

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Feb. 26, 2026

Zoning Board ruling lands town in court

By Kim Lewicki

On Feb. 13, a writ of certiorari – Willoughby Family Farms, LLC vs. Town of Highlands – was filed in Macon County Superior Court appeal-

ing the Highlands Zoning Board of Adjustment November ruling that overturned the Highlands Planning and Development Director's ruling regarding a Short-Term Rental on Worley Road.

In the writ, Willoughby Family Farms, of 336 Worley Road, is challenging the Board of Adjustment decision overturning Director Michael Mathis's September

• See COURT page 5

Experts weigh in: Proposed redistricting scenario is not allowed

By Kristin Fox

Macon County is considering a change to how county commissioners are elected. After listening to the public's concerns about the proposed redistricting during the February public hearing, commissioners decided they needed more time to consider possible options before making any changes to the election process.

For close to 50 years, Macon County has selected its commissioners from three districts. District 1 (Ellijay, Sugarfork, Highlands and Flats precincts) and District 3 (Cartoogechaye, Nantahala, Burningtown and

• See SCENARIO page 4



At Saturday night's annual Highlands Fire & Rescue Awards Banquet Jacob Pressler was named "Fireman of the Year." He is flanked by Chief Ryan Gearhart and Asst. Chief Robbie Forrester.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

Annual banquet recognizes firefighters

By Kim Lewicki

It was the case in 2024 and again in 2025 – 2025 was the busiest year on record for High-

lands Fire & Rescue without a natural disaster the reason for the increase.

At Saturday night's Annual

Awards Banquet held at OEI's Spring House, Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart ticked off the depart-

• See BANQUET page 13

A Special Meeting is called to pick a new commissioner

By Kim Lewicki

At the February Town Board meeting, commissioners agreed to hold a Special Called Meeting, Thursday, March 12 at 3 p.m. in the Community Building to hopefully pick the new member of the Town Board.

Five applicants applied for the seat vacated by Commissioner John Dotson effective Dec. 31, 2025 – Bill Grubb, Daryl Griswold and Marc Hehn, Jan Pittman and Margot Teed.

Selecting the next Town Board member will be through a nomination/ballot method. Applicants will progress based on the number of votes they get each time a vote is called. Once an applicant gets a majority vote,

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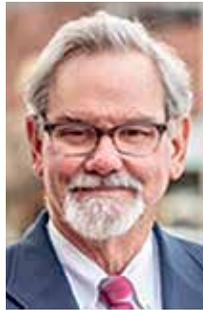
• MAYOR ON DUTY •

State-of-the-town of Highlands

President Trump gave the State of the Union address this past Tuesday evening. Let me give a brief state-of-the-town summary for Highlands.

Highlands has faced several challenging situations in recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Hurricane Helene, STR issues, and recent swatting incidents, to name only a few. We have worked together as a community to meet these challenges. And more challenges lie ahead.

Financially, the town continues to be in good shape, due to careful planning and keeping a measured view of what our local government can and should do. Our debt load, as revealed in the recent town audit, remains low, especially compared to our reserve funds and revenue potential.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

Nevertheless, there are budgetary pressures now and in the future. Maintaining a workable infrastructure system and continuing to provide critical services will be the challenge. Property taxes and service rates have still been low.

For instance, there has not been a property tax increase since around 2014-'15 when there was a 1.5 millage rate to upgrade the recreation department. Over the past few years of property tax reevaluations, the Town Board has adopted a revenue-neutral policy that has kept tax rates unchanged. While there have been some rate increases for water, sewer, and garbage collection, other utilities, like electric rates, have remained the same for many years.

Several years ago, the town and county increased the fire tax from 1 cent per \$100 of property valuation to its current rate of 1.9 cents. That increase helped build the new fire station, convert to full-time staffing, and replace an old fire truck.

Inflationary pressures will make tax increases almost inevitable in the future or require the board to decide which services and departments should be reduced.

For instance, the town needs to soon replace an aging 10-year-old large garbage truck. There is a standard replacement rotation of these vehicles that are used every day in the life of their service. The last truck replaced cost around \$240,000. A new replacement truck will now cost about \$350,000. The last pumper fire truck we replaced cost somewhere over \$250,000. Now the replacement of an aging 10-year-old pumper truck will be well over \$500,000.

Infrastructure projects in areas such as water and sewer are also increasing significantly. This is not a problem just in Highlands; towns and municipalities throughout the country are facing the same problem.

So, going into the upcoming town retreat, the staff and Town Board will have to address these inflationary pressures. In the past, we have used strong reserve funds from our enterprise funds to cover rising costs and to fund projects such as paving roads and creating sidewalks.

The state has recently curtailed how towns can use reserves from enterprise funds.

In the past, electric reserve funds could be appropriated to purchase garbage trucks, upgrade water and sewer equipment, and fund electric utility projects. That is no longer the case; the state has mandated that enterprise funds be spent only in the area where they were generated.

Therefore, all necessary electric grid upgrades have been funded by the electric fund. Water and sewer upgrades will have to come from reserves in those areas; thus, water and sewer rates have and will

continue to be increased to keep those utilities operative at a level expected by customers.

A very important offset to some of these inflationary pressures has been securing state and federal grants to fund infrastructure improvements. In the past few years and even this year, the town has received over 15 million in grants. If Highlands had not received these grants, our financial position would be quite different at the present time.

As we go into the new budget planning season, Highlands continues to be in a strong financial position, as reflected in the recent annual audit. The challenge for the future is to plan wisely and carefully to maintain that strong position. What all citizens want, what is essential, and what the town can afford will determine planning and implementation of a town budget.

• WEATHER •

Thu, 26-Feb	Fri, 27-Feb	Sat, 28-Feb	Sun, 1-Mar
			
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Obituary Policy

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...SCENARIO continued from page 1

Cowee precincts) have one member each on the board. The three remaining seats are selected from District 2 (Iotla, Millshoal, North Franklin, East Franklin, South Franklin, Union and Smithbridge precincts).

Under this process commonly referred to as “residence districts,” candidates for election as commissioner must run for the seats assigned to the district where they reside, but all the voters of the county vote for all the seats.

The proposed change presented in a resolution during this month’s board meeting would divide the county into three geographic districts, require one commissioner to live in each district, add two at-large commissioners who may live anywhere in the county and allow all voters in the county to vote for all five seats.

“North Carolina only allows certain election systems,” said Melanie Thibault, Macon County Board of Elections Director. “Counties may choose from approved options such as all at-large elections, true electoral districts, limited mixed systems, or residency districts. Counties are prohibited from creating new combinations on their own.”

Thibault said State law does not allow residency districts and at-large seats to be combined.

“The requested system as presented in the proposed resolution attempts to use both, which is not permitted under state statute,” she said.

She said even if voters were to approve the proposed change, a referendum cannot override state law. A county may only adopt elections systems authorized by state statute.

“The only way the county could adopt the proposed change to the county’s electoral districting as stated in the resolution is through a local act passed by the North Carolina General Assembly,” said Thibault. “Without that the county must continue using an election structure allowed under current law.”

According to Robert Joyce with the North Carolina School of Government generally there are two ways that an election system for a county can be changed. The first way which is always available is for the General Assembly to enact what is known as a “local act.”

A “local act” is an act of the General Assembly that applies to only one place. A local act applicable to only Macon County could be passed by the General Assembly

making the change proposed in the resolution possible.

A member of the General Assembly, either of the Senate or the House of Representatives, would introduce a bill to make the change and the bill would have to be passed by both the House and the Senate. Usually, but not always, the member introducing such a bill would represent a district that includes the affected locality -- in this case Macon County.

The second way that an election system for a county can be changed does not involve the General Assembly. It is by action of the commissioners and a vote of the people of the county in a referendum through a process found in the general statutes GS 153A-58 through 153A-64.

However, the proposed resolution presented at the commissioners’ meeting is not permitted under this process, according to Joyce.

Under state statutes there are a limited set of changes that can be made to the election process including:

- A county can go to an election of all commissioners at large, doing away with districts altogether. All five commissioners would be elected by the general voting public.

- A county can go to a system of true electoral districts (combined if wanted with at-large seats). Only the people in each district can vote on the candidates from that district in both the primary and the general elections.

- A county can go to a system of true electoral districts in the primary elections and then residency districts in the general election (combined if wanted with at-large seats). Only the people in each district vote on the candidates from their district in their primary but with a county-wide vote on all candidates in the general election.

- A county can go to residency districts; this is the system which Macon County currently has. However, under this statutory option there is not an option for a combination of residency districts plus at large seats, which is what Macon County was proposing in the resolution. According to Joyce, the only way the county can make the change that is through a local act of the General Assembly.”

Thibault said the public voiced their opinion during the public hearing but but said they need a lot more information before they are asked to vote on it.

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...COURT continued from page 1

4, 2024 decision in favor of Willoughby, on nine legal errors, notably the untimeliness of the Woods' re-filed appeal, which was filed way in excess of the 30-day appeal deadline, saying the case shouldn't have been heard at that point, and the "Standing" of the Woods, as well as other legal errors.

A writ of certiorari is an extraordinary, discretionary remedy used to review decisions by lower tribunals, such as local government quasi-judicial boards, boards of adjustment, or administrative agencies. It acts as a supervisory mechanism, allowing the superior court to review the record of proceedings for errors of law or abuse of discretion when no direct appeal right exists.

Recap

In his September 4, 2024, administrative determination, Mathis, determined that Willoughby Family Farms' use of 336 Worley Road in Highlands as a short-term rental was a legal nonconforming use.

"After reviewing all the evidence provided to my office, it's my determination that the dwelling at 336 Worley Road operated as a lawful STR prior to September 15, 2022, when STRs became a prohibited use in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts. Furthermore, I have no evidence to prove that the use was discontinued for 12 consecutive months after becoming nonconforming," reads his decision. "Therefore, the STR use of the residential dwelling unit on the subject property is considered a legal nonconforming use and may continue operating at this time, subject to the standards set forth in UDO Section 6.5.18."

On September 23, 2024, neighbors Ronnie & Cheryl Wood of 265 Worley Road submitted an application to the Board appealing Mathis's determination. The Woods contended they had been adversely affected by the Willoughby's use of their home as a STR and that it hadn't been rented within 12 months after the town's September 2022 stipulation that an existing STR be rented within a 12-month period or cease to exist as an STR.

With the September appeal application in hand, the Zoning Board scheduled a quasi-judicial hearing for December 11, 2024.

However, on December 11, 2024, upon request of the Woods, the Board continued the hearing to February 12, 2025.

On February 12, 2025, the matter was continued again until the March 2025 meeting due to health reasons raised by the Woods.

After another request for continuance before the March meeting, town staff, in consultation with the Zoning Board chair Margot Teed and Town Attorney Nick Tosco, removed the appeal from the calendar with the understanding that the parties may request the matter to be heard at a later date.

More than a year later, at the November 2025 Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting, the board heard the Woods' appeal of Mathis's decision.

At the beginning of the hearing, Attorney J. Brandon Freeman of Allen Stahl + Kilbourne, PLLC who represented Willoughby, made a motion to dismiss the appeal as "untimely."

However, Ronnie Wood testified that he understood – due to ongoing health issues -- the appeal could be postponed until a date in which he could physically attend the hearing. Director Mathis testified that the appeal was withdrawn from the meeting schedule with the ability to be heard upon the request of the Woods, or the owner, Willoughby.

Though Wood presented medical information and appointment schedules as evidence why he was unable to attend the hearings, according to the writ, no information presented related to Willoughby's request for postponement.

According to the writ, Mathis, instructed the Woods to "withdraw the original appeal, and re-file it once [they] were physically able to attend a rescheduled ZBA hearing"

"Such instruction would have been inconsistent with N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160D-405, outside of the scope of his authority, to have extended the 30-day time period in which an appeal may be filed," reads the writ.

It continues, "Notably, the Original Appeal and the re-filed Appeal are substantively different. They were filed on different forms, with different names, and advance different arguments as to why the Woods are contesting the Planning and Development Director Administrative Determination.

"The Re-filed Appeal makes clear on its face that the "Date of Administrative Decision" was 9/4/24 and that the "Re-filing Date" was 8/25/25.

"To the extent that Town staff, Town

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This week is the last week of early voting before Election Day. Both early voting sites will be open the rest of this week from 8am-7:30 pm and Saturday from 8 am-3pm.

Voters who don't vote early, must go to their proper polling location on Election Day, Tuesday, March 3. All (15) polling locations in Macon County will be open from 6:30 am-7:30 pm.

The Board will meet on Election Day, March 3 at 5 pm for the Absentee meeting. Results will not be made public until 7:30 pm. If voters have questions in regards to their polling location, they may contact the office (828-349-2034).

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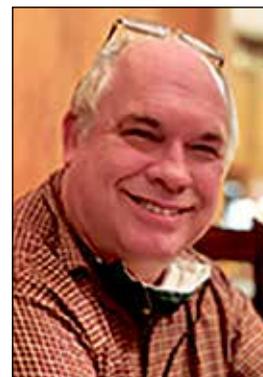
Let's not lose the Highlands we love

Greetings from Highlands! I wish writing on investing came easier for me! The Highlands Real estate market is still very healthy, we are seeing more inventory come on the market with pretty good absorption.

A good house or property, if priced fairly, has been getting snapped up reasonably fast. Also, there are a lot of changes on commercial property around Highlands, with five old Highlands landmarks being torn down including the Holt Building, the Stone Lantern building, the Cleaveland house, the building that housed White Oak Realty, the Highlands Playhouse and the Carolina Mountain Bank/Bank of America building.

I have great memories of going to Bill's Soda Shop for ice cream, pinball, comics and hanging out with my friends. That building was a landmark on Main Street. I know the new owner tried everything to save it but hopefully the new building will be of similar character that will keep the charm.

The Stone Lantern was a gem that had very eclectic and unique gifts and accessories. Everyone I knew shopped there. I really hated losing the Playhouse, the old charm was irreplaceable and the new replacement, although nice, will



W Terry Potts

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never take the place of the old one. Several generations used it from school kids to professional summer stock. The All Male beauty pageants as charity fundraisers were hilarious! It is gone now so that's water under the bridge so I guess not all progress is good.

The bank building was not my taste or personal favorite, but the new one taking its place looks like it could be a glorified chain in anywhere USA. While we do need more hotel spaces to support the weekend visitors and wedding guests,

the developers got the zone changed to be able to use every available inch of the property. They came armed with lawyers to shotgun it through using points of law, which shows they anticipated it was a square peg in our well-rounded community.

I agree with one statement from the board that looked at the plans, "I hope it will be the last building of that scale and look built here."

People come here for a small quaint town, so if we let it become a "Big City" then we lose the way of life we have here. But, the real estate investment will always be good here as long as people want this way of life. That is what makes Highlands Highlands!

Volunteers needed for Plateau Pickup

The Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC invites community members to roll up their sleeves and help beautify our local roadsides and public spaces during the annual Plateau Pickup on Saturday, April 18.

Volunteers will gather at 8:30am at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park (Pine Street) to check in and receive clean up assignments along key corridors including U.S. 64, N.C. 28, N.C. 106, and select areas of downtown Highlands.

All supplies will be provided, including a light breakfast, safety vest, gloves, pick-up tools and garbage bags. After the cleanup, volunteers are invited back to the park for a thank-you t-shirt and

boxed lunch at 12pm.

"Plateau Pickup is one of those days that brings out the very best in Highlands," said

Johanna Fein, executive director of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC. "This year, we're proud to be part of the Greatest American Cleanup, working together to make our community cleaner, greener, and more beautiful as we look ahead to America's 250th celebration."

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...COURT continued from page 5

officials, and/or the Board was involved in authorizing the Woods to withdraw their Original Appeal and submit a Re-filed Appeal almost a year after the Administrative Determination, such authorization was made without the involvement or consent of the Willoughbys, was improper, and inconsistent with North Carolina law. In addition, such authorization appears to have been open-ended and would have permitted the Woods to “re-file” their appeal at any time in the future, be it two, five, or ten years.”

Despite Attorney Freeman’s objections that the re-filed appeal was untimely and that the Board of Adjustment lacked the authority to rule on that issue, the board heard the matter thereby denying the motion to dismiss.

Attorney Freeman then made a second motion to dismiss based upon the Woods lack of “Standing” as applicants.

According to the writ, the Zoning Board improperly granted “Standing” to the Woods in this matter on the grounds that the Woods were “applicants” before the board under N.C. Gen. Stat. §160D-1402(c)(1)(c).

“In fact, the Board’s Decision overturning the Administrative Determination erroneously refers to the Woods as the ‘applicant.’ N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160D-1402 reads, that ‘an applicant before the decision-making board whose decision is being appealed’ has standing.

“The Woods, however, were not ‘applicants,’ they were appellants of an administrative decision,” reads the writ.

According to UNC School of Gov-

ernment Professor Adam Lovelady, “For some of these parties, standing is clear. The applicant, the owner, and the local government are easily identified as parties with “Standing” to appeal. Determining whether a neighbor will suffer special damages requires more. The courts look at factors such as proximity, property value impacts, and additional adverse impacts (noise, pollution, traffic, etc.) to determine special damages. The application form for an appeal may request information to confirm legal standing, and at the hearing, the question of standing is a threshold matter for the board to determine. If the person filing the appeal lacks standing, the board lacks authority to hear the appeal.”

However, after hearing from Wood, the Board concluded he had “Standing” and denied Attorney Freeman’s motion to

dismiss.

According to the writ, the Board should have conducted a serious analysis under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160D-1402(c)(2) to determine whether the Woods would suffer “special damages” to their property that are distinct from the public-at-large.”

“Statements made by Board members and counsel during the hearing and the fact that the Board’s Order refers to the Woods as “applicants,” demonstrates that it did not.

“Neither the Woods, nor any other witness, presented evidence that they would suffer “special damages” as a result of the Administrative Determination. To the extent that the Board did consider special damages, it made its

• See COURT page 15

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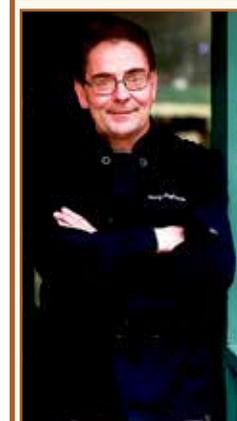
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• OBITUARY •

Andrew Alan Figel



Andrew Alan Figel, born Nov. 10, 1937, in Indianapolis, IN, passed away peacefully Feb. 20, 2026, at the age of 88.

He is survived by his devoted wife of 50-plus years, Marta Figel; his children, Andrew Figel, Nicholas Figel, Martha Limner (Nick) and Marlene Fairchild (John); his dear grandchildren; many loving nephews and nieces; and countless friends across the world.

A proud graduate of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Alan began his career in finance before pursuing lifelong passions for travel, food and cooking. In the 1970s, he served as president of the Rare Fruit Council International in Miami, reflecting his deep

interest in agriculture, tropical flavors and culinary exploration.

His greatest adventure began when he met Marta. They married in 1975 and built a life defined by curiosity, partnership and a shared love of hospitality. In 1981, after discovering a log cabin overlooking a serene lake in Highlands, North Carolina, they opened On the Verandah. As founder, owner and executive chef, Alan created an award-winning beloved destina-

tion known for refined, inventive cuisine blending international influences with regional tradition, and earned acclaim for its Grand Cru-recognized wine list.

Marta stood beside him in every chapter – from testing recipes to exploring new destinations and welcoming guests as friends. Their travels took them around the world, including Thailand, Italy, Isla Mujeres, Jamaica and their treasured retreat in Tobago.

Alan expressed his love through food and the welcoming table he and Marta created for others. He leaves behind not only a remarkable legacy in the kitchen, but also a life defined by craftsmanship, curiosity and joy. In lieu of flowers, family and friends are invited to honor Alan by raising a glass (or a perfectly plated dish) and remembering a life well lived.

JOEY WILSON

FOR MACON COUNTY COMMISSIONER

A VOTE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE OF MACON COUNTY

Joey Wilson is a lifelong resident of Macon County, a proud husband, father, and son, a firm believer that good government means balancing fiscal responsibility with forward-looking growth.

He's seen firsthand how smart planning and responsible spending can create opportunity - for local businesses, for our children, and for our parents who helped build this community.

As County Commissioner, Joey will work to ensure that every tax dollar is used wisely, while making sure our county continues to grow in a way that preserves our small-town values and secures a strong future for the next generation.

**PRIMARY ELECTION DAY
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026**

THE BEST PERSON TO REPRESENT DISTRICT 1
ELLIJAY, FLATS, HIGHLANDS AND SUGARFORK

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Every dollar counts. Joey believes in transparent, efficient budgeting - prioritizing essential services while eliminating waste. County government should live within its means, just like families do.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Growth should bring opportunity, not problems. Joey will promote smart development that strengthens our economy, supports local businesses, and protects what makes Macon County special.

IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICES

Backing investments in emergency services, education, and critical infrastructure.



• CHHS NEWS •



Photo by Marty Boone

True to his namesake, 4-year-old Thor is indeed strong and mighty. But despite his strength, Thor has a silly streak and our staff lovingly refers to him as our "goofy giant." He is house-trained, smart, and eager to please. Thor has been neutered, microchipped, up to date on vaccinations and his adoption fee is only \$50. Visit chhumanesociety.org or call (828)743-5752.

PAID FOR BY FRIENDS OF JOEY WILSON

• LETTERS •

Why is Trump so desperate to keep us from voting?

Our President is trying in every way possible to get the Federal Government to run state elections. He is using the presidential megaphone to plant seeds of doubt about the integrity of our elections. As of this date there has been no evidence that fraud of any amount has occurred in any of our past elections, particularly the 2020 election. If evidence existed, Trump would have presented it. He has not. Even the Wall Street Journal

has found no evidence that there is fraud in our elections.

Does Trump not want people to vote? Is he afraid Republicans are going to lose control of the House and possibly the Senate? Are Republicans protecting him? Will Trump be impeached if Republicans lose control of the House? Is he afraid of being held responsible for whatever he is hiding in the Epstein files? Did Trump get caught trying to steal the 2020 election?

Will he try to steal this election? Are these the reasons why he is trying to prevent people from voting in the first place?

I believe the answer to those questions is YES. The SAFE Act which Trump is pushing Congress to pass will in fact make it more difficult for many citizens to vote. So let me tell you a personal story. On my 4th attempt to get my drivers' license renewed last August, I finally got a number and after 3 hours of waiting I saw the state

employee. I had to provide a certified birth certificate (not a copy), my marriage license showing I had changed my name and multiple bills showing my physical address which was difficult since all my bills go to my P.O. Box. If the SAFE Act passes that will be required in all states. Now who will be impacted by this law... the very group that makes up the base of the Democratic Party- women.

It is absolutely despicable to rob someone of their right to vote. The freedom of every American citizen depends on their right to be heard and represented which is why voting is so important. If you take away a citizen's vote, you take away their freedom to choose the people whose decisions impact their lives. The right to representation is the difference between democracy and dictatorship.

Elections in the U.S. are incredibly difficult to steal and almost impossible to steal without getting caught. They are run by states who put safeguards in place. In every polling location, there is a chief judge and both Republicans and Democrats can have observers inside the polling area. As I write this letter, I am doing just that, observing people coming into the Highlands Rec Park polling location to vote. If you doubt the safety of our elections, learn about the process in North Carolina. Our elections are safe!

Linda Arnold
Highlands

You deserve an F, Mr. President

Dear Editor,

Recently, President Trump said, "I don't know how a person of faith can vote for a Democrat," at the National Prayer Breakfast. This may surely make the Top 10 of his ridiculous statements. Likewise, if anyone stated they didn't know how a person of faith could vote for a Republican or Independent, they too would be equally ridiculous. I must add that such an unbelievable statement coming from a sitting President is far from the expectation we should have for one in the highest office of the land.

I do not know where the President received his biblical and Theological Studies – maybe Trump University – but I don't believe he was listening during ses-

• See LETTERS page 12


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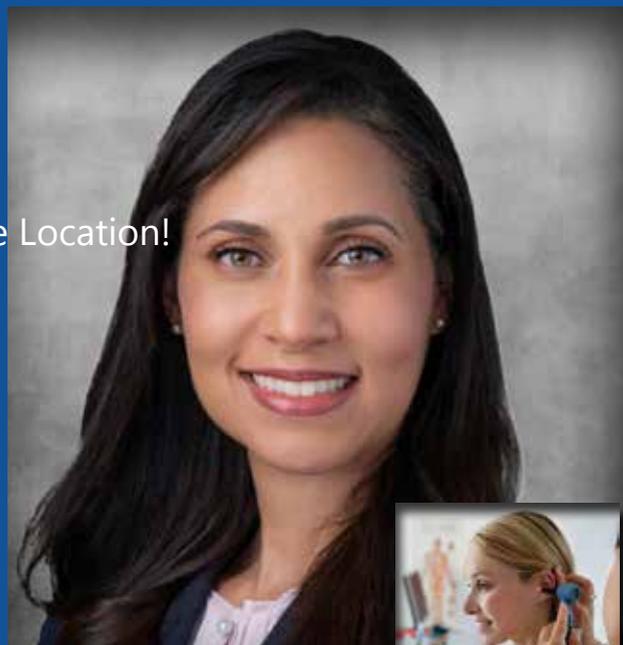
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Highlanders for Good Government endorses Joey Wilson for District 1.

It's time to get back to governing that is RESPECTFUL OF THE VOTERS OF MACON COUNTY, OUR MUNICIPALITIES AND OUR VALUABLE COUNTY EMPLOYEES.

- Shearl voted against free school lunches for our most vulnerable children in Franklin & Highlands.
- Shearl tried numerous times to stop the Franklin High School project, ultimately voting against it, jeopardizing the children of Macon County's future.
- Shearl delayed the badly needed upgrade to the Highlands Soccer field, blaming the board of education for not putting it in the budget which the county commissioners set. Our kids are our future.
- Openly asked for the county manager's resignation because our county manager pointed out inconsistencies and misstatements about COVID 19 and ARPA funding.
- Voted against \$6.9 million in ARPA federal funding (tax free to Macon County citizens) that gave county employees a pay raise during COVID 19 to stay competitive and thank them for their hard work.
- Voted against cost-of-living increases and competitive pay for our hard-working county employees.

Please go to www.highlandersforgoodgovernment.com/shearl to see board minutes and news articles that support our statements.

Paid for by Highlanders for Good Government

• HS SPORTS •

Highlands High School Athletic Weekly Update: Championships, comebacks, and State records

It was a rollercoaster week for Highlands High School Athletics, featuring a historic conference title, a gritty regular-season finale at Blue Ridge, and impressive showings on the state stage in Cary.

JV Boys Claim Conference Crown

The week kicked off Tuesday night at Hiwassee Dam with the JV Boys basketball team securing a hard-fought 34-29 victory. The win wasn't just another "W" in the column — it officially clinched the regular season conference championship.

Jonathan Carpenter: 15 points, 6 rebounds; Sam Conner: 7 points, 7 rebounds; Jake Smith: 7 points, 6 steals

Tough Night at the Dam

The Varsity squads faced a steeper uphill battle against the Eagles on Tuesday.

The Lady Highlanders kept it neck-and-neck until the final minutes, but Hiwassee Dam pulled away late for a 50-41 finish. Charlotte Westendorf flirted with a double-double (19 pts, 9 reb), while Hunter Conner anchored the defense with a massive 7 blocks.

The Varsity Boys followed a similar script. After a tight first three quarters, the Eagles' "pressure trapping defense" forced turnovers that shifted the momentum. Despite double-digit efforts from Isaiah Vilardo (13 pts) and Paolo McRae (12 pts), the Highlanders fell 74-51.

Redemption at Blue Ridge

Highlands traveled to Blue Ridge on Thursday for the regular-season finale, and both



Brett Lamb
Highlands School
Athletic Director

Varsity teams made sure they headed into the postseason on a high note.

Varsity Girls: Highlands 62, Blue Ridge 45

The Lady Highlanders used a taste of their own medicine — stifling pressure defense — to overwhelm Blue Ridge.

Jordyn Borino: 17 points; Charlotte Westendorf: 14 points, 12 rebounds (Double-Double); Anne Elizabeth Woods: 12

points; Hunter Conner: 9 points, 13 rebounds, 8 blocks (Near Triple-Double)

Varsity Boys: Highlands 51, Blue Ridge 32

The boys locked down defensively, holding Blue Ridge to just 32 points. Paolo McRae dominated the paint with 14 points and 10 rebounds, while Isaiah Vilardo (12 reb) and Chase Kenter (10 pts) provided the spark needed to secure the win.

Swimming: State Championship Success

On Saturday, the action shifted from the hardwoods to the pool in Cary, NC. Aniah McKim and Ian Batista represented the Highlanders at the NCHSAA State Championship with stellar individual performances:

Athlete

Event Performance Placement

Aniah McKim (Sr.) — 100 Breaststroke Dropped 3s off PB; 15th (Jumped from 16th seed)

Ian Batista (Fr.) — 500 Freestyle Dropped 15s off PB; 27th (Jumped from 32nd seed)

Thanks to these two standout swims, Highlands finished 34th overall out of 177 schools.



Isaiah Vilardo against Hiwassee Dam

...LETTERS continued from page 10

sions on Theological Ethics and Biblical Practices. I had the opportunity to serve as an Adjunct Professor at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta. If one of my students had made a similar statement on a major term paper, they would have received an F, which I never gave any young seminarian. The F would have been deserved because they had no concept of truth or logic.

I would be so bold as to freely say the same about our President. To be the primary speaker at the National Prayer Breakfast and to interpret a person of faith by their choice of political party is juvenile and embarrassing. Such a lack of intellect and understanding of faith at a gathering where prayer is the emphasis

adds another dimension of embarrassment to the President and unfortunately our wonderful country. Shame on him for making such a horrible and insensitive statement. Even he should know better — one would hope!

PS. Please allow me to once again state that those of us who rally at the Highlands Post Office are LOCAL RESIDENTS and WE HAVE NEVER BEEN PAID. Those who say differently are NOT telling the TRUTH, regardless of their profession.

Reverend Doctor Mike Cordle
United Methodist Minister,
Retired
Highlands

Who does our tax system really work for?

Dear Editor,

Every year around this time, I sit down with my W 2s and receipts, trying to make sense of the numbers. Like most people, I don't mind paying my fair share — if it actually goes toward things that make life better for our families and communities. But I can't help wondering: who does our tax system really work for these days?

We send thousands of dollars to Washington expecting to support schools, health care, roads, a healthy environment and other services. Yet much of that money disappears into what's become a national debt slush fund. A growing share now goes just to interest on old debt, instead of meeting our real needs here at home.

Politicians keep blaming "waste, fraud, and abuse," but government reports say those are tiny compared to the bigger problem: a system tilted toward wealth and power. The ultra-rich and well connected pour money into campaigns or gifts expecting tax breaks and special favors in return. They help write the laws to benefit themselves — while the rest of us pay the bill.

Congress's 2025 OBBBA law is a perfect example. It cuts Medicaid and SNAP,

pushing more people toward hunger or medical debt, while giving much bigger tax breaks to high-wealth households and corporations. That's not fiscal discipline — it's misplaced loyalty.

Congress seems to demonstrate less control over how our money is spent. Built in formulas, special interest loopholes, and rising debt costs swallow most of the budget before we even talk about what families actually need. Somehow, there's always room for grandiose vanity projects, for profit detention centers, and militarized enforcement — but not enough for the basics that hold communities together.

Budgets are moral documents. They show whose lives count and whose comfort comes first. As I sign my return this year, I'd like to believe my money is building opportunity instead of deepening inequality or decreasing our national security with unprecedented debt. That belief shouldn't be naïve — it should be standard. And it starts with demanding a fair tax system that invests in people, not power. In 2026, let's vote for candidates that will look after people over profits.

Constance Neely
Scaly Mountain

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 14

God with our heart. God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

This is a season to take intentional time to let God in to cleanse our hearts

and renew our spirits. Our lives are so much better when we take time to let God in to create in us clean hearts and renewed spirit. God bless you on this cleansing journey.

...BANQUET continued from page 1

ment's accomplishments and congratulated the dedicated paid and volunteer officers who make it their job to come when called. He also thanked the significant others for "putting up with the time and effort it takes for us to do what we do," he said.

Though the number of calls the department responds to typically goes up each year, the job of protecting and serving Highlands' citizens and property increased even more this past year. Chief Gearhart attributed the growing number of calls to more people moving to Highlands.

In 2025, the department clocked 986 calls, up from 2024's 869 calls which included the department's Hurricane Helene response. In 2023 there were 683 calls.

The increase in calls, which includes false alarms, structure fires, rescues, public assistance, motor vehicle accidents and first-responder calls is the reason full-time firefighters have been hired. Relying on an all-volunteer force just isn't possible anymore. "Times are changing," said Asst. Fire Chief Robbin Forrester.

There are eight paid firefighters, and 23 volunteers. In the near future, more paid firefighters who are paid with the fire tax, may be hired but no decision has been made at this time.

During Saturday's ceremony, Chief Gearhart recognized the officers for 2025-'26; welcomed new members Billy Brooks and Barry Cabe and recognized the retirement of John Crowe who after 20 years of service has decided to spend



Officers for 2025-'26: Lt. Travis Brooks, Eric Pierson, Rescue Capt.; Ryan Gearhart, Chief; RL Wilson, Capt.; Lt. Matt Pruett; Eric Fielding, Member-at-Large; Robbie Forrester, Asst., Chief; Lt. Jeff Burnette and not pictured, Ist. Lt. David Leffler.

more time with his grandchildren, said Gearhart.

Once again – for the 31st-plus time, Captain Roger Lee Wilson was awarded the Drill Perfect Attendance award. An award in his name was established a few years ago, and so far, he is the only one who has received the award. Drills are held each Tuesday evening.

Several officers were awarded pins and certificates marking the number of years they have been with the department ranging from 12 to 20 years.

Like last year, this year, one of HF&R's full-time firefighters, Jacob Pressler, was named Fireman of the Year by his co-workers.

Pressler recently completed his vehicle extrication certificate and his swift water certificate.



John Crowe, flanked by Chief Gearhart and Asst. Chief Forrester, retired after 20 years.

...SPECIAL continued from page 1

which commissioners voted for whom will be disclosed as part of the public record.

During the meeting, each candidate will be called forward to first provide brief opening remarks and then to answer questions posed by each sitting Town Board member.

A lottery system will be used to determine which applicant speaks first and so on.

This is an open meeting, so the public is invited to attend. The person chosen to fill the seat will be sworn in at the March 19 Town Board meeting and will complete Dotson's term until the 2027 municipal election.

Though commissioners hope to select a person March 12, they don't have to, at which point they will decide how to proceed.



Certificate recipients with Chief Gearhart and Asst. Chief Forrester are from left: Ryan Perkins, 15 yrs; Eric Fielding, 12 yrs; RL Wilson, with the Roger L. Wilson Award for perfect drill attendance; and Travis Ramey, 20 yrs.

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

How is your heart?



Ken Langsdorf
Lutheran Church of the Holy Family

This is a good time of year to consider our “heart health.” I am not talking from the perspective of a cardiologist, but from a spiritual perspective.

How is your heart? Is your heart broken by grief? Is your heart smothered by sin? Is your heart throbbing in pain because of a broken relationship? Is your heart full of joy and rejoicing? Is your heart resting in deep peace? How is your heart?

Our hearts may be feeling all these things and more. As we consider our heart health, we might turn in the Bible to Psalm 51. In this psalm King David is agonizing over the condition of his heart. David’s heart is broken over his sin. He has had an affair and then had the woman’s husband killed. With the help of a dear and trusted friend, David was confronted by the deep pain his sin has caused others, himself, and his relationship with God.

In this psalm David prays for mercy and forgiveness. David prays, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

It is good news that God showed David great mercy. God’s love for David was steadfast. And God used David, with his cleansed heart, for great and God honoring work.

This is true for us too. Despite our sin, and the hurt we have caused; even when our heart is broken and full of grief; God’s love for us is steadfast. God has mercy on us, forgives us, and fills us with healing love. Even in our brokenness, God has good and God honoring work for us to do.

We are invited to join David’s prayer, asking God to create in us clean hearts. As we join this prayer, we let God work on our hearts. As your heart is in God’s hands of grace, how is God creating a clean heart within you? What in your heart needs to be cleansed? What needs to be forgiven? What needs to be pushed out of our lives? What needs to be washed away? What needs to be healed?

Let’s also consider how we participate with God in creating a clean heart within us? How can we receive and trust God’s mercy? How can we be filled with the gracious and steadfast love of God? How can God help us to find peace? This may take some extended time in prayer, both crying out in pain, as well as silently letting God create a clean heart within us.

We let God in because we know that we can trust

• See **SPIRITUALLY** page 12

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

BLUE VALLEY 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.

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

Bistro

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

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS

Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship

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

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

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

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

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

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

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

Sunday Worship is at 9a. & 6p. Wednesday Worship is 6p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376

In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services

909a Bluegrass and 11a Traditional

www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741

Rev. Ken Langsdorf

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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

Services: 1st Fri. and 3rd Sat. and Rosh Hashanah & Yom

Kippur.

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

Sun: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church. 4224 Big Ridge

(4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone – 526-2418

Sat. 4pm 5/24/25-10/25/25; Sun. - 11am

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

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

Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

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

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

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Richard Salmonson

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

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mass: Sun. 9a (English); Mon. 9:30a (Vatican II in Latin); Tues.

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

THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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

Sunday Service (summer): 9am & 11am

Visit our website: www.goodshepherdofcashiers.com

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Open Fri & Sat. 11am-3pm

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

85 Sierra Drive. Franklin • ufranklin.org

Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers • 828-743-2122

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Feb. 21. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been

used.

Feb. 21

• **ACCIDENT:** Unit 1 started backing up on Main St. Unit 2 started backing up on Main St. Unit 1 hit unit 2 while backing up on Main St. Unit 1 pulled

forward and came to rest in parking place. Unit 2 pulled forward and came to rest in parking place.

• Officers issued four warning tickets Feb. 16-22.

the authority conferred upon the decision-making board by ordinance; inconsistent with applicable procedures specified by statute or ordinance; affected by other error of law; unsupported by competent, material, and substantial evidence in view of the entire record; was arbitrary or capricious and that the decision was not supported by substantial competent evidence or was otherwise based on an error of law. Therefore a reversal of the decision is required," reads the writ.

Should the courts rule in Willoughby's favor, as per N.C. Gen. Stat. § 6-21.7, upon a finding by the court that the city or county violated a statute or case law setting forth unambiguous limits on its authority, the court shall award reasonable attorneys' fees and costs to the party who successfully challenged the city's or county's action.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Feb. 17

Feb. 17

• At 2:04 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Pierson Drive.

• At 2:54 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Whiteside Mountain Road.

Feb. 18

• At 9:52 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers FD.

• At 11:20 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on Horse Cove Road.

Feb. 20

• At 11:22 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

Feb. 21

• At 7:59 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Wilson Road.

• At 2:37 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Old Walhalla Road.

• At 4:54 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Raoul Road.

Feb. 22

• At 10:40 a.m., the dept. responded to miscellaneous fire at a residence on Foreman Road.

• At 3:53 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on N. 4th Street.

• At 9:28 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cypress Lane.

Feb. 23

• At 9:15 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on Horse Cove Road.

• At 11:40 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Clubhouse Trail, but it was cancelled en route.

...COURT continued from page 7

decision based on improperly admitted lay testimony including testimony concerning property values, noise, traffic, and/or road surface suitability and failed to distinguish special damages from those occurrences that are common to all residential neighborhoods, such as occasional fireworks and, as Mr. Wood testified: "those types of things that you typically see from a rental property," which do not constitute special damages."

Preliminary Outcome

After a three-hour marathon hearing, the board overturned Mathis's decision with a 3-2 vote thereby ending the use of the Willoughby property as an STR.

Zoning Board members, Chairman Margot Teed, Mi-

chael King and Ricky Siegel voted to overturn Mathis's decision. Members Bill Futral and Robert Wood voted against overturning his decision.

Now, the courts will decide whether Mathis's decision will be upheld meaning Willoughby Family Farms property on Worley Road could continue as an STR, particularly now that the amortization of existing STRs throughout Highlands' R1 and R2 districts has been rescinded.

The town has 30 days from Feb. 13 to submit the complete record of the proceedings, including the Board hearings, any exhibits, minutes, stenographic recordings, and audio tapes concerning the Board's decision.

According to the filing, the Town exceeded the unambiguous limits on its authority or

Mayor, police raise distemper alert

By Kim Lewicki

Tuesday, Mayor Pat Taylor and HPD Captain Leah McCall put out a warning about distemper cases in Western North Carolina and Highlands.

Five foxes and one raccoon displaying signs of distemper – unable to move, acting drunk, falling down – have been found in Highlands.

This is coinciding with a significant outbreak among wildlife, particularly raccoons, foxes, and skunks, across Western North Carolina, including Buncombe, Henderson, Haywood, Macon and Transylvania counties.

This highly contagious, often fatal virus poses a major risk to unvaccinated dogs and cats, but it does not affect humans.

It is most commonly spread through saliva, but it can also be transmitted through urine, blood, feces, or contaminated food and water bowls. The disease has no known cure, making vaccination critical.

Mayor Taylor and Capt. McCall urged people to make sure their pets are up to date on the Distemper shots.

"Also, keep your pets on leashes so they don't attempt to approach a sick animal before you can get control of them," said McCall.

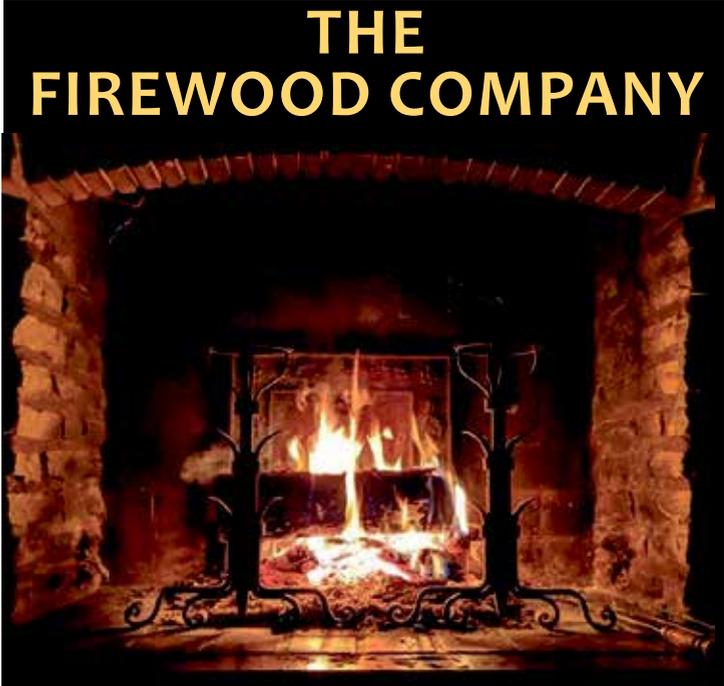
Symptoms of infected animals include discharge from the eyes and nose; walking in circles or the inability to move in a straight line; unusual head tilt; lack of coordination; muscle twitching; seizures or convul-

sions, sometimes with jaw-chewing movements and drooling.

Also, seeing nocturnal animals out during the day could be a sign of distress, but HPD Chief Andrea Holland said seeing foxes and other animals out during the day this time of year isn't always a cause for concern especially if they are running about.

"Animals like foxes, are out right now, looking for food to feed their young so just seeing one isn't something to worry about. An infected animal is obvious; they are lying down in roadways clearly miserable and aren't moving when approached. It's pitiful," she said.

Capt. McCall said if an infected animal is sighted, don't approach it. Call 911.



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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

NOTE:

• Highlands Pharmacy is closed on Saturdays until May. Hours are Mon.-Fri. 9a to 5:30p.

• No Senior Luncheon at Rec Park the month of February.

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

ICE SKATING IN PARK

• Thurs., 3:30-8p; Fri. 3:30-10p; Sat. 1-10p, Sun. 1-5p \$8 with or without skates.

ALL WEEK

• REC DEPT. NEWS •

Franklin Little League Baseball registration is open until March 8th. Cost to register is Baseball \$65 and Tee Ball is \$50 with sibling discount of \$15. online registration www.franklinlittleleaguebaseball.com.

Franklin Little League Softball registration is open until March 13th. Cost to register for softball is \$55. Open for ages 4-14 years old. Online registration at www.franklinlittleleaguesoftball.com.

For any other information call Lester Norris or Janice Mathis at 828-526-3556.

• 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 each Tues at 5:30 pm and Highlands @ the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 p.m. and on Wednesday & Fridays @ 12:00 noon. Open in-person meetings are also held in Cashiers @ the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library, 249 Frank Allen Rd. on Sunday at 5pm, on Tuesday @ 7 pm, on Friday at 5 pm and on Saturday at 9 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.,Tues.,Wed,Fri.

• EnerChi: Connect

mind, body, and breath using Tai Chi in a meditative movement practice. Call or email if interested in these classes 828-634-1404 or WellspringClasses@gmail.com. Mon. 5:30-6:30pm, Tues. 4-5pm, Wed. 6:30-7:30pm and Fri. 4-5pm and 5:30-6:30pm.

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 Lit-

eracy & Learning Center, 6-7 p.m. 675 S 4th St.

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. 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 Rec Dept. 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.

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

• Dec. 20th meeting is cancelled. Meeting will resume in January. The American Legion Post 370 meets at the First Methodist Church at 315 Main St. in their community room/909 chapel. Breakfast is at 9a; meeting is at 10a. 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).

Thurs., Feb. 26

• At Highlander Mountain House, Valley James is performing at 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$35 (excluding taxes and fees).

Wed., March 4

• At PAC, Paces Live Presents: A Taste of Ireland at 7:30 p.m. For tickets, call 828-526-9047.

Wed., March 18

• Free Brown Bag Lunch & Learn at the Community Center from 11:30a-1p. In partnership with Southwest CC and the Chamber of Commerce.

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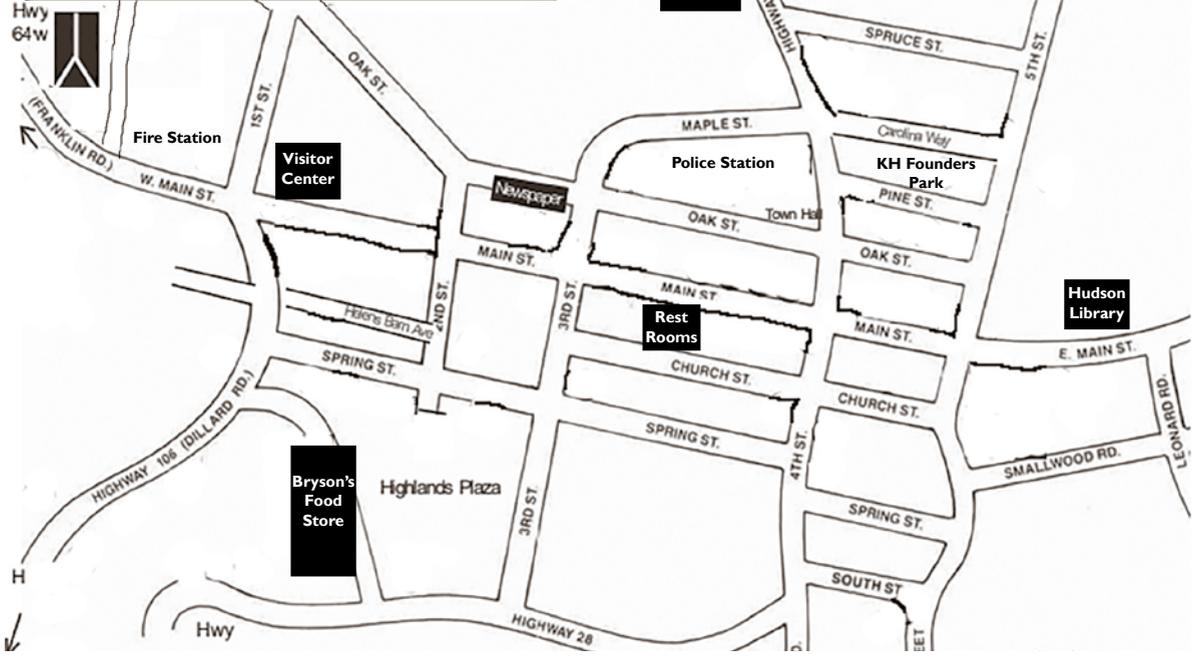
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