Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 20, Number 43 | Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com | Thurs., Oct. 26, 2023

Kay Craig

John Dotson

Brian Stiehler

Jeff Weller

Rachel Wilson

This is week 5 of the Candidate Q&A

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

This is the fifth week of the 6-week Q&A leading up to the Nov. 7 election. Candidates are listed alphabetically.

Question #5:

What relationship do you think the Town should have with the K-12 Highlands School?

• See Q&A page 30

At Thursday night's Town Board meeting, the five, full-time HF&R officers were pinned. Flanked by Asst. Chief Robbie Forrester and Chief Ryan Gearhart from left are: Lt. Jeff Burnette, FF Clay Gibson, LT Matt Pruett, FF Jacob Pressler and LT Travis Brooks. - Photo by Kim Lewicki

HF&R new full-time, paid firefighters are pinned at Town Board meeting

The Highlands Fire & Rescue's recently hired five, full-time employees were introduced and pinned at the October Town Board meeting.

Chief Ryan Gearhart introduced each of them, outlining their credentials, their past work history and families.

After the ceremony, Mayor Pat Taylor reiterated the impor-

• See PINNED page 12

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Multiple agencies respond to recent wreck

In the wee hours of Thursday, Oct. 19, residents in the vicinity of Satulah Ridge and Wilson roads were awakened by the sounds of an accident.

At about 1 a.m., Highlands Fire & Rescue, the Highlands Police Department and Macon County EMS responded to a call of an accident when a vehicle traveling above the posted speed limit on Satulah Ridge Road ran off the roadway, struck a tree and proceeded to Wilson Road where it came to rest.

According to Police Chief Andrea Holland, five people were in the vehicle. Two individuals were taken to area hospitals, and one passenger was airlifted for medical treatment. The driver of the vehicle, Steijn Pieter Drijver, 19, and another passenger were

• See WRECK page 24

Town Board OK's NC 106 sidewalk on the right side

The workshop session at 6 p.m., prior to the October Town Board meeting set up agenda items for the November Town Board meeting.

Discussed was the need for a street light policy - where they should be erected, basically on town streets and where people walk. A policy is needed because where they have been erected on private roads in the past has caused dissent in neighborhoods.

Also discussed were two issues on which the Planning Board has been working.

The Planning Board's proposed amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance regarding string lighting has been finalized – basically only to be allowed over dining areas, not walkways or parking lots. It is proposed they also be commercial grade and hard wired so they can be turned

• See SIDEWALK page 25

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• The Plateau's Position •

• Mayor on Duty •

The money has been granted by still takes time

Highlands Mayor Patrick Taylor

The decision on the proposed sidewalk on NC 106 was made Thursday night. It will not be located on the side of the road where the Shelby Place Homeowners Association land is situated. The board decided to locate the sidewalk on the opposite, north side.

Unlike the original design, the new sidewalk route will not require private property permissions; it will be located on the existing NCDOT right-of-way. The proposed sidewalk will meet all ADA and environmental requirements. It will tie into the existing sidewalk by the post office and go to Cobb Road. Our staff will continue to work with the folks from the Southwestern Regional Planning Commission to secure grant funds for the sidewalk.

This sidewalk project illustrates the challenges facing the town in building sidewalks on our major corridor roads. Admittedly, we had a jump start and change of plans that cost the town some money and staff time. But these kinds of situations go hand-in-hand in creating some public facilities. I want to thank the Shelby Place Homeowners Association for their willingness to consider the town's easement request. The Shelby HOA Board also put time and energy into deciding that the easement was just not feasible from their perspective.

Like several other projects in process that are funded by external grants, this sidewalk project will take time to get underway. In the coming months, town staff will address the grant program's administrative requirements.

The Poplar Street waterline installation is close to completion. The lion's share of the funds for this project, as well as the Gibson Street water and sewer line project, were secured from the Covid ARP federal funds. It took over a year to complete all the reports and approval signatures. A similar process impacted the Gibson Street project. That project, too, is now underway.

A state/federal grant also funded the Dog Mountain water project. Our town engineer and a consulting firm have been working all this year on design specifications and reports that state officials must approve. That process should come to an end at the beginning of 2024, and construction will begin at some point during the year.

The town received state funding for replacing the pre-clarifier tank at the water department and another grant to dredge Mirror Lake. Funds were allocated in this year's budget to do the design work for the pre-clarifier tank. That design phase should be completed by the end of the year. That first step will help move the project forward.

As for Mirror Lake, people are already asking me why there isn't dredging equipment at the lake. I respond, not so fast; we haven't even gotten official notification from the state for both the pre-clarifier and Mirror Lake Project. The state budget was approved only a few weeks ago. Now, state administrators will begin the process of formally notifying towns and counties about the grants they have been awarded. That notification process might take several months. Our staff will have to go through the initial planning and administrative process before any work can get underway on these major projects.

See you at the Community Coffee tomorrow at 11 am at the Hudson Library.

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Letter Policy:
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.

• Hic's View •

"Another hiker to Highlands.
I hope when he gets there
he remembers, less is worth more."

• Correction •

In last week's edition, the obituary for Marie Ann Van Huss Marion, 87, of Charleston, SC and Highlands, NC, was accompanied by a picture of her daughter Rebecca "Becky" Marion Blakeney not Marie.

Marie was buried in the family plot at Highlands Cemetery on Monday, Oct. 23.

Memorials may be made to Highlands Biological Station, 265 N 6th St, Highlands, NC 28741.

We regret the error and are happy to set the record straight.

• Weather •

Thu, 26-Oct	Fri, 27-Oct	Sat, 28-Oct	Sun, 29-Oct
66°F / 48°F	70°F / 50°F	73°F / 49°F	69°F / 48°F
Pleasant with some sun	Mostly sunny and mild	Partly sunny and warm	Mostly sunny and mild
RealFeel® High: 69° Low: 51°	RealFeel® High: 73° Low: 54°	RealFeel® High: 75° Low: 49°	RealFeel® High: 73° Low: 51°

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• Investing At 4,118 Ft. •

The reasons we sell and the reasons they buy

When it comes to real estate, there is so much to talk about: land, residential, commercial, contracts, due diligence and everything else through closing and finally, possession. So much has been written on the subject and there is certainly something to learn from each and every article. I decided to approach it a bit differently for this week's editorial feature, Investing at 4,118 FT.

Lorna Alexander
828-200-2463
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices
Meadows Mountain Realty

One of the most important parts of the real estate process is the people, the buyers and sellers, for it is them that make our real estate world go round and round. To that end, this article introduces you to your new neighbors, Brittany and David Guren, a young couple who I recently worked with from Florida who decided to purchase a home in Highlands this year. The following gives you a glimpse into their lives and why they ultimately decided on Highlands to create a second home for themselves.

Tell me a little bit about yourselves: What do the two of you do for a living and what are your passions outside of your career and as a couple?

We are David and Brittany Guren, current residents of Tierra Verde, FL and now splitting time in Highlands, NC to escape the Florida summer heat. David was raised in Coral Springs, FL until he moved to Tampa, FL as a sophomore in high school and later attended college at the University of South Florida where he received his degree in International Relations. Brittany was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio and relocated to Saint Petersburg, FL where she attended University of South Florida and received a bachelor's degree in finance.

David is a founding member and current partner at Brundage Workforce Solutions, where they focus on providing revenue staffing for Health care systems. The company is in their fifth year of business and recently received awards for being the 2nd fastest growing company in Tampa Bay and best place to work. After a 9-year career with a global management consulting firm, Brittany has recently joined a start-up company where she will be helping to create scalable processes for a company providing stop-loss insurance to health care systems.

As a couple we really enjoy spending time traveling, trying new restaurants, and outdoor adventure. As Florida residents, we spend a lot of our time inshore fishing on our flats boat, boating with friends, and enjoying time at the beach with our dog Charlie.

What inspired you to find a second home and how you selected the North Carolina mountains and how you came to decide on the Highlands-Cashiers plateau and specifically settling on Highlands itself?

As each of our careers became more flexible to work remotely, we started to explore the idea of finding a second home that we could drive to in one day that would provide a reprieve from the Florida summer heat. We started to consider N.C. as David's mother snowbirds between Hobe Sound, FL and Brevard, NC, and we knew we wanted to be close to the Asheville Airport.

It was important to us to find a mountain town that had access to great hiking and also offered amenities like great restaurants, arts, and community activities. As we researched different areas of North Carolina, we kept coming across articles about Highlands, and everything we read was exactly what we were looking for but we needed to see it first-hand. We began working with a local realtor, Lorna Alexander with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Meadow Mountain Realty. Lorna, who considers herself a Highlands Brand Ambassador, did an outstanding job of showing us all of the amenities Highlands has to offer from the Bascom Center for the Visual Arts to the Highlands Performing Arts Center, and all of the other town attractions in between. Lorna helped us find the perfect place that checked off all of our needs all for a second home.

How are you enjoying your new home in Highlands and how is it enhancing/transforming your lives together. What do you like about it?

This is our first season in Highlands, and we have loved every second of being here! The entire community was very welcoming, and we really enjoyed getting to experience the different summer events the community hosts.

Our first season has been full of family and friends coming to visit and tackling

• See INVESTING page 15

CASHIERS - SILVER SLIP FALLS

MLS# 102928 | $1,895,000

3 BR | 4 BA | 1 HBA

This stunning mountain contemporary home offers a picturesque blend of mountain and river views, nestled within a secure gated community between Highlands and Cashiers. With ceilings that reach for the sky and walls of glass, living here feels like residing in a treehouse. Step onto the expansive outdoor decks, where you can enjoy the sounds of the river behind the home. The kitchen's spacious island and cozy window seat make it the heart of the home. The great room boasts wood ceilings and gleaming wood floors, complemented by a corner fireplace. Meticulously maintained and featuring an encapsulated crawl space, this home is in impeccable condition.

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FRANKLIN

MLS# 103131 | $667,000

3 BR | 2 BA | 1 HBA

This attractive farmhouse-styled cabin is just minutes away from downtown Franklin at an elevation of more than 3,300' that offers breathtaking, panoramic mountain views. Inside, the home conveys warmth and comfort, featuring vaulted and beamed ceilings, rich hardwood floors, a stunning stone fireplace, and built-in bookcases that add character to the living room. The well-designed kitchen simplifies meal preparation with its functional layout and offers the added bonus of windows on two sides. A two-car garage and a generator complete this mountain retreat, offering more storage space, and comfort when the lights go out. The landscaped grounds have plenty of space for gardening. Offered furnished.

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• Highlands Dining •

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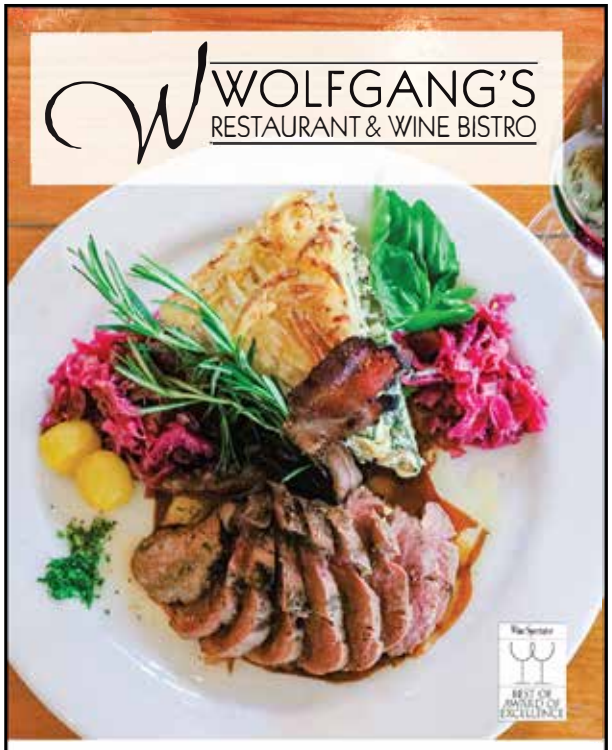

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• Letters •

It's the county's job to support Highlands School

Dear Editor,

Commissioner Shearl made a public misstatement at the last commissioners meeting that the citizens of Highlands were prepared to privately raise the money for the school. There has never been a commitment to raise the funds privately for the pre-k. We are looking to the county to support our school as it becomes clearer moving forward how funding will be put into place for the Franklin and Highlands' school projects.

If there was any confusion it was because we told Mr. Shearl that Highlands couldn't move forward without a set of plans to price the project accurately. If Mr. Shearl would like to come up to Highlands and lead a fund-raising process to bring private money to our school, then please come to Highlands and lead the effort.

Also Mr. Higdon's statement that, "I feel like we're the funding arm for the board of education a lot of the time," is a bit shocking.

Mr. Higdon has been a county commissioner for several years and knows education is approximately 30-40% of the budget and that the Board of Education has no authority to raise revenue. By default, it is the county's job through our commissioners to fund the schools. Being 30-40% of the budget, school funding will come up a lot at the commissioner meetings. Why the surprise? I assume when someone runs for county commissioner, they are committing to the job of taking care of our county schools.

Derek Taylor
Highlands

• See "Macon commissioners get creative to complete Highlands School renovations" on pg 10

• Dining •

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Highlands School enrollment is declining - What does that mean for our town?

Dear Editor,

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.

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. "Let the locals pay for it" seems to be the prevailing message. HOW?

We believe the proliferation of Short-Term Rentals in our residential neighborhoods is negatively affecting school enrollment. The estimated number of short-term rentals in Highlands is between 275-400. It is hard to get solid data on this. We received information this week that the Town has identified 276 Short-term Rentals so far. If true, that would be over 10% of the housing based on the number of housing units identified by the Highlands Community Plan.

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. Other communities have reached this same conclusion and used it as a reason to decrease the number of STRs in their communities.

Residents support schools, and we need more of them with school-aged children. Every STR is a house, not a home for families with children. Once a community loses its neighborhoods and then its schools, it dies and simply becomes a destination for tourists.

In the upcoming election, we urge you to vote for the candidates who support you, your neighborhood and our local schools. Without these, Highlands will no longer be Highlands.

The Board of Highlands Neighborhood Coalition:
Tom Coley, Carol Gable, Cathy Henson, Lila Howland, James Worrell

2023 Election

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• Ink Penn •

Airplane reading for a trip to England

Of course, I had to load my Kindle with geographically appropriate mysteries for my summer trip to England. Heaven forbid I run out of reading material. I started the plane ride with one set in my destination, the Lake District. It was a long flight, so I finished that one and moved on to another, set in 1920s London.

Kathy Manos Penn

Murder in Adland
by Bruce Beckham

Believe it or not, it was a newspaper reader who told me about this series. The short blurb made me laugh: MEET MAVERICK BRITISH DETECTIVE DI SKELGILL... "MAD, BAD AND JUST A LITTLE BIT COZY." How could I resist?

DI Skelgill investigating a murder at an upscale resort proved to be an entertaining and informative introduction to local life. We see him fishing on Basenthwaite Lake, a lake I saw from a distance on my trip and learned is the only true lake in the Lake District. Locals love to stump visitors with the question "How many lakes are there in the Lake District?"

The glossary of local terms the author includes is a tad overwhelming, but very helpful. As DI Skelgill investigates, the action shifts back and forth between London, Edinburgh, and the Lake District. The descriptions make you feel as though you're right there with the inspector and his team.

There are plenty of suspects and red herrings in this well plotted mystery, and I'm delighted that there are another nineteen books in the series. If you like British mysteries, I recommend you add the DI Skelgill mysteries to your TBR list.

Murder I Spy: A Rex and Dora Mystery
by Lynn Morrison

Imagine 1920s England trying to shake off the horror of WWI. The upper class indulge in drinking and dancing the nights away, though some have more serious matters to attend to. Meet Dora and Rex.

"When a bright young man teams up with a glamorous femme fatale, the identity of a murderer won't be the only secret they'll unmask." Theodora Laurent, the femme fatale, and Lord Reginald "Rex" Bankes-Fernsby, both of whom served in the war, are the unlikely duo who set out to find the killer.

Author Lynn Morrison serves up a perfect mix of glamor and danger in this first installment of the Dora and Rex 1920s Mystery series. When you reach the last page, you'll be dying to know more about these two likeable--dare I say "enchanting"--characters and how their work and their relationship will evolve.

If you're like me, you'll find Book II in the series, "The Missing Agent," and dive in. Thankfully, Book III is already out, and Book IV arrives in October.

• *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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Macon commissioners get creative to complete Highlands School renovations

By Brittney Lofthouse

The Macon County Board of Commissioners have had little to no luck soliciting bids from companies willing to complete renovations and repairs to Highlands School, further delaying the project. The one and only bid the county received for the project came in much higher than anticipated, leading commissioners to reject the bid and send the project back out for consideration. However, the county's second attempt didn't garner any different results, sending county leaders back to the drawing board.

During the October meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners, after a lengthy discussion, the board unanimously voted to combine the two pending Highlands School renovations projects – the middle school renovations which has already been partially funded and the Highlands expansion and PreK addition whose

• See **RENOVATIONS** page 18

• Highlands School •

Highlands boys soccer finished undefeated in conference when Highlands hosted Blue Ridge Early College on Monday and earned a hard-fought win with a final of 2-1. The school also celebrated Senior Night on Monday and recognized senior players from left: JD Head, Inman Ahrens, Cooper Hall, Henry Lopez, Landon Green, and Peyton Naron. - Photo by Brian O'Shea

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...PINNED continued from page 1

tance of having full-time firefighters.

"You full-time firefighters are critical concerning all you do and have had to do and how you respond, including your response to the terrible situation last night," said the mayor referring to the early morning Oct. 19 accident on Satulah Ridge and Wilson roads. (See story on page 1.)

Gearhart said the full-time, paid firefighters are on three shifts – A, B, and C – which designate the time of day or night they are on duty.

On A-shift is Lt. Travis Brooks who hails from Staten Island, NY and is the son of a retired Staten Island firefighter. He moved to Highlands eight years ago.

Brooks was a volunteer with HF&R for six years, holding the rank of lieutenant two of those years. He was also a paid employee of the Sylva Fire Department for a year after completing the Cleaveland County fire academy earning his Level 2 Firefighter and Haz Mat certification. He has also completed the Basic EMT program at SCC.

Also, on the A-shift is firefighter Jacob Pressler who grew up in Cashiers. He has five years of fire service under his belt and will soon be a Level 2 Firefighter and plans to complete EMT basic training soon.

On the B-shift is Matt Pruett who grew up in Franklin. He has 15 years of fire service both as a volunteer and a paid employee.

He is a Level 1 Fire Instructor, a Level 2 Firefighter, has been a paramedic for five years and has worked with Macon County EMS since 2011.

Also, on the B-shift is firefighter Clay Gibson who was born and raised in Franklin. He has tallied eight years of fire service work and will soon be a Level 2 Firefighter. He plans on completing EMT basic training, soon.

On the C-shift is Lt. Jeff Burnette. He was born in Highlands and grew up in Glenville. He has 17 years in fire service between NC and GA. He was a paramedic for Glenville-Cashiers Rescue from 1998-2006.

He is a Level 1 and Level 2 Firefighter, a Fire Officer 1, and completed EMT basic training.

Chief Ryan Gearhart said the department can't do without and is lucky to have its volunteers and now paid, full-time firefighters.

- Kim Lewicki

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— MIKE & SHARON TALBERT

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Congratulations

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Christopher Duffy, Johanna Fein, Keith Gilbert, Daryl Griswold
Jane Jerry, James Spencer, Margaret Shutze, Carol Taylor, Jerry Wilson

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...INVESTING continued from page 4

David, Brittany, and Charlie Guren.

a variety of home projects. Since moving in we have had our crawlspace encapsulated, added a water filtration system, had shiplap installed to our master bedroom ceiling, and various DIY projects completed by Brittany. By far one of the biggest DIY project Brittany tackled was the addition of a custom bunk bed to our guest room, where the top bunk is a twin and bottom bunk is a queen, outfitted with cubbies and outlets.

Highlands as been a great addition for us and we can't wait to spend next summer here with more family, friends and our dog Charlie.

If you see Brittany, David and Charlie around town, and you will, please be sure to give them a nice warm welcome with a wave of the hand, something that Highlanders are so good at.

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...RENOVATIONS continued from page 10

design phase is in the works – in hopes of making the project more appealing to bidders. As part of the vote taken by commissioners, the board also decided to take a less conventional approach to the process by soliciting bids from eligible Construction Managers At-Risk (CMAR).

According to North Carolina General Statute, a CMAR may perform a portion of the work only if (i) bidding produces no responsible, responsive bidder for that portion of the work, the lowest responsible, responsive bidder will not execute a contract for the bid portion of the work, or the subcontractor defaults and a prequalified replacement cannot be obtained in a timely manner, and the public entity approves of the construction manager at risk's performance of the work.

The board's decision to move forward with the CMAR rather than the traditional route taken for capital projects was largely supported by the need to move forward with ordering materials such as the HVAC unit and new windows for the renovations to the Highlands middle school wing. Lead time on those materials are getting longer each week and according to project architect Paul Boney, Senior Vice President of LS3P, a CMAR will help the school district avoid further cost escalation due to the rise in material costs.

Commissioner John Shearl expressed concern surrounding combining the projects considering the fact that at this juncture, the county has expressed no intent of moving forward with the Highlands expansion and PreK portion of renovations.

According to Boney, the bid package specifically states that while the two phases are combined, the county reserves the right to separate the projects at any time and terminate the contract prior to the second phase beginning.

"You're not committing to the larger project, we're just trying to move it forward," Boney said. "It's the fastest way to do that."

Commissioner Paul Higdon shared his frustration with ongoing funding discussions with the school system saying, "I feel like we're just the funding arm for the Board of Education a lot of the time, and that schools make up the majority of the county's budget."

Although Commissioner Higdon expressed displeasure in being used as the school system's "funding arm" statutorily, by definition, the county is obligated to serve as the school system's funding arm, as North Carolina does not allow school districts to levy a tax to generate revenue themselves.

Commissioner Shearl also shared his hesitancy to move forward with combing the projects because following meetings with residents in Highlands, he said private citizens were working to secure funding for the expansion of the school. Highlands Board of Education representative Hilary Wilkes noted that Shearl's assumption was incorrect and must have resulted from miscommunication, because while residents requested the design phase to be completed so funding could be secured for the project, it was never the intention for the funding to be secured privately.

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KEY ELECTION DATES

OCTOBER 6 — Absentee Mail-in Voting Begins

OCTOBER 19 to NOVEMBER 4 — Early Voting Period

NOVEMBER 7 — Election Day

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Highlands Food & Wine is almost here!

The 7th Annual Highlands Food & Wine Festival set for Thursday, Nov. 9 through Sunday, Nov. 12 is locked and ready with a waitlist for two of the five events – the opening Grand Tasting Thursday night sponsored by Allen Tate Realtors- Pat Allen Realty and Saturday's Main Event sponsored by Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Meadows Mountain Realty.

This year all ticket prices include a charitable donation ranging from $25-$125 plus taxes and fees.

The Grand Tasting, to be held on The Bascom terrace is Thurs. Nov. 9, 7-10 p.m., featuring Southern Avenue. Tickets are $295 per person. It is sold out but there is a waiting list.

Truckin' presented by Wilson Gas is to be held in K-H Founders Park on Pine Street, Fri., 1-4:30 p.m. headlines End of the Line and features Matt Koziol. Tickets at $295 are still available.

Saturday's Main Event is on Main Street from noon-3:30 p.m. headlining: Grace Potter and Features Katie Pruitt. Tickets are $350 per person. It is sold out but there is a waiting list.

Saturday's A Generous Pour presented by Highlands Vacation Rentals and Tarpon Cellars is at the Highlands Performing Arts Center from 8-10 p.m. featuring Chuck Leavell. Tickets are $500 per person and are still available for this seated event.

On Sunday, Nov. 12 Lupoli Construction presents A Shot at Redemption at the K-H Founders Park from noon to 3p.m. headlining The War and Treaty and featuring: Harlem Gospel Travelers. Tickets at $295 are still available.

There are also wine dinners and specialty events at …on the Verandah, Flat Mountain Farm, The Farm at Old Edwards, Wolfgang's, and 4118 Kitchen + Bar.

Tickets for the VIP Weekender Plus, which includes tickets to all the events, are $2,100 per person ($125 charitable donation included) + taxes & fees. These tickets are sold out, but there is a waitlist.

VIP Weekender Pass that does not include A Generous Pour is $1,600 per person with a $100 charitable donation included + taxes & fees.

For more information and to buy tickets go to https://highlandsfoodandwine.com.

• 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.

Oct. 6-28

• "The Rocky Horror Show" at Mountain Theatre Company now in residence at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street. For tickets www.mountaintheatre.com.

Thurs., Oct. 26

• Elected local officials, including the Mayor of Highlands, as well as the Highlands Chamber of Commerce and local Hotwire Communications leadership, unveil the Highlands Fision Experience Center for residents and businesses to experience the cutting-edge technology and innovative Fision products powered by our multi-Gigabit fiber-optic network at 670 N. 4th St. Check in is 1:45-2p and the program begins at 2.

• Highlands Parks and Recreation will have a Halloween Spooktacular Event on Thursday night from 5:30-7:30pm. The event will include pumpkin decorating, apple bobbing and other games geared to ages 5-10, but everyone is welcome. Wear your spookiest costume or come as you are. We look forward to a fun event for the whole family.

Fri., Oct. 27

• At Hudson Library, Community Coffee with the Mayor Friday at 11a in the Hudson Library Meeting Room for the final Community Coffee with the Mayor of 2023. The topic will be: "What is Ahead for Highlands: An Idea Discussion with the Mayor."

• Let's bring baseball back to Highlands School!. On Friday at 5:30-7:30 pm at the town field we will be hosting a family fun night. We will do some hitting, fielding and throwing. This night is to gauge interest in starting a middle school team this coming spring.

Sat., Oct. 28

• Mission Health is partnering with local law enforcement agencies on Saturday to host our 5th annual Crush the Crisis, a prescription drug take-back event. In Highlands unused prescription drugs can be turned in at the front entrance of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital at 190 Hospital Drive in Highlands, 10 –11 a.m.

Sat. Oct. 28

• At The Bascom, Cynthia Strain book signing from 3 – 5 pm. Free to attend• Free Fall Concert with the H-C Chamber Music Festival, 5 p.m., at First Presbyterian Church. Sponsored by the Cullasaja Women's Outreach.

Sun., Oct. 29

• Aura Photography Readings at Holistic, 11:30a-4:30p. Reservations required. 828-487-5597.

Tues., Oct. 31

• Halloween on Main (from 2nd to 5th streets) will be open to pedestrians from 6-8 p.m. on Tuesday, Participating merchants will distribute candy. Musical performances include the Foxfire Boys in front of Reeves Hardware, High Five in front of Berkshire Hathaway and DJ Mike Murphy next to Kilwins. The Kid's Zone will be on Fourth St.

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 h-cmusicfestival.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 Kosiba 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 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.

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.

Wine Wednesdays

Each Wednesday through Thanksgiving

Wednesdays
3:30 pm - 5 pm

Spread the season's joy with handcrafted 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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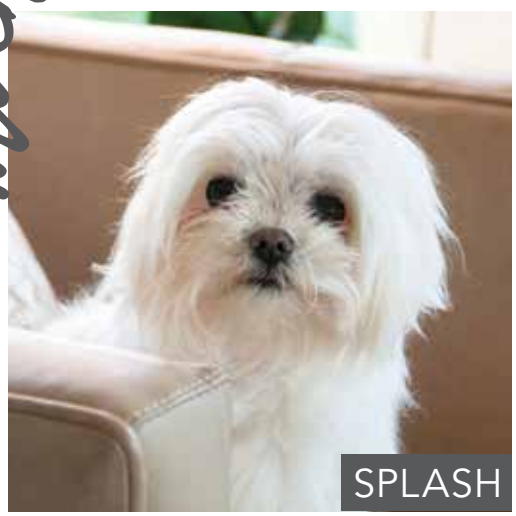
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...WRECK continued from page 1

uninjured.

Officers on the scene determined through an investigation that Drijver was impaired.

"We take these cases very seriously and are dedicated to the safety of our residents and visitors. We commend the Highlands Fire and Rescue and Macon County EMS's quick response," said Holland.

HF&R Chief Ryan Gearhart said the department was dispatched to the scene of a motor vehicle accident with unknown injuries or number of occupants at the intersection of Satulah Ridge and Wilson Road intersection.

"Upon our arrival, and after talking with Highlands PD officers, it was determined that there were three people injured, with two people trapped in the front seat, unable to get the door open.

"HF&R units assisted Macon County EMS to remove one male patient from the rear seat, and then opened the front door with the jaws-of-life.

"HF&R units then assisted the EMS crew to get the two people (1 male, 1 female) out of the front seat. "Three people were transported to area medical facilities - two by ground to Harris Regional in Sylva and one by air to Greenville, SC via Lifenet 10 Medivac," he said.

Gearhart said Macon County EMS used both ambulances from the Highlands base and one from Franklin, as well as one from Glenville-Cashiers Rescue.

"It was a critical joint effort between multiple agencies and we appreciate each of them and what they do for, and with us for our community," said Gearhart.

The Highlands Police Department charged Steijn Pieter Drijver, 19, with Driving While Impaired, 2 Felony Serious Injury by Vehicle counts, and Reckless Driving-Wanton Disregard.

On Friday, Oct. 20, an agent with the Alcohol Law Enforcement (ALE) agency assisted with the follow-up investigation.

Through the course of the ALE investigation, special agents verified the driver purchased numerous mixed beverages from 4118 Kitchen + Bar, in Highlands Plaza, Highlands.

The bartender, Ryan Patrick Henry, 41, of Cashiers failed to verify the age of the underage individual. ALE cited Henry for selling alcohol to someone under the age of 21 and one count of allowing violations to occur at an ABC-licensed business.

ALE will submit violation reports to the ABC Commission documenting the investigative findings. The ABC Commission may choose to sanction 4118 Kitchen + Bar through a fine, suspension, or revocation of the business' ABC permits.

"We would like to thank the ALE for joining our quest to keep Highlands safe," said Chief Holland. **- Kim Lewicki**

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Learn how to make your own wooden pen!
Choose from 5 different pen styles. Cost: $40-50 per person and includes laser engraving.

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Each class lasts approximately 90 minutes and provides 25 meals locally for each item made.

...SIDEWALK continued from page 1

off at closing time.

Michael Mathis, planning director, also introduced a commercial color chart suggested by the Planning Board. The colors are for main commercial business's, base, trim and accent colors.

Mayor Pat Taylor brought up the need to discuss weekend work regulations regarding weed whackers and other noisy tools used by commercial entities on the weekend.

With winter approaching the mayor also suggested the town and its citizens be prepared for winter weather.

The hot topic discussed at the Town Board meeting that began at 7 p.m., was the NC 106 sidewalk.

Shelby Place homeowners said they didn't want an elevated sidewalk running across their property. They were initially OK with the walk descending the embankment along the road to ascend and rejoin the walk further south, but they didn't want to see the sidewalk, which would have been the case if elevated.

"Sometimes things just don't work out and that's the case here," said Mayor Pat Taylor.

With the Shelby Place decision and after meeting again with DOT engineers, it was decided that running the sidewalk down the right side of NC 106 was the way to go. No crosswalk is proposed at this time.

The town has right-of-way easements down the road so the only obstacle will be the need to construct and back-fill a retaining wall in one area.

Commissioner John Dotson, who wanted the sidewalk to go down the left side of the road due to potential of future development said that should areas be developed, the developers would be responsible for a sidewalk.

"So, maybe this is the way we do want to go," he said.

According to Town Manager Josh Ward an exact quote isn't yet available for the construction of the sidewalk on the north side of Hwy 106.

But an early projection for the sidewalk on the south side – which has been nixed – was around $1.6 million.

"If awarded, the Carbon Reduction Grant would cover 80% of the construction cost," said Ward.

Private donations are also in the mix.

Staff was instructed to move ahead with estimating the cost and applying for the grant.

- Kim Lewicki

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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
visithighlandsnc.com

• Spiritually Speaking •

Highlands, NC: Distinct Seasons and Distinct Purposes

Sr. Pastor
Gary Hewins
Community Bible Church

The Byrds produced a song entitled, Turn! Turn! Turn!, which became a huge hit in 1965. The lyrics were in large part 1,000s of years old, the song was based on the third chapter of a book written by King Solomon. To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Solomon was right to understand life in the context of seasons. We all experience seasons in relationships, business and of course in life and even dying. Seasons are inevitable. People have seasons and even towns like Highlands, have seasons.

Winters here on the plateau are for many a season of rest. Many "full-timers" have worked hard in the other seasons, saved up their acorns, in large part to rest and ready themselves for spring. The harsher the winter weather, perhaps the more deserved rest. Winters are for friends and family, putting on a few pounds and enjoying a lot less road traffic. The rhythm of winter appeals to the many who perhaps came to the mountains for a quieter ambience. Winters can be a season of warm coziness, rich in reflective preparation, not to mention holiday cheer.

Spring in our mountains announces the coming of a new rhythm. Landscapers prep equipment to prep lawns for houses being prepped for sale. Merchants and clubs welcome international workers for a new season of recreation and camaraderie. Our beautiful vistas prepare to woo harried, city dwellers wanting a break from the "monoxized, concrete jungles" they navigate daily. Our mountains come alive with new life as our farmer's markets and nurseries open with the fragrance of a new season.

Summers are filled with the sounds of weddings, community concerts and new plays that entertain vacationers and remind them of their need to slow down and enjoy life. Summer traditions are rich and nostalgic for many, our inns are near full, our sidewalks too, and we become hosts to people who seems to want to be temporarily enveloped by a beautiful vista, a thundering waterfall or meandering hiking trail. If only for an elusive moment, something in nature can deeply touch their nature in hopes of transcending all that they left behind.

Fall, if timed right, can mesmerize one with a kaleidoscope of yellows and golds and that majestic red maple. Fall screams from a higher altitude and says, "y'all come back one more time before we nearly shut down for a while. Come back one more time, it will be worth it, then leave us be."

Yes, we do experience seasons as a community and the nuances of such have only been touched on here.

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 27

Proverbs 3:5 • **Places to Worship** • **John 3:16**

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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

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Sky Valley. GA • 706-746-2999
Sundays: 10 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

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Rev'd Dr. Michael Matlock, Rector
464 Hwy 64E. Cashiers. NC 28717
CAC@christanglicancashers.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:11a.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, Morning 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

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

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and Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur.

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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.

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

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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. 13. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Oct. 13

• At 3:14 p.m., officers responded to a call of someone in possession of a small amount of marijuana.

• At 3:14 p.m., Raymond Earl Adams, 39, of Franklin, was issued a summons citation for drug/narcotic violations.

Oct. 17

• At 7:20 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on NC 28 south.

Oct. 19

• A little past midnight, the dept. responded to a one-vehicle accident on Wilson Road.

• At 1:20 a.m., Steijn Willem, Pieter, 19, of Highlands, was arrested for DUI, 2 felonious serious injury by vehicle and reckless driving wanton disregard. He was issued at $15,000 secured bond. His trial date is Nov. 8.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Oct. 17.

Oct. 17

• At 7:31 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on S. 4th Street.

Oct. 18

• At 6:12 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on the Dillard Road.

• At 8:18 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a possible gas leak at a residence on Pierson Drive.

Oct. 19

• A little past midnight, the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Wilson Road.

• At 2:18 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 5:31 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Oak Street.

Oct. 20

• At 8:21 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Happoldt Drive.

• At 9:12 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a possible structure fire on Wilson Road.

Oct. 21

• A little past midnight, the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on the Franklin Road.

• At 4:19 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Spruce Lane.

• At 7:22 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Country Club Drive.

Oct. 22

• At 12:28 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Holt Knob.

• At 1:42 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on the Cashiers Road.

Oct. 23

• At 2:28 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 8:41 p.m., the dept. was called to conduct an investigation at N. 4th Street and Carolina Way.

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...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING from page 26

We too experience seasons as individuals. What season are you in? Are you in the winter of your life? If so, may your rest not be idleness but active, purposeful investment in others. Are you in an exciting spring-like season of life. Perhaps new possibilities, new places, new perspectives? May your adventure be exciting, inspiring and captivating. Are you in a summer season of life right now? Are you working both hard and smart? Are you prioritizing, reaching goals, accumulating acorns and enjoying what it is you do? May your time and your sweat equity pay off but not cost you love. Are you in the fall of life? Perhaps you are winding down and now really appreciating the beauty of who and what really matters. May your life be a multi-dimensional, colorful reflection of experiences rather than a one-dimensional monochrome version.

What was King Solomon trying to say? What were the Byrds trying to convey through song? Wherever you are, fully be there. Know, too, that you are in an ordained season with a specific purpose. Your season and purpose is not random or serendipitous. Whether you realize it or not, your seasons and purposes take place "under heaven." You were created to appreciate this creation, but more so its Creator. During times of rest and reflection, or during seasons of newness, He longs for a connection between you and Him. Call on His Name. He patiently waits during all seasons. Call on Him in the winters of your marriage or business. Call on Him during your seasons of peak production. You can be enveloped by His astounding grace and love. Some look to the sun, moon and stars for direction and the diversity of seasons. If you have yet to do so, look not to the sun, nor to the moon or stars but to the One who delicately put them in place. He has for you an inexhaustible reservoir of goodness and purpose in whatever season of life you find yourself. Call on His Name, the Bible says. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord (Jesus) shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

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...Q&A continued from page 1

Kay Craig

The Town of Highlands should support our school, however, the funding of our school falls 100% on Macon County and to a smaller extent the State.

County funding for all the schools comes from property tax and a small percentage of sales tax to which Highlands contributes a large portion.

The Town should be an advocate for the school and continue supporting the students with programs like the scholarship fund. We can also explore new ways to partner with the community to support our students.

John Dotson

Both of my daughters attended Highlands School from Kindergarten through graduation. They both received a well-rounded primary education that supported their acceptance into a number of prestigious colleges and universities.

My support of the Highlands School is unwavering.

Even though Highlands School falls completely under the purview of the Macon County Commissioners, I think The Town of Highlands should stand as supporter, advocate and enabler for the school.

We should bring to bear any and all leverage available to help elevate our children and provide the absolute best education and facilities possible.

In 1975 The Town of Highlands Scholarship Fund was established by the North Carolina General Assembly. It was set up to help assist graduates of Highlands School in their post-high school educational endeavors.

We are extraordinarily lucky to have this resource for our graduates and is one way the Town of Highlands can continue to contribute to their success. Go Highlanders!!

Brian Stiehler

We are so fortunate to have a first-class institution, the Highlands School, as part of our community. My daughter, Anna, is a 2023 graduate of the school so I can speak firsthand about the quality of the education and the wonderful faculty that makes it what it is. I wish the town had more financial interest in the school, but that is the responsibility of the county, where county property tax is what funds the Macon County School system.

Highlands is unique, and our needs differ from those of the rest of the county. This doesn't mean the town can't be involved in the school and the lives of the young folks. When you look at such things as the School Resource Officer (a Highlands Police Officer), our support of several 5K fundraisers, the Scholarship fund, and the DARE program, you can see there is a lot of support that the Town is providing to the school.

That said, I think after-school care and summer youth programs have a tremendous need in this community and while it isn't direct support to the Highlands School, it's an area the town can be a major player in filling in the gaps that are desperately needed.

A conversation that I've been a part of recently, and I am a huge advocate for, is the establishment of a Boys and Girls Club in Highlands. I am 100% behind this and look forward to helping make this a reality. In Cashiers, 55% of the students at the two schools are actively involved in their Boys and Girls Club. It's an incredible facility that has great leadership. Since losing the Houston House, I think that parcel of land should be dedicated for this purpose alone. The organization is establishing a temporary location near the Hospital until they can do something more permanent in Highlands. The Town needs to step up and be a major player here and that could mean helping to fund/fundraise the initiative or donating the land or a combination of both that is yet to be determined.

The other key link between the Highlands School and the Town that is near and dear to me, is the Town Scholarship Fund. Since I have been involved with fundraising and chairing the annual golf tournament (which was just held on October 23rd), we've raised over $210,000 since 2010. I'm very committed to this in to the future, as a commissioner. This is such a unique and wonderful program, benefiting graduates of the Highlands School. As one of your commissioners, young people in the community will be a priority for me.

Jeff Weller

The Town of Highlands should be an Advocate and Supporter of the Highlands School. Highlands School itself from a Funding and Operations standpoint relies on the Macon County Commissioners and the Macon County School Board. With that said, The Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners should continue their support through the School Resource Officer out of the Town of Highlands Police Department. Understand that the Town of Highlands is reimbursed by the County for the cost of the SRO, but the connection of the SRO to the Highlands Police Department is an important one.

In addition, the Town should be a strong and vocal Advocate for Highlands School at every level. I have spent years advocating for the Youth and Highlands School to the County Commission and School Board. From the Design and Oversight as a Volunteer to see the Highland Soccer Field to be relocated and built at the school to the Renovation and Construction of the Highlands Track and Fieldhouse. I also spent many years on the Board of the Booster Club and served as President for 4 years as well. I coached soccer at Highlands School for 14 years. My focus has leaned heavily toward the Youth in Highlands and especially Highlands School and Highlands Recreation. If elected, I would personally plan to continue that Advocacy and Support of Highlands School and would encourage the Town Board to as well. Our Youth are one of the most important parts of our Community.

Rachel Wilson

Our family is fortunate to have been a part of Highlands School for the past five years. Many teachers, administrators and coaches have poured into our children and contributed to their growth. We have been welcomed and encouraged to become a part of the school. Joey and I participate as coaches and club volunteers; our children participate as team members and are involved in other organizations and activities that help them learn outside of the classroom. Having this incredible resource in such a small town is rare and not something we take for granted.

Financially speaking Highlands School is the responsibility of Macon County and should receive the same priority and funding as other schools within Macon County. Lack of support for the Highlands School expansion from county leadership is disgraceful to our students, teachers, faculty and administration. The planned expansion has been well thought out and ensures the school can continue to meet the needs of our community for years to come. I do not think the town should step in monetarily to make up for this deficit, but our mayor has been very vocal on our behalf in advocating for Highlands School and I think he and other town leaders should continue to do so.

The Highlands police force has done an amazing job of training and preparing for emergency situations that could arise at the school -- I appreciate the presence they have had on campus -- and this is a relationship we should continue to cultivate. This helps students to build a good rapport with law enforcement officers and creates a familiarity that would be crucial should an emergency arise. The responsibility does not rest solely on our police officers, it is also the county's responsibility, but the reality is that someone from the town would likely be closest should help be needed so I appreciate all they are doing to be prepared.

Finally, our town government could be a very useful learning tool for the students at Highlands School and I would like to see involvement at the school sharing about how our town operates and what each role is responsible for. This could be a great learning opportunity and might encourage students to get involved in their local government wherever they decide to call home.

• *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?*

To see the entire series, go to highlandsinfo.com click on Local News and start with the Sept. 28 edition.

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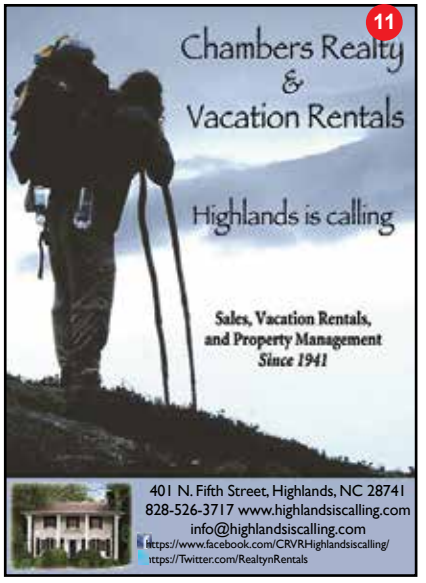

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