

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Nov. 20, 2025

Hotel & STR subject of 6-hr. ZB meeting

By Kim Lewicki

On Wed., Nov. 12, the Zoning Board of Adjustment heard two cases. The meeting lasted a record-breaking six hours. A Special Use Permit was granted as

was an appeal of the town's decision regarding the existence of a short-term rental.

Part 1 of this story about the Special Use Permit (SUP) is below. Part 2 about the appeal of Plan-

ning and Zoning Director Michael Mathis's decision about a short-term rental will be in the Nov. 25 edition.

The Zoning Board of Adjust-

• See ZONING page 8

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Nashville NOEL is Friday, Nov. 28 | 7:30 pm



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Quarter-cent sales tax increase for MC to be on 2026 ballot

By Kristin Fox

For the third time, the Macon County Board of Commissioners will ask Macon County citizens to consider a sales tax increase.

At their November meeting, the board voted unanimously to adopt a special referendum for a quarter-cent (0.25%) sales tax increase for citizens to vote on during the November 2026 general election.

The 5-0 vote followed a motion by Commissioner John Shearl seconded by Commissioner Gary Shields.

The board has voted to put similar resolutions on the ballots in the 2024 and 2022 elections. Both times the resolution has been voted down, however, the margin of citizens voting against the referendum has continued to decrease.

During the midterm election in 2022, the same referendum was on the ballot for Macon County. Out of 15,124 citizens who voted, 8,575 or about 55%, voted against

the tax increase and 6,829 or about 45%, voted in favor.

Last year's election results showed that of the 21,905 ballots cast in the county, 10,213 (just over 51%) voted against the referendum and 9,726 (just shy of 49%) voted in favor of the referendum.

If passed, the sales tax increase would help to generate additional revenue for Macon County to fund various projects and services that would benefit citizens. While the prior referendums have been earmarked to increase funding for Macon County Schools, this time, the 2026 referendum doesn't specify what the tax increase would fund.

However, that is not to say that such a tax increase would not benefit the school system. Commissioners have recently heard from the school board and acknowledge the tremendous need for additional funding for the

• See SALES TAX page 7



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Tonight's Town Board agenda is varied

The Town Board will be meeting on Thursday, Nov. 20. The board will meet at 5:30p to hold a closed session concerning the Huff vs Town of Highlands lawsuit. Following the closed session, the board will hold a workshop at 6p, followed by the monthly business meeting at 7p. Both the workshop and business meeting are open to the public.

The meetings will be held at the Highlands Community Center next to the ballfield. Both the workshop and business meeting can be accessed remotely via the YouTube app on the town website.

The topic for the workshop will be a discussion about changing the occupancy tax legislation that was passed back in 1985. I, along with several board members, believe it is time to update the legislation, as several area counties have done in recent years, so the allocation of room tax funds can be more flexible. Any change in the



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

legislation would require approval by the county board of commissioners before being submitted to our legislative delegation for passage.

This workshop review of the room occupancy tax will be the first discussion, and, as usual, no final action will be taken at a workshop session. It will take more work and coordination to realize any changes in the current legislation, but I believe reform in this area is long overdue.

The first item on the 7p business meeting agenda will be a presentation of the Hudson Library Renovation Plans. The library will be making significant improvements to its facility.

There will also be a preliminary and final plat for the Hardscrabble Subdivision. The renewal of the property lease for the Bug Hill cottage owned by the Highlands Historical Society will also be discussed. The structure is located on the town recreation property next to the Historical Society.

Chief Andrea Holland will also be announcing the retirement of Xena, the department's canine patrol officer. Unlike humans, the retirement age for police dogs comes exceedingly early.

Josh Ward will be discussing the cost overruns incurred in installing the caution light at Little Bear Pen and US 64. NCDOT installed the light after the town and the Little Bear Pen HOA covered the estimated costs. After long delays due to COVID and Helene, the final cost overran the original budget estimate. The board will need to decide, in partnership with the HOA, how this overrun will be covered.

Finally, the selection of a firm to design and build the new playground will be finalized at the meeting. A request for qualifications was sent out to possible firms, and the town received four responses. From this group, the playground committee has made a recommendation. We anticipate that construction of the playground at the recreation center will get underway in the coming weeks, with a completion date in early summer.

I hope to see you at the meeting to-night or have you join us on YouTube.

• SNAPSHOT •

'What are you waiting on? Let's go!'





– Snickers



Photo by John Williams

Do you have a heartfelt, funny, interesting, or beautiful photo you would like to share in our "SnapShot" section? Email it to highlandseditor@aol.com or text it to 828-200-1371, with a brief description and a name. No anonymous photos will be accepted.

• WEATHER •

Thu, 20-Nov	Fri, 21-Nov	Sat, 22-Nov	Sun, 23-Nov
			
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Does size really matter?

Among the first questions many home-buyers ask is simple: How big is the house? So, it often surprises newcomers to the Highlands-Cashiers market to learn that the local Multiple Listing Service does not publish square footage. The omission isn't an oversight — it's a deliberate choice rooted in local history and the unique character of mountain homes.

In 2007, while serving as president of the MLS board, I was part of the group tasked with deciding whether to begin reporting square footage. After careful consideration, the board voted against it, and the policy has stood firm ever since. Today, ours remains the only MLS in North Carolina that does not include square footage in listings.

There were — and still are — sound reasons behind that decision.

Many homes in our region include several levels, often with substantial below-grade space. Appraisers assign far less value to rooms below grade, making any simple price-per-square-foot calculation misleading at best. Complicating matters further, mountain homes rarely follow a tidy rectangular footprint. Curves, angles, and architectural quirks that give these houses charm also make them difficult to measure with accuracy. Inevitably, miscalculations occur — and with them, the risk of significant liability for brokers.



**Cathy Garren, BIC
Highlands Sotheby's
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Perhaps most importantly, property values here are shaped by factors far more nuanced than raw square footage: long-range views, privacy, setting, amenities, and the lifestyle a home offers. A simple number can never capture that.

For those who insist, digital tools can generate floor plans, and sellers may choose to include those in a listing as a range or narrative. Experienced buyers can also provide a reasonable estimate of a home's size. But the primary purpose of a public listing remains the same: to showcase photography and details that inspire buyers to visit the property in person. Only then can they truly gauge whether a home feels too large, too small, or just right.

In a market where lifestyle and experience outweigh strict geometry — much to the chagrin of my high-school geometry teacher, who also happens to be my mother, we're proud to think outside the box. After all, the memories created in these mountains can't be measured in square feet.

• Cathy Garren is the Broker-in-Charge of Highlands Sotheby's International Realty's Downtown office. She is a proud native of Western North Carolina. She has lived and sold real estate in Highlands for 26 years and may be reached at 828-226-5870 or Cathy.garren@highlandssothebys.com.

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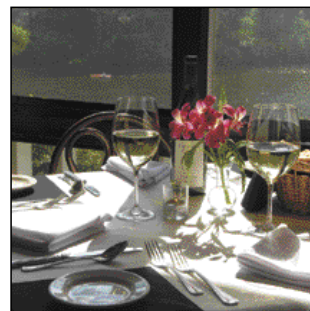
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• LETTER •

God Bless President Trump and the USA!

Dear Editor,

I read Linda Arnold's letter in the Nov. 6 edition and wanted to offer a different view. I respect her opinion, but it's clear she's been misled by the liberal media. Now, architects like James Comey face indictments for lying to Congress, while James Clapper, John Brennan, and others are under FBI probe for their treasonous plot. This isn't journalism; it's deep-state propaganda. Peggy Noonan echoes elite fears, but I see the truth: Trump's first nine months are America First triumph s— borders secured, Middle East peace brokered, swamp drained. Here's a factual rebuttal.

1. Military in blue cities? FBI statistics show violent crime down 15% via Trump's pro-police agenda. National Guard activations target sanctuary chaos in Chicago/NYC, were soft DAs free felons. Constitutional under Insurrection Act. Police funding? Trump added \$10B in the "Big Beautiful Bill"— CBO confirms, not MSNBC lies.

2. Extrajudicial killings of Venezuelans? No such incidents; this stems from a garbled report on a single Coast Guard interdiction of a cartel vessel smuggling fentanyl from Venezuela. Evidence? Over 500 kilos seized, with indictments filed in federal court. Trump's strategy: surgical strikes on cartels. Redirecting to treatment? He's poured \$5 billion into rehab via the SAVE Act — meanwhile, Biden's open borders flooded our streets with drugs.

3. Strikes on Venezuela without Congress? False. Trump fully briefed leaders under War Powers Resolution for defensive anti-terror moves. Argentina's \$40B loan? Smart, cartel-tied reform creating 200K U.S. energy jobs. Health premiums down 12% via CHOICE Act, covering 3M more people.

4. Arrests based on skin color? Straight from the CNN playbook that edited Kamala Harris's word-salad "60 Minutes" interview. ICE arrests target criminal aliens, regardless of race — 95% have prior convictions for drugs, assault, or worse. Under Trump, deportations up 300%, focusing on public safety threats, not "brown people." This isn't regression; it's restoration of the rule of law.

5. DOJ prosecuting political foes? The weaponized

DOJ under Garland spent \$100M on Trump. Now we're holding accountable real crooks — like Comey, facing obstruction charges for the Russia lies. Resignations? Holdovers from the resistance, fleeing accountability. Frivolous? Indictments are ironclad, saving taxpayers by ending hoax probes.

6. Book bans, press censorship, science denial? Secretary Hegseth expanded military library access with diverse, pro-American titles — banning only CRT indoctrination that divides troops. Press restrictions? Voluntary code for embedded reporters in war zones to protect ops, not "what he decides." HHS Secretary Kennedy upholds decades of research by exposing Big Pharma's COVID lies and vaccine mandates — saving lives via informed choice, not denial. Media's "chilling" spin ignores their own lab-leak censorship.

7. \$230M payout, 2020 crimes? No such payout; this twists a routine FOIA settlement on classified docs mishandled by the deep state. "Overwhelming evidence"? Busted by BBC's Nov. 2025 admission of splicing Trump's Jan. 6 speech to fabricate incitement — leading to exec resignations and \$1 billion lawsuit threat. Trump urged "peacefully and patriotically" make your voices heard — unedited footage proves it.

8. AI-generated feces video? Generated by anti-Trump trolls — debunked by fact-checkers as from a parody account. Trump's social media? Punchy memes calling out elite hypocrisy, like the media's edited hits on him.

9. U.S. cities as military training grounds? Fearmongering. Trump floated urban exercises to prepare for threats like Antifa riots — bipartisan, with red and blue cities volunteering. The press buried similar Obama drills to stoke division.

Wake up to the facts, not the fake media. America is safer, stronger, and freer than ever under President Trump.

God Bless President Trump and the USA!

**Ed Metzger
Highlands**

...SALES TAX continued from page 1

school system.

In addition, the county has spent millions on capital improvements for the school system such as the new Franklin High School currently under construction and the recently completed renovations at Highlands School. The county has also started the initial phases of the expansion and renovations of the Macon County Recreation Park.

However, commissioners also know there are many other needs throughout the county that such a tax increase could help finance. Such needs include but aren't limited to the senior citizens center, veteran services and the housing department.

Commissioners can decide at a later date and prior to the deadline for publication of the ballot to designate what the funding will be used for. However, County Manager Warren Cabe cautioned the board saying if it decided to include the funding purpose in the resolution a future board could ultimately vote to change that purpose.

"I think that you have potential for the face of this

board to change drastically in the next general election, so therefore if we did earmark it, then as the manager said, that could be changed by a future board," said Shearl.

Shields expressed his concern about not earmarking what the funds will be used for.

"But I think there's a point when you have to put that purpose on there for the voters," said Shields. "The last time we voted on this, we specified for the capital needs of the school system. I think at some point we have to earmark it or the voters won't be interested in voting for the referendum," he added. "We have to give voters some direction."

Commissioners have also said the lack of specific information about what the monies generated from the sales tax increase would benefit may have contributed to the resolution being voted down last time.

In 2024, it was estimated that the quarter cent local option sales tax, which would apply to residents and visitors, would generate about \$2.3 million annually in additional sales tax revenue.

The sales tax increase would apply to anyone making certain purchases in the county and would be a way the county could generate additional funding without burdening the county residents.

On a \$25 purchase, the increase would result in a six cent increase; likewise on a \$100 purchase it would end up being a 25 cent increase.

If passed, the tax increase will not apply to unprepared food such as groceries, prescription medication, gasoline, certain agricultural supplies, and motor vehicles.

However, the sales tax increase would apply to purchases on items such as clothing, household supplies, electronics, and prepared food and drinks from restaurants or stores.

The NC General Assembly granted county boards of commissioners the authority to levy, subject to voter approval, an additional one-quarter cent county sales tax.

Of the seven western most counties of North Carolina, Macon County is the only one that has not yet implemented the quarter-cent sales tax increase.

...ZONING continued from page 1

ment is a quazi-judicial board which must adhere to specific protocol and procedures. A SUP must meet four specific elements based on the town's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and expert testimony.

Present Wednesday night, were Chairperson Margot Teed, Bill Futral, Rick Siegel, Robert Wood, Michael King, and alternate Jan Pittman. Alternate Tom Lamar was not present.

The granting of an SUP for the High-

lands House hotel was the first case on the docket.

With the Planning Board's recommendation for approval, the SUP issuance from the zoning board was the last hurdle for the hotel destined for the Bank of America parcel on Carolina Way and N. 4th Street. After about three hours, the SUP was granted 4-1 but its issuance didn't come easily.

Ross Hotel Partners will be building a 73-unit hotel with seven privately owned, in-

cidental apartments at 424 Pine Street which is zoned B2.

Though 95 parking spots are required on the B2-zoned site, 96 will be provided, most under the building and 15 in the parking lot at street level.

Though early on, board member Robert Wood said he didn't think the structure was in harmony with the rest of the town, Mathis, said from a design standpoint, the proposed project complies with the UDO and the Community Design Standard in scope, materials and color.

The current built-upon percentage (impermeable) on the .977 acre parcel as it stands now is 70% and the developer intends to keep it that way. Two of the four driveways on the property will be eliminated – one at the ATM and one off Pine Street. A swath of greenspace will front the park side of the hotel to make it look like an extension of the park.

Jeff Weller of Summit Architecture who was advising the developer, said according to the 2022 Comprehensive Plan which the town uses only as a guide, the B2 zone is part of the downtown support district which is supposed to cater to mixed uses – commercial, hotels, offices, retail and residential – with expansion of the pedestrian district through sidewalks.

As to scale, due to the lay of the parcel, the building will be 35 ft. tall, at the entrance at the middle of the building along Carolina

Way and about 45 ft. high on the 4th Street side. The property descends 19 feet from the corner of the parcel on Carolina Way near First Bank to 4th Street.

Ross Hotel Partners was represented by Attorney Craig Justus with the Van Winkle Law Firm in Asheville. He practices in the areas of land-use litigation and planning, environmental law and real estate litigation and has litigated against the town and won in the past.

Justus introduced five expert witnesses – the project architect, a civil engineer who specialized in grading, stormwater, utility, design and ADA access; a traffic engineer who focused on vehicular and pedestrian access and safety, a landscape architect, and a commercial appraiser who presented an impact analysis regarding property value to adjoining properties.

Due to their line of questioning and remarks thereafter, three zoning board members appeared hesitant about the project from the start – Chairperson Margot Teed, Mike King and Rick Siegel.

Chairman Teed began the discussion questioning whether construction of the building would affect the flow line of water thereby potentially discharge into Mill Creek. She further asked why the hotel had to keep the bank's 70% built-upon.

"If it was just a SUP permit with something other than 70%, we wouldn't even be here," she said.

However, Mathis corrected her explaining that the SUP is required by the UDO and is not based on the built-upon.

"It's required because they are putting a hotel in B2 not due to the 70% built upon," he said. "They would have to get a SUP no matter what for a hotel."

Teed said she would have preferred something different on the lot.

"I would have loved to have a cute little inn in that space, that fits in with the town, that isn't giant and is friendly to pedestrians to walk in. A smaller hotel with a smaller built-upon percentage would create more green space. There are so many things that could have happened with this," she said. "You could have had shops and restaurants in the bottom. A true mixed-use. But it's obvious they can't get the money to work."

Teed went on to say that the town's code says that the town should maintain a low to moderate intensity pattern.

"It allows for the 70%, but in keeping with the town plan, if the SUP had just been for B2 and a 50% built-upon it would have been more like an inn so why you needed to use this intensity of 70% is the question," she said.

Attorney Justus said they are matching the existing condition.

"We aren't talking about a naked, grass field. We are talking about a bank building

• See ZONING page 9

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...ZONING continued from page 8

that has an impervious level that we are matching. This is the redevelopment of a site," he said.

King questioned the accuracy of the survey's built-upon percentage.

"Can we get the documents to compute to see if the permeable areas are actually 30%," he asked. "It's interesting that it has come in with the exact 30% that you need."

Next, Teed, King and Siegel suggested redesigning the hotel so the vehicular and pedestrian entrance would be on 4th Street between the Oak Street/Carolina Way traffic light and Pine Street.

Teed said most businesses in Highlands front a major thoroughfare – like Main Street – so the front of the hotel should be off 4th Street not Carolina Way.

Pertaining to the building orientation, and citing several instances in town, Weller and Justus suggested Teed was basing her belief on the B1 downtown business district – whose land use requirements are completely different and don't require on-site parking – and not on the downtown support district which is zoned B2.

"The Comprehensive Plan says in downtown support areas lodgings are en-

couraged, and that the buildings are likely larger than in the downtown business district. We believe this plan satisfies the ordinances of the town," said Justus.

King suggested the main reason for the entrance off Carolina Way was so the developer could have three floors and thereby have more rooms and make more money.

Traffic Engineer James Vosos, who over his 30-year career worked for and with NC DOT, said NC DOT would likely not allow another access point off US 64.

"They would say 'why add another access point when you can use a side street,'" he said. "It would mean backing up traffic and requiring pedestrians to navigate vehicles pulling into the entrance which would cause vehicular/pedestrian interactions on what is now solely a pedestrian walkway."

King told Vosos that since he didn't work for DOT anymore, he didn't really know what they would say. He suggested a motorized reception lobby off 4th Street instead of Carolina Way with the entry off 4th Street and an exit on to Carolina Way.

Siegel asked why putting another access point off 4th Street to allow vehicular traffic into the hotel check-in area was any different than all the public streets off 4th Street

namely, Spruce, Laurel, Chestnut, Hickory.

"We considered a safe design and even eliminated two access points off Carolina Way," said Vosos. "Why add another conflict point on US 64 between two intersections when another safer way is possible. I have given my opinion – that it is safer not to have an access whether in or out on Highway 64."

Architect Nitin Patel with Patel & Patel out of Atlanta said due to the 19 ft. grade difference on the property, and to accommodate all the required on-site parking they determined having the entrance off Carolina Way was the best way to make this work.

"An entrance on 4th Street would take up a lot of space needed for parking," he

said.

To that King suggested the real reason not to do a design change was because it would jeopardize the number of rooms.

"I am getting the impression that the number of rooms is critical to the success of the project," he said.

Attorney Justus said if the board wants to flip the orientation, it's not up to the board but rather it's up to the city leaders to do it.

"We meet the rule of law, and we meet your requirements. You can't come up with a discretion you don't have and say, 'I think we know better.' If you try that, you won't

• See ZONING page 14

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Photos by
Kim and Jim Lewicki



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• OBITUARY •

Leonard Cary Saurage II,

Leonard Cary Saurage II, known to his many friends and loved ones simply as “Cary,” passed away peacefully at home on Nov. 4 in Baton Rouge, LA.

A true patron of the arts and generous supporter of his community, Cary’s name lives on in the Cary Saurage Community Arts Center, a reflection of his lifelong devotion to beauty, creativity, and civic engagement.

Cary loved fine art, landscape architecture, his family, his friends, dogs, and a well-poured glass of Chardonnay. He was known for his kindness, his gentleness, and his quiet civility, traits that led nearly everyone who met him to say, “He’s the nicest person I’ve ever known.”

A veteran of the United States Army, Cary later devoted much of his life to philanthropy and cultural preservation. He not only collected art but also actively served in leadership roles with many organizations, including the Louisiana Art and Science Museum, the LSU Museum of Art, and Hill Memorial Library. His deep appreciation for nature and landscape design inspired his steadfast support of the LSU Burden Center and Magnolia Mound Plantation.

Cary spent his summers in Highlands, where he owned a home for 30 years. While



here, he was a devoted and enthusiastic volunteer and board member for several local organizations, most notably The Bascom and the Center for Life Enrichment.

Cary was preceded in death by his parents, Alma Lee Spahn Saurage and H. Norman Saurage, Jr., and his brother H. Norman Saurage III. He is survived by his brother Roland R. Saurage

(Dean Bordelon) and sister Linda L. Saurage; sister-in-law Donna M. Saurage; and beloved nieces and nephews Susan Saurage-Altenloh, Stephanie Saurage, Hank and Laurie Saurage, Jennifer and Jim Moreland, and Matt and Catherine Saurage. He will also be dearly missed by his 17 great- and great-great-nieces and nephews, all of whom adored their Uncle Cary.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge to benefit the Cary Saurage Community Arts Center, 233 St. Ferdinand Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, or to the charity of your choice.

A graveside service was held on Mon., Nov. 10 at Roselawn Memorial Park in Baton Rouge followed by a Celebration of Life honoring Cary’s remarkable legacy of generosity, grace, and love of beauty.



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• HS SPORTS WEEKLY RECAP •

Highlands Middle School teams dominate, High School seasons set to tip-off

Highlands Middle School Teams Dominate, High School Seasons Set to Tip-Off

middle school basketball teams delivered a mixed bag of results in their recent outings, showcasing dominant victories as they prepare to defend their home court this week. Meanwhile, the high school basketball, swim, and dive teams are gearing up to officially launch their 2025-2026 seasons.



Brett Lamb
Highlands School
Athletic Director

Middle School Action: Dominance and Determination Road Wins at Blue Ridge

On Thurs., Nov. 13, the middle school teams traveled to Blue Ridge and put on a clinic.

• The Girls' team opened the night with a stunning 34-9 win, demonstrating strong defense and efficient offense.

• The Boys' team followed suit, maintaining the pace with a 54-32 victory, securing a clean sweep for the night.

Monday Night at Summit

The momentum was tested on Mon., Nov. 17, when the teams played on the road at Summit.

• The night started tough for the Girls' team, who dropped the game with a final score of 10-34. Their current record stands at

1-3.

• The Boys' team refused to let up, turning the heat on for a commanding 51-32 win. Their strong performance brings their season record to a solid 2-1.

• Wednesday, Nov. 19, the middle schoolers returned to action against Rabun Gap at home.

High School Preview: Seasons Get Underway

Varsity Tune-Ups

The Varsity Girls' team had a valuable pre-season workout, traveling to Smoky Mountain High School for a scrimmage. No score was kept, but the contest served as an excellent tune-up ahead of the regular season.

Basketball Season Opener



On Tuesday, Nov. 18, both the boys' and girls' squads traveled to Andrews High School for their first official contests of the 2025-2026 season.

Swim and Dive Kickoff

The high school athletic calendar continues to fill up as the Swim and Dive teams will kick off their season on Sat., Nov. 22,



Photos by Keeley Bosdell

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

All praise and thanks to God the Father



Ken Langsdorf
Lutheran Church of the Holy Family

A hymn that many of us will sing over the next couple of weeks is, Now Thank We All Our God. This hymn was written by Martin Rinkart who was Bishop of Eilenberg, Germany during the Thirty Years' War.

During the war, many people moved to Eilenberg because it was a walled city. But with the population being so dense, famine and disease spread throughout the city.

Due to the casualties of war, famine and disease, Rinkart, being the only clergyman in the city, had to do 40 to 50 burial services each day. His own wife also died during this time.

In 1637, filled with grief and exhaustion from having done more than 4,000 funerals that year, Rinkart's faith remained strong as we hear in the words of this hymn that he wrote.

May our gratitude be kindled and our faith inspired as we sing Rinkart's words:

1. Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices, who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices; who, from our mothers' arms, has blest us on our way with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

2. Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us, with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us, and keep us all in grace, and guide us when perplexed, and free us from all harm in this world and the next.

3. All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given, the Son, and Spirit blest, who reign in highest heaven, the one eternal God, whom earth and heaven adore; for thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

...ZONING BOARD from page 9

be following the rule of law, and we meet what the city leaders decided about properties in the B2 zone. There are specific standards and we meet that," he said. "The rule of law is very important because that sets the expectation of the property owners, citizens and people who come here and want to develop."

Though he admitted more hotel rooms were needed in Highlands, Siegel asked if competition to other hotels in town was taken into account when determining the impact of a new hotel.

"How would this affect competition? Hurting other hotels? Would that be considered harmful?" he asked.

John Palmer, the commercial appraiser, said the hotel would not injure the value of adjoining properties, in fact it would increase the commercial property value which has nothing to do with the financials of other hotels.

• See ZONING page 15

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

BLUEVALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor 706-782-3965
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

GRACE CHAPEL ON HIGH HOLLY

9615 Dillard Rd Scaly Mountain, N.C.
Pastor Steve Kerhoulas. <http://www.Graceonhighholly.com>
Sunday School 9:45; Worship 11; Prayer Service Wed 5:30p
Men's and Women's Bible Study throughout the week

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Rev'd Dr. Marc Robertson & Rev. Nick McGee
464 U.S. Hwy. 64E, Cashiers, NC

CAC@christanglicancashiers.org • 828-743-1701

Sunday: Adult Christian Ed. 9:15a; Holy Eucharist, 10:30a;
Fellowship 11:45a; Wed: Bible Study/Contemplative Prayer, 5p

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS

Pastor Jacob Tedder • jacob@cashiers.church • 743-5470
www.cashiers.church

Sun. 10:45a; Wed Study 5:15p supper and childcare.

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

Wed.: Youth 5:30-7pm; Women's Bible Study: Mon. 4:30pm, Tues.
10am; Men's Bible Study: Wed. & Thurs. 7am @ Zookeeper
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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

Rev. Emily Wilmarth, pastor; Rev. Kelley Connelly Asso. Pastor
828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org
Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10a; Worship 11a.; Tues: Men's Group 10a;
Wed: Bell Choir 4p. Chancel Choir: 5:30p

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

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HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers • 828-743-2122
Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

...ZONING BOARD continued from page 14

But Siegel continued.

"In terms of competition, depending on the amenities and the prices of the rooms and accommodations within the building wouldn't they have some affect either positive or negative on the other accommodations in the town? Shouldn't that be part of the valuation of the property," he asked.

Palmer said the evaluation was based on whether it will affect adjoining properties, not whether it is competition for other hotels in town.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment shall grant and issue the SUP if and only if it finds all of the following:

1. The use will not materially endanger the public health or safety if located where proposed and developed according to the plan as submitted and approved;

2. The use meets all required conditions and specifications;

3. The use will not substantially injure the value of adjoining or abutting property or, in the alternative, the use is a public necessity; and,

4. The location and character of the use as developed according to the plan as submitted and approved, will be in harmony with the area in which it is to be located and in general conformity with the plan of development of the Town environs.

In his closing statement, Attorney Justus said Mathis said the project meets all the standards set in the ordinance.

"So do we meet the rule of law? The answer is yes. And we have five professionals who have each submitted a statement, a written report and testimony showing compliance with the town's requirements who say yes, with no evidence to the contrary," he said. "At the end of the day, if there are no professionals to present evidence counter what has been presented showing compliance with the town's requirements, North Carolina law instructs you to issue the permit."

Justus said there were a lot of questions about architectural elements and orientation.

"You've been given a professional statement from a traffic engineer. And when you say, 'well I think it should be orientated this way,' the ordinance doesn't say that a building in B2 must be orientated to 4th Street. You list commercial exterior standards in your ordinance, but you don't mandate orientation of buildings period," he said. "You would be creating law if you deny this based on the orientation. The Comprehensive Plan says you should orientate your business to the main street in the downtown business district, but we aren't in the downtown district. We are in

the downtown support district, and it says to orientate to a public street, which we have done."

Justus went on to say the board can't write in standards that don't exist in the ordinance at their discretion.

"The court says you can't do that. If you want to impose standards, they have to be in the ordinance. The law tells us in this context that we are entitled to do this based on the evidence. You may not like it. So, petition your city leaders to change something in the ordinance you don't like. But tonight, we are entitled to that permit," he concluded.

As a retired attorney, King said Justus was right.

"We learned a lot tonight. We learned that we have elevation standards that can be abused and to allow over-develop and higher structures in a manner consistent with Atlanta. We need to go to our ordinances. We need to change them and make sure that this is the tallest building that's ever built in Highlands, North Carolina, from this point forward and we need to make sure that we do provide that the front faces the street with welcoming characteristics," he said. "We didn't protect what we all care about in this town. We didn't do our job. And the Town Board didn't do its job. We need to get these ordinances fixed so we don't have to have these types of projects that are only about how many rooms we can get in a certain amount of space."

Siegel said since the hotel is going to be so huge it changes what's in Highlands.

"There's nothing else like it. I wish we could have the rooms, without having something that will stand out," he said.

Teed said she is bothered about the zoning changes on the bank property over the last few years.

"It jumped from B3 then it went to conditional B2 and that didn't work, so it jumped back to B2. I am not a big fan of changing codes and laws to suit projects. I think projects need to fit into our town and our codes and conform to our UDO and I think the harmony concern of it is very real. We do have the discretion to decide if it fits into our town. Otherwise, there wouldn't be a fourth option," she said.

Siegel asked how the board could reconcile saying no to the hotel project considering what it allowed for the Catholic church.

Town Attorney Nick Tosco who presided over the Zoning Board said legally precedents aren't taken into consideration by the zoning board.

"What happened in that case has no precedent in this. You are tasked to take all

• See ZONING page 17

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Sept. 23. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Sept. 23

• At 10 a.m., a cyberspace scam was reported in Highlands and multiple locations.

Nov. 8

• At 1 p.m., officers responded to a call for service about identity theft/fraud from a resident on Hickory Street.

There were 2 accidents last week, and officers issued 14 Citations and 10 Warning Tickets

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Nov. 11.

Nov. 11

• At 7:57 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Ring Road.

• At 9:22 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Potter Lane.

• At 8:15 p.m., the dept. was on special assignment at Aunt Dora Lane by Buck Field.

• At 11:04 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Clubhouse Trail.

Nov. 12

• At 5:47 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Sassafras Court.

• At 10:18 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Old Walhalla Road.

Nov. 13

• At 1:59 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a brushfire on Broadview Circle.

• At 8:29 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on South Street.

• At 12:53 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident at Highlands Mountain Club.

Nov. 14

• At 6:56 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Zachary Road.

Nov. 15

• At 3:06 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Dendy Orchard Road.

• At 4:14 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Kenridge Lane.

• At 4:50 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 9:15 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Laurel Branch.

• At 11:05 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Hickory Knutt Gap.

Nov. 16

• At 5:31 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of an illegal burn on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

Nov. 17

• At 4:26 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Johnwood Road.

• At 5:51 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Falls Drive West.

• At 8:29 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Johnwood Road.



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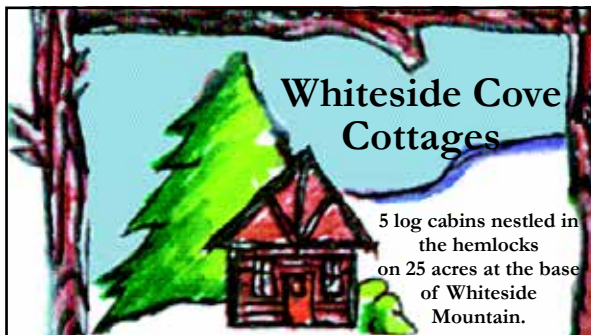


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power, and sewer run to each lot. www.TinyMountainEstates.com for more info. (10/30/25)

FOR RENT

CABIN FOR RENT - 2 bed, 2 bath in peaceful Horse Cove. \$2,200/month. Available 12/1. Dogs and cats considered. Fiber Optic Internet. Fully furnished, gas fireplace Main floor, wraparound deck with gas fireplace, water and mountain views. 1st floor bed, bath, laundry, screened porch, tv room with foldout couch and water view. Hot tub. 3rd floor master suite. Water view. 8 minutes to downtown. Call Dick 828.200.4264. (st. 11/13)

3 BED, 2 BATH HOUSE FOR RENT. Rolling Acres. \$3,000/month. Available Dec 1. Huge yard. Hardwood floors. All appliances. No animals. Outdoor fire pit. Warm, friendly place and neighborhood. Call Dick at 828-200-4264. (st. 11/13)

WALK TO TOWN. Garage Apartment, no pets, \$2500 per month 828.526.2793. (11/6)

LONG TERM RENTAL - Top of Eagle Ridge. Flat yard. 4 bed/3 1/2 BA. Central HVAC, water/sewer. Cable TV. 4,000 ft. elevation. Parking for 3 vehicles. Call 828-743-2655. (st. 10/9)

HIGHLANDS 1-2 SPACES - 1 large or 2 smaller spaces for rent in popular Mill Creek Shopping Center next door to Blue Bike Cafe. Each space is 800 sq/ft at \$2,333/mo OR both spaces at 1,600 sq/ft for \$4400/mo. Inquires to Debi: bock7@me.com or 404-323-9444. (st. 7/10)

4 BD/3BA FOR RENT HIGHLANDS - Updated farm home, located between Highlands & Cashiers off Hwy 64. \$3,200/month, includes all utilities with high speed wifi. Call Marcy 828-482-4239 (st. 7/10)

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SERVICES

CREATURE COMFORTS - In House Pet or People sitting. Call Peg Ellis. Retired RN. References available. 828-200-1028. (st. 11/20)

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...ZONING BOARD from pg 15

the evidence you heard today and just that evidence. You are not to take evidence or experience or personal knowledge of other situations and apply it to this case; just the evidence," he stressed. "Those four standards are the only thing that controls. Your personal preference about what you like or don't like does not play into it. Standard number four is about the location - will it be in harmony in the area in which it will be located and in general conformity with the plan of development of the town and its environment. So, it's the *plan of development* we are talking about."

Tosco said there is a rebuttal presumption in North Carolina that if the town puts into the development ordinance that this is a special use, there is a default that it is allowed.

"There has to be contrary evidence to show that it is not conforming with the area. That is the law in North Carolina. The discretion of the board is based on the evidence you heard and you are to just focus on that," he said. "Competent material and substantial evidence is what you have to base your decision on. You heard evidence that it is in harmony with the area and you didn't hear anything to the contrary. You are like a jury, and you have to base your decision on what you heard."

Member Bill Futral culminated the discussion.

"The fourth criteria we are questioning is about harmony. If the people of this town - who we are supposed to represent - and neighbors of these adjoining properties thought this was so un-harmonious, you would think someone would have presented some arguments about why they didn't want this in our town. And no one showed up. I don't see that we would be representing the town or the people of the town if we didn't issue the permit since no one else, except for some of us sitting here, think that it isn't in harmony."

Teed said since members of the zoning board aren't elected, they don't represent the people.

"We weren't elected; we were appointed so we don't answer to anyone. It's our job to interpret the ordinances as best we can," she said.

King said everyone knows about the 35-ft. height limit, but no one knows you can get around that by building on a slope. "I think if people knew that they would be here."

Mathis said residential houses must also conform to the 35-ft. standard and there are multiple houses all around town that are built on a slope, so they are higher - sometimes times 20 feet higher - on the back side.

In the end, the board voted 4-1 to issue the SUP. Chairperson Teed voted no.



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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

POOL SCHEDULE

• Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri. 6am-9:45am, and Saturday 10am-11pm - 6 lanes. Water Aerobics: 18 y+ Mon.-Fri. 10-11am with Karen Chambers. Adult Swim: 18y+ Mon.-Thurs. 11am-3:30pm, Friday 11am-1:30pm. Public Swim: Mon. thru Thurs. 3:30-7pm, Saturday 11am-6pm and Sunday 1-6pm

PICKLE BALL

• At the Recreation Dept. every Monday - Friday 10am-1pm indoors for the winter (notice the days and time has changed),

MOUNTAIN FINDINGS

Winter Hours: Friday & Saturday 10a to 1p. Nov. 14-15 ; Nov. 28-29; Dec. 5-6 (Parade 12p - 3p); Dec. 19-20

• Open: 10 am - 1 pm. Spruce Street. www.mountainfindings.org

PAC WEEKEND MOVIE

• At PAC, Wicked for Good. Fri., Nov. 21, 2p & 5:30; Sat., Nov. 22, 5:30 & 8:30p; Sun., Nov. 23, 2p

with captions & 5:30p. Mon., Nov. 24, 2p & 5:30p. Sat., Nov. 29, 2p & 5:30p. Sun., Nov. 30, 2p with captions and 5:30p. Mon. Dec. 1, 2p & 5:30p. Fri. Dec. 5, 2p & 5:30p. Sat., Dec. 6, 2p & 5:30p. Sun. Dec. 7, 2p with captions & 5:30p. Tickets are \$12. **Link to tickets: Highlands Performing Arts - Wicked: For Good**

SATURDAY MARKET

• Farmers Market in KH Founders Park on Pine Street from 8a-12:30p rain or shine.

ALL WEEK

• Scaly Mountain/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 at Scaly Mountain @ Grace Chapel, 9915 Dillard Rd., Scaly Mountain and Highlands @ the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 p.m. and on Wednesday & 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 @ 7pm, on Friday at 5:00 pm and on Saturday at 9:00 am. 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 Mon-Thurs.

• At First Presbyterian Church, ArtSpace is open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The next exhibit will start in mid-August. For information contact fpchkelley@gmail.com

Mon-Wed-Fri

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

• Balance, Stretch & Strengthen Class at the Rec Park 8:30-9:30am. The cost for the class is \$30 a month and is led by Vivian Brewer. Call the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

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 combo class with different types of exercise. 828-526-3556

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. For more info call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004

Tuesdays

• Strength Training at the Rec Park 8:15-9:15 am.

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Workshop for Writers - from 5-6:30 PM

• **ESL classes at The Literacy & Learning Center, 6-7 p.m. 675 S 4th St. Highlands.**

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 info contact Bud Katz at either 828-526-3190 or at budandlyn@me.com

2nd Wednesdays

• Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, at 11 AM. To register, stop by the library or call 828-526-3031.

Wednesdays

• Digital Navigators will be at

the Hudson Library from 1-3 PM, digital navigators will host a Tech Time drop-in time at Hudson Library with the goal to assist attendees with basic smartphone, laptop, iPad and tablet skills. Tech Time sessions offer one-on-one help on any personal digital device. Tech Time is a chance for residents of all ages to bring their devices and ask any questions. Learn how to set up an email account, mute your cell phone, back up and store files. Those are just a few of the skills we teach patrons. For more information, call the Library at 828-526-3031. This program is free and open to the public.

Thursdays

• Kickboxing 8:15-9:15a. at the Rec Park. No martial arts background necessary. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more info.

• At First Presbyterian Church a free concert "Music for Prayer" at noon. These casual concerts are almost entirely improvised and last 30-45 minutes. This offering is called Music For Prayer.

• At Hudson Library, special children's events will be on tap on Thursday afternoons at 3:30 Kids Zone programs.

3rd Friday thru April

• Senior lunches at the Rec Park in the meeting room at noon.

Fridays

• At Hudson Library, Friday afternoons at 2 PM, there's a variety of children's programs including board games, STEM programs, and crafts.

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 9a and hold our monthly meeting at 10a. We invite ALL veterans to attend. Email ncpost370@gmail.com or just join us at 9am.

Sundays

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

Thru Dec. 27

• At The Bascom, Holiday Market. Handcrafted gifts and holiday themed workshops.

Ice Skating in the Park Begins, Thurs., Nov. 20

• Thurs., 3:30-8p; Fri. 3:30-10p; Sat. 1-10p, Sun. 1-5p Hours will be extending during Thanksgiving and

Christmas vacations. \$8 with or without skates.

Sat., Nov. 22

• Vendors from the Saturday Farmer's Market (plus a few extras) will be warm and cozy indoors at the Highlands Rec Center with fresh produce, locally made bakery treats, specialty foods, handcrafted gifts, unique products, artful jewelry, Haitian metal art, and a FREE cup of Haitian Coffee we all know and love. 10a to 3p. Come shop for one-of-a-kind gifts and other things you need for the holidays.

Tues., Nov. 25

• Community Thanksgiving Dinner at the Rec Park at 6 p.m. Prepared meals will also be delivered to anyone in need. Call Lester Norris or Janice Mathis at 828-526-3556.

Fri. & Sat., Nov. 28-29

• Cashiers Festival of Trees, Summit Charter School, 370 Mitten Lane. Get into the holiday spirit by viewing and bidding on decorated Christmas trees and décor with accompanying gifts and experiences, revel in a variety of holiday activities, create free personalized children's crafts, celebrate literacy in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Storytime Nook, enjoy a pop-up O.P. Taylor's Teddy Bear Workshop, a scavenger hunt, watch rivalry weekend football games in the Gameday Lounge, and shop one-of-a-kind gifts in the Gift Zone and Vendor Village. Cashiers Valley Real Estate serves as Presenting Sponsor and Ingles Markets as the Media Sponsor.

Sat., Nov. 29

• Small Business Saturday Holiday Stroll. Strolling carolers, face painting, live music, story telling, bagpipers and more. 11:30a-4p on Main Street.

• Light Up the Park & Main. Start the holiday season with this electric celebration. Gather with friends and family as KH Founders Park and Main Street glow with festive lights — and a visit from Santa himself. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

Dec. 5-21

• At PAC, Mountain Theatre Company presents "Home for the Holidays." For tickets go to boxoffice@mountaintheatre.com. 828.526.2695

Sat., Dec. 6

• Highlands Christmas Parade. Revel in the magic of the holidays at the Highlands Christmas Parade, a cherished tradition that brings joy to all ages. For info, call 828-526-2112.

'Tis the Season!



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