

# Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Nov. 16, 2023

## MC Commissioner Shearl calls for county manager's resignation; admits to colluding prior to taking oath of office

By Brittney Lofthouse

With the rise of blind partisanship on the local, county, state, and federal level, decorum and courtesy, or the lack thereof, was nearly completely absent during Tuesday night's meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners.

With a hoard of divisive, partisan issues on the agenda — everything ranging from revising the county's agreement with the Fontana Regional Library system to commissioners seeking to make school board elections partisan, the all Republican board of county commissioners engaged in a marathon meeting that ended just before midnight, and called for Sheriff Brent Holbrooks to intervene to keep the peace between board members.

Under old business on the agenda, County Manager Derek Roland presented a proposal to commissioners to address the county's remaining \$1,850,659 in American Rescue Funds that were directed to Macon County as part of the federal COVID10 relief package in 2021.

In October 2022, the Macon County Board of Commissioners unanimously voted to spend the majority of the \$6.9 million the county received in ARPA

(American Rescue Plan Act) funding on premium pay for all county employees. The approved plan provided every employee — nearly 500 individuals — with a \$2 an hour proem pay bonus. The commissioners vote also determined that the funding would be provided to county employees in the form of seven lump sums, paid to employees in six-month increments.

In 2022, Premium Pay was identified as one of the four allowable ways for local governments to spend ARPA funds, according to the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The others — infrastructure improvements, revenue loss and COVID recovery — were discussed amongst county officials in 2022 and were determined to not be immediate needs, as Macon County's economy grew during the pandemic, rather than experiencing an adverse effect. Macon County was among the majority of local governments across the country to decide to spend the money for employee salaries.

In April of 2023, the county received notice from the U.S. Department of Treasury that due to President Joe Biden declaring an end to the COVID19 Pandemic,

• See SHEARL page 7



Aerialists MaKenna Bilbery class of '26 of Otto, NC, Jasmine Abranyi class of '27 of Highlands, and Ivanna Zermeno class of '26 of Santiago, Mexico in Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School's production of "Cirque Synthetica."

## 'Cirque Synthetica' wows at RGN

Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School premiered its one-of-a-kind Cirque performance, "Cirque Synthetica," on the

Rearden Stage on Oct. 26-28.

"Cirque Synthetica" was directed by Joshua Miller, Rabun Gap's artistic director, and utilized

the power of artificial intelligence and human creativity to create a unique storytelling experience.

• See Cirque page 16

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### Burn ban and water shortage continues

I wish I could say it's over, but I can't. The drought and related restrictions on water use and outside burning remain in place. The small amount of rain we got over the past week-end did nothing to alleviate the crisis except give firefighters a short period to recover and reset. The forest fires continue.



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

Highlands will be following the lead of the North Carolina Forest Service in following the no outside burn ban. When that state agency lifts the fire ban in Western Carolina, we will do the same. Currently, the state agency is asking citizens to report any outside burning activity by calling 911.

In Highlands, a 911 call concerning possible outside burning will trigger a response by the Highlands Police and Fire Departments. Last week, I visited with the firemen at their station. They had a door up and a fire truck on the ready. A number of firefighters were standing by, ready to respond.

The chief told me they made three calls in one day concerning possible outside burning. In another instance, a contractor crew was burning a pile of scrap wood at a building site. The police issued

a citation that has a \$500 fine. That kind of reckless behavior will not be tolerated under these critical circumstances. The last thing I want to see is what happened in Gatlinburg in the previous fire ban in 2016. That community lost lives and property due to the careless actions of a few individuals.

The town continues to monitor and manage the declining water levels. I urge everyone to consciously strive to reduce their water use during this severe drought period.

Thursday night is the November meeting of the Highlands Town Board. A workshop session will begin at 6 pm, followed by the business meeting at 7 pm. The meetings will be at the Highlands Community Center.

The focus of the workshop will be to review the current weekend construction regulations. Specifically, issues such as commercial operation of leaf blower and other equipment will be covered. The staff and board will also review the commercial color chart, which was discussed at the last workshop. Keep in mind that items on the workshop agenda will not have final actions taken until a subsequent Town Board meeting.

On the agenda of tonight's board meeting will be yet another discussion of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce building lease. Staff from the chamber have concerns about the wording of the one-year temporary lease that the Town Board approved in September.

The board will also hear a report from Hotwire Communications concerning operational issues and contract commitments. The contract the town has with Hotwire requires these periodic updates.

The board will also review a proposed town street light policy that staff developed from discussions at a previous workshop. Up to this point, the town hasn't had a formal policy concerning street light placements.

The board will also review a UDO Amendment concerning exterior commercial lighting. No final action will be taken other than calling for a public hearing on the proposed amendment.

Hope to see you at the meeting, or it can be accessed by a YouTube portal that is on the town website.

## • HIC'S VIEW •



"Hey stinky, Elon called. Says he can monetize gravity. He's offering us 6% of gross after the first eon."

## • WEATHER •

Thu, 16-Nov	Fri, 17-Nov	Sat, 18-Nov	Sun, 19-Nov
58°F 46°F	60°F 44°F	57°F 32°F	53°F 33°F
Mainly cloudy	Cloudy with a few showers	Clouds yielding to sun	Plenty of sunshine
RealFeel® High 57° Low: 46°	RealFeel® High 61° Low: 49°	RealFeel® High 57° Low: 41°	RealFeel® High 57° Low: 30°

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### Highlands Newspaper

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## • INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

### Price per square foot

I enjoy watching the reality shows "Selling New York" and "Selling LA" on Bravo. Like other reality shows, it isn't actually reality with the drama being created between the agents or agents and clients, along with a lot of over-the-top sales gimmicks. What I do find interesting is seeing some beautiful properties and what they sell for. One of the main items they discuss is the price per square foot with prices going into the thousands of dollars per square foot. Of course, it varies depending on the building, area of town, view and amenities.



**Carl Romberg**  
Landmark Realty

clude location, condition, terrain and the direction the house faces just to name a few. Those are all factors that a value like Zillow's "Zestimate" cannot take into consideration when calculating the real value.

To help demonstrate the reality of pricing, I did a study of 6 homes with a Highlands address that sold in the past 12 months between \$1.2 and 1.25 million. I had been in each of these and obtained the square footage from the tax records

which may not be exact, but would be close. These are the results of what sold:

1. 4 bedrooms/3.5 baths; 3420 SF; .58 acre; very nice long view; just outside town limits; built in 1973 and updated; double garage; baseboard heat and no A/C; unfurnished. \$351/SF.

2. 5 bedrooms/4 baths; 3086 SF; 4.24 acres; very nice view; about 10 minutes from town; built in 2001; double garage; central heat & air; furnished. \$389/SF.

3. 3 bedrooms/2.5 baths; 2630 SF; .39 acre; no view; in town; built in 1957 and recently updated; single carport; central heat & air; furnished. \$475/SF.

4. 4 bedrooms/2.5 baths; 2234 SF; 1.01 acre; wooded view; 10 minutes from town; built in 2021; double garage; central heat & air; unfurnished. \$560/SF.

5. 2 bedrooms/2 baths; 1248 SF; .98 acre; wooded view; in town; built in 1980 and recently updated; single garage; central heat & air; furnished. \$1001/SF.

6. 3 bedrooms/2 baths; 1074 SF; .41 acre; exceptional view; in town; built in 1962 and updated in 2003; no garage; central heat and no air; furnished. \$1141/SF.

• See INVESTING page 13

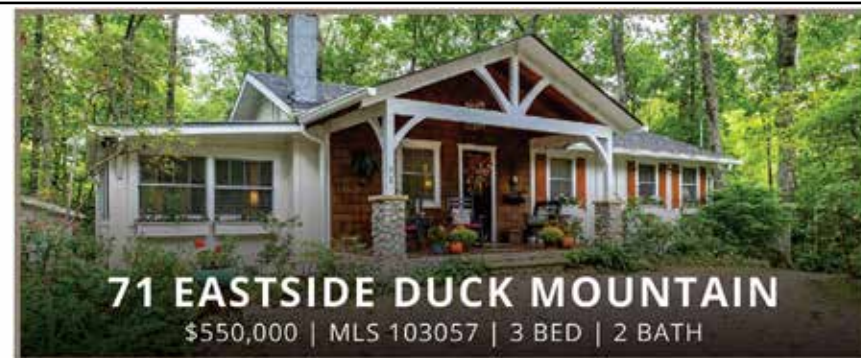
Almost every time I am showing houses, the clients ask what the square footage of the house is. As I understand it, the Highlands-Cashiers MLS is the only MLS in North Carolina that does not require the calculation and entry of the square footage of homes. I have heard different stories as to why this is the case but don't know what the actual reason is. Needless to say, it is somewhat of a pain to measure houses given some of the terrain challenges and unusual shapes of houses in the area so no one is complaining. The North Carolina Real Estate Commission has strict guidelines on calculating the square footage and agents can be reprimanded if it is calculated incorrectly.

Following the question, I explain why the square footage of properties isn't a great guideline of price in our market. You can have the exact same house in the same neighborhood. One may have a wooded view up a hill and another may have an outstanding long-range view. There is going to be a large discrepancy in the two values. Other factors that impact the pricing of similar homes in-

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### OTTO

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MLS# 103330 | \$629,000 | 3BR / 3BA

This wonderful home sits on five acres in Highlands. The spacious living area is perfect for relaxation and entertainment, while the adjacent dining space sets the stage for memorable gatherings. Other main level features are a convenient guest bedroom, a large deck, and a nice kitchen with a large pantry. The primary bedroom commands the upper floor with a generous bathroom and walk-in closet.

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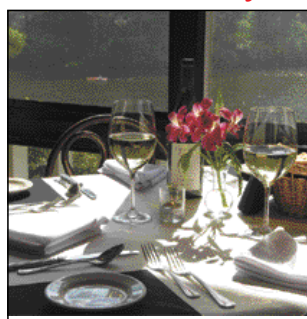
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# • LETTER •

## Project 2025 - Hate is Taught

Dear Editor,

I was recently in New Orleans walking in a park when I came across a group of 20 to 25 kindergarten children. They were with a teacher, and she gave them a short lesson as they sat together on the grass. Then they rose, took the hand of the next child, and all walked together in a line, holding hands, to the next area, where they again sat down and had another lesson. The children were adorable; they were of all different races, all sitting and learning together.

As I watched these innocent young children, I had a terrible thought: I wondered when they would be taught to hate each other just because they were different.

What made me think of that was that I had just heard from a friend that USAF Colonel, retired, Paul Schowalter had responded to my request in my letter-to-the-editor concerning veterans voting for Trump in a letter he wrote in the Nov. 2 edition entitled "Excoriating veterans who back Trump."

I had asked any Vet who supported Trump and could overlook his disparaging conduct toward veterans to please let me know how they could. The response came to me via a mutual friend.

His wife, who had read the letter, confronted her husband with all of Trump's statements and actions about veterans. He responded to her by saying that he didn't care what Trump is or does because Trump was still better than any Democrat. She cried.

I wonder when he learned to unconditionally hate, or at least disrespect and dismiss, an entire group of people—the Democrats group, which includes his wife. Prejudice and hate are not born to the person; they are learned. And I guess this particular vet learned it well.

Unfortunately, hate is on the rise, and Trump has become the great facilitator of hate in America. His rants against Muslims, Democrats, illegal immigrants (his wife was one), judges with Latin heritage, Latin and black men falsely accused of rape (Central Part Five - convicted and later found innocent), and the DOJ and the FBI (Reuters

April 2023) are legendary and golden news stories for the Fox "It doesn't have to be true to be reported" News station. And now the twice impeached, four times indicted, three times convicted of fraud (Civil Fraud – Sept 2023, Trump University – March 2017, and criminal tax scheme - Jan 23), liable for sexual abuse (May 2023), and speaker of 30,573 lies while President (NY Times Jan 2021) has started his campaign for President by choosing Waco, TX, the site of Branch Davidian standoff where 80 people died, for the announcement of his platform, which includes "I am your retribution" (March 2023), and "I will defund the FBI and DOJ."

As of November 6, "Project 2025" was revealed, which includes a hot list of people to investigate as soon as Trump takes office, including General Milley, Attorney General Bill Barr, Attorney Cobb, and General/Chief of Staff John Kelly, as well as a plan, that includes executive orders, that would deploy the military domestically under the Insurrection Act (Washington Post Nov 6, 2023). And as of November 12, Trump is now referring to Americans who don't support him as "Vermin," the same word used by the Nazis. I cannot fathom how none of the above matters to his supporters.

My lady's stepfather is a 99-year-old WWII veteran, and each Saturday, he has a station in the World War II museum in New Orleans where people visit with him and learn about his service in WWII. He is a remarkable man. Whenever I am in NOLA, I visit the museum. It has the most incredible displays of individual soldiers and their personal stories and sacrifices. It is a monument to Democracy and a testament against hate.

During WWII, in response to the Nazi threat, Winston Churchill famously said, "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight in the landing ground, we shall fight in the streets. We shall never surrender." We are not facing the Nazis today in America, but we are facing a Trump.

**Matt Eberz  
Highlands**

## ...SHEARL continued from page 1

the allowable uses for the ARPA funds were changed. That change initially stated that the funding could no longer go toward premium pay, as the stipulations with the funding specifically stated the premium pay was allowed for time worked during the public health emergency.

While many counties across the country used the ARPA funding to provide one-time lump sum bonuses for employees, because Macon County intended for the bonuses to be paid out in six-month increments through October 2024, the change in allowable expenditures in April meant that the \$1.8 million remaining that county employees expected to receive just before Christmas 2023 and then again six months later — which ranged from \$1,080 every six-months for part-time employees to \$2,160 every six months for full time employees — has just sat in the bank, waiting for the county to amend the policy to reflect the federal level changes.

On Tuesday night, County Manager Derek Roland proposed updating the policy to meet the amended federal requirements while still allowing that funding to be pro-

vided to county employees.

Roland worked with the UNC School of Government when updating the plan to ensure it was in compliance with the U.S. Department of Treasury. However, after presenting the proposal, Commissioner John Shearl informed Roland that he had done his own research and based on what he found, he believed premium pay for county employees was no longer an allowable way to spend the ARPA funding, he also accused Roland of manipulating the county's budget in order to provide county employees with premium pay.

"What you are asking this board to do, in my mind, is to manipulate the funds from the general fund to take that much money out of the general fund and replace it with ARPA funds so you can pay this \$2 an hour," said Shearl.

Shearl said that while he appreciates county employees, taxpayers can't be burdened with increasing their salaries.

"We cannot spend every penny that we get trying to

## 2023 Election

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John "Buz" Dotson**

**Commissioner  
Brian Stiehler**

**Commissioner  
Jeff Weller**

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## • HIGHLANDS EVENTS •

### NEW POOL SCHEDULE

- Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri., 6-9:45a, and Sat., 10a-11p - 6 lanes. Water Aerobics: 18 yrs plus, Mon.-Fri. 10 -11am with Karen Chambers. Adult Swim: 18 years old+, Mon.-Thurs 11a-1:30p; Public Swim Mon. thru Thurs. 3:30-7p; Sat. 11a-6p and Sun. 1-6p. For info, call 828-526-1595.

#### Mon.-Fri.

- Nantahala Tennis plays at the Highlands Rec Park 9a-1p.

#### Mon-Wed, Fri-Sun

- Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9am at the Rec Park.

- Heart Healthy Exercise Class at the Rec Park 8:30-9:30am. The cost for the class is \$25 a month. The class is led by Cathy Hodgson. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

- Alcoholics Anonymous: "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. program of recovery. Highlands Mountain View Group holds open meetings in Highlands at the First Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 PM and Wednesday and Friday at noon. The Cashiers Valley Group holds open meetings at the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library Monday at 8:30 AM, Tuesday at 7 PM, Friday and Sunday at 5 PM, and Saturday at 9 AM. For more information, please visit [www.aawnc80.org](http://www.aawnc80.org) or to speak with a member of AA 24/7 at 828-349-4357

#### Second Mondays

- The local chapter of PEO, an off-campus sorority founded in the 1800s that provides grants and loans to women with financial need who want to return to

school or further their education meets at 10 a.m. More meeting places call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004

- Indivisible Highlands from 5:15-6:15pm at the Hudson Library Meeting Room.

#### 2nd Tuesdays

- Highlands Writers Group meets on alternate Tuesday afternoons at 3pm. Writers still uncomfortable with in-person gatherings may participate via Zoom meetings. For more information contact Bud Katz at either 828-526-3190 or at [budandlynn@me.com](mailto:budandlynn@me.com)

#### Tuesdays

- Strength Training at the Rec Park 8:15-9:15 am. Aim for strong, lean muscles using light weights, body weight, and high repetition to shape and tone. Learn proper form and range of motion to safely target all muscle groups for a metabolic boost and feel great.

- At Hudson Library, Nature Kids on selected Tuesday mornings. For more info call the Hudson Library at 828-526-3031

- At Wayfarers Chapel, Workshop for Writers – Tuesdays from 5-6:30 PM. Facilitated by Sam Renken, this group has a simple mission: to foster and provide consistent community for local writers thereby giving writers of all ages and genres the opportunity to write, read, revise, and present their work to the group.

- ESL classes are held at the Presbyterian Church in Highlands from 5:30-6:30pm. No registration required – just show up and participate. Questions? call 828-526 – 0863 or email [info@maconn-cliteracy.org](mailto:info@maconn-cliteracy.org)

#### Wednesdays

- Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health topics of particular interest to them, but all ages are welcome to attend. The November 1 program is Dementia: A Deeper Understanding. Reservations are required for this free event. To register, stop by the library or call 828-526-3031.

#### Wed. thru Nov. 22

- The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts Invites You to "Wine Wednesdays" – A New Holiday Tradition. The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts is delighted to introduce "Wine Wednesdays," This festive holiday offering will occur each Wednesday leading up to Thanksgiving, from 3:30 to 5 pm. "Wine

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# Don't miss the *Highlands Christmas Parade!*

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10 a.m. — 12 p.m.

Special appearance by the  
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828-526-2112

# • HIGHLANDS EVENTS •

Wednesdays" offer a unique opportunity for visitors to explore The Shop and Studio Barn, all while enjoying a glass of wine and browsing the work of local and regional artists.

## 1st Wednesdays

- Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health topics of particular interest to them, but all ages are welcome to attend.

## 2nd & 4th Wed.

Digital Navigators will be at the Hudson Library at 1PM - 3PM of each month through Thanksgiving to help patrons with their tech needs. Bring a smartphone, laptop, or other digital device to receive free assistance and support. No appointments are required - all are welcome.

## Wednesdays

- Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health topics of particular interest to them, but all ages are welcome to attend.

## Mon-Fri

- Water Aerobics at the Rec Pool. 18 years plus 10-11 am. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

- Pickle Ball inside and outside at the Rec Park. 10am-1pm, everyone is welcome so come out and enjoy a game of Pickle Ball.

## Mon., Tues., Thurs.

- The Food Pantry behind the Methodist Church on Spring Street is open from 10a-6p.

- Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at the Rec Park at 5:30. A combination class with different types of exercise. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information

## Thurs-Sat. thru October

- Highlands Historical Society Museum at 320 N. 4th Street is open 10a to 4p.

- Mountain Findings Thrift Store on Spruce Street is open 10a-1p through October.

## Thursdays

- Kickboxing 8:15-9:15 am. at the Rec Park. An exhilarating and fun mix of martial arts for a calorie-burning workout. Learn the proper form and technique to execute jabs, hooks, uppercuts, and front and side roundhouse kicks in a non-contact setting. No martial arts background necessary Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more info.

- At Hudson Library, Family Storytime continues throughout the year on Thursday mornings at 10:40 AM.

- At Hudson Library, Kids Zone at 3:30 pm with a wide variety of STEAM, nature, and craft activities. For more information about any of these summer activities, contact Hudson Library at 828-526-3031.

## 2nd Saturdays

- The Western North Carolina Woodturners Club meets in Highlands at The Bascom at 10 a.m. thru Nov.

## 3rd Saturdays

- The American Legion Post 370 meets at the First Methodist Church

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# • HIGHLANDS EVENTS •

at 315 Main St. in their community room/909 chapel. We serve breakfast at 9 AM and hold our monthly meeting at 10 AM. We invite ALL veterans to attend - email [ncpost370@gmail.com](mailto:ncpost370@gmail.com) for more information or just join us at 9 AM on the 3rd Saturday of the month.

## Sundays

- At Wayfarers Chapel, Sunday Service: 10 AM Sunday Morning. Stick around for visitation and coffee hour immediately after service. (Coffee hour is replaced by potluck dinner the 1st Sunday of each month).

## Through March 3

- Ice Skating in the Park is opening soon. Thursdays 3:30-8p; Fridays 3:30-10p; Saturdays 1-10p; Sundays 1-5p. \$5 with or without skates.

## Thru Nov. 26

- At Acorn's Trunk Shows Pop-Up 10a-5p.

## Nov. 16-19

- At PAC, the Highlands-Cashiers Players present "Parallel Lives" 7:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., Sundays. For tickets go to [highlandsp Performingarts.com](http://highlandsp Performingarts.com)

## Fri., Nov. 17

- At the Rec Park, Senior Luncheon at noon. Free.

## Sat., Nov. 18

- Highlands Greenway workers will meet at the Rec Park at 9a to do maintenance. Bring gloves and loppers.

## Sun., Nov. 19

- Asheville Storytelling Circle on Sunday from 2-4 p.m. at the Folk Art Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway. It's good clean affordable fun.

## Sat. Nov. 25

- Light up the Park & Main In K-H Founders Park 6-8 p.m.

## Thurs., Nov 30

- At The Bascom, ceramic artist talk with Christine Kosiba from 4-5 p.m. Free.

## Dec. 2, 9, 16

- Santa in the Park at K-H Founders Park.

## Sat., Dec. 2

- Highlands Christmas Parade 10a to noon. on Main Street.

## Fri.- Sun., Dec. 1-3

- Half-Mile Farm is thrilled to welcome Rebecca Lang, author of Y'all Come Over and Judge on the Food Network's Chopped Junior for a weekend of Southern Foodie fun. Hosted events are for Half-Mile Farm guests only. To attend this complimentary event at Half-Mile Farm Dec. 1-3 book your stay today.

## Mon., Dec. 4

- Red Cross Blood Drive 10a-2p

at HUMC. To make an appointment call Kristy at 526-3376, ext. 107, call 800-733-2767, or visit [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org)

## Tues., Dec. 5

- Community Dinner at the Community Building for a good time of food and fellowship at 6pm.

## Thurs., Dec. 7

- Lighting of the Menorah in K-H Founders Park at 5:30 p.


## Dec. 8-24

- "Home of the Holidays" at Mountain Theatre Company now in residence at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street. Tickets go to [www.mountain-theatre.com](http://www.mountain-theatre.com)

## Sat. Dec. 16

- Wreaths across America Day is Saturday The ceremony will be at 12 noon at Highlands Rec. Park, 600 North 4th Street. Volunteers are needed to place wreaths. Volunteers will be shuttled to and from Highlands Cemetery afterwards.

**Busted supply hoses have postponed the opening of the ice rink in the park. The hoses have been repaired but coolant was lost and the town is waiting on a coolant delivery.**



**WHOLE LIFE MARKET**

Natural Products Store

Hours: 9am-5pm  
Mon-Sat  
828-526-5999

[Wholelifehighlands@icloud.com](mailto:Wholelifehighlands@icloud.com)

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**NECTAR** Organic smoothie/juice bar located inside Whole Life Market

**JuiceBar**

## Staging Map for Christmas Parade Participants

Please be aware of this year's staging route which may affect access on these roads from 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. on Saturday, December 2, 2023.



HOLIDAYS IN  
HIGHLANDS  
HIGHLANDS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE/VISIT HIGHLANDS, NC







## *Ice Skating in the Park* Opening Soon!

Thru March 3, 2024

Thursdays 3:30 – 8 p.m., Fridays 3:30 – 10 p.m.,  
Saturdays 1 – 10 p.m. and Sundays 1 – 5 p.m.  
Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park  
\$5, with or without skates.

## *Santa in the Park*

December 2, 9 & 16  
Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park

## *Light Up the Park & Main*

Saturday, November 25  
6 – 8 p.m.  
Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park

## *Highlands Christmas Parade*

Saturday, December 2  
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
Main Street

## *Lighting the Menorah*

Thursday, December 7  
5:30 p.m.  
Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park



All events, other than Ice Skating, are organized and hosted by the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC.

HOLIDAYS IN  
HIGHLANDS  
HIGHLANDS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE/VISIT HIGHLANDS, NC



## ...SHEARL continued from page 7

make employees happy,” Commissioner Shearl said. “You’re saying that we need to take this funding and give it to employees so we can be competitive, but the government is trying to be competitive on the taxpayers back.”

According to public information, the UNC School of Government explained this AFTER the April 2023 ruling, despite Shearl’s claims to the contrary, Roland’s proposal for premium pay met all federal requirements.

“The ability to reimburse for prior expenditures, particularly in the Revenue Replacement category, provides a simplified path to legally obligate and expend a local government’s ARP/CLSFRRF funds, which effectively converts the cash to unrestricted fund balance,” Kara Millonzi published on June 30, 2023 for UNC School of Government. “The ARP/CLSFRRF allows expenditures on eligible projects in four broad categories: Responding to COVID-19 and Its Negative Economic Impact; Revenue Replacement; Premium Pay; Necessary Water, Wastewater, Stormwater, and Broadband Infrastructure.

“U.S. Treasury has defined in detail what qualifies as lawful expenditures in each of these categories. And North Carolina local governments also must have state law authority for the expenditures. (There are some expenditures authorized by the grant that are not authorized for NC local governments under state law.)

“The grant allows for reimbursements of eligible project expenditures in any of these categories for costs incurred on or after March 3, 2021. The reimbursement may occur at any time before December 31, 2024, the grant obligation deadline.”

In addition to detailing the allowable expenses, Millonzi’s publication further explained that not only is the revenue replacement method Roland proposed and Shearl accused of being manipulative allowed, it is how the majority of county’s have utilized the funds.

“The Revenue Replacement category

allows ARP/CLSFRRF funds to be spent on almost anything a local government has state law authority to spend money on, including salaries/benefits and other general government or public enterprise expenses. The only prohibited expenditures are (1) extra pension fund contributions; (2) borrowing costs or debt service (loan) payments; (3) financial reserves / rainy day fund contributions; (4) litigation costs, including settlements / judgements / consent decrees; (5) expenditures that undermine or discourage compliance with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines; (6) expenditures that violate federal conflict of interest provisions; (7) expenditures that violate state law or other federal laws and regulations, including applicable Uniform Guidance requirements; and (8) expenditures that the local government has or will receive other external funding to cover (in other words, no double dipping). Further, US Treasury has waived several of the most complex compliance requirements for expenditures in this category.”

Shearl turned his comments to Roland away from the premium pay discussion and informed Roland that he has reviewed eight budget cycles that have been overseen by Roland as Manager and made the accusation that Roland has increased the county’s budget by \$25 million over that time period.

“I have looked at eight budget cycles since you have been here and the budget has increased \$25 million and the only thing taxpayers have gained by this \$25 million in the budget is higher salaries and a larger government. That is what we have gained and our county is falling apart,” Shearl said.

Roland disagreed and said, “In your eyes,” Roland responded. “I think we have a pretty good county.”

Shearl then claimed that in a private meeting he had with Roland that the county manager said county departments were 50% overstaffed... to which Roland immediately interjected adamantly denying the claim, at which point Shearl called for

• See SHEARL page 14

## ...INVESTING continued from page 4

This indicates a variety of properties in size, location and view ranging from \$351/SF up to \$1141/SF, quite a variance in price. It is obvious that an in-town location with an exceptional view brings the highest price, even if it is the smallest house. This also shows why it is important to obtain a Comparative Market Analysis using sold properties to come up with an accurate asking price.

I don’t expect that Bravo will do a “Selling Highlands” show but there are properties that would certainly be worth

showcasing. Although we do have a lot of negotiations that go on, I don’t think our brokers would provide the drama that New York and LA seem to have! I don’t ever see the agents talking about where to golf, fish, hike, shop or eat. To them it is about the deal and moving on to the next sale.

Carl Romberg is the Broker-in-Charge of Landmark Realty Group’s Highlands Office. Stop by his office on Main Street to say hello or reach him at 678-936-9309 or carl@landmarkrg.com.



# Highlands Food & Wine 2023 - Nov. 9-12

Photos by Kim Lewicki



- More than 2,500 tickets sold
- Ticket purchasers hailed from 19 different states as far away as California.
- 40 local & regional restaurants
- 50+ wineries, breweries & spiriters participated.





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**...SHEARL continued from page 12**

Roland to resign from his position.

"I didn't say that, John," said Roland. "Derek, I am going to tell you something," said Shearl. "You have called me a liar four times in open session, so tonight, I ask for your resignation."

Members of the audience expressed their objection to Shearl's request, causing Commission Chairman Paul Higdon to warn the audience to remain civil or else he would request law enforcement to remove them from the meeting.

Roland again denied Shearl's accusations and stated that if the majority of board wanted him to resign, he would.

"John, if you can get two more commissioners to vote, if you don't like the job that I am doing or you think that poorly of who I am or you question my character, and you can get two more commissioners to vote with you, you can have my resignation."

Shearl then doubled down on his original claim regarding the budget increase, "The budget has increased \$25 million under your watch," said Shearl.

Shearl did not provide any documentation or references to verify his claim the budget has increased \$25 million in the last eight budget cycles, and according to county records, his claim was false.

According to public budget records, the FY 2015 budget proposed by County Manager Derek Roland was \$45,521,122 and that year the Macon County Board of Commissioners approved a budget in the amount of \$45,721,122. This year, for FY 2024, Roland's budget proposal was \$64,788,976 and the budget approved commissioners totaled \$63,754,537, which would reflect an increase of \$18,024,415 — \$7 million less than Shearl's accusation.

Prior to the current budget year, when the county's ad valorem tax rate were decreased to be the lowest in the entire state of North Carolina, from FY15 to FY23 the county's budget increased by just over \$13 million.

Further, although Shearl specifically put the responsibility of the budget increase on the county manager, county records show that in FY 2019 Roland's recommended budget was \$1,192,000 less than budget that was approved, with the more than \$1 million increase coming at the request of county commissioners, not Roland. The same thing occurred in FY 2022 when Roland's recommended budget was more than \$2 million less than the budget that was approved, again with the budgetary increase coming at the request

• See SHEARL page 22

## **Wine Wednesdays**

Each Wednesday through Thanksgiving



**Wednesdays  
3:30 pm - 5 pm**

Spread the season's joy with hand-crafted treasures! Discover unique finds at The Shop and Studio Barn: sculpture, pottery, paintings, textiles, glass, photography, books, & more. Your purchase supports regional artists and our creative economy. Plus, savor a glass of wine while you shop every "Wine Wednesday" through Thanksgiving at The Bascom.

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TheBascom.org | 828.526.4949



# • BIZ/ORG NEWS •

## Highlander Diane Benford takes Gold in Seniors BioFreeze USA Pickleball National Championships



From left: Diane Benford and Linda Arnold

On Nov. 6 and 8, Highlands own Diane Benford won two gold medals at the Biofreeze USA Pickleball National championships in Dallas, TX. On Monday, Diane and Linda Arnold rallied to win gold in the Women's Double, age 70-74. Then on Wednesday, Benford captured another gold in the Mixed Doubles, age 65-69 division with partner Mike Shriver, where they went undefeated.

## Highlands Mercantile is OPEN!



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# I WANT TO THANK

**all of my Supporters and the Voters for entrusting me to be one of your Town of Highlands Commissioners. I am honored to represent the Town of Highlands as a Commissioner. I look forward to getting started.**

**- Jeff Weller**



**Paid For By The Committee to Elect Jeff Weller**



## Holiday Glamor at Diva's!



## ...CIRQUE continued from page 1

Audiences raved about this year's show, which featured Cirque performances on the trapeze, aerial silks, Cyr wheel, Spanish web, as well as traditional circus acts and bungee dancing.

More than 70 students were involved in this year's production, from on-stage performers to technical crew.

Arts faculty members who led the show also included Selassie Alleyne, Rachel Chaves, Kimmie Gee, Mary Lauren Keeny, Terri Manoogian, and Joey Wade.

Rabun Gap is one of the only schools in the country with a Cirque program.

Based on Cirque du Soleil, the program combines aerial acrobatics, circus arts, theatre, and dance to produce an original performance each year.

Upcoming performances for Rabun Gap arts include a Christmas Showcase on Dec. 13 and the much-anticipated winter musical, "High School Musical," on Feb. 8-10.



Sophia Moore class of '24 of Highlands, performs on the lyra in "Cirque Synthetica" at Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School. The Christmas performance is set for Dec. 13.

## Nancy's & The Exchange Fancys for Men



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## Local drop-off sites open this week for 'Operation Christmas Child'

As the Thanksgiving season approaches, many families and children are giving thanks for all their blessings and sharing those blessing with children in need by packing shoeboxes with Operation Christmas Child.

Shoebox gifts prepared by generous donors and filled with toys, personal care items, and school supplies may be dropped off now during National Collection Week, Nov. 13–20. More than 4,500 drop-off sites are now open.

Operation Christmas Child has been collecting and delivering shoebox gifts to children worldwide for three decades. In 2023, Operation Christmas Child hopes to collect enough shoeboxes to reach another 11 million children. This season, there's still time for individuals, families, and groups to transform empty shoeboxes into fun gifts. The project of Samaritan's Purse partners with local churches across the globe to deliver these tangible expressions of God's love to children in need. Find a step-by-step guide on the How to Pack a Shoebox webpage.

"This season, children around the world need a tangible reminder that there is hope and that God loves them," said Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan's Purse. "Through these shoebox gifts packed with special items, children also receive the opportunity to hear about the eternal hope found in Jesus Christ."

There are two drop-off centers on the Plateau: First Baptist Church in Highlands and Ca-

shiers Baptist Church in Cashiers. The Central Drop-Off Location for Western North Carolina is Holly Springs Baptist Church in Franklin. Signs at each location will identify the drop off.

Operation Christmas Child, a project of Samaritan's Purse, seeks to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way to children in need around the world and, together with the local church worldwide, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 209 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 170 countries and territories. This year, Operation Christmas Child will celebrate its 30th year of ministry!

### First Baptist Church, Highlands (ES)

220 Main Street  
Highlands, NC 28741

#### Coordinators:

Sergio Barranco,  
Angelica Garcia

Thu, Nov. 16: 2 - 6 pm

Fri, Nov. 17: 2 - 5 pm

Sat, Nov. 18: 12 - 5 pm

Sun, Nov. 19: 1 - 5 pm

Mon, Nov. 20: 9 Am - 12 pm

### Cashiers Baptist Church Cashiers

213 US Highway 64 E  
Cashiers, NC 28717

#### Coordinator: Cindy Fowler

Thu, Nov. 16: 1 - 3 pm

Fri, Nov. 17: 10 Am - 12 pm

Sat, Nov. 18: 9 - 11 am

Sun, Nov. 19: 1 - 3 pm

Mon, Nov. 20: 10 am - 12 pm



## Rotary Club of Highlands honors October 2023 'Students of the Month'

From left: Cooper Hall (12th), Mrs. Nicole Lui (Counselor), Krimzon Rathbone (4th), Keeley Bosdell (7th), Mrs. Alyssa DeBois, Highlands School Assistant Principal and Dave O'Harra, President, Rotary Club of Highlands.

# PLANET

by Lauren G

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Appalachian Fries • Onion Rings • Fried Shrimp • Fish n' Chips • Chicken Fingers and more!

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Susie deVille

## Local author wins multiple, prestigious book awards

Local author, entrepreneur coach, and Founder & CEO of the Innovation & Creativity Institute, Susie deVille, has won multiple, prestigious awards for her business and creativity book, *Buoyant: The Entrepreneur's Guide to Becoming Wildly Successful, Creative, and Free*.

*Buoyant* has been awarded the bronze medal in the category of Entrepreneurship/Small Business by Axiom Business Book Awards, the silver medal in the category of Creativity & Innovation by the Nautilus Book Awards, and the bronze medal in the Visionary Nonfiction category by the Coalition of Visionary Resources. *Buoyant* was also a finalist in the Nonfiction Cross-Genre category by the International Book Awards.

The Axiom Business Book Awards are the largest and most respected critical guidepost for business books and are intended to bring increased recognition to exemplary business books. Previous medalists include Nobel laureate Robert Shiller, former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Pulitzer Prize winner Doris Kearns Goodwin, philanthropist and investor Raymond Dalio, among others.

The Nautilus Book Awards represent better books for a better world that connect our lives as individuals, families, communities, and global citizens. Other notable Nautilus Book Award winning authors include Barbara Kingsolver, Louise Erdrich, Deepak Chopra, M.D., Brené Brown, Eckhart Tolle, and Desmond Tutu.

"I am greatly honored to be in the company of such exemplary authors and distinguished publishers," said Susie deVille. "I profoundly appreciate these fine awards programs and offer my deepest congratulations to all of the 2023 winners."

Referred to as *The Artist's Way* for entrepreneurs, *Buoyant* is a practical guide for becoming your best, truest self and positively impacting the world—one idea, one person at a time. Said deVille, "*Buoyant* helps you connect with your innate creativity, home in on who you truly are, and unlock your entrepreneurial potential."

The book is filled with resources, tips, and inspirational anecdotes designed to encourage, inspire, and equip readers.

Publisher's Weekly's BookLife gave *Buoyant* a stellar review noting, "Readers looking for ideas for cultivating real change and achieving success will find much to dig into in this polished, inspiring guide." Kirkus Reviews said "deVille's storytelling skill, her enthusiasm for unbridled innovation, and her fervent belief that everyone can achieve creative freedom combine to make for an engrossing self-improvement book."

*Buoyant* is available wherever books are sold.

## Proverbs 3:5

## • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

## John 3:16

### BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (828) 421-1315

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7

Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting: 7 p.m.

### BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

828-269-3546 • Rev. Jamie Passmore, Pastor

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

### CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Aryn Williams-Reubel, Pastor 828-743-5298

Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

### CHAPEL OF THE SKY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999

Sundays: 10 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

### CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

Rev'd Dr. Michael Matlock, Rector

464 Hwy 64E, Cashiers, NC 28717

CAC@christanglicancashiers.org & 828-743-1701

Sundays: 9:30 am Adult Christian Formation;

10:30 am Holy Eucharist Worship

Wednesdays: 6 pm Bible Study, Prayer, Potluck

Thursdays: 10 am Healing Eucharist

### CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470

www.cashiers.church

Sun. 10:45am. S.S. 9:30am. Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.

Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.

### CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

283 Spring Street - Sunday Service: 10:30 a.m.

Testimony meeting: 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

### CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.

1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7 p.m.

Wednesdays—Supper at 6 p.m.

### COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685

3645 Cashiers Rd. Highlands, NC • Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins

Sundays: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am

Wednesdays: Youth 5:30-7pm; Women's Bible Study: Mondays

4:30pm, Tuesdays 10am; Men's Bible Study: Wednesdays &

Thursdays 7am @ Zookeeper Bistro

### COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

706.746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447

Pastor Steve Kerhoulas

Worship: Sun. 10:30 a.m. Holy Communion 2nd Sunday

### EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. VV. Bentley Manning, Rector • 526-2968

5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org

Sunday: Rite I, spoken, 8 am in Chapel, Rite II with Choir 10:30

am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel, Morn-

ing Prayer: Mon-Thurs 8:30 am in Chapel

### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org

Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 220 Main Street, Highlands

Sun.: Worship 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study 9:30 am

Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Women's 10:30 am

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Emily Wilmarth, pastor, Associate Pastor, Rev. Kelley Connelly

828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10 a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.

Tues: Men's Group 10 a.m. Wed: Bell Choir 4 p.m.. Choir: 6p

### GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

### GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS

Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship

242 Hwy 107N. 1/4 miles from Crossroads in Cashiers

www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814

Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

### HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Hwy 107N. • Glenville, NC • 743-2729 • Nathan Johnson

Sunday: School 9:45a. Worship 11a & 7p. Bible Study 6p

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

### HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Randy Reed, Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street

Wed. Bible Study: 6 p.m.; Sundays: Worship: 11

### HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily

sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

Sunday Worship is at 9a. Wednesday Worship is 6:30p

### HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas, Pastor 526-3376

In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services

909a Bluegrass and 11a Traditional

www.highlandsmethodist.org

### HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741

Rev. Ken Langsdorf

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# • POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

**Highlands Police entries from Oct. 20. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

## Oct. 20

• Officers responded to a report of a purse snatching on Main Street.

## Nov. 12

• At 2:15 a.m., Brenda Elizabeth Marsh, 38, of Highlands, was arrested for DUI, Driving left of center and in possession of marijuana when she was stopped on Glen Falls Road. She was issued an unsecured \$2,000 bond. Her trial date is Dec. 20.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Nov. 7.**

## Nov. 7

• At 10:39 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on the Cashiers Road.

• At 3:20 p.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a location on Pierson Drive.

## Nov. 8

• At 9:26 a.m., the dept. investigated a call of an illegal burn at a residence on the Franklin Road.

• At 10:59 a.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a residence on Mack Wilson Road.

• At 12:18 p.m., the dept. investigated an illegal burn at a residence on Clear Creek Road.

• At 1:45 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on Pierson Drive.

• At 5:45 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Clubhouse Trail.

## Nov. 9

• At 8:37 p.m. the dept. investigated an illegal burn at a residence on Satulah Ridge Road.

• At 8:54 a.m., the dept. investigated an illegal burn on Shortoff Springs Road.

• At 11:55 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Clubhouse Trail.

## Nov. 10

• At 12:42 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on VZ Top Road.

• At 4:44 p.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a location in Highlands Plaza.

• At 5:07 p.m. the dept., was called to investigate smoke at a residence on Holt Circle.

• At 4:07 p.m. the dept. investigated an illegal burn at a residence on Chowan Drive.

• At 6:06 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Worley Road.

• At 7:34 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on N. 4th Street.

## Nov. 11

• At 2:58 p.m., the dept. responded to a structure fire on Hickory Hill Road.

• At 4:57 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a motor vehicle accident on the Dillard Road but it was unable to locate the accident.

• At 7:53 p.m. the dept. responded to a call of missing person on Rock House Road.

## Nov. 13

• At 2:47 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on the Dillard Road.

## Highlands Police Department 'Notice of Property Auction'

Notice is hereby given that the Highlands Police Department, has in their possession, Computer Equipment, Jewelry, Keys and Key Rings, Pocket Knives, Driver's Licenses and Identification documents, Golf Equipment, Books, Wallets, Purses, Credit and Debit Cards, Clothing, Eyeglasses and Sunglasses, Cell Phones, Electronics and Accessories, US Currency, Firearms, and other various items which have been turned in to the department as found property and have been held for a time greater than the required preservation time as described by state law.

The Highlands Police Department will offer said articles for auction beginning on Dec. 1, 2023. A more detailed list of items available is posted at the Macon County Courthouse, Highlands Police Department, Highlands Town Hall, and Highlands Civic Center.

Auction of suitable property will be handled by [www.govdeals.com](http://www.govdeals.com) and funds from the auctioned property will be turned over to the Macon County Public School System.

Property not suitable for do-

nation or auction will be destroyed. This notice is given in accordance with provisions of the General Statutes of North Carolina, Chapter 15, Section 14.

The list of items will be posted at the Macon County Courthouse, Highlands Police Department, Highlands Town Hall, and Highlands Civic Center.

Golf bag with clubs, Red Purse, Black Verizon phone with cracked screen, Power unit for cell phone, Floral pattern wallet, Silver-colored ring with clear stones, Hand radio, Brown wallet, iPad in black case, gold-in-color flat chain necklace, Black tile tracker, Samsung phone in broken green case, iPhone SE Charging cable and brick Black Cell phone with case, HDMI Cable, Volvo key fob, Gold-color necklace with clear stones, Toyota Tacoma keys, Assorted clothing, TV DVD/VHS player, Radio, Wooden snow shoes, Rifle scope, Black bag, iPad, Mini Infrared heater, Brasslike clock with glass enclosure, Miscellaneous tools, Wireless keyboard, Vizio remote Black Sony Speaker, XBOX games, Samsung Television and remote, Assorted knives.

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## ...SHEARL continued from page 14

of county commissioners, not Roland.

Commissioner Josh Young said he supported Roland's proposal because county commissioners had already discussed how to spend the ARPA funding and had unanimously voted to spend it on premium pay and the action expected of the board on Tuesday night was to approve changes to meet updated guidelines. Commissioner Danny Antoine said that he supported Roland's proposal because the money was already approved for county employees, thus it should not be taken away from them.

Commissioner Paul Higdon joined Shearl in voicing his objection to spending the remaining ARPA funding for bonuses for county employees, saying he thought the issue was over in April when the federal government declared the end of the public health emergency.

Despite Higdon's misunderstanding of the status of the funding, Macon County had to readdress the ARPA funding requirement changes or the unspent \$1.8 million would revert back to the federal government in December 2024.

Despite voting in favor of allocating the majority of the county's ARPA funds for county employees in October 2022, on Tuesday night, Higdon claimed he was blindsided by the original proposal and felt forced to approve it a year ago.

Ultimately, the Macon County Board of Commissioners voted 3-2 to approve Roland's proposal.

Just before midnight, after lengthy debates and split votes on several agenda topics, Commissioner Shearl introduced a resolution calling for state leaders to consider a change to how local board of education members are elected, at which point his fellow board members, Commissioner Danny Antoine and Commissioner Josh Young requested the discussion be tabled due to the fact that the majority of the county's board of education members that would be effected by any change, were unable to at-

tend Tuesday night's meeting due to a mandatory conference.

Expressing the frustration that had been visibly building during the meeting while being faced with opposition, Commissioner Shearl turned to Commissioner Young and asked him what changed with his stance since the private meetings they participated in, colluding prior to Shearl taking his oath of office last November.

"Last November, at Commissioner Antoine's house, before we were all sworn into office, we had many meetings about these very same things. Partisan School Boards. Redistricting the county. What has changed?" Commissioner Shearl confessed.

As Young began to respond to Shearl's comments, noting the personal nature of his question, Commissioner Antoine interjected supporting Young in tabling the discussion as a "professional courtesy" to school board members not in attendance.

Despite Antoine's attempt to redirect the conversation, Shearl once again spoke directly to Commissioner Young saying, "We talked about this in depth."

Commissioner Young responded denying Shearl's claims.

"I don't want you to put words in my mouth," Young said. "I didn't say anything about this. We had discussions, we had a lot of discussions. A lot of crazy conspiracy discussions that got thrown out there, too, and I am not supporting them either."

After Shearl failed to gain support from any of his fellow commissioners regarding moving forward with the school board elections discussion, Commissioner Young implored county leaders to refocus efforts for the betterment of Macon County.

"Let me ask you all this. When are we going to take on something that actually matters for the people of Macon County?" Commissioner Young questioned. "All we are doing is playing in the weeds and it is under your [Chairman Higdon] direction. Let's talk about building a school. Capital needs. You talk about not spending money at the

middle school, but then you want to go to Main Street and that has nothing to do with the board. We sit on this board and contradict ourselves every day. If we are going to start calling someone out, let's just call a spade a spade. Let's get rid of our pet projects, and let's worry about the county as a whole. I feel like what is happening right now is you guys have pet projects that you have set meetings about, and no one on this board knew about them, then you come before the meeting and expect me to pass this or that. We had discussions for weeks and talked about everything, but you get hung up on political issues that have to do with other elected bodies, that is national politics you are driving into this community to divide us."

As Chairman Higdon attempted to redirect the conversation to close out the meeting, Commissioner Shearl stood up from his seat and began to pack up his things and once again became confrontational toward County Manager Roland saying, "You like that, Manager? You look at me like that. With that smirk."

While Shearl continued standing and packing up his belongings, Commissioner Higdon and Commissioner Young discussed ways to get things done more efficiently in the future. The meeting concluded shortly thereafter. Commissioner Shearl continued making negative comments directed toward Roland.

"Sitting over there with that smirk on his face. Arrogant. He wouldn't be so arrogant if he knew what people said about him," Shearl said while heading toward the exit. Attempting to diffuse the situation and redirect conversation, Sheriff Brent Holbrooks responded to Shearl saying, "I'll tell you what people say about him, that everything he does is for this county and the county employees."

Sheriff Holbrooks and other law enforcement then escorted county leaders out of the courthouse, ensuring no further confrontations occurred.



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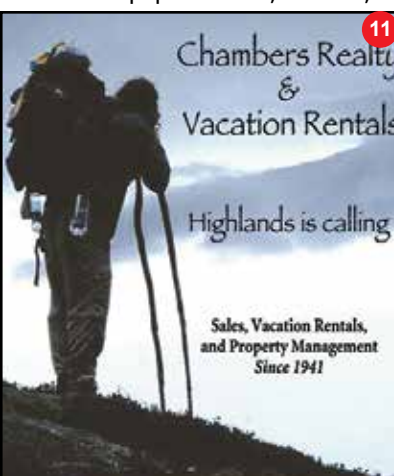
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