TB hears 2017-'18 budget ‘wish lists’ from dept. heads

At last Tuesday’s annual retreat, the Highlands Town Board took the first step in formulating the 2017-'18 budget by meeting with town staff to hear the state of affairs in each department and to consider their wish lists. First up was Town Manager Josh Ward.

He said as of February 2017, property tax collections had decreased $56,035.23 compared to February 2016 but said the decrease had a lot to do with Jackson County’s recent reval.

“Property values in Jackson County dropped $16 million which meant a loss of property tax to Highlands of $30,000,” he said. There are several tracts of property off Bowery Road and in the country clubs off US 64 east that are either in the Highlands town limits or within the Highlands Township that are either completely or partially in Jackson County.

By Merritt Shaw

When you think of a firefighter, you probably imagine a young man wearing turnout gear and helmet, carrying an axe and wielding a fire hose; but today’s firefighters – even here at the Highlands Fire & Rescue Department – are male and female, with various skills who collectively have what it takes to be a fire fighter and first-responder.

New member Emily Shuler – a 20-year-old Highlands native

Group to develop bicycle touring in WNC counties

Input from citizens requested: Macon County bike plan event is March 23 at 6 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church in Franklin.

Bicycle tourism is on the rise in Western North Carolina, and communities in the seven western most counties are looking to cash in.

A 2015 study conducted by Don Kostelec of Kostelec Planning, looking at Bicycle Tourism in Haywood County and the other seven westernmost counties, estimated that the industry generated $14 million each year as an economic impact for the region.

The Southwest Commission, a regional council of government serving as a technical, economic, and planning resource for local towns and counties in the region, is hosting a series of planning meetings to begin developing the regional Southern Blue Ridge Bike Plan for Cherokee, Graham, Clay, and Macon counties.

“The meetings will be a time for folks to provide input on this new plan currently in development,” said Sealy Chipley with Chipley Consulting, the firm developing the plan. Specifically, we will have boards with bicycle routes (and cue sheets) in each of the counties we developed with public input. We will also present results of the economic impacts of bicycle tourism. Folks will have the opportunity to provide their input.”

Shuler is 2nd female at HF&R Dept.

By Merritt Shaw

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From left: Highlands Fire & Rescue Chief Ryan Gearhart, retired firefighter “Grandpa” James L. Ramsey and Emily Shuler.

Photo by Merritt Shaw

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\]
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Citizens reminded of trash dumping etiquette

The March meeting of the Highlands Town Board is tonight at the Highlands Conference Center. The meeting starts at 7.

The Mountain Top Rotary Club will request sponsoring two art shows in Founders Park. The dates for the shows are the weekends of June 24-25 and August 26-27. I am glad to see the art shows returning to the park. I’m certain the Mountain Top Rotary Club will do an outstanding job in sponsoring the event that will benefit nonprofit groups.

The board will also hear a request from Phil Potts for the town to recognize and support the “National Wreaths Across America Day,” which is scheduled for December 17. Community volunteers will place wreaths on veterans’ graves at the Highlands Cemetery.

Other agenda items include a subdivision request for a property on 4 1/2 Street, approval of the town audit contract, a fund balance apportion to purchase a Bear Pen tract, and final approval of the Verizon Antenna Contract. The board will also go into closed session to continue discussions of the possible business expansion for the public body, namely the solicitation request for a private partner in creating a fiber optic, utility network.

In discussing trash problems last week, I called folks who dump trash “Bozo Heads.” Several readers have suggested other names. One name was AHs. Use your imagination, I can’t repeat the full words. Another suggestion was “SLUGs,” short for Selfish, Lazy, Unappreciative Goons. Both sound good to me.

We all need to be aware of where and what garbage should be placed in trash containers. Soon there will be signs on the large dumpsters around the business district stating these are commercial dumpsters that have been leased. These dumpsters are not for residents to dump household garbage. That practice is illegal dumping in violation of NC GS 14-399.

Local residents can take household garbage to the county recycling and convenience center located on Buck Creek Road, or at the county transfer station on Rich Gap Road. Also, old florescent lights can be taken to Rich Gap for proper disposal. Biohazard items, like used syringes, can be taken to Rich Gap, so long as they are in a secure container and labeled as a biohazard. Town sanitation workers have been stuck before with needles that were simply thrown into garbage bags.

Let me stress the importance of what is placed in trash containers.

A few weeks ago a sanitation worker was seriously injured while unloading a large commercial dumpster. He was using the mechanical hoist to tilt and unload the dumpster into the back of a garbage truck. The dumpster broke loose, swung sideways and hit the worker.

The cause of the accident was construction debris that should not have been placed in the dumpster. A 2x4 fell forward and lodged against the truck bed causing the dumpster to break loose while being unloaded. Being a sanitation worker can be a very hazardous job. Thankfully the worker recovered and is back to work.

The cause of the accident was construction debris that should not have been placed in the dumpster. A 2x4 fell forward and lodged against the truck bed causing the dumpster to break loose while being unloaded. Being a sanitation worker can be a very hazardous job. Thankfully the worker recovered and is back to work.
James Willard Keener, 84, of Highlands, NC, died Tuesday, March 7, 2017.
Born in Macon County, he was the son of the late James Robert Keener and Grace Talley Keener. James was a US Air Force veteran.
He is survived by his wife Lois Marie Potts Keener; son, James Keener, Jr. (Leslie) of Brevard; daughter, Tammy Hall (Sandy) of Tuscon, AZ; two sisters, Ruby Watts of Satolah, GA and Eleanor Blankenship (Harold) of Franklin; three grandchildren, Terri Keener, Chris Keener and Cory Hall; one great granddaughter, Faith Bryson; two step grandchildren, Jonathan Childers (Nikki) and Melissa McKinna (Shawn) and step great grandchildren, Mason Childers, Nathaniel Childers, Oakley Childers and Weston Childers.
A Memorial Service will be held at 2 p.m., Thursday, March 23 at First Baptist Church of Highlands. Rev. Randy Reed and Rev. Scott Holland will officiate.
Macon Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements. Online condolences can be made at maconfuneralhome.com

Lena Childers Garren, 84, of Highlands, passed away Wednesday, March 8, 2017.
Born in Glennville, NC, she was the daughter of the late Hayes and Lou Stewart Childers. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband Harold Earl Garren and five brothers and sisters, Aldon, Neal, Jessie, Mary “Hurble” and Lucille. Lena was a member of Ridgecrest Baptist Church.
She is survived by her son, Gary Garren and wife Cathy of Highlands; sister, Dixie Moses of Franklin; brother, Douglas “Doug” Childers of Gastonia, NC; one granddaughter, Meredith Garren and niece, Carolyn Sanders and her husband Dennis and their daughters, Erica Moore and Cheryl Vernon.
Funeral Service was held Sunday, March 12 in the Chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Tommy Fouts officiated. Burial was in Woodlawn Cemetery.
Macon Funeral Home was in charge of the arrangements. Online condolences can be made at maconfuneralhome.com

Engagement

Mr. and Mrs. Clyde “Bud” Hedden of Highlands, NC, announce the engagement of their daughter, Sarah E. Hedden to Justin Watson, son of Lamar and Melanie Nix of Clayton, GA.
Sarah is employed at Highlands Pharmacy and Justin is employed at Reeves Hardware in Highlands.
The wedding is planned for June 11, 2017 in Scaly Mountain, NC.

Community Action Needed by Monday, March 20

The Nantahala Forest Service has proposed THE SOUTHSIDE PROJECT, to cut timber in the Chattooga East Fork Headwaters area of Bull Pen, Granite City, Brushy Mountain, and the Ellicott Rock Wilderness Extension. If implemented, this cut will disqualify these areas for further protection under the new draft of NC Forest Revision Plan. To protect these Highlands treasures and prevent herbicide (which will be used indefinitely to keep open the logging access) and timber harvest in these sensitive areas, public comments are needed by end of day Monday, March 20.

Email To: comments-southern-north-carolina-nantahalanantahala@fs.fed.us
Subject Line: Southside Project Comments 828-837-8510
SHULER continued from page 1

who is the second female firefighter in the history of the Highlands Fire & Rescue Department -- is also a generationa

tional member.

Her grandfather, James L. Ramey, became a member of the Highlands Fire Department in 1988 and retired in 2008; her uncle Travis Ramey has been in the department since 2004.

When Shuler first graduated from high school she wanted to get into the paramedic program at Southwestern Community College (SCC) because she felt it fit her personality.

“I could picture myself doing this. And I’m pretty good at calming people down and letting them talk to me,” she said. She also felt that being in the medical field was a good paying job and it was exciting. “It gets your adrenalin going.”

But Shuler’s road to becoming a firefighter has not been an easy one. When she graduated high school, she was accepted into the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program at SCC but soon felt it was too much for her. She decided to take a break. Then her advisor suggested she spend some time at her local fire department to see if being an EMT was something she really wanted to do.

“So, I started going on calls and I thought ‘this is pretty awesome. I want to do this,’” she said.

Next Shuler decided she wanted to get back into the paramedic program at SCC but found it was hard to get back into the program a second time.

“They didn’t know if I was going to quit again; but they did let me back and it’s hard, but I feel this is something I really want to do,” she said.

Chief Gearhart has known Shuler since she was at Highlands High School and knew she could be a first-responder.

“I coached Emily in softball when she was in high school so I know she can handle the physical stuff needed to be a first-responder and she’s got the mental and emotional strength to do it, too.”

Shuler said the department is behind her all the way, even though her class schedule means she can’t make all the meetings or respond to all the calls.

“I told her that the EMT Program is a priority right now and once you get that done, then we’ll start with the fire department,” said Gearhart.

Everyone has a different reason for wanting to be a fire fighter. But whether it is to help people, to give back to the community or the excitement of it, it is a service that is needed and much appreciated by the whole community.

Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart, who is originally from Oklahoma, has been a member of the Fire Department since 1999. Members voted him Assistant Chief in 2011 and Fire Chief in 2013.

Gearhart said members’ skills and training vary throughout the 30-member volunteer force.

“It just depends on your availability and how much you are. If you had the money to miss work and go straight through all the training, it would take nine weeks,” Gearhart said.

• See SHULER page 5
SHULER continued from page 4

He said there are members who have been in the fire department almost 20 years who don’t have all of their training yet and there are a few who have been in the department four years who have their Fire Two Certification.

Shuler is also training to become an emergency dispatcher in Franklin. She works with kids at the Highlands Development Center, attends classes at SCC in the Emergency Medical Training curriculum and in her spare time.

She made it through her six-month vote — a department stipulation on the way to being fully initiated — and goes on calls when she is available.

In 2014, the first female firefighter, Lea Dallmann, joined. When Shuler started, Dallmann took Shuler under her wing.

Gearhart said when Dallmann applied, the fire station was at a point where it needed members. The procedures were in place if she wasn’t serious about the job or wasn’t working out for some reason. But Dallmann fit in well so the other members saw she was doing well in her fire training and soon the attitude was that they would just as soon go into a burning house with her than with anybody.

“It’s the same procedure we would do for a male. We treat her like one of us. And when I see someone who is gung-ho, wants to get their training and wants to be here, that says a lot to me,” Gearhart said.

The process of getting on the fire department takes time and dedication. Once an application is submitted, the membership votes. If the applicant passes the vote, a one-year probationary period starts. They must go through a rigorous physical test, take fire and first-aid training, then after six months of spending time with the members and voluntarily going on calls, the members vote a second time. It is done with a rudimentary white ball/black ball system. If they don’t feel you fit in or can’t handle the work physically or mentally, then the applicant may not be voted in.

To qualify to be a member of the fire department applicants must complete a state required 36 hours of training, a physical test, background check and drug screening. There is a meeting every Tuesday night and at those meeting training for pre-planning, learning where fire hydrants are, knowing where water points are, knowing the procedures when going on a call are offered.

On the 2nd Tuesday of the month, fire training is offered either through SCC class or officers go over the equipment and trucks to refresh members on their skills.

The other kind of training is medical.

Highland Fire & Rescue Department is a fire and first-responder department but only 60% of the members on the first department are first-responders. First-responders are not EMT-Basics, but they know first aid, how to take vital signs and how to stabilize a patient.

According to Gearhart, all members of Highlands Fire Department are technically town employees, even though they are volunteers.

However, he as Fire Chief and Robbie Forester as Assistant Chief, are full-time paid employees. Other members are paid a stipend. If they make 40% of the calls in six months, they get $1,200. If they don’t make the 40% of calls, they get $15 per call whether it’s 15 minutes or four hours.

In addition, the department pays 100% of the dues for the state pension fund. If a member puts in 20 years and retires from the department, they get a minimal monthly payout from the state pension fund.

“We did this as an incentive to get people to come to calls. At one point in time we got real low on people showing up for calls. It’s better now,” said Gearhart.

Highlands Fire & Rescue is one of Macon County’s 11 fire departments. At full roster there are 30 members — currently there are 29. Seven of the members are officers: Chief, Assistant Chief, Captain, 1st and 2nd Lieutenant, Rescue Captain and Rescue Lieutenant.

Two years ago a substation opened at the Meadows off US 64 east. Though Gearhart said the Highlands Township could use another substation, the numbers don’t work right now but there has been talk of increasing the roster to 35.

“By state law you have to have eight members and two trucks per substation and right now we are at 29 members and we are lacking the trucks we would need for another substation.”

Gearhart said the biggest recruiting program is the Junior Fire Fighter Program for 14- to 18-year-olds through word of mouth and the school system. The program is flexible and takes students’ schedules.

Keeping the ranks full has always been a challenge.
Will you have a “Rent-a-Preacher” at your funeral?

By Pastor Dr. Gary Hewins
Community Bible Church

I recently had the privilege of overseeing a funeral at Community Bible Church. Long time resident Tom James went on to be with the Lord. The funeral was very well attended. Tom obviously was a loving part of the fabric of the community. Two other pastors/friends of Tom’s and I were involved in the service.

As funerals go, it was an easy one to do. Tom sought not to be a great man; instead he lived as a good man. He loved his wife, Hilda, and his family and he walked with integrity, worked hard and brought others up in success. Tom helped many people along the way. Because Tom lived a good life, in my opinion, he was a great man. So many people seek greatness and fail to be good. Tom sought goodness and lived a great life.

Tom served his family and served his church, his community and his nation. We need more men like Tom James. Many see the need to emulate such men and that is a good thing but there is more to this story than simply doing what others have done in like manner. It is one thing to live a good life and it is another to live for and worship Christ with your life. Tom lived in and through and for Christ.

Tom owned a wrecker service. Christ is in the wrecker business as well. Tom came to people’s rescue when they needed help the most. Christ comes to people’s rescue when they need help the most, when their lives are a wreck. Tom would take calls in the coldest and darkest hours of the night. Christ takes calls in the coldest and darkest hours of the night as well. Tom’s headlights coming up behind a fearful and stranded driver was certainly a comforting sight. Christ brings light to fearful people as well.

I shared one thought for a minute or two at the funeral. Tom James had three pastors share at his funeral that represented different seasons of his life. When some people die, their families hire a “rent-a-preacher” to oversee their service. A total stranger giving a canned message of dying and hopefully living again to a group he likely does not know is not attractive to me. I recently heard of a “rent-a-preacher” who had to be reminded of the first name of the deceased during his “message” from the Lord. I have no issue with such ministers, they fill an important role, but there is more to this story than simply doing what others have done. It is one thing to live a good life and it is another to live for and worship Christ with your life. Tom lived in and through and for Christ.

Two things are certain. Those reading this article are going to die and each person’s death will likely precede some sort of recognition of their life. Are you in relationship with Christ, the church? Do you have a pastoral presence in your life? Do you know Christ and the eternal life he has for you or are you going on your own, alone and outside of community?

My grandmother came to a belief in Christ late in life. She had a “rent-a-preacher.” While the funeral was heart-felt among those who came to grieve, it too was fabricated for a lack of connection with the church and those shepherding the flock. May I encourage you to get connected with a local church that preaches and teaches the Bible and may I encourage you to continue to live a good life as did Tom. But, while we are at it, let’s do so in the incredibly inexplicable relationship with Christ.
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60th wedding anniversary!

Bob and Sammie Houston celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on March 14, 2017. They were honored with a luncheon at the home of their daughter and son-in-law Joe and Karen. They have been blessed with two children, Karen and Tim, four wonderful grandchildren, Danae, Trent, Matt and Melissa and five precious great grandchildren, Adisyn, Charlotte, Camden, Lucus and Emma. Attending the luncheon were family members and dear friends. Their grandson, Matt, sang some favorite hymns as he played his guitar. A close and special friend, Jim Kinard, shared fond memories and sang a special hymn with Sammie. Their legacy of their love and faithfulness to the Lord is the greatest gift to their family who love them with all of their hearts.

...SHULER continued from page 5

particularly since it's a volunteer department.

“They aren't doing this for the retirement,” said Gearhart. “I've talked to Mayor Pat Taylor and he is writing a letter to our Congressman Kevin Corbin to see if we can get an incentive for people to join. People risk their lives every day and if they are willing to risk their lives every day for 20 years they should get a little more.”
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$21.95 serves four

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$21.95 serves four

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$21.95 serves four

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Big Bearpen Mountain in Highlands City limits with 3 br/3ba. Meticulously maintained log home offers all the warmth of Old Highlands Charm, yet it is bright and open bringing in natural sun light. $850,000. MLS # 83797

Great lot in prestigious, gated Ravenel. Long summit views spanning from town to Shortoff to Whiteside and beyond. This easy laying homesite is the perfect place to build the home of your dreams right in town within a easy walk to everything. $799,000 MLS #85383

On the 7th hole at HFCC. This 4br/4.5ba home has vaulted ceilings, stone fireplace. Wrap around covered & open decks, lower level family room & guest suite. Attached 2 car garage. $545,000. MLS# 84474

Best condo value in Highlands Falls Country Club! Lovely 2br/2ba overlooking the 13th fairway with vaulted ceilings, stone-face fireplace, sunroom plus an open deck. $224,000. MLS #83675

2012 remodel with an enlarged master suite, porte cochere and a double carport. Rustic mtn feel with wood walls, floors. 3brr/3ba, great mtn views, and located in town. The partial basement could become a workshop. $697,000 MLS # 84941

In exclusive HIGHGATE, only 4 minutes to downtown Highlands. 5br/6.5ba home with open floor plan with high ceilings and a “walkout” terrace level w/ separate entrance. ‘his’ and ‘hers’ baths and closets. $1,195,000. MLS #83155

Simply the best of the best in Highlands Point. This 4br/7.5ba home has a view of Whiteside Mountain. Enjoy the sounds of 3 private waterfalls overlooking 2 Koi ponds, gazebo and hot tub. Lush native plants are woven into the rock walled setting. On the Atlanta side of Highlands - within a 5 minute drive to downtown Highlands. $4,300,000. MLS #84716

Flat Mountain with long range mountain views from this 3br/2ba home featuring floor to ceiling stone fireplace, vaulted ceilings and a private setting. $474,500. MLS #84634

Mountaintop Golf. Brand new 5br/4.5ba wonderful mountain home close to amenities and Lake Club. Incredible kitchen, mountain view, master suite with fireplace and very special bath. $2,295,000. MLS #68782

2012 remodel with an enlarged master suite, porte cochere and a double carport. Rustic mtn feel with wood walls, floors. 3brr/3ba, great mtn views, and located in town. The partial basement could become a workshop. $697,000 MLS # 84941

Highlands Country Club expanded and architecturally redesigned by acclaimed Atlanta architect, Norman Askins. This 4br/4ba home features wrap around decks and mountain views! $895,000. MLS #84686

Close to Highlands Country Club and close to town. This lovely home on Dog Mountain has 3 bedrooms/3 baths with spacious master bedroom on main. Open floor plan upstairs. Gas log stone fireplace in living room. Lower level family room has wood burning stone fireplace with two additional bedrooms each with full baths. Features 2 covered decks to enjoy the beautiful mountain views and a private spring fed trout pond. $425,000 MLS 83824.
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“...BUDGET from page 10
Proposed Skateboard Park plan.
Paving and patching streets will take place as the budget
allows. Patch jobs on Spring, Sherwood and Leonard streets
were mentioned, as well as Oak and Pine Street Alley since
K-H Founders Park will be completed this year. Paving could
take place this fall.
The old centerline paving truck is on its last legs and
businesses and citizens have complained about the noise it
makes. Nix said it’s due to parts nearing their end.
Dumpsters are being replaced annually and he said there
is still a need for a recycle convenience center in town.
The water line on NC 28 by Old Orchard Road needs
to be replaced. There was some talk about cost to the town
since the people the line services aren’t in the town limits and
contribute nothing for the repairs and upgrades.
Citizens serviced by town water pay the minimum $55 a
month versus $35 in town but that isn’t enough for upgrades.
“Even if we doubled the minimal charge, it wouldn’t
help,” said Nix. “By state law we can’t put back a 2-inch line
for more than 1,000 feet; it has to be a 6 inch line after that.”
Six-inch lines are the norm now and are of course much
more expensive.
Mayor Taylor said this is one of many cases in town
where previous boards allowed services out of town without
regard for taxpayers.
“It’s the contrary tale of one board over another,” he
said.
The Buckhorn water tank on Satulah needs to be re-
placed with one that has 50% more capacity. Once that’s done
the road will be paved likely in December up to the Worley
property. Beyond that is private property.
Rec Park
Rec Park Director Lester Norris began his presentation
by reminding the board that the 3-year .015 Ad Valorem tax
that was passed in the 2014-2015 budget to be used for Capital
Improvement projects within the Recreation Department
is set to sunset June 30, 2017.
The funds were used to renovate the Rec Dept. gym; the
upper level restrooms; complete the new pool; the addition
of the pool dome; renovations at the ballfield; and to build
the public restrooms in Founders Park.
During 2015-2016 the entrance sign at the Recreation
Department was added, the ball field fence was replaced and
the Ice Rink was added in Founders Park.
During 2016-2017 the windows were replaced in the
Civic Center and Christmas decorations were ordered for
Founders Park.
But Norris said more needs to be done so he would like
to see the Ad Valorem tax continued.
“In order to move forward with the remaining capital
projects within the Recreation Department estimated to cost
$1,169,498, the Ad Valorem tax needs to be extended.”
On the wish list for 2017-18 is the gym stage and lower
level renovations which have been discussed but put on
the back burner year after year.
The estimated cost for these renovations is $427,763.
“If approved, I need to start putting together plans,
bid documents and get the project bids back and ready to
be awarded at the July Town Board Meeting so that the
renovations can begin in August,” said Norris.
The remaining capital projects are the main level and
exterior renovations to the Civic Center, replacement of Ball Field lights and the construction of a Skate Board Park.
Norris said with town funds and PARTF grants the
Skate Board Park could become a reality.
Altitude Broadband
GIS/MIS Director Matt Shuler said Altitude Broad-
band currently has 130 customers with 20 of them getting
fixed fiber because they were unable to get fixed wireless
beaming from towers and water tanks on Big Bear Pen, Brushy Face and Satulah.
The department is currently building out fiber as fast
as it can and connecting new customers – moving down
NC 106 now.
House Bill 129 is back in affect which says that mu-
cipalities can offer broadband but must seek public/private partnerships.
“The town wants to find that partner and we are con-
sidering options now,” said Shuler.
The board went into closed session to discuss op-
tions but no decisions were made.
Tuesday’s retreat was an “information only” affair
with input to be used to formulate the budget. No votes
were taken on any subject.
– Kim Lewicki
...BICYCLE continued from page 1

ful stakeholder input. It provides a range of economics, planning and communications services. The firm “helps groups chart their future and build better places.”

The Southern Blue Ridge Bike Plan’s goal would be to do just that and with the input of the community providing input on draft routes, the Southwestern Commission hopes to develop a plan for Macon, Graham, Clay, and Cherokee counties.

With North Carolina’s westernmost counties looking at ways to attract new tourists, the 2015 study developed by Kostelec noted that there are several advantages to investing in the promotion of bicycle-related tourism over investment in other tourism activities. One main point noted in the study is that the average stay in the region for a bike tourist is 3.7 nights, which can generate more spending on amenities than the average tourist, who stays 2.5 nights.

The economic impact of bicycle tourism goes beyond the tourism aspect and boosts the economy through job creation. According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation, work on greenways, sidewalks and bicycle facilities, on average, creates the most jobs — 17 jobs per $1 million spent, generating 4.5 more jobs than the next-most productive categories, new highway construction and pavement widening.

The Southwest Commission isn’t alone in its vision of focusing on bicycling, not just for tourists but for residents, too.

The Town of Franklin adopted a comprehensive master bike plan last week. The BikeWalk Plan is a master plan developed in partnership with J.M. Teague Engineering & Planning and the citizens of Franklin to make the town more bicycle and pedestrian friendly. The master plan identifies 22 projects throughout the town ranging in cost from a $225-foot bridge being placed on Wells Grove Road crossing over the Little Tennessee River at a cost of $8,000 to a $4 million project to construct a 3.7 mile Southwest Loop multi-use path for both bicyclists and pedestrians separated from motor vehicles around Franklin.

For more information Southern Blue Ridge Bike Plan and to learn what you can do to make this happen in Macon County, attend the public input meeting on March 23 at 6 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church’s Tartan Hall at 26 Church Street, Franklin, NC

...LETTER continued from page 2

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