

Highlands Newspaper

Happy Thanksgiving!

FREE Every Thursday

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ZB reverses director's STR ruling

By Kim Lewicki

In a rare move, with a 3-2 vote, the Zoning Board of Adjustment overturned Highlands Planning and Zoning Director's ruling regarding a short-term rental on Worley Road at its Nov. 12 meeting.

On Sept. 4, 2024, Planning and Zoning Director Michael Mathis issued a Short-Term Rental Determination that 336 Worley Road owned by Mitchell Willoughby was a lawful non-conforming STR. Neighbors Ronnie and

Cheryl Wood across the street at 265 Worley Road appealed the ruling on the grounds that the short-term rental was not a legitimate STR prior to Sept. 15, 2022 and furthermore, the use was discontinued more than 12

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Commissioner Dotson resigns from Town Board

By Kim Lewicki

The December 11 Town Board meeting will be the last meeting Commissioner John Dotson will attend.

Last week, at the November Town Board meeting, he announced his resignation effective Dec. 31, 2025 – something he said he has been considering for

a while.

Commissioner Dotson has been a public servant for the past 27 years – 18 years as a Commissioner and nine years as a member of the Appearance Commission, which is no longer in existence, and the Zoning Board of Adjustment as well as

• See DOTSON page 10

Light Up the Park & Main St. – Sat., Nov. 29, 6–8pm



As evening falls, the community will gather at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park to welcome the holiday season. Guests will enjoy songs by The City Carolers, a special reading of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas and tasty holiday treats.

The highlight of the evening comes when Santa arrives atop a firetruck to help usher in the lighting of the park and Main Street, transforming Highlands with thousands of sparkling lights that remain throughout the holiday season

HF&W Saturday Main Event is under scrutiny

By Kim Lewicki

The 10th annual Highlands Food & Wine Festival ended Sunday afternoon with thousands of people turning out for the four-day event.

It started with the Grand Tasting at The Bascom Thursday evening, moved Friday to K-H Founders Park on Pine Street for Truckin's Smoke Signals, then to Main Street Saturday afternoon for the Main Event, culminating

with A Shot of Redemption at The Bascom Sunday afternoon.

By most accounts, the festival was well received with funds raised for the Equal Plates Project and Highlands Food Pantry, as well as after 10 years, fully funding the Louis Osteen Legacy Scholarship to the Culinary Institute of America specifically for students from the Highlands/Cashiers area.

• See SCRUTINY page 10



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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Expressing thanks

I worry that Thanksgiving is being overlooked by marketing and promotion forces. It is not a big-ticket holiday like Christmas or Halloween, and it is being sandwiched between the two. There are no gifts to be bought nor costumes to be sold. From a consumer perspective, Halloween is now the second major holiday of the year.

I know I am old-fashioned and no longer get it when it comes to the trends and changing times. For instance, it bothers me to see companies advertising for Christmas at Halloween. Such premature promotion tends to trivialize and marginalize Thanksgiving as an event between commercial holidays. There are few ads about Thanksgiving turkeys these days, just reminders to tune into the big holiday football games.

But my family, especially my late mother, thought Thanksgiving was about the most important holiday of the year. It was a moment to be grateful for all that God, the creator of everything, has provided. It is a moment that people of all faiths and beliefs can embrace. Even in challenging times, and



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

after facing heartbreaking events, we can all be thankful for what we have and for the loving relationships we treasure.

Like we have done for the past 25 years of living in Highlands, our family will have a major Thanksgiving celebration at our home. About 25 to 30 children, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers, sisters, and friends will assemble for a feast to reflect and give thanks together. I hope you and your family have a

wonderful Thanksgiving.

Now, after Thanksgiving, let us all go shopping on Black Friday and have fun. Also, I hope to see you at the Highlands Town Lighting on Saturday evening. For Highlands, that is the official kickoff to the Christmas season.

On another note, Commissioner John Dotson surprised everyone at the town board meeting last Thursday by announcing his resignation, effective December 31. On behalf of the town, I accepted his decision to leave public service with regret. Commissioner Dotson has faithfully served Highlands for over twenty years. His leadership on the board will be missed.

Within hours of our adjournment, I was receiving messages about how he would be replaced on the board, so let me review what will happen. Commissioner Dotson will remain a board member until the end of the year, so no replacement can be sworn in until the first of the year. There is no need to rush the appointment process; the board has been functioning with just four members for several months since Brian Steeler's resignation. Jim Tate will be sworn in as a new commissioner at the December 11 board meeting, so we will have a full board again until the end of the year.

In January, there will be an agenda item on how the board members want to proceed in appointing a new commissioner to fill the open seat for the remaining two years. This procedure could be like how appointments to the planning and zoning boards are made. The way this process takes place will be decision by the board. NC statutes are open-ended and give a town council the authority to make the appointment.

After the board has put a process in place, I expect a board appointment to be made by March.

• SNAPSHOT •





HC Hospital 'CAN' do your MRI



HCA Healthcare holds an annual "Healthy Foods for Healthier Tomorrows" can sculpture contest where its hospitals create sculptures out of canned food donations, which are then donated to local food banks. Recent North Carolina winners include Mission Hospital (2024) with a water tanker truck sculpture, and Highlands-Cashiers Hospital (2023) with its "Dr. Bear" creation. The contests raise food insecurity awareness, and winners receive grants for their local food bank partners.

— Photo by Kim Lewicki

• WEATHER •

Thu, 27-Nov	Fri, 28-Nov	Sat, 29-Nov	Sun, 30-Nov
			
41°F 21°F	39°F 19°F	39°F 27°F	46°F 41°F
Cooler; breezy in the morning	Cold with brilliant sunshine	Partly sunny and cold	Cloudy with a little rain
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High: 36° Low: 15°	High: 34° Low: 13°	High: 40° Low: 21°	High: 45° Low: 29°

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Light up the Park & Main

Santa arrives to light the town for the holidays!

Saturday, November 29 | 6pm | Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park

Highlands Christmas Parade

Saturday, December 6 | 10am-12pm | Main Street

Santa in the Park

November 28, December 6, 13 & 20 | Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park

Lighting of the Menorah

Sunday, December 14 | 5:30pm | Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park



HIGHLANDS

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

• INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

Finding community and gratitude on the Plateau

As Thanksgiving approaches (and despite the impending hustle and bustle of the holiday season), many of us pause to reflect on what we're grateful for. For some, it's the arrival of family from far and wide, bear hugs and laughter and children's voices. For others, it's the simple comforts of a mountain home, and the serenity of sipping coffee while meditating on layered Blue Ridge views. On the Plateau, gratitude takes on an extra dimension, because here, it's not just about the walls that shelter us, but the community that surrounds us.

In real estate, we often focus on the tangible: inspection reports, engineering recommendations, cabinetry styles, or kitchen features. But the true value of a home is rarely found in its measurements or a La Cornue range. It's in the morning greetings from a neighbor on the Ramble, the local barista who remembers your daily order, or the sense of belonging that comes from living in a place that feels like it's always been part of your story. These are the qualities that make our homes more than buildings—they make them havens.

Thanksgiving reminds us to pause and notice these blessings. It's easy to get caught up in market trends, mortgage rates, or the stress of managing a property from afar. Yet, when we step back, what really matters is the rhythm of life here: the community events that bring us together, the local artisans and shopkeepers who pour their passion into everything they produce and sell, and the neighbors who look out for one another. These are the things that no listing can capture but that make living here extraordinary.

As someone who works in real estate, I see gratitude in action every day. I see it when a family finds the home where children experience their first mesmerizing view of fireflies, or when a couple



Lauren Dahl

828-279-4700

lauren@landmarkrg.com

finally settles into a space that perfectly fits their vision for retirement. I see it in clients who come to appreciate not just the house, but the people and the lifestyle that make it a home. And I see it in myself, as I'm reminded that my work is part of this bigger tapestry—a community rich in connection, beauty, and kindness.

This holiday season, I hope we can all take a moment to recognize the intangible treasures in our

lives. The sunsets over our mountains, the laughter shared on front porches, the moments that remind us that home is more than a destination; it's a feeling. On the Plateau, gratitude comes naturally, because we live in a place where life is vibrant, neighbors are welcoming, and the ordinary becomes extraordinary simply by being together.

So, whether you're hosting a holiday meal with family arriving from around the world, taking a quiet hike through Panthertown, or simply enjoying the solitude of your home, I encourage you to take a moment to reflect. These are the gifts that make our homes and communities worth cherishing—not just during Thanksgiving, but all year long. In the end, a house becomes a home, not by the walls that surround us, but by the connections, joy, and gratitude we cultivate within and around them.

From both my Landmark family and my own to yours, happy Thanksgiving. May it be full of warmth, laughter, and the unmistakable joy of being part of a community that just feels "right."

• Lauren Dahl is the General Manager and Broker-in-Charge at Landmark Realty Group and Landmark Vacations where she supports an elite team of brokers. She can be reached at 828-279-4700 or via email at lauren@landmarkrg.com.

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• LETTERS •

Demonstrate some hunting etiquette, please

Dear Editor,

As a 35+ year resident of the Highlands area, I just wanted to say up front, I respect most hunters. The ones who are respectful of where they are hunting.

Hunting is not allowed in town or rural areas. You may hunt on private property with permission from the property owner.

We had some very disrespectful people driving our neighborhood, setting their dogs free on Flat Mountain Road where people are walking the road, riding bikes, dogs playing and yes, speeding cars going by.

Their dogs ran between several of my neighbors' properties, chasing a bear. The bear was shot on the road

in front of three family homes. I never heard a gun so loud, so deafening.

We had a bear that would come to visit. He hasn't been back. Don't know if it was the same bear. So sad. We don't know if the bear that was shot was a male or a female or if she was pregnant.

Hunters, please stay away from Flat Mountain Road. And drivers, the speed limit is 25 mph.

Thanks

**Liz View
Highlands**

The Tipping Point?

Dear Editor,

If the artist's rendition in the Oct. 30 edition of Highlands Newspaper of the proposed hotel at the corner of Carolina Way and N. 4th Street is accurate, it's a bloody shame. I've never seen anything so un-Highlands in my long experience in this beloved town. If constructed, it just may be the tipping point that Highlands has been teetering on for a long time. The proposed design is exactly what one would expect from Atlanta developers. Highlands is not Atlanta yet, but this inappropriate building may be just what pushes it over the edge. It grieves me to say, but it looks like one of those "anchor" department store buildings you see in big city shopping malls. It looks like those big box stores Highlanders have purposely avoided having in our town. It is ugly and it is too big.

The professional proponents who argued their case before the Highlands zoning board on Nov. 12th may be experts in their respective fields, but they are not High-

lands experts and obviously have no desire to be. Why should they? It's not their town. Please do not misunderstand me or misquote me. I am not criticizing nor am I against a new hotel. It is this particular building, as rendered in the newspaper, that is shocking. It simply has absolutely no relationship to Highlands and is the least organic piece of architecture conceivable for that corner.

Last but not least, let me personally thank and commend Chairperson Teed for her intelligent and sensitive objection to this proposal as it stands and for her courage in doing so. And she is 100% right that the project does not meet the 4th requirement necessary for a Special Use Permit, no matter how cleverly attorney Justus interprets the law for the edification of the zoning board laypeople.

**Alice Nelson
Highlands**

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Nantahala Health Foundation partners with Dogwood Health Trust to 'Nourish Our Neighbors'

In response to growing food insecurity across Western North Carolina, exacerbated first by Hurricane Helene in September 2024 and more recently by a federal freeze on SNAP payments, Nantahala Health Foundation (NHF) has launched a regional initiative to support local food security providers, made possible through a partnership with Dogwood Health Trust.

Through their "Nourish Our Neighbors Initiative," NHF is expected to mobilize more than \$110,000 to address urgent food access needs across its six-county service area and the Qualla Boundary.

This funding reflects the combined support of Dogwood Health Trust and NHF resources dedicated specifically to this regional effort.

While county-specific allocations are still being determined, Foundation Executive Director Lori Bailey says they will work closely with existing community partners — food banks,

food pantries, faith-based organizations, and other food security providers — to assess needs and capacity and make funding decisions accordingly.

Although NHF's coverage area was not as severely impacted by the storm as neighboring communities, the primary regional food bank based in Asheville that serves our entire six-county area experienced significant damage to its facility during Hurricane Helene. This disruption created a ripple effect, straining partner programs and food security providers throughout the outlying areas that depend on its regional support.

NHF encourages individuals, businesses, and philanthropic partners to contribute to this effort. Those wishing to support the Foundation's work by making a tax-deductible donation may do so by visiting their website at NantahalaHealthFoundation.org.

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...REVERSES continued from page 1

months, thereby rendering it illegal after Sept. 15, 2022.

On Sept. 15, 2022, the Town Board amended the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) prohibiting short-term rentals (STRs) in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts. Upon adopting the 2022 amendment, section 6.5.18(B) of the UDO allows STRs in operation before the amendments were passed to continue operating as nonconforming uses until September 15, 2027.

Present at the zoning board meeting were Chairperson Margot Teed, Bill Futral, Rick Siegel, Robert Wood, Michael King, and alternate Jan Pittman. Alternate Tom Lamar was not present.

Also present was Town Attorney Nick Tosco representing the Zoning Board, attorneys Evan Lee with Poyner Spruill representing Mathis and Brandon Freeman with Allen Stahl & Kilbourne representing Willoughby.

Freeman opened the hearing with two pre-hearing motions – one about the statute of limitations and the other regarding standing.

The statute of limitation motion questioned whether the board had the ability to hear the case based on when the appeal was filed.

Attorney Freeman said the Woods had 30 days to appeal Mathis's decision on the case which was made Sept. 4, 2024.

"The Woods appealed the case Sept. 23, 2024, which was within the 30-day time frame, but then at some point the appeal was withdrawn over a year ago. It was then brought back and re-filed Dec. 11, 2024. It is now November 2025," said Freeman.

Entered into evidence was a letter from the Woods dated Aug. 25, 2025, explaining that due to health reasons they were forced to delay several times. In the letter, Woods said Mathis advised them to withdraw the original appeal and re-file it once they were physically able to attend a rescheduled.

Freeman said he didn't think there was any authority for a challenge to extend that date beyond the statutory required date in the first place unless there was some sort of Tolling Agreement.

A Tolling Agreement is a written agreement, signed by both sides to a potential lawsuit, that suspends the statute of limitations for an agreed amount of time.

He said Willoughby wasn't included in any postponement decision.

"This took more than a year to be re-

filed, and the statute is clear that it should have been filed within 30 days. Or with a Tolling Agreement that says 'we are going to extend the statute of limitations regarding this because you have things going on.' That didn't happen, so I don't think the board has the ability to hear this," he said.

However, Attorney Tosco said it was his understanding that their appeal wasn't withdrawn, it was just withdrawn from being heard.

"If it is determined we weren't supposed to hear the matter, so be it. But it is my understanding that the appeal was correctly filed, it was just continued and continued, which the board does have the authority to do."

Mathis said the appeal was continued up through March 2025 to ensure all parties were given due process.

Freeman went on to discuss "standing" to determine whether one of the parties had the ability to appeal the decision.

According to David Owen's Coates' Canons NC Local government Law, Tosco said determination of standing applies to staff, or an applicant, a property owner or lease holder or any person who would suffer "special damages."

Tosco said since the Woods are the applicants they have standing. "But it's the board's decision."

Special damages involve proximity, property value impacts, and additional adverse impacts (noise, pollution, traffic, etc.) to determine special damages different from the rest the community.

Chairperson Teed asked, "If you live right next door and you file an appeal wouldn't you have standing?"

But Freeman said near proximity is not enough to have standing.

"It has to be something else that gives you that special damages distinction from the rest of the community," he said.

Tosco agreed the issue isn't black and white.

"Whether they can be a party in the case, that is something they can deal with if they want to appeal it in Superior Court. You never lose the right to assert standing," he said. "In this case, there is also the ability to have standing if you have special damages distinct from the rest of the community. That is the test that needs to be made," he said.

Ronnie Wood said he was impacted

• See REVERSES page 12

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...SCRUTINY continued from page 1

According to its mission statement, Highlands Festivals, Inc produces the annual Highlands Food & Wine and Bear Shadow festivals to promote Highlands as an inspiring place to live and visit by producing world-class events that showcase, enhance and support the region's vibrant culinary, visual and performing arts organizations while contributing funds and resources that directly benefit similar local initiatives and strengthen the community.

Aside from noise complaints from businesses on Carolina Way during Friday's Smoke Signals event in the park, Highlands Police Chief Andrea Holland said for the most part there were few problems throughout the four days.

However, she drew the line at the Main Event on Main Street Saturday afternoon where an estimated 1,200 tickets were sold not including complimentary tickets. She estimated the number of people neared 1,500 including ticket holders, vendor personnel and sponsors' and their employees.

"There were entirely too many people," she said at the November Town Board meeting. "Attendance appears to have increased significantly in recent years which has resulted in a crowd density that impeded law enforcement operations, emergency response capability and general public safety."

Chief Holland said problems started with pedestrians disregarding traffic signals as they approached the event at 4th and Main streets which caused vehicular traffic to back up, and sidewalks along 4th Street be congested while people waited to enter the venue. "This forced those not intending to go to the event to step off the sidewalk into the roadway," she said.

But it was the crowd density within the cordoned off area on Main between 4th and 5th streets that cause the most concern and contributed to multiple medical incident challenges, she said.

"Two individuals became so intoxicated that they fell and struck their heads with one requiring transport to the hospital," she said. "Additional calls were received regarding intoxicated individuals who were disoriented and unable to determine their own location."

Though portions and pours were downsized, for the price of a ticket, patrons were eligible for unlimited food and alcoholic beverages.

According to Chief Holland, NC General Statute 18B-305 states that it is unlawful for a permittee or their employee to knowingly sell or give alcoholic beverages to an intoxicated person.

"However, enforcing this statute proved extremely difficult due to the sheer volume of patrons. At peak times, the event was shoulder-to-shoulder, making it nearly impossible for officers to move through the crowd to assess potential over-service or to respond promptly to emerging situations," she said.

In addition, she said each year it becomes increasingly difficult to clear patrons from the Main Street venue at the end of the event.

"On multiple occasions, attendees told us they wished to finish their beverages before exiting with one patron telling me to 'F-off'", she said. "Several individuals had to be advised that they would face trespassing charges if they refused to leave."

In the end, due to ongoing safety and operational challenges, Chief Holland questioned whether Main Street was a suitable location for the Saturday event in future years.

Mayor Pat Taylor suggested a special session be held in January between the stakeholder – Highlands Events, Highlands Food & Wine, law enforcement and the board – and talk about how the issues should be addressed. The board voted unanimously to schedule a session for the new year.

...DOTSON continued from page 1

various committees.

"A little over a year ago, with the intention of taking a few things off my plate, I began the process of downsizing some of my commitments. And tonight, that process brings me to an important and heartfelt decision which is to step down from my position as commissioner for the Town of Highlands effective December 31," he said. "I would like to

thank the mayor, the Town Board, and certainly the community of Highlands for their support. It's been my complete and absolute honor and a privilege to serve the citizens of the town of Highlands."

Mayor Pat Taylor said he knew Dotson had been thinking and struggling with the decision.

"We had several conversations about

• See DOTSON page 11



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...DOTSON continued from page 10

this and well, now he's made that decision," said the mayor. "We will anticipate your formal letter of resignation and will accept that with regret. This will certainly be a surprise to the community."

Mayor Taylor said going into the next year, the board will start the process of appointing a person to complete Commissioner Dotson's term.

Dotson asked that during the consideration and determination of the person to take his seat, he hopes, based on the

community of Highlands and the constituents who voted for him, and his positions, that for the remainder of the two years of his term the Town Board look to find someone who has the same philosophy about the town as he does.

If Dotson had announced his resignation in August when Commissioner Brian Stiehler announced his resignation, his unexpired seat could have been on the November ballot, as was Stiehler's, and the voters could have decided. Jim Tate

was elected to Stiehler's seat.

"Unfortunately, the timing didn't line up with the election cycle," said Dotson. "But it was solely a personal decision and therefore I was working off my personal time line"

When a North Carolina municipality's commissioner resigns, the remaining board members appoint a replacement from a pool of qualified candidates to serve the remainder of the unexpired term.

Following state laws NCGS §153A-27 and §153A-27.1, the remaining board

members have 60 days from the effective resignation to appoint a replacement. The appointed person must be a full-time resident of the town.

If the board fails to make an appointment, the clerk of superior court will step in to fill the vacancy.

While state law provides the framework, a town's specific rules can influence the selection process. State law advises consultation with the town attorney to ensure the process is handled correctly.



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...REVERSES continued from page 8

by the rental of the house across the street by the noise, and the additional traffic on the road.

"It is a small one-lane, private road, it has been declared unsafe by the city and they won't salt or plow the road. So, the rental has added traffic on the road; tenants have shot off fireworks. Due to this, we have been impacted and thereby have standing. We live directly across the street from Willoughbys."

Again, Freeman said determining noise and traffic requires expert testimony for the town to consider its impact and said STR activity is residential noise. Tosco agreed with Freeman.

Board member Mike King made the motion to hear the matter and resolve the case once and for all.

The board voted 4-1 to hear the case regardless of Freeman's concerns about statute of limitations or standing. Robert Wood voted against the motion saying he didn't believe the Wood family had standing.

The board finally moved on to hear the case.

According to Mathis's report, after reviewing all the evidence provided, it was his determination that the dwelling operated as a lawful STR prior to Sept. 15, 2022, when STRs became a prohibited use in R1 and R2. And he had no evidence to prove that the use was discontinued for 12 consecutive months after becoming nonconforming use.

"Therefore, the STR use of the dwelling is considered a legal nonconforming use and may continue to operate at this time," he wrote.

To make his determination he relied on an affidavit from the previous owner of 336 Worley Road, Paula Dodson swearing she operated it as an STR prior to the sale to Willoughby in 2022. She presented a rental management agreement with Landmark Real Estate Sales & Vacation Rentals; an email from Mandi Cantrell with Landmark verifying Dodson's claim; emails between the current owner (Willoughby) and Dodson who rented the home to Willoughby as an STR before he purchased the property from her; and an email from VRBO Support verifying that

Willoughby had the property listed as a rental on their site 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Furthermore, Mathis said the Rental Unit Record from Granicus, one of the town's STR software companies, confirms that the property's listing went active in 2017 and continued through 2025.

Though there was standard documentation regarding the rental as an STR prior to 2022, traditional documentation wasn't available for 2023, 2024, and 2025 – documentation verifying room tax payments, rental agreements, etc.

"Though nothing specific is required by the UDO, documents a property owner can provide to prove rental history include a rental agreement, tax registration forms, occupancy tax receipts, proof of financial statements, sales tax registration and receipts, tenant information or any other forms of evidence," he said. "However, the property owner isn't required to provide every document on the list. Just enough information that is necessary to prove they were operating as an STR during the time discussed."

Mathis said Willoughby provided the affidavit from previous owner Dodson, a rental agreement between Dodson

and Landmark beginning 2017 through 2019 prior to ceasing using Landmark and renting it herself.

"The property was listed on VRBO since 2023 and it has been continuously live since that date and the Granicus software confirms this, for 2023, 2024 and 2025. Therefore, the property is a lawful nonconforming STR," he said. "Furthermore, nothing has been submitted to discredit what Mr. Willoughby has submitted to my office."

Board member Mike King asked Mathis if he considered a listing on VRBO equivalent to a rental?

Mathis said yes, because it's listed with VRBO as a rental.

"Just like any other business open to the public. We don't determine whether it's a business based on sales. As soon as they put their property up and listed it for rent at that point, I view it as a business that is open for business. I wouldn't base it on what they sold," he said. "If you have a restaurant that's open but no one wants to eat there but they stay open and try to make sales, I would consider that an open business. If you are listed

• See REVERSES page 13

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...REVERSES continued from page 12

with VRBO then you are open for rent and you are actively trying to operate that business.

King said he didn't agree.

"The problem I have with that is that a STR is defined as a rental for compensation not 'listing' for compensation," he said.

Mathis said he wouldn't base the legality on sales.

"So, I can offer my property, put it on VRBO and put a massive price on it so I know it will never rent but keep that option open to myself to rent it short-term?" asked King. "The definition is pretty specific. A short-term rental is the rental of a residential dwelling unit for compensation for a period of less than 30 days."

Willoughby said he began renting it himself directly, to people he knew, colleagues, law partners, family continually without any break, 2022, 2023, 2024 and this year with VRBO and through compensation.

"Compensation is trade. You do something for me, and I do something for you. That's compensation," he said.

Board member Bill Futral said knowing he was coming to the hearing, it would have been wise to have some proof or affidavits.

Willoughby said he has emails between people he rented to for compensation and paid room tax through VRBO.

Attorney Lee said the board heard from Mathis and though the board can consider additional evidence, what Mathis had was what was in affect at the time.

"We know that there were some gaps in the way the system was used and we also heard from Mr. Willoughby that he personally rented it, so based on those facts, I don't think the applicant met their burden to show that it has not been used as an STR," said Attorney Lee.

Tosco told the board that Mathis has proof that it was a STR prior to Sept. 2022 and no evidence to prove the use was discontinued for 12 months.

But the board voted 3-2 to reverse the decision of the Planning Director dated Sept 4, 2024.

Teed, King and Siegel voted to reverse Mathis's decision. Futral and Wood voted no.



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• UPCOMING EVENTS •

Small Business Saturday Holiday Stroll is Saturday, Nov. 29, 11:30am-4pm

Downtown Highlands will come alive with holiday cheer during this community-wide celebration of shopping local.

The festivities begin at 11:30am with Storytime at the Hudson Library.

Enjoy lively bluegrass tunes from Southern Highlands between noon and 2 pm and stop by The Bascom for face

painting from 1:30 to 2:30pm.

At 2:30pm, The City Carolers will stroll along Main Street, filling the air with festive songs as shoppers explore special offers from local businesses. Adding to the fun, the Highlands Police Department will spread holiday cheer by handing out candy canes.

Santa in the Park – Nov. 28, Dec. 6, 13, 20

Santa Claus will make special appearances in Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park on select dates from 11am to 3pm (a little later after the Christmas Pade and 12/6). Children will also have the opportunity to share their holiday wishes with a designated mailbox in the park. Santa will collect letters during his visits.

Highlands Christmas Parade Saturday, Dec. 6, 10am

The long standing Highlands Christmas Parade will bring Main Street to life with marching bands, llamas, camels, creative floats, and, of course, Santa himself.

Lighting of the Menorah is Sunday, Dec. 14, 5:30pm

Hanukkah will be celebrated in Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park with the Lighting of the Menorah. On the first night, we will gather at the giant menorah where one candle will be illuminated. An additional candle will automatically light at the same time each evening until the me-

norah shines in full on the eighth night, symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness. For more information about the Holidays in Highlands, call the Highlands Welcome Center at 828-526-2112 or visit www.visithighlandscnc.com.

'Trombone Shorty' & Charley Crockett to headline 2026 Bear Shadow spring music festival May 29-31

Mavis Staples, Margo Price, Marc Broussard, Kashus Culpepper and more also scheduled to perform.

Tickets go on sale Dec. 11 at 12 noon.

The 2026 Bear Shadow music festival lineup features headliners Trombone Shorty (Saturday) and Charley Crockett (Sunday). Mavis Staples, Margo Price, Marc Broussard, Kashus Culpepper, Pony Bradshaw and J & The Causeways will also perform, according to an announcement from Highlands Festivals, Inc. today. The music festival is set to return to Highlands, NC, from May 29th-31st, 2026.

"We are bringing the heat with this

lineup!" said Casey Reid, festival director and partner at Eleven Events. "After taking a year off, we knew our fans would be ready to rock again. The artists on our 2026 lineup are Grammy award winners, nominees and performers – proof positive that Bear Shadow is a must for the industry's top talent ... and a must-see for our fans."

Bear Shadow, produced by High-

• See BEAR SHADOW page 15

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...BEAR SHADOW continued from page 14

lands Festivals, Inc. and Eleven Events, is a music festival named in honor of the bear-like shadow that appears behind the region's Whiteside Mountain in the fall and spring. The festival features a variety of live musical acts for nearly any musical taste.

The festival promises a jam-packed weekend of music, mountains, mindfulness and community, including a special charity event and immersive daytime experiences.

Bear Shadow 2026 Lineup Friday, May 29, 2026

An exclusive and intimate pre-festival concert will be held on Friday, May 29, 2026. This live music event will benefit Stage4Hope, a public charity connecting advanced-stage cancer patients to lifesaving treatment, travel support, emotional-wellness retreats, and lung cancer research. More details to come.

Saturday, May 30, 2026

Trombone Shorty:

Natural born showman Troy Andrews, or "Trombone Shorty," got his start as a musician at the age of 4 and by the age of 16, was performing in Lenny Kravitz's band for his Electric Church World Tour. More than just a horn player, Shorty is an undeniable star with magnetic charisma, gracing national audiences and garnering attention from national outlets such as Vanity Fair and The New York Times. In addition to touring with stars from Jeff Black to the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Shorty has released five chart-topping studio albums; collaborated across genres with artists such as Pharrell, Bruno Mars, Mark Ronson, Foo Fighters, Zac Brown and Normani; played Coachella, Bonnaroo, Lollapalooza, and nearly every other major festival; performed at the GRAMMY® Awards four times, at the White House six times and on countless TV programs. Shorty will headline Saturday's Main Stage.

Mavis Staples:

Mavis Staples has been performing since she was 8, marking over 70 years of blending blues, rock and gospel in innovative, yet timeless ways. Now 86, Staples has been inducted into several halls of fame (blues, rock and gospel), won multiple GRAMMY® Awards and collaborated with major figures such as Bob Dylan, Prince, Aretha Franklin and Willie Nelson. Her most recent album, Sad and Beautiful World, draws inspiration from the musician's multigenerational ex-

perience in the industry and spans seven decades of the American songbook – a range nearly as vast as Mavis' career.

Marc Broussard:

Growing up the son of a Louisiana Hall of Fame guitarist of "The Boogie Kings" and immersed in the vibrant Lafayette, Louisiana music scene, Marc Broussard's musical gifts were nurtured from an early age. Blending classic R&B, rock and soul into contemporary terms, the musician creates a sound true to himself and his roots. Broussard's latest release, S.O.S. 4: Blues for Your Soul, featuring Joe Bonamassa and Josh Smith, is a blues cover record combining Broussard's unique craft and classic roots.

J & The Causeways:

Hailing from New Orleans, Louisiana, J & The Causeways will bring a combination of soul, blues, jazz and R&B to the Bear Shadow stage. Fronted by keyboardist Jordan Anderson, the group's powerful sound is influenced by Anderson's grandmother, a piano teacher in his Louisiana hometown. Her music collection featured a mix of influential artists from Otis Redding, Al Green, Queen and Aretha Franklin, all combining to inspire the group's dynamic style. Anderson's lead is backed by a six-piece band including: bass, drums, guitar, organ, saxophone and trumpet, blending together in harmonious, funky soul.

Sunday, May 31, 2026

Charley Crockett: From singing with an open guitar case on the streets of Louisiana to selling out renowned venues, Charley Crockett has proven his talent and star power time and time again. The GRAMMY® Award-nominated Texas-born musician will headline Bear Shadow on Sunday, bringing his signature home-inspired "Gulf & Western" sound to the Basecamp Main Stage. In the past year, Crockett has headlined Red Rocks Amphitheater, performed in the Hollywood Bowl and played two sold-out nights at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, TN. Not only has Crockett received praise from The New Yorker, The New York Times, Rolling Stone and Variety; he often appears on late-night and morning TV programs, showcasing his talent to national audiences.

Margo Price:

It's been nearly a decade since country artist Margo Price released her debut solo album, and the unapologetically au-

• See BEAR SHADOW page 21

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Donations for keeping warm!

Each month the Cashiers-Highlands P.E.O. Chapter BJ supports the Highlands Emergency Council with donations of needed items. At their November PEO meeting, members donated box loads of children and adult coats, hats and mittens to help them keep warm during the cold months ahead.

The Highlands Emergency Council has been serving families in the Highlands area since 1982. The Council has been run by volunteers since then and is proud to be able to support and help our neighbors in Highlands and the surrounding areas. This community donation center helps low-income residents, senior citizens, young families, single-parent families, and disaster victims of any age in times of adversity. A vast majority of these people needing help are employed, but still need help in their day to day living.

P.E.O. is a Philanthropic Educational Organization where women celebrate the advancement of women; educate



Pictured from left is Mille McCafferty, Chapter BJ's President, Marie Johnson, Emergency Council's Lead Volunteer, and Sarah, Chapter BJ's Treasurer.

women through scholarships, grants, awards, loans and the stewardship of Cottey College; and motivate each other to achieve their highest aspirations. It is an international non-profit organization that has helped more than 130,000 women by providing \$462 million dollars in financial assistance to further their education.

P.E.O. first came to North Carolina with the formation of Chapter A in Greensboro in 1929. The NC State Chapter was organized March 23, 1962 and there are now over 99 chapters with over 3100 members and this number grows every year. The Cashiers-Highlands Chapter BJ was organized in 1992 and now has 37 members who meet on the second Monday of each month. For more information about Chapter BJ, please contact Chapter BJ's President Melle McCafferty at 850-830-3124. To learn more about the mission of P.E.O., go to its website at: peonc.org or peointernational.org.

WALK CASHIERS spreads holiday spirit with 'Festival of Trees' collaboration

Christmas is coming early to Cashiers! WALK CASHIERS has partnered with the Cashiers Festival of Trees to spread holiday cheer by showcasing decorated Christmas trees in select retailers along the Cashiers Greenway Ramble.

WALK CASHIERS is a collaborative campaign led by the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce, Jackson County, and Vision Cashiers to create a more walkable community through the expansion of the Cashiers Greenway Ramble.

The Cashiers Festival of Trees is a beloved, family-friendly event held Thanksgiving weekend featuring beautifully decorated trees, wreaths, and gift baskets available for purchase. Visitors can enjoy holiday shopping, children's crafts, story time, rivalry weekend football viewings, festive performances, and more. Proceeds from the event benefit local nonprofits and Summit Charter School.

To build excitement for the Festival, participating Chamber businesses along

the Cashiers Greenway Ramble are pre-viewing trees that will be featured during the event. These locations include Buck's Coffee Café, the Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce, Cashiers Farmers Market, Slab Town Pizza, and Vivace. To help bring more awareness for the Festival, the Chamber included these locations in their "Falling for Cashiers" social media scavenger hunt, which ended November 10.

Now, the community is invited to continue the celebration by visiting the tree displays along the Ramble in anticipation of the Cashiers Festival of Trees, taking place November 28-29 from 10 AM to 5 PM. While at the Festival, guests can stop by the WALK CASHIERS booth to learn more about the expanding Greenway Ramble and its role in connecting the community—one step at a time.

"This year, our Cashiers Festival of Trees is sprinkled throughout town, with trees showcased at the Cashiers Farmers Market, Vivace, Buck's, the Cashiers Chamber, and Slab Town Pizza. These

displays celebrate the Festival season while shining a light on the businesses and shared spaces that make the Cashiers Greenway Ramble so special," says Melissa Hudson, Festival of Trees Director. "It's a joyful reminder of what we can achieve together when community, creativity, and collaboration come to life. Check out these spots along the trail, and don't forget to visit us at the Festival during Thanksgiving weekend!"

"The beauty of Cashiers shines brightest when we come together. This collaboration celebrates the creativity of our businesses, the spirit of our residents, and the joy that defines our community during the holiday season," says Susan Sapienza, Executive Director, Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce.

• Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce: cashiersareachamber.com

• Cashiers Festival of Trees: summitschool.org/festival-of-trees

• Cashiers Greenway Ramble: cashiersgreenwayramble.com

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

A General Thanksgiving (From the Book of Common Prayer, p. 836)

Rev. Kirkland "Skully" Knight
The Episcopal Church
of the incarnation

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love.

We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side.

We thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us.

We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone.

Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of his Word and the example of his life; for his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation; for his dying, through which he overcame death; and for his rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom.

Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know Christ and make him known; and through him, at all times and in all places, may give thanks to you in all things. Amen.

Thanksgiving should come first. And I don't mean before Christmas or something like that. I guess I should say, gratitude should come first. I mean that when we pray, when we worship, before we do anything else, we should offer thanks. Sometimes that's harder to do than it sounds. We want to rush into our agenda—what we need, what we want, the things for which we come to God, asking. Maybe we come to grieve. Maybe we come to celebrate. But no matter what's going on in our life, no matter why we come to God in prayer and worship, we should take time. Take a breath. Slow down. Pause, and give thanks. And the times when that seems hardest to do, are the times that we need to do it the most.

My favorite parts of this General Thanksgiving are, "We thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us," and "We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone." Thank you for demanding our best efforts and for disappointments and failures. I love the Book of Common Prayer that we use in the Episcopal Church

• See SPIRITUALLY page 19

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

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CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Aryn Williams-Reubel. Pastor 828-743-5298
Sundays: School at 9:30; Worship 10:30

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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

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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 • fbchighlands.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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www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814
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HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Hwy 107N. • Glenville. NC • 743-2729 • Nathan Johnson
Sunday: School 9:45a. Worship 11a & 7p. Bible Study 6p
Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Randy Reed. Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street
Wed. Bible Study: 6 p.m.; Sundays: Worship: 11

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road
The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily
sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.
Sunday Worship is at 9a. & 6p. Wednesday Worship is 6p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Pastor Zane Talley

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11. Choir: 6 p.m.
Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

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

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743-2583 • Independent Bible Church
Sun: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church. 4224 Big Ridge
(4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

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SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby
Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212
Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

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

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

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7p (Spanish); Wed., 9:30a (English)

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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

• POLICE & FIRE NEWS •

HPD joins other Western NC law enforcement agencies for Blackout Wednesday, blue: Nov. 26

The Wednesday before Thanksgiving, known as Blackout Wednesday, marks the beginning of the holiday season. This day is often associated with a rise in deadly motor vehicle crashes related to speeding and driving while impaired (DWI).

This year, at 6p., law enforcement agencies across Western North Carolina, including the Highlands Police Department, will turn Black Out Wednesday blue. Patrol vehicles will be stationed at key locations where tragic accidents have occurred and officers will activate their blue lights for five minutes as a solemn tribute to those who have been killed or injured. Other patrol vehicles will also stop and activate their blue lights as a re-

minder not to drink and drive. Together, we can work to ensure safer roads for everyone.

In Macon County, the following individuals were killed by a driver who was impaired:

- Judy Moore was killed on December 7, 1996,
- Rachelle Edwards and Paul Maliska were killed on October 16, 1997,
- Sylvia Bolick was on July 31, 2012,
- Megan James and Roger Dooley were killed on October 31, 2018
- Miriam Witzl was killed on November 1, 2019.

The Highlands Police Department is urging every driver to refrain from drinking and driving.

Please help us prevent brush fires

Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart reminds people to not dump ashes from fireplaces in the leaves or pine straw.

The department has been responding to brushfires that started when people dumped hot coals or ashes in leaves and pine straw.

“The best practice, even if it has

been several days since having a fire, is to place ashes or coals in a metal bucket with a lid, and place it on a non-combustible surface like concrete, asphalt, dirt or gravel and let them cool down,” he said.

He said flooding the canister or a fire pit with water is also a great idea.

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 18

for many reasons, but one is for the beautifully worded prayers that we have for seemingly, every occasion. I would have never thought to offer a prayer like this while giving thanks to God. I would linger in the parts about “splendor of creation, and the beauty of the world,” and “blessing of family and friends,” because that all sounds like Thanksgiving (lower case or capital “T”), right? But do we take time to see those other things as blessings, as things to be thankful for?

Do we see the hard things that demand our best as things that lead us to accomplishment? Do we let ourselves see our disappointments and failures as opportunities to acknowledge our dependence on God? Do we think of the

times in our lives that are hard, that feel like disappointment and failure, as things to be thankful for? Probably not, but maybe we should try.

This Thanksgiving, whether your family publicly and literally goes around the table with each person naming something they're thankful for, or if you find yourself in a quiet, solitary moment, think about those things that have been hard, that have demanded your best efforts. Think about those failures and disappointments. Have they created in us a sense of accomplishment? Have they drawn us closer to God in some way? Maybe they have. Maybe they haven't, yet. Maybe they will. Thanks be to God.

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

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

Nov. 20

• At 2 p.m., officers responded to a call of identity theft and fraud when someone at a specialty store took information without permission.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Nov. 18.

Nov. 18

• At 2:30 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Whiteside Mountain Road. The call was cancelled en route.

• At 4:16 p.m., the dept. was called to a residence on NC 106 (Dillard Road) to investigate an incident.

• At 6:19 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a chimney fire at a residence on North Drive.

• At 7:42 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Webbmont Road.

Nov. 19

• At 9:37 a.m., the dept. responded to a brush fire at a residence on Mirror-mont Drive.

• At 3:53 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

Nov. 20

• At 7:35 a.m., the dept. responded

to a motor vehicle accident on Buck Creek Road.

• At 3:28 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Sun Ridge Road.

Nov. 21

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

• At 4:28 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Woodland Ridge Road.

• At 6:45 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Half Mile Drive.

Nov. 22

• At 2:20 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Chestnut Hill Drive.

• At 7:57 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clubhouse Trail, but it was cancelled en route.

Nov. 23

• At 10:33 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Satulah Falls Lane.

• At 2:58 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on BlueValley Road.

• At 5:33 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Hemlock Ridge Road but it was cancelled en route.

• At 8:32 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Pine Circle.



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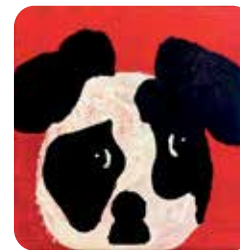
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power, and sewer run to each lot. www.TinyMountainEstates.com for more info. (10/30/25)

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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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Classifieds:

\$10 for first 10 words; 30 cents for each additional word; \$5 for graphic; \$2 for color highlight

...BEAR SHADOW continued from 15

thentic star hasn't stopped stunning fans yet. Boasting four records, a GRAMMY® nomination, countless star-studded collaborations and a lauded memoir, Price has proved her unmatched talent and ability to thrive alongside the mainstream, despite her unique approach to the craft. The independent-minded songwriter performs truth-telling classic country songs written from the intellect and gut.

Pony Bradshaw:

Pony Bradshaw, born James Bradshaw has been deemed a "rambling troubadour" by Rolling Stone. Bradshaw is on his third release, Thus Spoke the Fool, continuing his habit of telling odd stories from different angles. His songs transport listeners to his now home, Georgia, with tales rich in imagery and a hybrid mix of bluegrass and Americana, rich with sounds of rustic guitar, fiddle and pedal steel.

Kashus Culpepper:

Alabama-born country music star Kashus Culpepper's musical journey began five years ago during deployment with the Navy. The 26-year-old veteran's music has developed from cover songs to original tunes, moving from performing at dive bars up and down the coast to selling out shows across the South. Culpepper truly encompasses the sounds of the region, blending styles of country, soul, blues, folk and rock in his craft. The relatively new artist was named one of The Tennessean's "10 Nashville artists you need to know for 2024" and has since proven his showmanship and talent on stages across the South.

Daytime Experiences

Also returning to the Bear Shadow schedule for 2026 are the beloved daytime events that allow festival goers to immerse in the outdoors. Daytime events at the 2026 Bear Shadow will include "Live Stream" fly fishing excursion with Brookings Anglers, and Summit & Sound guided hikes complete with an up-close-and-very-personal music experience overlooking high vista views.

The festival will be held at Ferngrove in Highlands, North Carolina.

For more information, visit <https://bearshadownc.com/>, subscribe to our newsletter and sign up to receive texts for the latest festival news by texting BEAR-SHADOW to (828) 202-8911. You can also follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

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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. 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**

ICE SKATING IN THE PARK

• 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.

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 fpch-kelley@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 budandlynn@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 nepost370@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.

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.


Sat., Dec. 13

• Your favorite 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.

Sun., Dec. 14

• Lighting of the Menorah. to honor the beginning of Hanukkah, a celebration of light and unity that marks this meaningful season. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

‘Tis the Season!



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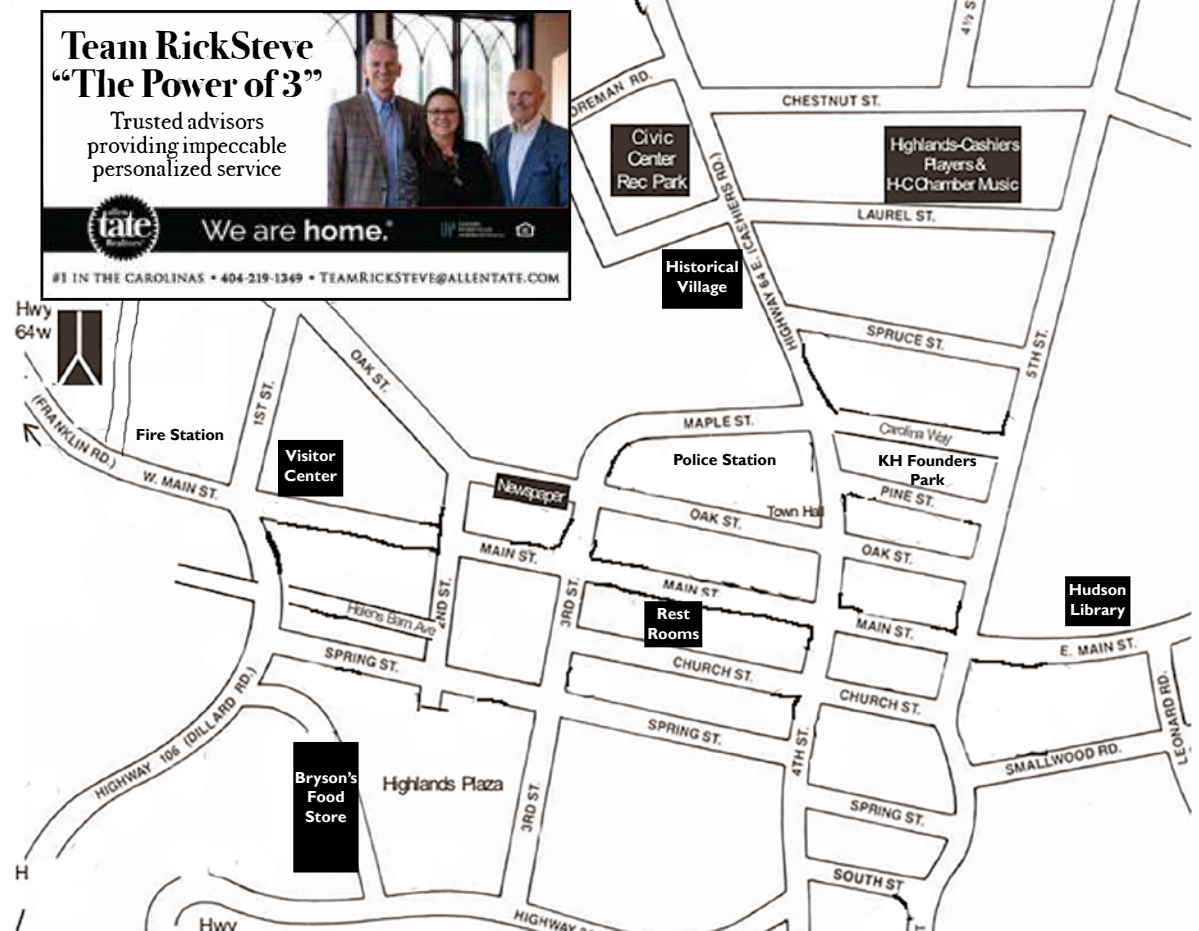


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Map labels: Civic Center Rec Park, Highlands-Cashiers Players & HC Chamber Music, Historical Village, Fire Station, Visitor Center, Newspaper, Police Station, Rest Rooms, Bryson's Food Store, Highlands Plaza, Hudson Library.



Andrea Gabbard
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