remodeling ideas. 2/2 MLS#75859 $240,000

What a setting in Wildwood Mountain. Great deck overlooking two ponds with a re-circulating water feature. 3/3 plus a family room and an office. Well priced MLS#78078 $574,000

Mirror Lake view cottage with new kitchen and baths. Front and rear decks, fenced yard. Privacy and lake access. 2/2 MLS # 77720 $252,000

The best view of all the Golf Villas in Highlands Falls CC. Watch the golfers on #10 green or the river otter in the lake. Pristine condition. 3/2 MLS#78264 $425,000

On a quiet street within an easy walk to dining, shopping and theatre, this 3/3 cottage overlooks Mill Creek. Two master suites. Vaulted ceilings, great porch. MLS#77846 $537,500

Walk to everything from this log home located on a great level lot on Foreman Road. Ready for your remodeling ideas. 2/2 MLS#75859 $240,000

Perfectly renovated Highlands Country Club cottage with amazing outdoor living space with fireplace plus a great mountain view. 3/2 MLS#76783 $720,000

English cottage in The Cotswolds. 3br/3.5ba, very private with long winding driveway, lovely landscaping and views. $797,000. MLS# 75521

Mountain views from this 3br/3ba with family room in Highlands Falls CC on private acre lot adjoining USFS. $497,000. MLS# 73006

Walk to everything from this log home located on Foreman Road. Ready for your remodeling ideas. 2/2 MLS#75859 $240,000

White Mountain views from the oversized covered deck of this five bedroom/4 bath home. Lots of windows, lots of wood, high ceilings. Workshop. MLS#69231 $1,127,000

Just outside city limits, this 1947 Log Cabin on 2.84 acres has 3br/3ba, 2 lofts, sunroom and stone patio. $295,000. MLS# 76384

Perfectly renovated Highlands Country Club cottage with amazing outdoor living space with fireplace plus a great mountain view. 3/2 MLS#76783 $720,000

English cottage in The Cotswolds. 3br/3.5ba, very private with long winding driveway, lovely landscaping and views. $797,000. MLS# 75521

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B

uyers often ask, why buy a condo? It's a good question to ask because there are differences between living in a home or a condo. While some may chalk up space as the main difference, there are other considerations to think about when weighing the options of owning a condo or a single family home.

A single family home in Highlands could potentially offer a great deal of space and privacy, offering the perfect getaway for families and friends. A single family home also needs to be maintained. A condo can come in a variety of sizes and is not always as small as one might think. While there are common spaces associated with condo living, a condo can still offer plenty of privacy.

Highlands' condos have continued to lag in sales. Due to the high level of inventory, condos still offer some of the best prices and values in the Highlands area. Although there are maintenance fees, they do present a value that a single family homeowner would have to pay for out of pocket. It is important to look at the whole picture before making a decision between a condo and a single family home.

The biggest pro for buying a condo as opposed to a single family house is the ease of care. A condo is maintenance-free as exterior maintenance, landscaping and common spaces are all cared for by the association and covered by your dues. You can come and go knowing that you don’t need to worry about scheduling basic maintenance.

- Lynn Kimball has 40 years of real estate experience, with 28 years serving the Highlands area. Whether you are interested in searching properties or comprehensive information about our area, you are invited to visit her user friendly website at www.signatureproperties-nc.com. Meadows Mountain Realty has two locations, at 41 Church Street in the Old Edwards Inn complex or visit Lynn at 2334 Cashiers Road across from Highlands Country Club. Lynn Kimball can be reached at 828-421-8193 or by email at Lynn@MeadowsMtnRealty.com.

...RE SALES continued from page 10

Don’t Let This One Get Away

Gorgeous acreage (2.77 +/- acres) with stream, lush rhododendron, paved access, and easy building site. May be subdivided into 2 lots. One lot would be in-town and the other outside the town limits. Other lot could be annexed into town for sewer and water, then buyer may apply for subdividing. Located just minutes from Main Street. Owner financing available!

Offered at $198,000, MLS #75876.
Contact Susie deVille at (828) 371-2079.

Lush Satulah Mountain Lot

Located on historic Satulah Mountain in the heart of Highlands, this truly unique, 1.1 +/- acre lot features easy access, a gentle building site, lush wooded views, and Town power and water. Recently surveyed and flagged, this unique parcel is easy to walk and see.

Offered at $199,000, MLS #75978.
Contact Susie deVille at (828) 371-2079.

Gorgeous Meadow & View Acreage

Remarkable estate-sized wooded lot (3.4 +/- acres) in the exclusive Ravenel community in the heart of Highlands. The unique in-town parcel has a level building site, a great winter ridgeline view, and gorgeous rock outcroppings. Much of the Ravenel community is preserved as natural green space and common areas. Offered at $469,000, MLS #76794.

Contact Susie deVille at (828) 371-2079.

Dream Lot in Ravenel

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828-508-9952.
Good buy close to town. 2BD/2BA, large open living room, dining room, and kitchen. Stone wood burning fireplace in living room. Attached single carport with paved driveway. Level yard with private back yard. Short walk to Mirror Lake. Needs a little TLC. MLS # 78385 Priced for quick sale at $179,900.

Highlands Falls Country Club. One level 3BD/3BA with additional office/reading area. Huge porch and decks with winter view. Large 2 car garage. 2 water features. Offered at $545,000. mls #78544

Easy RV parking (50 amp. service) with this spacious renovated home. Close to Main St. Highlands on over an acre of nearly level land. Winter views of Shortoff and surrounding mountains. Bonus room above 2-car garage. 4000+ sq. ft. home. MLS #78298 Offered for $595,000.

Charming cabin needs some love but is comfortable with 4BD/3BA with sunny view of Whiteside Mountain. Good parking and wood-burning fireplace. Walls of glass bring in view of the mountain and valley below. Offered at $885,000.


Cold Springs Tennis and Saddle Club! This 3BD/2.5BA home is on 1.46 acres with lakefront living and borders USFS. Cathedral ceilings, a stone fireplace and a great deck. Lower level has a family room with fireplace and deck, two bedrooms, a bath and garage. Offered at $1,100,000. mls #78065

At Highlands Country Club. 4BD/4BA family home on almost an acre. Close to the golf course, yet private. Furnishings are negotiable. Access by canoe to Lake Sequoyah. Priced well under the tax appraised value, and offered at $649,000. mls #78368

Wildcat Cliffs Country Club. 2BD/2BA has new kitchen and baths. Split floor plan with 2 masters. Large open kitchen/dining and cathedral living room with fireplace. Covered porch and deck with views of the golf course and mountains. Offered at $340,000.

Shelby Place. Year round family home has a good floor plan with a 2 car garage, large open rooms. 4BD/4.5BA, large porch. Offered at $880,000.

Great condo in Mountain Moorings. Main level has living room with hardwood floors and fireplace, dining room, kitchen and master suite, upper level has 2BD and a full bath. Large open deck. Offered at $189,000. mls #78196

Atop Moon Mountain this 3BD/3BA home has a lovely screened porch with a nice mountain view. Livable as is but would shine with cosmetic updates. Offered at $389,000. mls #78606

Located on 2.55 acres, the property fronts Shortoff Road, and is quiet and private. A one story 2BR/2BA cottage with woodburning fireplace, large covered deck, and a studio/playhouse. Views of Shortoff Mountain. Offered furnished including the dishes! $405,000 MLS# 78133

6.74 acres with HWY 28 frontage and views. Great views of Brushy Face and Satulah Mountains from this tract that borders USFS on one side. There is a 2BD/1BA cabin, an out building. Many investment possibilities. $274,900. mls #78472

60 +/- acre farm with fabulous views. Main house 3BD/2BAs, 2 half baths, 2 fireplaces, 2 kitchens, and 2 great rooms. The guest house is connected by a breezeway. Views from almost every room. The property is gated and fenced, has a horse barn, equipment building, a pond and numerous out buildings. Fruit trees, and mature landscaping. $1,795,000. mls #78539

Highlands Country Club. On Mooreswood Circle. Level access. Main floor has walnut floors and a wall of glass that opens onto the large porch with spectacular layered views. Greatroom with stone fireplace. Master bedroom with huge bath. Laundry, and 2 car garage. Lower level has 3 guest bedrooms with family room. Offered at $1,295,000. mls #78070

Strawberry Lane. Charming mountain cottage has great room spaces with lovely grounds. 3BD/3BA, garage. Needs some kitchen and bath updates! Offered at $250,000. mls #78165

Highgate. Spacious 3BD/3.5BA has soaring ceilings and great outdoor living with huge covered deck with fireplace. Backs up to USFS lands with a great mountain view. Master bedroom and bath, 2 guest bedrooms and baths upstairs. Offered at $1,100,000. mls #78291

Magnificent long range views in this once-outstanding mountain residence. Needing some repairs and upgrades. Near the summit of King Mountain. Two sets of architectural plans for improvements are available. MLS # 78386. $285,000.
Living in the public square

By Mark Ford
Highlands First Baptist Church, Pastor

Living as a Christian in today’s world is getting more difficult. Forces are at work in trying to make us compromise our values and beliefs. Otherwise, we are being less than tolerant, and even uncharitable. It comes down to two philosophies that vie for the heart and soul of our nation. And the outcome of this conflict will determine the future role of the Christian faith in the public square where ideas compete.

Christianity holds to a Biblical worldview that has been foundational to Western civilization for over 1500 years. Starting with Augustine of Hippo, this worldview holds to an appropriate belief of human nature as fallen and sinful. This belief, in what has been called “original sin,” declares the need for a countervailing force to restrain the unbridled use of power and greed — and this force is God. It requires submission and humility, yielding to Divine absolutes as our guide, Divine institutions of law and family, and a redemptive transformation of the heart. Herbert London of the Hudson Institute has argued convincingly that the great defender of democracy and historian Lord Acton clarified the boundaries for modern democracy when he said famously, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” London goes on to defend his thesis that this idea was uniformly subscribed to by our Founders, and that the Constitution could be fairly called an “Augustinian document” as it takes seriously the reality of original sin and the need for restraints on human nature. But our newfound freedoms now dictate the changing of laws to comply with our desires, rather than the laws restraining those desires. Entitlements called “my rights” carry the day while submission to law and rule are often viewed as enslavements.

The classic worldview of our early history has given way to modern philosophy and its desire to break free from dependencies on restraining institutions like the nuclear family, religion, and absolutes of any stripe. The concept of freedom as proposed by Jean-Jacque Rousseau, Voltaire, modern day existentialists as Nietzsche and Sartre, and today’s post-modernists is that these restraints are “slaverys” that restrict the individual’s right to free expression and practice. Secularism has benefited the concept of freedom — and absolutes of any stripe. The concept of freedom as proposed by Nietzsche and Sartre, and today’s post-modernists.

So it really is simple. Do we believe in the classic worldview that established and prospered Western civilization in the past — beliefs in humanity’s sinful nature which can only prosper under Biblical values and Christian teachings about the Divinely ordained institutions of family and law? Or are we going to push the tried and tested Christian message and Biblical directives out of the public discussion through attacks of intolerance and irrelevance, and resort to a free-for-all public domain where all opinions and desires hold equal value — opinions from fallen, sinful creatures. In this pastor’s opinion — if I’m allowed to say so — the only Voice that matters is the Creator’s voice in the Holy Scriptures, and for me, it has proven to work best in our broken, sinful world. “Choose this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).
The remainder of the Highlands Township transactions and Flats Township’s 67 transactions will be in the Jan. 9, 2014 edition.
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**A Native and a Local**
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Call Brokers
Betty and Don Fisher at 787-2324 or 226-1030
Country Club Properties
...BIRTH continued from page 1

Two EMS paramedics arrived in an ambulance shortly after and quickly prepared Sarah for a ride to Highlands-Cashiers Hospital’s Emergency Room. Paramedics asked Reese to drive the ambulance while they rode in the back to tend to Sarah.

They arrived at the hospital and as they pulled the gurney from the truck and wheeled her through the glass doors into the ER hallway, Sarah’s water broke. The baby was coming.

Just as the paramedics were lifting her onto the ER bed, Sarah pushed once and baby Michael Dallas Passmore was born.

Dr. Baker was on duty and told her Michael was the first baby to be born in the ER proper in about five years, though he said a baby was born in the hallway about three years ago.

Sarah had been to her doctor in Franklin the previous day, Oct. 11, because she was having contractions.

“I told him I thought the baby would come on the 12th … he told me to stay close and to be in touch,” said Sarah. “By midnight Oct. 11 contractions started and by 1 a.m., I told my husband to call 9-1-1. The contractions weren’t fake, the baby was really coming.”

After resting for a while in the ER, EMS transported her to Angel Medical Center for a follow-up with her doctor.

When Sarah found out she was pregnant, her doctor estimated Oct. 20 to be the due date, but Sarah’s mother knew better.

“I asked Sarah if she had asked the doctor to be available on the 12th because both of her other children were born on the 12th. Sarah said I was silly, but here we are – three babies born on the 12th,” said her mom, Diana Potts.

Makala Brooke Sanford, (4) was born Dec. 12; Kenneth Siler Passmore, (17 months) was born July 12 and Michael was born Oct. 12.

Birthing a baby – or being that close to birthing a baby – was a first for Austin.

“It was nerve wracking – especially since I was the only one to respond to the call. But in the end, what I saw and experienced was very rewarding,” he said.

Brad Hovis, one of the two paramedics on the call, was a “hands on” Dad during the births of his own children but said this was the first time he had to help deliver a baby on the job.

Michael just returned from his two-month checkup where he was pronounced healthy; weighing in at an even 13 pounds.

– Kim Lewicki
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