

Highlands Newspaper

Sunday Nov. 5 we gain an hour!

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 20, Number 43

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Thurs., Nov. 2, 2023



After several weeks of questions answered by the five candidates for the three seats open on the Town Board, it appears all five are qualified and agree on all major issues except Short-Term Rentals and term limits. (See those opinions in this issue.) Incumbent Commissioners John Dotson and Brian Stiehler oppose Short-term Rentals in R1 and R2, but say they are OK in commercial zones. Dotson would like STRs to be amortized as soon as possible. Stiehler says it's not fair that an STR is worth more than a home that isn't an STR. Craig Weller and Wilson would allow STRs with current Town regulations as stated in the current UDO. Get out and vote this Tuesday and choose the candidates who represent your views.

- Photo by Kim Lewicki

This is week 6 of the Candidate Q&A

Five candidates are vying for three seats on the Town Board - two incumbents and three newcomers.

This is the sixth week and fi-

nal week of the Q&A leading up to the Nov. 7 election. Candidates are listed alphabetically.

Question #6:

The final question in our 6-part

series is: Should there be term limits for Town Board Commissioners and Mayor? Is there anything else you would like to address?

• See Q&A page 30

The truth about STRs and Highlands School enrollment statistics

A letter-to-the-editor in the Oct. 26 edition of Highlands Newspaper and an ad that ran the same week in The Highlander newspaper both submitted by the Highlands Neighborhood Coalition (HNC) has the community scratching its head and questioning HNC's claims as well as its logic.

"Highlands School enrollment is declining - What does that mean for our town?" they asked.

"Highlands School enrollment has decreased almost 13%, the largest percentage in Macon County since 2019 based on data provided by the Macon County Board of Education," was the claim in their letter.

The letter goes on to say, "There are between 275 and 400 short-term rentals in Highlands according to recent estimates. Those used to be single-family residences. Residents have been displaced and young families can-

not afford to live in Highlands. Fewer young families mean fewer school-aged children."

Obviously, HNC considers what they call the "proliferation" of Short-term Rentals (STRs) as the culprit to the decrease in Highlands School enrollment. However, as always, facts tell the real story.

First, enrollment statistics.

Yes, the 2023-'24 enrollment is less than it was years ago -- in

• See TRUTH page 14

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The Fision center officially opened last Thursday with a ribbon cutting.

- Photo by Jim Lewicki

Hotwire Communications opens Fision experience

On the heels of bringing ultra-fast broadband to the heart of an area long underserved by technology's ever-changing demands, last Thursday Hotwire Communications, along with local elected officials including Highlands Mayor Pat Taylor and the Highlands Chamber of Commerce, gathered to officially open the Highlands

Fision Experience Center.

In September 2021, the Town of Highlands partnered with Hotwire Communications to deliver state-of-the-art Fision products and technology powered by their multi-Gigabit fiber-optic network. Following extensive network upgrades, hundreds of

• See HOTWIRE page 21

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

• HIC'S VIEW •

We need rain!

The picture says it all. The water is just going over the Lake Sequoyah Dam. Highlands has not had significant rain for some time, and I don't see any in the immediate future.

Are we in a drought period? Yes, indeed, but we are not at a point where the mayor has to declare a water emergency or institute a burning band. At least not yet.

But to illustrate where we are, our water plant operators routinely pump water from a weir just below the plant to make a daily supply of water. They can't do it right now because the water flow is so low that their pumps could literally dry up Big Creek. Fortunately, the town has a pump station at Big Creek next to US 64 and a major intake station about 50 yards away from Sequoyah Dam.

Low levels and slow flow of our water



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor



resources make the treatment process at the plant take somewhat longer. The fresher and cooler the water, the better. In summary, the town is ok for now, but prayers for rain would be appreciated.

I also hope folks will exercise caution in burning outside fire pits and fireplaces during the dry fall season. By ordinance, burning leaves and vegetative matter in an unconfined space and unmanned is prohibited. Also, as always, the construction practice of grub burning at building site is not permitted in Highlands. Our fire department will be on the lookout for violators. If you have any questions, please call the fire department for information at (828) 526-3645.

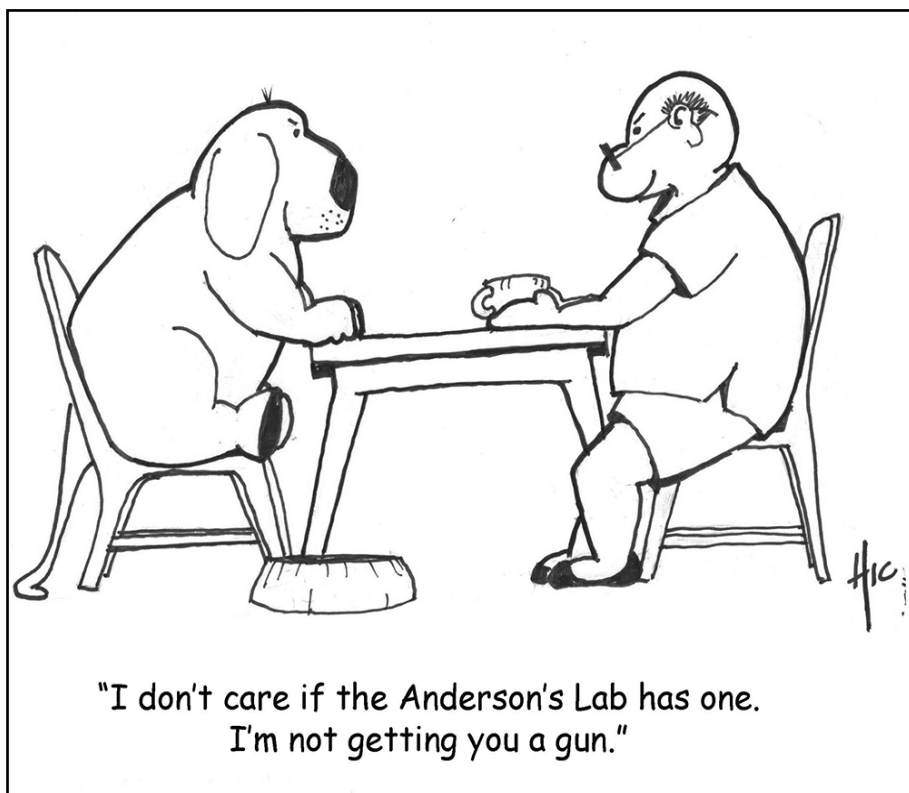
This week, we saw the first significantly below-freezing temperatures. Don't forget to turn off and drain outside water faucets or lines. Every year, we have reports of broken outside yard lines that result in high water bills.

Also, if you plan on being away from your home in Highlands for some time, please cut off and drain your interior waterlines. Last year's Big Freeze caught a lot of folks off guard, and the town had many residences and businesses gushing water all at once. At one point, our water department folks were concerned about maintaining adequate pressure and supplies.





If the lines in an unoccupied house cannot be drained, two things can be done, either separately or together. First, do not turn off the heat or turn it down so low that pipes can freeze. An overall warm house helps keep pipes from freezing. Second, if one is away for a short time, keeping a faucet slightly dripping helps prevent frozen lines. Just a slow movement of water is a preventative freezing measure.

Finally, in the case of a power outage or a water line rupture, please call Town Hall at (828) 526-2118. During business hours,

• See MAYOR page 12



• WEATHER •

Thu, 2-Nov	Fri, 3-Nov	Sat, 4-Nov	Sun, 5-Nov
			
48°F 20°F	57°F 27°F	64°F 27°F	64°F 39°F
Plenty of sunshine	Plenty of sunshine	Sunny and pleasant	Partly sunny and delightful
RealFeel® High: 53° Low: 19°	RealFeel® High: 61° Low: 27°	RealFeel® High: 69° Low: 30°	RealFeel® High: 68° Low: 37°

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Highlands Newspaper

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There is a 500-word limit. We reserve the right to reject or edit letters-to-the-editor. No anonymous letters will be accepted. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper.

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• FINANCIAL MATTERS •

The expiration of the tax cuts and jobs act of 2017

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, often referred to as TCJA, brought significant changes to the U.S. tax code when it was signed into law by President Trump. However, many of its provisions were set to sunset (or expire) in 2025, and as a result, taxpayers and businesses are beginning to consider the tax changes that would come with the sunset of this legislation. In this article, we'll explore the key tax changes that would occur if TCJA's regulations are allowed to expire.



Michael P. Henderson,
CFP® CKA®
Founder/Wealth Advisor
Crossover Point Advisors

to its prior, lower amount, which will likely impact families' tax obligations.

Business Taxation: The TCJA also made substantial changes to corporate taxation, including reducing the corporate tax rate. While the sunset of TCJA will result in a partial rollback of these rate reductions, corporate tax rates would be lower than they were before the TCJA was enacted helping the U.S. remain a relatively attractive destination for businesses.

Pass-Through Business

Deductions: One of the key elements of TCJA was the introduction of a deduction for pass-through businesses, such as partnerships, S corporations, and sole proprietorships. With the expiration of TCJA, the rules governing these deductions will revert to previous levels, affecting the tax liabilities of many small business owners including me.

Estate Tax: The TCJA significantly increased the estate tax exemption, allowing individuals to pass on more wealth without incurring federal estate tax. As a result of expiration, the estate tax exemption would be reduced. Estate planning considerations will become more complex once again.

It's important to note that the expiration of the TCJA's provisions will likely lead to ongoing debates in Congress during the 2024 election cycle as policymakers are faced with decisions about whether to extend certain provisions, revert to pre-TCJA rules, or enact new tax laws altogether. Taxpayers and businesses should stay informed about these changes and plan their financial strategies accordingly.

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Individual Tax Rates: One of the most significant aspects of the TCJA was the reduction in individual tax rates. This included a lower maximum tax rate for individuals and married couples filing jointly. The sunset of TCJA will lead to the return of higher tax rates for certain income brackets. This change will affect individuals with higher incomes, who are now subject to higher federal tax rates.

Standard Deduction: The TCJA nearly doubled the standard deduction, making it more attractive for many taxpayers to take the standard deduction rather than itemizing their deductions. With the expiration of TCJA, the standard deduction would return to its previous lower levels, potentially impacting those who previously benefited from itemizing their deductions.

State and Local Tax (SALT) Deductions: One of the most contentious aspects of the TCJA was the limitation placed on SALT deductions, which capped the amount individuals could deduct for state and local taxes. There is renewed debate over the restoration of these deductions. Many high-tax states have been advocating for an increase in the cap or the complete repeal of this limitation regardless of whether the law is allowed to sunset or not.

Child Tax Credit: The TCJA significantly increased the Child Tax Credit, providing more financial relief to families with dependent children. With the sunset of TCJA, the Child Tax Credit would revert

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• LETTERS •

Background checks for all

Dear Editor,

If according to the article in the Oct. 19 edition entitled "Background checks are being considered for library workers," does it not also seem fair that such checks are made of the Fontana Library System advisory board and the Macon County Board of Commissioners?

Dean Zuch
Scaly Mountain

Excoriating veterans who back Trump

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to the letter-to-the-editor entitled "A soldier's right" that ran in the Oct. 19 edition of Highlands Newspaper.

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I am a combat veteran (135 Combat Missions, 100 of those flights over North Vietnam) and I proudly support Trump. Why do I support this loudmouthed, boastful, arrogant New Yorker? For the same reason I loved to follow loudmouthed, boastful, arrogant fighter pilot leaders: THEY GET THINGS DONE and THEY SUCCEED AT THEIR MISSIONS! If you care to confront me face-to-face, I have given the Lewickis permission to share my phone number or email address with you.

Yes, I support Trump because he kept the inflation low, without the Covid disaster...the US Economy was booming, he quieted the terrorist (HAMAS, ISIS, etc.), the Southern Border was secure and not pumping illegal drugs and illegal aliens into the USA, Trump supported the military by building weapons and manpower strengths, and he led Our Nation out front...NOT STUMBLING, BUMBLING, BLUNDERING!

Paul Schowalter, USAF Colonel, retired,
Highlands,
popschow@gmail.com

Stop blaming STRs for everything

Dear Editor,

It baffles me to continue to see the Short-term Rental (STR) issue placed center stage as the most pressing issue facing Highlands. The Highlands Neighborhood Coalition appears to make the case that if Highlands bans all STRs, we will once again live in eutopia and love all our neighbors.

Highlands is a unique town made up of unique residents that rely upon a unique economy. I would argue the Highlands economy relies on visitors, part-time residents and full-time residents to create the benefits we all enjoy with great shops and restaurants. The continued push to completely ban all STRs in the Town of Highlands will not only harm the fragile economic ecosystem of Highlands but most importantly, it destroys one of the most basic principles of our Republic which is private property rights.

As an owner of two short-term rental properties, I have accepted the current ruling of the Town Board and I believe it addresses the concern of the potential proliferation of STRs and their impact on our quality of life in Highlands. I also believe it creates problems with property owners like me who may want to rent on a long-term basis for a period of time and switch back to a short-term basis without losing my non-conforming use status.

I remind those individuals and commissioners who do not support STRs that STRs were perfectly legal and in compliance with the existing UDO prior to September 2022, when individuals and entities invested millions of dollars in their properties. Unfortunately, it took town commissioners over a year and spending tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars in legal fees to arrive at the current ordinance. Banning existing STRs in the future will likely have the same results.

I would also like to address the letter-to-the-editor in the October 26, issue of the Highlands Newspaper entitled "Highlands School enrollment is declining – What does that mean for our town?" that attempts to make a

• See LETTERS page 12

2023 Election

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Update or wait...That is the question

Brokers are constantly faced with this situation. We often hear from our buyers: "Well, I don't mind a little work!" Or: "I don't want anything that needs work," or: "I want a fixer-upper!" So, our work begins! We don't really know how to define what a "little" work means and since our MLS doesn't have a box to check for fixer-upper we do a "blind test!"

We walk into an over-priced house with Formica countertops and fiberglass inserts for showers so is it considered a "little" or a lot? Immediately we are asked if we, the broker, know someone who is reputable, honest, and affordable. When we inform them that builders are quoting between \$650 - \$1,000 a square foot to build, they are amazed, and everyone blames Covid for everything! Furthermore, builders have approximately a 1- 2 year waiting list and then estimate two years to build! So, a home needing work can seem the better option.

Brokers are often asked how we price homes. It is now very difficult because we don't know or quote square footage -- this is a rule our Board of Realtors has due to frivolous lawsuits. We go by county records which aren't always correct because the current assessors don't even come inside to reassess and base their assessment on original plans. Therefore, they aren't aware of finished basements, screened porches turned into sunrooms, garages that became dens or if the current owner has changed from Formica to quartzite countertops or if the carpet was replaced with hardwood floors.

They don't know if air-conditioning was added or Wolf appliances replaced the original GE ones. This is why the tax assessments are usually low and buyers question why the asking price is high in comparison. Hence, it is difficult for us. Factor in that prices have gone up so quickly -- we can blame Covid and the exodus it created with supply and demand



Pat Allen BIC
Allen Tate Realtors/Pat Allen
Realty Group.

-- so prices are all over the board.

If you choose to remodel a "fixer-upper," always ask for references and credentials from contractors because many have had to "do-over" renovations that were already done and paid for. I had a seller who had to correct a situation that cost him over \$125,000 just to make the home sale-able! No permits were pulled so no CO was done to allow occupancy! Another was a costly \$40,000 mistake! If

you are the seller you need to consider that the remodeling costs now are much higher than three years ago and take that into account when pricing. I hear over and over: "if they want to upgrade the kitchen and baths, they can do that, I'm not!" But you need to understand it will be costly and time-consuming and price your home accordingly so a buyer will consider the challenge to have a win-win transaction.

If you are willing to upgrade the kitchen and baths in a home, you will more than recoup your investment. Buyers who want to "walk right in and sit right down" will more than pay for your work. Just use quality materials and neutral colors. Lighten the rooms any way you can: dark rooms even with track lighting are difficult to sell. If the appliances are moaning and groaning and on their last leg, it's time to retire them! Remodeling is not for sissies so get ready!

My broker opinion is that doing the work to remodel will pay off. But don't overprice when the home is completed. Buyers are savvier now and do their "homework" before overpaying.

- Pat Allen is the broker-in-charge of Allen Tate/Pat Allen Realty Group in the downtown office at 295 Dillard Road. She is a Certified Luxury Home Marketing Specialist, a consistent award-winner, and a top producer every year for her real estate career of 19 years. You may reach her at 828-200-9179 or email her at pat.

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'Wreaths Across America Day' is Sat. Dec. 16

Wreaths across America Day is on Saturday, Dec. 16 beginning at noon from the Rec Park from where volunteers will be shuttled to and from before and after placing wreaths.

Wreaths can be sponsored for \$17 and order forms can be printed from the Facebook page at <https://bit.ly/donatehighlandswaa2023>. Forms are also available at Highlands United Methodist Church, Highlands Rec Park or Highlands Decorating Center. You can also sponsor online at [https://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/.../167634/Overview/...](https://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/.../167634/Overview/)

This is Highlands' 7th year honoring veterans on national Wreaths across America Day. The 2023 theme is "Serve and Succeed." The goal is to have 575 wreaths to be placed at cemeteries in Highlands, Scaly Methodist, Scaly Mountain, Baptist, Horse Cove, Macedonia (Satolah), Clear Creek, Buck Creek, Mt. Moriah (Goldmine) and Miller. Wreaths will also be available for some family cemeteries in the area.

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• INK PENN •

From Long Island to London

As you search for your next great read, you'll see the phrase, "an unputdownable mystery" or thriller or whatever genre the book falls into. I suspect the books fall short of that hype all too often. For different reasons, the last two books I read truly were unputdownable, at least for me.



Kathy Manos Penn

Island friends don't find out about her past lay a fascinating foundation for the mystery.

I recommend reading it for the laugh-out-loud moments, the family dynamics, and the twists and turns. I'm off to find "Bad, Bad Seymour Brown," the sequel.

Someone Else's Shoes

by Jojo Moyes

What a story! We wom-

en certainly know the power of a good pair of shoes--whether it's the heels that make us feel like a million dollars (until we walk in them for more than 10 minutes) or the go-to, practical & comfy flats that allow us to accomplish the endless tasks we tend to everyday.

This tale captures both as we get to know several strong women--strong in different ways, but in the end--strong. Nisha, the original owner of a pair of red Louboutin heels, is a glamorous woman wed to a powerful but controlling man. Sam, the hard-working career woman who unwittingly picks up the wrong gym bag, has little sense of style. She's too busy supporting her family in the wake of her husband's job loss and depression. She's too busy dealing with the condescending boss who treats her as though she's an idiot.

Takes One to Know One

by Susan Isaacs

I recall reading Isaacs' 1978 novel, "Compromising Positions" and finding it hilarious. I may or may not have seen the movie version, "Positions," with Susan Sarandon, Judith Ivey, and Raul Julia. I certainly don't recall seeing Joe Mantegna as the murder victim.

But I digress (not unusual for me!) I picked up this 2019 book when I saw a blurb about a second book featuring Corie Geller, a former FBI agent turned suburban housewife. Naturally, I went in search of the first one so I could start at the beginning of what may turn into a series.

I knew I'd made a good choice when I saw this "Wall Street Journal" review: "Ms. Isaacs is a witty author, but comedy gives way to terror as Corie's inevitable confrontation with her dangerous quarry nears. All the foreshadowing and presaging pays off in spades, and the scenes that tie up loose ends are a pleasure to read."

The WSJ nailed it. It's the snappy and snarky dialogue that makes the book, though the mystery is well-plotted, too. The dynamics between Corie and her handsome husband, Judge Josh Geller, and the cover story she lives so that her Long

Island friends don't find out about her past lay a fascinating foundation for the mystery.

I recommend reading it for the laugh-out-loud moments, the family dynamics, and the twists and turns. I'm off to find "Bad, Bad Seymour Brown," the sequel.

Then there are Jasmine and Andrea, friends--often saviors--of the two main characters. Nisha and Sam literally walk in each other's shoes, and the plot shows cases how doing so can change how you act, how you see yourself, and what you can accomplish. Just when you think the story is over, the author throws in a twist you never saw coming. This is a book you don't want to miss.

The only downside to reading two unputdownable books in one week is the lack of sleep. Fortunately, I'm retired, and can indulge in my go-to cure for late nights, an afternoon nap.

• Award-winning author Kathy Manos Penn is a Georgia resident. Find her cozy mysteries at Shakespeare & Co. in Highlands, Franklin Office Supply & Gifts, and on Amazon. Contact her at inkpenn119@gmail.com, and follow her on Facebook, www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/.

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Represented Buyers

18 VILLAGE WALK

Village Walk

Sold for \$1,575,000

Represented Buyers



...MAYOR continued from page 2

personnel will answer calls. After hours and on weekends, we have a system of prompts that can be followed to report a problem. One of our staff will be on call at their home, monitoring the incoming calls. The staff member will have a radio and contact the appropriate crew to respond. If the lines are busy, it is probably because other

folks are calling in the same outage. Everyone's patience will be appreciated.

In bad weather situations, I will do my best to post information on my Askmayor-Pat.com website. As always, please do not call 911 for a residential outage. Those lines need to be kept open for life-and-death situations.



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...LETTERS continued from page 7

correlation to the declining enrollment at Highlands School and STRs. The letter cites absolutely zero evidence of a correlation between declining enrollment and the approximate 275 STRs in the Town of Highlands. As a resident of this community for over 16 years, I can attest to the difficulty of recruiting younger families to our community, and I simply cannot see how 275 STRs can be attributed to Highlands School declining enrollment.

Factors that should be considered in declining enrollment could include Summit Charter School's high school expansion and the increase in attendance at Rabun Gap Nacoochee School.

Other factors may include limited

high-paying employment opportunities for young families and the cost of housing. The cost of housing should not just be attributed to STRs which make up less than 10% of the approximately 3,000 residential units in the Town of Highlands.

If you want to see more families in Highlands, we likely need to create more housing for our workforce which may require the Town of Highlands to expand water and sewer services to make it economically viable for a developer. I hope the community can come together to develop solutions for additional housing and stop blaming everything on STRs.

Jerry Moore
Highlands

Andrea Gabbard
c: 828.200.6742
AndreaGabbard@gmail.com

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ELECT KAY CRAIG Town Commissioner

✓ **Service is important to me and it would be an honor to serve Highlands as a Town Commissioner.**

✓ **As our community grows, I would like to offer some new common sense ideas to take us forward.**

✓ **Three commissioner seats are up for election, I would greatly appreciate your vote!**



paid for by Committee to Elect Kay Craig

...TRUTH continued from page 1

2005-'06 it was 413 - but enrollment at Highlands School has always fluctuated as verified by figures provided by the school system with the highest enrollment at 428 in 2006-'07 and the lowest in 2015-'16 and 2016-'17 both at 323.

So actually, if facts count, there are years since the '16-'17 school year, that enrollment has actually increased.

In '05-'06 it was 413; in '06-'07 it was 428; in '07-'08 it was 396; in '08-'09 it was 387; in '09-'10 it was 408; in '10-'11 it was 357; in '11-'12 it was 361; in '12-'13 it was 341; in '13-'14 it was 361; in '14-'15 it was 362; in '15-'16 it was 323; in '16-'17 it was 323; in '17-'18 it was 334; in '18-'19 it was 342; in '19-'20 it was 388; in '20-'21 it was 380; in '21-'22 it was 370; in '22-'23 it was 348 and currently in '23-'24 it's 335.

Now to STRs.

HNC's premise is: if the short-term rentals were long-term rentals (the presumption being that homeowners would rent their homes long-term if they couldn't rent them short-term) then there would be places for young families to live within the corporate limits of Highlands so Highlands School enrollment wouldn't decrease.

It should be noted that currently students in Highlands School live in town, outside of town in the Highlands Township, Scaly Mountain Township, as well as in Franklin and Cashiers.

HNC further claims there are between 275 and 400 STRs in Highlands but according to Highlands Town Manager Josh Ward there are 275-280 STRs within the 2,360 homes currently on the residential utility billing accounts, as verified by Highlands Finance Director Rebecca Shuler.

HNC wants short-term rentals gone from Highlands and to that point, believes its claims - factual or not - will guarantee the election of the two candidates - incumbents Commissioners Brian Stiehler and John Dotson - who have also said they want STRs gone from residential areas.

The other three candidates, Kay Craig, Jeff Weller and Rachel Wilson, believe in STRs for various reasons and are content with the regulations in the amended Unified Development Ordinance that allows existing STRs in R1 and R2 as of September 2022 to continue. New STRs in those zoning districts after that date are for now prohibited.

Some background.

At the Aug. 24, 2021 Town Board meeting, the commissioners ruled to prohibit STRs in the R1 district as of January 3, 2022. Huff et al of Save Highlands, the group that believes STRs are lawful, took the town to court over that initial ruling. However, with no clear ruling on the legalities of the issue at the state level, both parties agreed to "stay" litigation. The first stay expired and with the issue still unclear, a second stay between Huff et al vs. The Town of Highlands was signed Oct. 26, 2023.

"The second stay order between Huff and the Town of Highlands was signed October 26th. The one-year stay commenced on October 1st," said Town Manager Ward.

According to the stay, the parties involved believe the NC General Assembly will take action next year regulating the use of Short-term Rentals that will directly impact the legal claims in this matter," reads the stay. "Neither party may engage in any litigation in this action during this period of stay."

Many of the members of HNC can't vote in Highlands or in Macon County or even in North Carolina because their residency is in another area or in most cases another state. They are depending on the in-town residents who can vote to carry the torch for them, and they are willing to make their

case with false claims.

The members of the coalition who signed the Oct. 26 letter are Tom Coley, Carol Gable, Cathy Henson, Lila Howland and James Worrell - only Lila Howland can vote in Highlands.

"It is our belief that fewer single-family homes for long-term rent or sale means fewer affordable homes for young families to rent or purchase and that is correlated with declining school enrollment," they claimed in their letter last week.

Everyone knows real estate particularly in resort, second-home communities skyrocketed nation-wide as well as here in Highlands when the great COVID exodus took place late 2019 and 2020. Home prices increased due to supply and demand which is what has made purchasing a home challenging for everyone young and old.

The real story is that for a fact over the last five years, educational options in the Highlands area have increased and that has caused Highlands School enrollment to fluctuate.

"As indicated by the data from the past five years, there hasn't been a significant change in enrollment numbers," said Highlands School Principal Sarah Holbrooks. "Enrollment numbers have stayed right between 330 and 380."

It's nothing new that other schools in Cashiers, Franklin and Rabun County offer various sports options and courses not available in Highlands and this can affect school choice, as well as where parents work.

But the main factor affecting Highlands School enrollment is the expansion of both the prestigious, private Rabun Gap Nachoochee School (RGN) down the mountain in Georgia and Summit Charter School in Cashiers.

In 2017 RGN opened its Lower School which meant grades K-12 became available and then a Pre-K program became available in 2021.

"Rabun Gap has been blessed with record enrollment growth over the past several years, and we've also seen an increase in day students from the local community, including the Highlands-Cashiers area," said Head of School Jeff Miles. "The opening of our Lower School in 2017 and the addition of our Early Learning Center for PreK students in 2021 allowed us to expand to serve students of all ages. We're proud to offer premier academic and applied learning opportunities, championship-level athletics, and an award-winning arts program."

Currently, there are 19 students from Highlands and Cashiers in the Lower School, eight in the Middle School, and 27 in Upper School for a total of 54 students from Highlands and Cashiers.

"Breaking it into total from each place, we have 19 from Cashiers and 35 from Highlands," said Megan Morris, director of marketing and communication.

It's a similar story regarding Summit Charter School in Cashiers.

Summit began expanding grade options during the 2018-'19 school year when it started adding one high school grade per year.

Currently, there are 40 students, K-12, with Highlands addresses.

Of the 303 students currently enrolled, students living in Highlands represent 13% of the student population with 15% of the students school-wide from Macon County.

"This includes 52 new students across multiple

• See TRUTH page 16

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for Town of Highlands
COMMISSIONER

*"I'm asking for your vote this election for the **Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners**. I'd like to bring fresh ideas and some new vision to the Board. I would be honored to be your Commissioner and would appreciate your support." - **Jeff Weller***

KEY ELECTION DATES



Absentee Mail-in
Voting Begins



Early Voting
Period



Election Day

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...TRUTH continued from page 14

grades,” said Melissa Hudson, development director. “While enrollment has increased across multiple grades, middle school in particular has seen a significant increase over the past two years.”

For the 2023-24 school year, Summit’s 13 grades are at full capacity.

Next, HNC claims less students means less funding and that’s why the county is reluctant to fund improvements at Highlands School.

“Declining enrollment results in less funding, certainly from the State. This may also explain why Macon County hasn’t funded the necessary capital improvements sorely needed at our local school or shown any willingness to fund a Pre-k program,” reads the letter.

The State allocates 30%

40% of its statewide Capital Improvement Budget to the 2,500 public schools in the state.

However, the state funding directly associated with enrollment is the Average Daily Membership (ADM) or head count at the schools.

Each year the State sends Macon County Schools a per student amount – currently \$4,471 per student.

According to Angie Cook, finance director of the Macon County School System, the money is sent to the school system which distributes it as needed for particular programs.

The amount isn’t divvied out per school based on ADM so Highlands, for instance, or another school whose ADM drops isn’t “penalized.”

“The state allocates the ADM

funding (4,471/per student) in PRCs (Program Report Codes) which represents a program,” said Cook. “For example, there are separate PRCs for English as a Second Language, Exceptional Children, Transportation, instructional support, non-instructional support and various other categories.

“Those ‘pots’ of money can only be used for the programs they are assigned to. For the most part it is allocated by the program and each director of the program plans accordingly based on the salaries of the employees in the program and the supplies, materials, and/or equipment that might be needed for that program.”

Most of the funding the county uses to run Macon County’s 10 schools – which now includes Macon Virtual Academy that started during COVID – comes from the county’s proper-

ty taxes and to a small extent from sales tax. The county is responsible for keeping the doors open in Macon County Schools.

HNC’s claims that the county may be balking at funding the Highlands Pre-K and expansion has nothing to do with ADM but everything to do with the opinions of the members of the Macon County Board of Commissioners in regards to Highlands.

“Let the locals pay for it,” which HNC believes is the county’s stance also suggests the lack of funding is some sort of punishment for declining ADM when it actually speaks to the views of some of the commissioners regarding school funding as a whole.

“I feel like we’re just the funding arm for the Board of Education a lot of the time and that the schools make up the majority of the county’s budget,” said MC Commissioner Chair Paul Higdon.

Though like Derek Taylor said in his letter in the Oct. 26 edition ... “It’s the county’s job to fund our schools,” only 18% of the county’s 2023-24 budget - \$11,720,027 – not the majority of the budget as Commissioner Higdon claimed, is allocated to funding its 10 schools so Highlands ADM has little to do with the county’s stance.

More than 50% of the property tax generated in Macon County comes from Highlands zip codes - therefore Highlands residents pay for over half of the property taxes in Macon County and funds the services for the entire county with a disproportionate amount coming back to Highlands, which is also the case for the school funding and is the real reason Highlands School projects get delayed traction.

- Kim Lewicki

Highlands Hurricanes Swim Team wins ‘Hallowswim Invitational’

On Saturday, October 28, the Highlands Hurricanes won the ‘Hallowswim invitational’ against members of FAST (Franklin Area

Swim Team) and JCST (Jackson County Swim Team). The scores were: Highlands 364, JCST 137, FAST 87. The meet was at home for the Highlanders.

The Hurricanes were led by Jaycee Powell who won four events on his way to 28 pts. Emma Denisoff, and Junior Olympians Chase

Kenter and Justin Powell all won three events and one second to score 26 pts. Junior Olympian Jack Sumner won two events, finished 2nd twice and brought home 24 pts.

Charlie Hinton won two and had a second with 19 pts., while sister Anne Marie had three sec-

ond-place finishes and 18 pts. Ian Batista and Nicole Shchelgachov both scored 17 pts. Batista had a 1st, 2nd, and a 3rd, and Shchelgachov had an 1st and two seconds.

Aleks Petric-Sakonjic, Harper Bresnahan, and Junior Olympian Blake Kenter all brought home 14 pts. Kenter won a race, Petric-

Sakonjic and Bresnahan got a 2nd and they all three had a 3rd.


Bo Curcuru had an 1st and a 3rd and 11 pts. Cody Levy, Wyllie Hinton, Agatha Jestin, brothers John and Michael Spencer all brought home 10 pts. Levy and Hinton won an event, the brothers Spencer each had a 2nd place finish, and Jestin had 3rd.

Emilina Hernandez, Asa Garner, and Valerie Nadzorau all scored 9 pts. All three had a 2nd and a 3rd place finish. Ivan Shchelgachov and Callum Tucker both scored 8 pts., Ivan with a 2nd and Tucker with two 3rds. Alex Lopez and Morgan Mason won 6 pts. Lopez had a 3rd. Max Jestin scored 5 pts.

The Highlands Hurricanes Swim Team is a Highlands Recreation Park Team that practices in the evenings at the Highlands Recreation Park Pool.

The only requirement to join is that a prospective swimmer must be able to swim 25 yards (one length of the Recreation Park Pool) unassisted.

For further information please call head coach Steve Hott at 828.421.4121



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Written by Mo Gaffney & Kathy Najimy

Directed by Mary Adair Trumbly & Erik Bishop



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Photos by
Kim Lewicki

NC's Public School Funding System: A century-old division in the spotlight

By Brittney Lofthouse

In December 2022, the Macon County Schools Board of Education voted to approve its 2022-'23 Budget Resolution which included having to allocate over \$500,000 from its fund balance. The majority of last year's budget shortfall came when the state increased the minimum wage to \$15 for school personnel, which increased the pay for custodial staff, clerical staff, and teacher assistants. The state budget, signed into law in July, provided salary increases for all public school employees in the fiscal year. It also increased retirement rates to 24.5% and increased health insurance premiums to \$7,397 per employee, per year. The state budget came after the county budget was completed, resulting in the shortfall.

On average, local dollars account for about 14.5% of Macon County Schools funding. Last year, the total local current expense was \$10.2 million with a little over \$2.5 million of that being used to pay for locally paid teachers, with another \$3.3 mil-

lion going toward operational support services.

State funding accounts for about 49.5% of the MCS budget on average each year with the total State Public School Fund Appropriation to Macon County Schools topping \$34 million.

The remaining roughly 19% of the county's budget comes from federal funds. The total Federal Grants Fund for the 2022-'23 fiscal year was just over \$13 million, which pays for federally funded classroom teachers, EC teachers and Title One teachers, as well as operational services.

In addition to Macon County's operational budget, the county provides an additional \$6.5 million in capital outlay expenses for school renovations and repairs.

In a financial landscape established nearly nine decades ago, North Carolina's public education system relies on a unique blend of state, federal, and local funding sources to provide quality education to its students.

The state's commitment to funding instructional expenses, including personnel, while county

governments shoulder the burden of capital expenses, such as building maintenance, has been the foundation of North Carolina's education financing model for nearly a century.

This financial structure is aimed at ensuring that every child in North Carolina receives a sound basic education, but the source of funding has evolved over the years.

In the 2020-'21 school year, North Carolina's public schools allocated nearly \$14.5 billion for instructional expenses, drawing from state, federal, and local resources. State funding made up 67 percent of this budget, federal contributions accounted for 12 percent, and local funding covered 21 percent.

The historical separation of state and local responsibilities in school funding remains a cornerstone of North Carolina's educational finance system. However, in recent years, this division has become more porous, with counties taking on an increasing share of instructional expenses.

In the 2020-'21 academic year, counties funded 15.3 percent

of principal and assistant principal positions, 5.8 percent of teachers, 8.3 percent of teacher assistants, and 21.2 percent of professional instructional support personnel.

The state, on the other hand, contributed just 2 percent to capital expenses. While the actual dollar amount allocated for school operations has increased over time due to rising enrollment and costs, the percentage of the state's General Fund dedicated to education has dwindled since 1970.

In 2020-'21, only 40.8 percent of the General Fund was allocated to K-12 public education, a sharp decrease from 52.5 percent in 1970. According to the Department of Public Instruction, had public education been funded at the 1970 level, districts and schools would have an additional \$3 billion for student education.

North Carolina recently found itself at the bottom of a nationwide ranking by the Education Law Center (ELC) regarding K-12 public school funding. ELC's "Making the Grade" report for 2022 analyzed data from the 2019-2020 school year, marked by the significant disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including school closures and transitions to virtual learning.

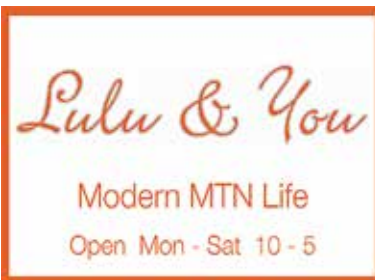
The state legislature in North Carolina's most recent budget appropriated \$11.2 billion for education, excluding higher education. ELC defined the funding level as the total amount received from state and local revenues per stu-

dent, without accounting for federal dollars.

North Carolina's cost-adjusted per-pupil funding level stood at \$10,791, which is \$4,695 below the national average. Out of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, North Carolina ranked 48th for funding level. From 2008 to 2020, state and local per-pupil expenditures in North Carolina increased by \$1,265.94 without adjusting for inflation, according to the North Carolina Public Schools Statistical Profile. However, when accounting for inflation, the report found that North Carolina's funding levels decreased by approximately 10 percent.

Despite being one of the states where much of school funding comes from the state, North Carolina faces challenges in maintaining the pace of teacher salary growth that keeps up with the cost of living. The state transitioned from a progressive tax structure, which taxed higher incomes at higher rates, to a flat tax rate that is uniform for all.

Furthermore, North Carolina has initiated a trajectory to reduce and eventually eliminate corporate taxes by 2030, with plans to reduce taxes on personal income and corporations in the coming years. The current law aims to lower the flat tax rate to less than 4 percent by 2027, with recent proposals suggesting a further reduction to less than 2.5 percent by 2030 which may further jeopardize school funding.



Rotary Club of Highlandscelebrates 30th Anniversary of Shop With A Cop by making a donation. Each child is given \$200 for Christmas shopping for their families or themselves. This year 200 recipients are expected. From left: Dave O'Harra, Rotary president; Caroline Cook, Shop With A Cop Fundraising Coordinator, and Sheriff Brent Holbrooks. Not pictured: HPD Chief Andrea Holland and HPD Captain Leah McCall.

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✔ As our community grows, I would like to offer some new common sense ideas to take us forward.

✔ Three commissioner seats are up for election, I would greatly appreciate your vote!



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...HOTWIRE continued from page 1

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Committed to concierge-level approach to customer service, local leadership has eagerly anticipated the opening of the Highlands' Fision Experience Center, further solidifying the company's commitment to providing customers with a best-in-class experience. Beyond the ultra-fast Gigabit internet speeds and revolutionary technology, Hotwire Communications' uncompromising degree of superior customer service sets the company apart from the competition.

"Hotwire Communications is proud to serve the Highlands community to bring our multi-Gig services to the area," said Mike Hall, Hotwire Communications' Senior Director of Sales. "We are committed to providing innovative, future-proof technology for the town, and we are thrilled to invite residents to our Fision Experience Center and learn more about Hotwire and what we have to offer."

From the beginning, the local Hotwire Communications team has immersed themselves in the Highlands community, making significant investments into and

partnering with community organizations to support local events and bring additional broadband accessibility to the town's residents.

The Town of Highlands spent a number of years planning and building the fiber-to-the-home network.

"Hotwire submitted a generous bid to lease the network fiber. I appreciate their commitment to operate the network and to serve the community for the next two decades," said the Mayor. "With Hotwire and other providers, Highlands residents and businesses now have excellent access to broadband."

Alex Stefanescu, executive VP of Sales GM of Carolinas said none of what's been accomplished in Highlands would have been possible without Hotwire's localboots-on-the-ground team: Jeremy Adcock, store manager and Fision educator, Account Managers Will Beck and Emily Lenski, and leading the tech team, Jon McCardle and Richard Reynolds, Josh Heard, Luke Gibbs and Dillon Price.

The Fision Experience Center is located at 670 North 4th Street Highlands, NC 28741 and is open from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

- Submitted

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While growth is inevitable, I'll work to proactively find fair solutions to challenges before they become problems.





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Paid for by Rachel Wilson for Town Commissioner



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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.

• Highlands/Cashiers Alcoholics Anonymous "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. recovery program. Open meetings are held in Highlands @ the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 p.m. and on Wednes-

day & Fridays @ 12 noon. Open in person meetings are held in Cashiers @ the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library, 249 Frank Allen Rd. on Sunday at 5 pm, on Tuesday @ 7 pm, on Friday at 5 pm and on Saturday at 9 am. Cashiers Open ZOOM Meetings are held on Monday @ Noon and 7 pm and on Wednesday @ 700 pm and on Saturday @ 9 am. ZOOM ROOM 921 817 2966 PASSWORD CVG2020. For more information please visit our website www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of A.A. 24/7 call our HELP Line 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

1st Tuesdays

• Indivisible Highlands from 5-6:30pm at the Hudson Library.

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

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@macconn-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 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 10-11am. 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

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.

THE BASCOM
A CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

323 Franklin Road | Highlands, NC
TheBascom.org | 828.526.4949

PLEASE VOTE



**for Town of Highlands
2023 Election for
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

November 7 - Election Day

Early voting open until November 4

Exercise your right to vote!

Voting is one of our most important rights and privileges as a citizen

I hope ALL voters in the Town of Highlands Community choose to participate!

WWW.JEFFWELLERHIGHLANDS.COM

Paid For By The Committee to Elect Jeff Weller

Beautiful Women Play at Diva's!



Nancy's & The Exchange Fancys for Men



828-526-5029

**2060 Dillard Rd, Highlands
2 miles south of Main, Highlands**

...EVENTS continued from page 22

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 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 for more information or just join us at 9 AM on the 3rd Saturday of the month.

Sundays

- Church in the Wildwood Hymn Sing Sundays 7-8 p.m. through Sept. 3. 828-506-0125.

- 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).

Wed., Nov 1

- 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.

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

Wed.-Sun., Nov. 1-5

At PAC, the Highlands-Cashiers Players present "Parallel Lives" 7:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., Sundays. For tickets go to highlandsperformingarts.com

Sat., Nov. 4

- Volunteers are needed to help Tidy Our Town on Saturday beginning at 8:30 a.m., weather permitting. Volunteers will begin at K-H Founders Park on Pine Street, to get geographic assignments before collecting trash. Volunteers will get a light breakfast, a safety vest, gloves, pick-up tools and garbage bags. Only areas within the town limits will be covered. To participate please email events@highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-5841.

- At The Bascom, Holiday Arts & Crafts Show on The Bascom Terrace and in the Bascom Studio Barn and in The Bascom Shop. It's free 10a to 4p.

Thurs.-Sun., Nov. 9-12

- The 7th Annual Highlands Food & Wine Festival featuring the Grand Tasting, Truckin', the Main Event, A Generous Pour and A Shot at Redemption. For more information and to buy

tickets go to <https://highlandsfoodandwine.com>.

Fri., Nov 10-26

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

Fri., Nov. 10

- Garrison Keillor, Tonight! at PAC-HPAC at 7:30 p.m. \$80 per person. Call 828-526-9060 for tickets or go online at hcmusicfestival.org.

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 highlandsperformingarts.com

Thurs., Nov 30

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

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 week-end 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.

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.mountaintheatre.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.

Sat.-Sun., May 11-12

- The 4th annual Bear Shadow will be held again at Winfield Farm in Scaly Mountain. Ticket prices, talent lineup and times are yet to be announced. Stay tuned.

Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation names Charlotte Muir executive director

The Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation (Health Foundation) announced today that Charlotte Muir has been appointed as its new Executive Director. The announcement comes following an extensive nationwide search conducted by the Succession Planning Committee and approval from the Board of Directors.

The Succession Planning Committee received more than 60 applications from candidates across the country for the Executive Director position. Over the past six months, the committee conducted a rigorous and thorough process of reviewing these applications and holding multiple stages of interviews with numerous well-qualified candidates.

"Charlotte will be a wonderful addition to the Health Foundation," said Dr. Barbara Corcoran, Chair of the Board of Directors and Succession Planning Committee. "She has extensive nonprofit



Charlotte Muir

experience, strong community relations, and a passion for the work that will continue the Health Foundation's growth and investments in the Highlands, Cashiers, and surrounding communities. I want to thank the members of the Succession Planning Committee for their thoughtful and diligent work during this process."

Muir comes to the Health Foundation after serving as the executive director of the Highlands Biological Foundation since 2018. Her

accomplishments include significant growth of the donor base and annual gifts, expanding programs with the Highlands Nature Center, cultivating new board members and stakeholders, and growth and development of the staff.

Prior to the Highlands Biological Foundation, Muir served as the Theatre Director of the Vilar Performing Arts Center and Vail Valley Foundation, and Program Manager of the Contemporary Arts Center in New

Orleans, LA.

"I am thrilled to join the Health Foundation team," said Muir. "Having witnessed firsthand the profound impact they've made on our community since 2019, I am incredibly honored for the opportunity to lead this organization alongside such a strong board of directors and staff. The Health Foundation's unwavering commitment to our region ensures that we are set to reach even greater heights in our mission to enhance health and wellness within our community."

As Executive Director, Muir will be responsible for staff and operational management of the Health Foundation. Her duties will also include development, strategic planning with the Board of Directors, and creating collaborative relationships across our communities.

The Health Foundation has been led by Robin Tindall since its inception in 2019.

"I could not be more excited for Charlotte," said Tindall. "She is coming on board at an extraordinary time for the Health Foundation. Her experience and inspiring enthusiasm are exceptional, and I look forward to ensuring a smooth transition over the next several weeks. I also want to pass

along my sincerest gratitude to all who have been so supportive over the past five years – the board, donors, non-profits, staff, and community. I am confident that Charlotte's leadership will continue to grow and expand the impactful work of our dedicated partners, and I extend my best wishes and congratulations to Charlotte."

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and much more**



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corner
of 3rd &
Spring**



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ELEV. 4118 | THE HEART OF HAPPINESS

Tidy Our Town
Join us!

Saturday, November 4

8:30 a.m.



**It is time to tidy up our town!
And we need a little help
from our friends.**

**We'll begin at
Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park,
Pine Street, Highlands.**

**To participate, send an email to
events@highlandschamber.org**

This event is hosted by the
Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC.
For more information: highlandschamber.org or 828-526-5841
visithighlandsncc.com

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



Teach us to pray

Michael D. Matlock
Rector
Christ Anglican Church

The central way that we are invited into a life-giving relationship with our holy, loving Heavenly Father is to hear from and talk to God, or pray. But how do we pray? I believe prayer is one of life's great mysteries. Praying in a scriptural way allows us to live in the third dimension of life and experience the crisis of a face-to-face meeting with God, to engage with His constant presence, to allow Him the opportunity to redeem, restore and heal us. Praying, like reading the Bible, is a personal experience — “person-al,” one person to another. Each human is a person and the triune God is three persons in one. Praying requires routine and structure, but it is not mechanical — just as a body requires a bony skeleton, but it is not the skeleton that gives life to the body.

The family prayer, or the Lord's Prayer, that our Lord Jesus taught us provides a framework for praying to the Father (Matthew 6:5-14; Luke 11:1-12; cf. Exodus 4:22). The Lord's Prayer contains summary ideas found in the Psalms, the rich prayerbook of Israel, Jesus, and the early Church. Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.” For commentary, see Tom Wright's *The Lord and His Prayer* (Eerdmans, 2014).

There are three types of prayer I recommend using as a trellis to allow our life of prayer to grow by the power of the Holy Spirit: spontaneous prayer, short intense vocal prayer, and ready-made prayers (see Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray*, [Paulist, 1970]). All three are important to flourish in our constant contact with God. The use of each enables us to pray unceasingly as Paul instructs in 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

Spontaneous prayer gushes out of our souls when we become vividly aware of God or find ourselves in deathly danger. It is heartfelt, deeply personal and fully engaged with God. I cry out to God with thanksgiving and when danger and tragedy strike my family, the church, the nation, and the world: “Lord, help me/them; Lord, save me/them.” This kind of prayer assures us we are not alone and do not have to form our prayers perfectly but we have a Father who loves us and welcomes our cries for help.

Second, short, intense, vocal prayers arise from conviction. In our relationship with God, we can pray short simple prayers that express the deep truth about our relationship with God — our need of him, our love for him, our

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 27

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. W. 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

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

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

8 miles south of Highlands on N.C. 28 S in Satolah

Pastor Zane Talley

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11. Choir: 6 p.m.

Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

Franklin • 828-634-1312 • mountainsynagoguewnc.com.

Services: 1st /Fri. and 3rd Sat.

and Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur.

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

Sun: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church.

4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)

Weds: Bible Study 6:30 p.m.; Youth Group 6 p.m.

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone - 526-2418

Tues. - 9:30am; Thurs. - 9:30am; Sat. 4pm; Sun. - 11am

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7

Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212

Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer

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

Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mass: Tues. noon (Latin). Thurs. 9a.; Fri. noon;

Sat. 5:30p; Sun. 9a

THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

1448 Highway 107 S.. Office: • 743-2359 • Rev. Rob Wood

Sunday Services: 8a. 9:30 & 11a

Visit our website www.goodshepherdofcashiers.com for

schedules of activities.

Our Bazaar Barn supports outreach in the community.

Open Thurs., Fri. Sat. 10a -2p.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

85 Sierra Drive, Franklin • uufranklin.org

Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Oct. 24. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Oct. 24

• At 5 p.m., officers responded to a call of shoplifting at Bryson's Food Store where alcoholic items valued at about \$35 were taken.

Oct. 28

• At 1:10 p.m., officers responded to a call of damage to real property when a vehicle door was damaged on N. 4th Street.

The Highlands Fire &

Rescue log from Oct. 17.

Oct. 24

• At 9:37 a.m., the dept. provided assistance at a location on Satulah Ridge Road.

• At 10:31 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at the hospital.

• At 7:29 p.m. the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cherry Tree Lane.

Oct. 25

• At 10:29 a.m., the dept. provided assistance at a residence on Flat Mountain Road.

• At 6:09 p.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a residence on Paul Walden Road.

• At 10:27 p.m., the dept. was

first-responders to Highlands Plaza.

Oct. 27

• At 11:09 a.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Old Cove Road.

• At 6:22 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Horse Cove Road.

Oct. 28

• At 2:30 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a LP Gas Leak on N. 5th Street.

• At 3:27 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Pierson Drive.

Oct. 30

• At 9:32 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING from page 26

desire for him—which remain true even when we don't feel it. The Jesus prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me a sinner," is a really good example of this. These kind of prayers become part of me and allow me to keep drawing close to God in whatever I am doing without needing to formulate my own prayer in each situation.

Third, ready-made prayers are "expressions of the saints' deepest experience ... which the Holy Spirit coined within their lives and within their hearts" (Bloom, p. 56). I come from

a Christian tradition (Anglican) which has birthed a Book of Common Prayer containing a rich treasure-trove of prayers that were conceived in the lives of others who have known God more deeply than us or connected with God in a particular way. This common prayer (bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net) offers every Christian a beautiful resource for prayer if we humble ourselves to connect our heart and soul with these words.

My fervent, abiding prayer for all God's children on the plateau is that we devote ourselves to biblical prayer as a means of hearing

from and talking to God so that we can receive and share the transforming love of Jesus Christ who is the only Way, the Truth, and the Life to our blessed, holy, loving triune God. As a former professor at Asbury Seminary, I experienced this reviving biblical prayer in my prior community in Wilmore, KY (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_vfKckoTBY).

If you are not a Christian or a Christian without a church home, we would love to welcome you at Christ Anglican Church as we grow as disciples of Jesus through restorative prayer.

Rotary hears about 'the state of our rivers'

Ever wonder how clean the river water is? The answer is yours for the reading by visiting MountainTrue's state of our rivers report where you will find detailed analyses of the Broad, Green, French Broad, Hiwassee, Watauga, Elk, and New rivers.

MountainTrue champions resilient forests, clean waters and healthy communities in the Southern Blue Ridge Mountains. Callie Moore, the Western Regional Director of MountainTrue, recently described to the Rotary Club of Highlands how the organization



From left: Stell Huie, Rotary Host, Callie Moore, Western Regional Director, MountainTrue and Dave O'Harra, President, Rotary Club of Highlands.

helps to clean up rivers, protect forests, plan vibrant and livable communities, and advocates for a sound and sustainable future.

MountainTrue's www.swimguide.org monitors weekly E.coli levels in 15 different watersheds during the summer; and River

Keepers – a clean river team that protects the French Broad, Watauga and Elk rivers.

For more information about how MountainTrue protects the places we share and how you can become involved, see www.mountaintrue.org

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9am - Live Stream

w/Andy Stanley

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8/31



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Paul Corbin
Owner



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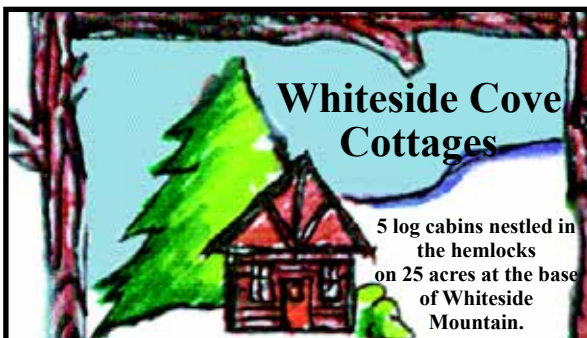
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Driveways • Septic Placement

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...Q&A continued from page 1

Kay Craig

I am not opposed to term limits. Term limits can create some challenges that need to be managed. You could lose some experience and expertise, but managed correctly you may also encourage new talent, ideas,

and energy that is important to keeping a community thriving. It is an important discussion that will need to be addressed with the new board. It would be a part of shaping the future of Highlands and who participates.

John Dotson

Working as a team to oversee a municipality like Highlands is not a responsibility that is simple to step into and “hit the ground running.” Cities and towns are very complicated institutions and are only vaguely similar to running a business.

It takes time and commitment to understand the broad scope of knowledge and responsibility - and working with others to make a town work. In many instances, gaining required knowledge can take years.

In my experience, the Highlands Town Board has, over the decades, made very informed and judicious decisions - decisions that affect us all. Governments should take the time to weigh decisions and consequences to avoid coming back to fix unintended mistakes later.

Larger national elections aside, the argument for term limits for smaller, local municipalities does not make a lot of sense. In a small town of approximately 1,013 voters, every vote counts and every election in Highlands IS effectively a term limit. If you have not voted, make your voice heard. Cast your vote by November 7th.

Brian Stiehler

Introducing term limits to the town board is an interesting concept and one that I'd need to hear a good enough argument for as to why it's needed.

Municipal elections occur on odd number years which means several commissioner seats are up every other year. By voting, residents can determine the direction the town is going. If the people of Highlands feel that I'm not contributing nor focused on relevant issues, they can select a candidate that they feel is better suited for the job.

It's also worth noting there have been a couple of elections where commissioners ran unopposed. If that were the case, term limits could do a disservice to the town. The monthly Town Board meetings are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of serving the public. What folks don't see that consumes an immense amount of time are committee meetings, fundraising, meetings with concerned residents and reading the 100-plus page agendas to be prepared for the monthly town board meetings.

In addition to that, I have other responsibilities that are tied to my role as commissioner. For example, I serve as the town's representative on the Macon County Economic Development Commission (EDC), which

involves monthly meetings in Franklin, and I am chairman of the Highlands Tourism Development Commission (TDC). These are just a few examples and as you see, it takes someone that has the time, the energy, and commitment.

In conclusion, like all topics concerning the town, I'm always open to hear and understand both sides of the issue. But for right now, I don't see the benefit of term limits for elected officials in Highlands. It has been an honor serving you and the town, and I ask for your support and your vote on November 7th!

Jeff Weller

I have been asked this question earlier as well as in conversations with members of the community. I realize Highlands is a small town, so sometimes finding candidates to run can be more difficult some years and others not. With that said, I do feel that there should be term limits for a Town of Highlands Commissioner as well as the Mayor.

If I was to have to decide that today, I would say that three terms would be my suggested limit. However, I do feel that because of the limited pool of candidates in such a small town, I would be open to a hybrid format that allows a candidate to run again after four years off of the Board of Commissioners. I feel that fresh and new Ideas can be a very positive element to a Town Board. If elected, I'd like to bring new visions to the board.

After weeks of questions, a Forum, emails, discussions one-on one, messages, phone calls and meetings with groups, the only thing left is to ask for your vote. There are roughly 1,000 registers voters in the town limits. Getting out and voting is very important. Please go and vote when you do vote, I would appreciate you considering voting for me. If you have any questions, more info is available at www.JeffWellerHighlands.com I very much look forward to the opportunity as Town of Highlands Commissioner if elected.

Rachel Wilson

This might seem easy for me to say as someone running for my first term, but I am a supporter of term limits for the Town Board Commissioners and Mayor position. Specifically, four terms in either position should be the cap. Our town is rich with people who want to get involved but either do not understand how our government works or are intimidated to run because of lifetime politicians who occupy seats and are convinced that they will not win. I appreciate legacy and tradition but after 16 years, incumbents should take pride in their service and seek out someone they can mentor for the future of Highlands. Investing in

another individual by teaching them about campaigning, preparing for meetings, the mindset behind decisions of the past, introducing them to key members of the community and handling challenges that come with either position while allowing them to inject their own personality and experiences into this process will ensure Highlands' past is honored yet there is a steady refresh of energy and ideas in our Town Leadership carrying Highlands into the future.

Knowing you are only given a finite amount of time to make an impact on this Town also creates a sense of urgency and motivation speeding up the pace at which projects happen. Being a Town Board Commissioner is a tremendous honor and responsibility, yet complacency can set in after too long and a term limit would help remediate that.

I understand that with a population of our size it could be difficult to fill seats on the Town Board or Mayor position. However, a little encouragement can go a long way and if incumbents are actively seeking out new candidates, getting more people involved and teaching caring members of the community about the intricacies of these positions, filling the ballot would not be an issue.

In closing, I am grateful for everyone who has taken the time to read my responses, attend events, contribute financially and given their time to get to know me over the past several months. You have enriched this experience and confirmed that we need fresh views on the Town Board. My hope is that I have won your vote and will be selected to serve our community to the best of my ability. There are a few more days left in early voting, then the polls are open from 6:30 am to 7:30 pm on Tuesday, November 7th. Every vote is critical, take the time to let your voice be heard.

In-Person Early Voting is thru Nov. 4

The one-stop early voting period for the Nov. 2023 municipal election ends at 3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 4.

During the early voting period, voters may cast a ballot at any one-stop site in their county. Eligible individuals may register and vote at the same time. Photo ID is necessary. Voters can also get a “No Fee ID Card” from the NCDMV.

On Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 7, the polls open at 6:30 a.m. at the Highlands Rec Park and close at 7:30 p.m.

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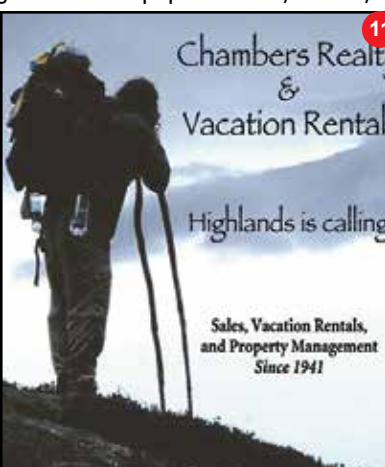
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