

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., March 12, 2026

Auditor explains Highlands' financial health

By Kim Lewicki

Once again, the annual audit by Gould Killian CPA Group, (GK) found that the Town of Highlands is financially sound.

At the February Town

Board meeting, Travis Keever of GK issued a clean opinion on the June 30, 2025 financial statements submitted -- June 30 is the end of FY '24-'25.

"We reported no material

weakness in internal control over financial reporting; no instances of material noncompliance with laws and regulations, and we performed a single audit over

• See AUDITOR page 4

Mission lifts flu visitor restrictions

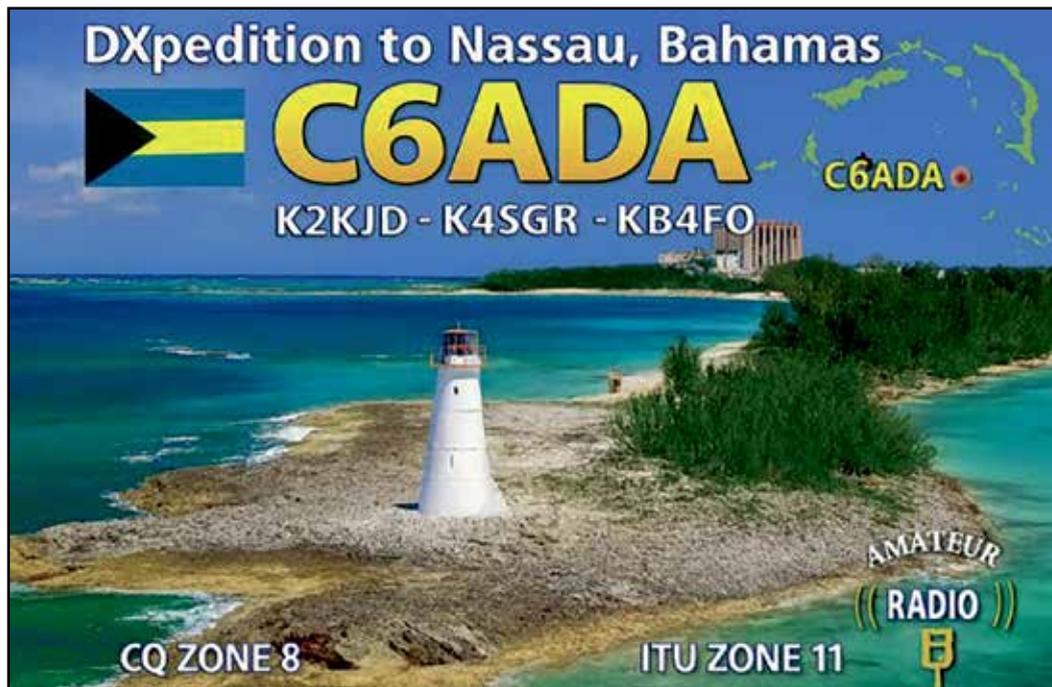
Also accepting Kesha Young Scholarship applications

Mission Health has lifted all flu-related visitor restrictions across its hospitals and affiliated facilities in Western North Carolina, effective today.

With influenza activity decreasing across the region, normal visitation policies have resumed at Mission Hospital and all Mission Health member hospitals and affiliates, including Angel Medical Center in Franklin, Blue Ridge Regional Hospital in Spruce Pine, CarePartners in Asheville, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital in Highlands, McDowell Hospital in Marion, and Transylvania Regional Hospital in Brevard.

"We are pleased to resume normal visitation and welcome families and loved ones back

• See MISSION page 9



Macon County amateur radio operators connect with the world from the Bahamas

Three Macon County residents recently combined travel, technology, and adventure during an international amateur ra-

dio expedition to the Bahamas, successfully making hundreds of contacts with radio operators around the world.

Highlander Chip Snyder (K2KJD), John Marich (K4SGR), and Jon Loewy (KB4FO)

• See RADIO page 11

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County's Planning Board to be reduced to 5

Highlands and Franklin will no longer have a vote

By Kristin Fox

After a motion by Commissioner John Shearl and seconded by Commissioner Barry Breedon, at their regular February meeting, the Macon County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to decrease the Macon County Planning Board from 11 members to five voting members.

One significant change in the approved reduction of the board that will directly affect the towns of Franklin and Highlands is that they will now only serve as non-voting liaisons on the planning board.

Commissioners said the

• See PLANNING page 6



The Birches

New Luxury Townhomes at Wildcat Cliffs Country Club

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

How to address the decades old story of workforce housing in Highlands?

What are we going to do about workforce housing? If nothing is done, what is the economic impact for the future? What is the Town of Highlands going to do to address this issue? What is Macon County going to do? What is the private sector going to do?



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

These questions create a complex matrix of issues and problems to be addressed. What I do know is that the town cannot go it alone in addressing workforce needs. As I have said before, "Let Highlands pay for it" is an outdated saying; some may think we have the resources, but we do not have the huge tax resources to solve this problem.

I was reading the local newspapers this past week and came across a real estate ad that underscored the challenges to expanding the supply of workforce housing. I like looking at pictures of homes for sale in the many real estate ads in the newspapers. A small blue bungalow on 0.31 acres, located near town, caught my attention. I thought to myself, this house would be a great place for a working couple to buy here on the plateau. Not a huge home, but a modest house for someone to live and work in Highlands. My immediate impression was that it was about a \$200,000 house, and even at that price, it would be a big mortgage payment for working-class folks.

But I was off base; the asking price was \$689,000, a price most people cannot qualify for, let alone afford. If that were not enough, the picture of a large house posted below the bungalow was listed at \$6.2 million. I guessed that anyone buying that house had others scattered across the country or throughout the world, and that the owners would occupy this 6.2-million-dollar home only a few weeks or months out of the year. But when occupying that luxurious home, the owners will want all the local services provided by a workforce, great restaurants, access to healthcare, and other amenities.

Other factors here on the Highlands Plateau create challenges for affordable housing. Construction costs far exceed those in other areas, with some homes costing \$1,000 per square foot. Also, large areas of flat land are at best in short supply, especially in the town. Topologi-

cally distressed lots pose challenges in terms of costs, meeting environmental concerns, and simply addressing access to water, sewer, or septic systems.

Previous attempts to gain state and federal government support for workforce housing have not been successful. The state has many criteria for meeting housing grant requirements. With intense competition, especially from more urban areas in the state, it is especially hard for area initiatives to secure funding.

My concern is that without new supplies of workforce housing, the region will see limited economic prosperity in the future. As new hotels, restaurants, and retailers locate to the plateau, where will the workers come from and live?

Also, the housing challenge is not only centered on hourly workers. Professionals like doctors, teachers, and government workers also face the challenge of finding a place to live.

Last year, a comprehensive housing study was done for all of Macon County. I hope a coalition of organizations across the county will address the housing needs of the community. It is a daunting problem that will take millions of dollars to address. By that, I do not mean 10 or 15 million; we are talking about 100 or 150 million dollars, along with a lot of hard work and creativity. But the effort needs to be made by the entire community. I am open to innovative ideas, just let me know.

• WEATHER •

Thu, 12-Mar	Fri, 13-Mar	Sat, 14-Mar	Sun, 15-Mar
 49°F 26°F	 56°F 34°F	 65°F 39°F	 58°F 46°F
Windy; a shower and t-storm	Mostly sunny and not as cool	Sunny and warmer	Low clouds
RealFeel® High: 42° Low: 28°	RealFeel® High: 58° Low: 30°	RealFeel® High: 73° Low: 34°	RealFeel® High: 55° Low: 48°

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...AUDITOR continued from page 1

FEMA funding received and no findings were noted," he said.

The audit did reveal a budget violation in the Water/Sewer Capital Projects Fund regarding an over-budget of \$49,000 on the Hummingbird Court waterline project. That over-budget was due to grant money coming in late.

The town is the recipient of numerous grants and that funding is entered as income which can throw figures off if timelines don't align.

Keever said the firm looks at the amount of cash in the town's coffers at the end of each fiscal year minus unpaid bills to determine viability. He noted that the water/sewer enterprise fund is operating at a loss and said a rate increase should be considered.

Enterprise funds are supposed to support themselves by earning enough money through service fees for operating and potential capital expenses.

Currently, the town has two enterprise funds – Electric and Water/Sewer. Sanitation used to be an enterprise fund, but it has been moved to the General Fund because keeping it independent and self-sufficient wasn't working fee-wise.

Last year, the state ruled that funds from one enterprise fund couldn't support another. Traditionally, Highlands Electric Fund which generates a lot of money, helped fund the Sanitation and Water/Sewer funds so rates didn't have

to be raised as often.

However, that is no longer allowed, which means a rate increase for water/sewer will likely be discussed at the upcoming FY '26-'27 budget workshops.

The Water/Sewer Fund's unrestricted net position is negative \$2,289,866 – less than 2024 but still a negative. Its operating income is at a loss of \$993,602 and cash flow from operating activities is negative \$145,325 so the net decrease in cash is \$359,829.

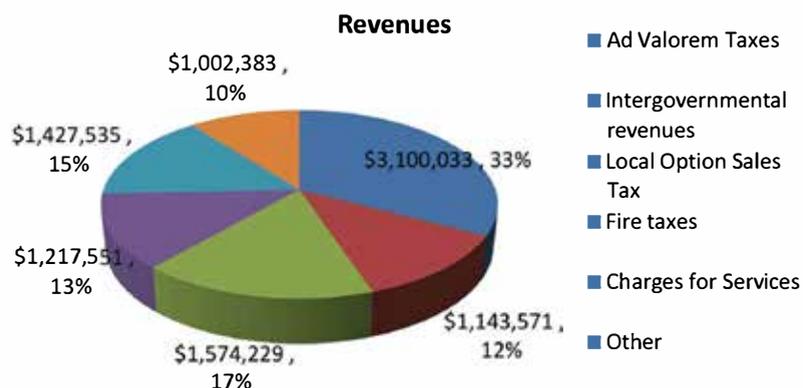
In comparison, the Electric Fund is up across all categories – working capital is at \$7,284,177, up from 2024; its unrestricted net position is up, too, at \$11,598,801; operating income is up substantially from 2024 -- \$1,371,514 up from \$497,177; grants received was \$787,305 with none in 2024; cash flow from operating activities more than doubled from 2024 -- \$1,149,821 compared to \$434,506; with a net increase in cash in 2025 at \$928,557 compared to a \$4,395,428 loss in 2024.

The Governmental Fund Summary revealed a total of \$9,465,302 in revenues and expenditures, which must always match.

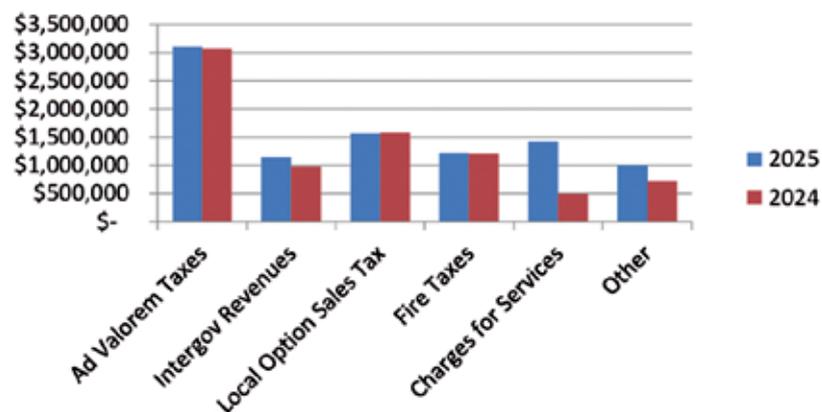
Ad Valorem Taxes bring in the most revenue at \$3,100,033; Local Option Sales Tax brings in the next highest amount at \$1,574,229; with charges for services (enterprise funds) bringing in \$1,427,535; Intergovernmental revenues bring in

• See AUDITOR page 12

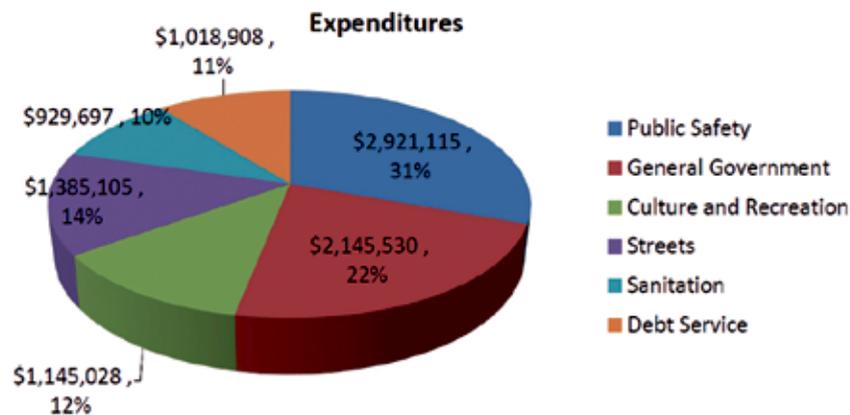
Governmental Fund Summary



Governmental Funds – Revenue Comparison



Governmental Fund Summary



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• HERE'S THE THING •

Here today. Tomorrow? Who knows?

A picture surfaced on one of the "What's Happening in Highlands" Facebook pages. It was purported to be a rendering of the project proposed for the recently demolished Bank of America property on 4th Street and Carolina Way. People who appear to be "in the know" regarding the proposed hotel also appear to be lamenting that such a project is even being considered for Highlands.



Bud Katz

To be sure, locals have likely been a bit frustrated at all the recent activity that some consider anathema to the character of our sweet, little town. Just last week, a respected local Realtor wrote in this newspaper a plea to, as he put it, not lose the Highlands we love. Speaking personally, which is what this column is, I could not agree more.

That said, we who are spectators to all this activity must be realistic about what's taking place. There's a word for it. Change. And if we're paying attention, we know it's been taking place and continues to take place pretty much all the time.

We're all aware of at least some of the changes taking place in our beautiful little town, and depending on every individual's point of view, some of it we are or will be OK with, and some of it, if we're honest, some of us don't like one bit.

My wife and I purchased our home just outside the Highlands town limits almost 20 years ago. We've been full-time residents for 15 of those years and have seen a lot of coming and going. We recently recalled a furniture store on the property now occupied by the Post Office, which used to be adjacent to Bryson's, but is now home to the Literacy and Learning Center. The ABC Store moved from Highlands Plaza to the site of the old fire department, which moved next to the site of a vacated bank that left the market. We loved the little café inside the pharmacy in the space next to The Dry Sink, currently home to Bardo.

Like many of you, we're wondering what will pop up on the corner of 4th and Main where the historic Holt building recently came down. The old High-

lands Playhouse on Oak Street near the Police Station is gone, but there's a beautiful now relatively new two-stage facility on Chestnut Street presenting an array of live theater, film, and concerts. Way more than was the case before.

Is Highlands the same as it used to be? Of course it isn't. But that doesn't mean that we've lost something.

Here's the thing. There are, I'm told, three responses to change. The first is to get on board. The second is to fight it. The third is to get out of the way so as not to be run over by it. Change happens and we must deal with it like adults. Those places we all visited and supported and loved will never truly be gone if we remember them and talk about them. If you want to compare what was to what is, that's fine. And we're all perfectly justified to miss that which we loved and feel we've lost.

I, for one, will miss Wolfgang's. I already miss The Toy Store, The Sports Page, and the house across from where we live and the folks who used to live there. If I'm honest, there are a few places I probably wouldn't miss at all, but I don't get to make those decisions. The people who own those properties and businesses do.

I left Bank of America long before Bank of America left Highlands and longer still before the building on 4th Street and Carolina Way came down. I won't know what to think about what's going to occupy that site until it's built and operating. Maybe I'll like it, or maybe not. Either way, after it's been there a while it will likely feel to me like it's always been there, until either it, or I, am no longer around.

• Bruce F. "Bud" Katz, and his wife, Lynn, have lived year-round in Highlands since 2011. Bud is the author of four novels and a work of non-fiction. He facilitates the Highlands Writers Group and spends much of his time in front of a computer making words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs, ... etc. You can contact him regarding his books, this column, or for information about the Highlands Writers Group, at brucekatzauthor@gmail.com



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Why to invest in a business in Highlands and Cashiers

Most people move to Highlands to buy a house. Rarely do they move up here to buy a busi-

ness. Owning a business isn't for the faint of heart. Owning one in a small, tourist town can be even more tricky.

What makes it difficult?

Seasonality and cash-flow swings: You might make most of your revenue in 3-5 months but pay rent, insurance, loans, and utilities year-round. This is the #1 challenge.

Staffing problems: Seasonal workforces are hard to hire and retain; housing shortages in tourist towns can make it worse. Training costs repeat every year.

Dependence on outside factors: Weather, road closures, local events, travel

trends, online reviews, and the broader economy can sharply change demand.

Limited local market: In the off-season you're selling mostly to locals, which can cap revenue - especially for non-essential businesses.

Regulation and community politics: Permits, signage, outdoor seating, liquor licensing, noise rules, and "tourism vs. local character" tensions can add friction.

Competition is concentrated: Small towns can have only a few main streets; you may compete directly with a handful of well-established businesses.

What can make it easier?

Built-in demand during peak times: You can get strong foot traffic without spending as much on marketing as you would elsewhere.

Word-of-mouth travels fast: Great service and reputation can quickly become a moat.

Less "big city" competition: Fewer chains, fewer substitutes - if you're differentiated.



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Community relationships matter: If you build trust with locals and other business owners, referrals and partnerships can be powerful.

Why buy over build?

Most people are hooked on the grind. They treat building a business from scratch for six years as "honorable." But there's no prize for doing it the hard way—and it's often easier to build real wealth in six months than in six years.

When you buy a func-

tioning business with real demand, proven systems, and paying customers, you're not starting at zero. You're buying a head start that most people spend their entire careers trying to earn.

Stop trying to build something from nothing. Start looking for an enterprise to lead. One path requires a decade of hope; the other requires a single, well-structured deal.

There are beautiful homes to buy up here. There are also great businesses to buy. If you're looking to live, and work in Highlands then know that Business Acquisitions, Sales, and Consulting in partnership with Berkshire Hathaway Meadows Mountain Realty can assist you.

Support your local businesses!

• *Wendy Reese Richey is a Business Broker, Business Owner and Commercial Agent Specializing in Business Acquisitions, Sales & Consulting Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Meadows Mountain Realty 402-630-7461 or wendy@bhhsmmr.com*

...PLANNING continued from page 1

membership reduction was necessary because the planning board has frequently had difficulties in achieving a quorum which they felt affected the productivity of the board.

Commissioners also said a smaller board is more in line with other local advisory boards.

"I think there is a gentlemen's agreement for us to be a liaison to the towns' boards and for them to be a liaison to us,"

said Chairman Joshua Young. "Another side of the coin is a lot of folks in rural parts of this country look at government as authority. When you have employees as voting members on a board, let's say a five-member board and two government employees are voting members, it appears to be a conflict."

However, Young said he did want to have organic community involvement.

• See PLANNING page 9

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• LETTERS •

Veterans: It's time to choose

Dear Editor:

Abroad, the Trump Administration defies international laws, violates the United Nations Charter (the U.S. helped develop), and threatens world peace by recklessly initiating wars with sovereign nations that pose no imminent threat to the United States or our allies.

Here at home, we're watching a police state evolve right before our eyes as peaceful citizens are shot dead on the streets of their own cities by well-armed masked thugs masquerading as an authentic police force. Trump's aim, both at home and abroad, seems abundantly clear: seize power and end our democratic experiment --- perversely, on the 250th Anniversary of its birth.

I'm disheartened by the direction our country has elected, the surrendering of our moral compass characterized by the

veteran community's response -- an unforeseen but most deafening silence. For a decade the dominant feature of human existence in the United States has been navigating the ever-thickening fog of uncertainty.

I vividly recall a time in America when people caught lying were routinely and universally expected to exhibit both remorse and a sense of shame. Woodsheds were built specifically for that purpose. Trump has transformed that axiom by establishing lying as standard operating procedure and utter bullshit as the modern-day equivalent to statesmanship.

I served 20 years active duty (Navy) under six presidents, another 10 years in the Fleet Reserve (subject to recall) under two more (Eisenhower to George H.W. Bush), all eight former Army or Naval officers.

None of these eight presidents claimed to be perfect -- but

neither would any one of them have incited an armed, angry mob to attack our own Capitol and kill its defenders to prevent the peaceful transfer of power. This president (a convicted felon who considers himself above all laws) did exactly that and then pardoned over 1,500 men and women who helped him commit that crime.

I thought the vengeance campaign by the Trump-Hegs-eth duo against the decorated retired Navy combat veteran and former astronaut (Captain Mark Kelly), now a U.S. Senator, would bring the veteran community to its senses - I was wrong.

Such an attack on a distinguished veteran (clearly an abuse of military law and 1st Amendment rights) ordinarily would be considered nonsensical bordering on moronic were it not recognizable that both Congress and the High Court are corrupted to the point, that unbiased,

fair outcomes are no longer assured.

I have hoped the veteran community would take the lead in seeking the truth amidst this Administration's lying, often racist, anti-democratic, anti-constitutional, pro-crime behavior, and shepherd our nation out of difficult times, defending the time-honored institutions and values Americans have been taught to respect since childhood.

I appeal to my fellow veterans, compatriots in the American Legion, VFW, AMVETS, DAV, TREA, the NCVA (ALL Veterans): honor our oath, dignify what our uniforms symbolize, choose to remain silent no longer. Stand up and speak firmly for right to prevail over wrong. The world is watching and history is recording. Fellow veterans: the future is ours to determine.

**David L. Snell
Franklin**

Fare thee well

Dear Editor,

While the road might go on forever, the party has indeed ended, and Highlands Food and Wine Festival has taken its final bow. I first experienced the festival in November 2019, just a few months after moving here, and I was instantly swept up in its magic. Anderson East lit up that Saturday afternoon, and for a moment it felt like we were all kings for a day. The following year slipped away to Covid-19, but in 2021 Amos Lee reminded us that the windows are rolled down, and we were locked up in this fantasy while the sun was setting high. In 2022, Old Crow Medicine Show brought their old-time string band charm, and the whole crowd belted out Wagon Wheel. Grace Potter reminded us in 2023 that love is love and hearts are hearts. In 2024,

Sunday's A Shot at Redemption became a heartfelt benefit for Hurricane Helene relief efforts. I'll always remember dancing in the rain while Abraham Alexander shared his soulful tunes and one of my favorite covers of Wicked Game. And in 2025, hearing One Headlight by The Wallflowers let me relive a piece of the 1990s I've always loved. These moments are just a glimpse of what the festival gave me year after year.

The music was only part of it. Each November brought unforgettable food and wine, far more than I could ever fit into a single letter. I loved watching our local restaurants shine and sampling dishes from exceptional chefs across the Southeast. I'm deeply saddened to see the festival go and will miss my friends from Eleven Events and their crew this fall. Begin-

• See **LETTERS** page 9



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...LETTERS continued from page 7

ning in 2022, I volunteered in the box office and got a front-row seat to the “behind the scenes” inside the old Bank of America building. Coordinating a four-day festival, each day in a different location, is no small feat. Add in unpredictable November weather and outdoor or tented venues, and it becomes even more impressive what Highlands Festivals Inc. and Eleven Events pulled off every year, for ten years. Their dedication, resilience, and care were evident in every detail. Vendors often told me this was one of the best-run festivals they worked with, and I believe them because I saw it myself.

I’m thankful for seven years of memories. I’m thankful for the countless artists I was able to hear in person. I’m thankful for all the food and wine I was able to savor. And I’m thankful for every person who helped create such a remarkable and one-of-a-kind experience year after year. As the festival says Fare Thee Well, what stays with me is not just the music, the food, or the wine,

but the way this event brought people together. Highlands felt a little brighter each November because of the people who poured their hearts into creating something unforgettable; artists, chefs, vintners, volunteers, organizers, and friends standing shoulder to shoulder. The

spirit of the festival lives on in the memories we made together. And for that, I will always be grateful.

**Marci Sherwood
Highlands, NC**

Goodbye, adieu and adiós

Dear Editor,

Where to begin? What will I miss the most about the Highlands Food and Wine Festival (HFWF) and its annual occupation of the streets and green spaces of our town over the last 10 years? What will I lament the most by its conspicuous absence next Fall?

Will it be the increasingly copious crowds each successive year? Will it be the exorbitant price of the tickets? Will it be the excessive numbers of drunken visitors and the reports of vomiting in our public places? Will it be the increased local traffic and countless vehicles parked

on the sides of the roads, on the edges of front lawns and in No Parking zones? Or maybe I will miss the ubiquitous and unimaginative number of cowboy hats to be seen - but where are the horses to go with those hats? Yes, I believe that is what I will miss the most - all those hordes of horseless hat people.

So, goodbye, adieu and adiós to the HFWF. (I refrain from whispering “and good riddance, too” because it would be impolite.)

**Alice Nelson
Highlands**

• DINING •

...on the Verandah
Restaurant
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OPENING

March 20

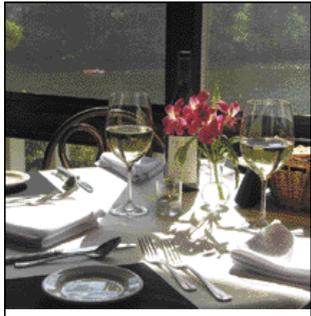
Fridays & Saturdays

5:30-9p

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...MISSION continued from page 1

without limitations,” said Peter Deyoung, Chief Medical Officer for Mission Health. “We are grateful to our community for their cooperation and understanding during flu season. These temporary precautions help protect our patients, visitors, and care teams, and we appreciate everyone’s efforts to keep one another safe and healthy.”

Mission Health continues to encourage everyday prevention practices, including frequent handwashing and staying home when feeling unwell, to help reduce the spread of seasonal illnesses.

Mission Health thanks patients, families, staff, and the broader community for their partnership and patience throughout flu season. Working together helps ensure a safe and healthy environment for everyone.

Mission now accepting applications for Kesha Young Scholarship

Mission Health is accepting applications from throughout the communities we serve for the Kesha Young Health Careers Scholarship. Now in its 29th year, the aim of this scholarship is to support education goals for high school seniors and college students in Western North Carolina, who are interested in healthcare careers.

Interested candidates can apply at missionhealth.org/keshayoung and the deadline for application mate-

rials is 5 p.m. on Friday, April 17th. This program was created to strengthen the pipeline of future healthcare professionals who bring warmth and a strong spirit to patient care.

In the years Mission Health has been awarding the Kesha Young Health Careers Scholarship, more than \$1 million has been given to make college more affordable for high school seniors and college students from Western North Carolina who are pursuing careers in healthcare. The scholarship is named in honor of Kesha Young, a 22-year-old, bi-racial woman who was born with mental and physical disabilities and underwent multiple surgeries at Mission Hospital. Kesha died just months before she was scheduled to earn her high school diploma. Despite her health struggles, Kesha was described by her adoptive parents as embodying the characteristics that are vital to how healthcare team members engage with patients, families and visitors, with a strong spirit, warm smile and positive encouragement.

At Mission Health, our mission statement is based around recognizing and affirming the unique and intrinsic worth of each individual: “Above all else, we are committed to the care and improvement of human life.”

...PLANNING continued from page 4

“I think we would welcome Highlands and Franklin and encourage them to be there as liaisons. If you look at the school board, the board of appeals, and all the other boards you have around here, they are all five-member boards.”

But Highlands Mayor Pat Taylor said with no vote, the municipalities will be cut out of the county planning process.

“For instance, the towns will have no significant input on the county policy on developing flood plain prop-

erty in unincorporated areas,” he said.

The point is municipalities and the county are environmentally connected despite lines of demarcation.

Taylor said the towns and the county are all part of the watershed and what happens over the county line can affect what happens within the confines of a municipality.

At this week’s March Board of Commissioners meeting, commissioners will consider the draft of new

• See **PLANNING** page 12

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Dinner Starts @ 5:30 PM

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• HOSPITAL NEWS •

Colon Cancer is affecting younger adults — Here's what you need to know

Colorectal cancer is often viewed as a disease that primarily affects older adults, but that perception is changing. Increasingly, physicians are seeing diagnoses in people under the age of 50 — a concerning trend that has led to updated screening recommendations. The recent death of a 48-year-old actor has brought renewed public attention to this issue, serving as a sobering reminder that colon cancer does not only impact

the elderly, and that many people may not realize screening guidelines now begin earlier than they once did.

For many years, routine colon cancer screening began at age 50 for people at average risk. However, based on growing evidence that diagnoses are rising among younger adults, leading medical organizations lowered the recommended starting age to 45. This updated guidance reflects what physicians across the country are

seeing in real time.

Unfortunately, awareness of that change hasn't reached everyone. Screening recommendations evolve as medical research advances, and unless you've had a recent discussion with your primary care provider, you may not know you're now eligible. Making sure people understand this update is critical.

Today, nearly one in five colorectal cancer cases occurs in individuals under

age 55. Researchers are still studying why this trend is occurring, but potential factors include changes in diet, sedentary lifestyles, obesity rates, and environmental influences. What is clear is that colorectal cancer is no longer a disease we can assume only affects people in their 60s and 70s.

The encouraging news is that colorectal cancer is highly treatable — and often preventable — when caught early. When detected at its earliest stages, survival rates are very high. Even better, screening allows us to remove precancerous polyps before they ever develop into cancer.

Colonoscopy remains the most comprehensive screening option because it allows physicians to examine the entire colon and remove abnormal growths during the same procedure. At Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, I, along with my colleague Dr. Zachary Phillips, perform colonoscopies locally so patients in our community can access this preventive care close to home. Having screening available nearby makes it easier for people to stay current with recommendations and prioritize their health without the burden of traveling long distances.

It's important to remember that colorectal cancer often develops silently. Early stages may cause no noticeable symptoms at all, which is why screening is recommended even when you feel well. That said, certain warning signs should never be ignored at any age. These include:

- Blood in the stool
- Persistent abdominal discomfort
- Unexplained weight loss
- Ongoing changes in bowel habits
- Fatigue without a clear cause

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should seek medical evaluation promptly.

The decision to lower the screening age to 45 was made to address rising rates among younger adults. However, screening participation in the 45–49 age group



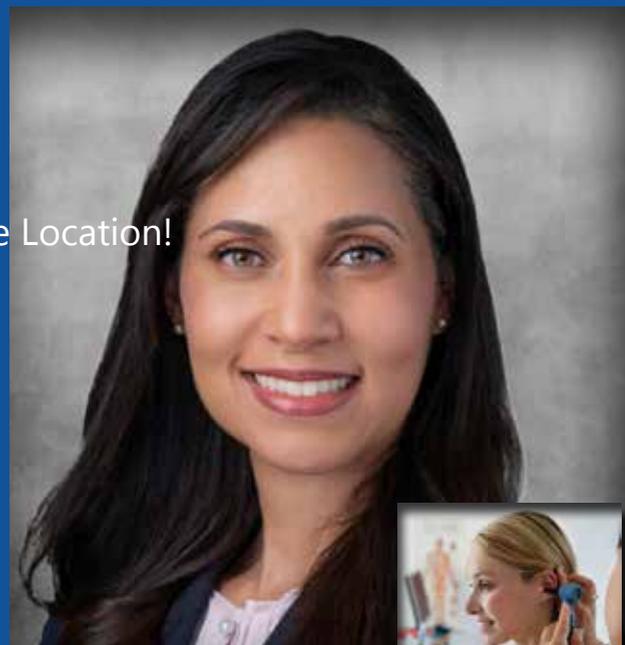
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...RADIO continued from page 1



From left: Highlands, Chip Snyder K2KJD, Bahamas, Nick Chriswell C6AKZ, Franklin, John Marich K4SGR, Franklin, Jon Loewy KB4FO

traveled to Nassau Feb. 20-25 as part of what amateur radio enthusiasts call a DXpedition – a trip outside the United States designed to operate portable radio stations from unique international locations.

Before departing, the group obtained operating licenses and permission from the Bahamian government. They then packed suitcases filled with personal items, portable radios, antennas, computers, and battery-powered equipment needed to transmit from remote outdoor sites.

After arriving on New Providence Island, the operators spent their first day scouting locations across Nassau and surrounding areas to identify suitable operating sites within Bahamian National Parks and historic lighthouse properties.

Over the following days, the team set up temporary radio stations at several notable locations, including Retreat Garden National Park, an internationally recognized botanical garden known for its rare tropical plants and extensive palm collection. They also operated from Bonefish Pond National Park, home to the last remaining mangrove ecosystem along the southern shore of the island.

One of the expedition's highlights came at the historic Paradise Island Lighthouse, originally built in 1817. Reaching the lighthouse required carrying radios, batteries, and antenna equipment more than a mile along the beach to the tip of the island. Once the station was on the air, signals quickly began reaching stations thousands of miles away.

The group also operated near the Government House Lighthouse, located at the official residence of the Governor General of the Bahamas, blending modern radio communication with sites long

associated with maritime navigation.

During the five-day trip, the Macon County operators activated six Bahamian National Parks and three island lighthouses, making more than 900 contacts with amateur radio operators at stations across the United States, Canada, Europe, Central and South America, and throughout the Caribbean.

In addition to international contacts, the group met several local amateur radio operators, including Nassau resident Tom (C6ANM), whose family history in the Bahamas dates back to the 1600s. He shared stories describing how early island settlers once used the Bahamas' extensive cave systems to hide from pirate raids — locations that today serve as peaceful national park sites.

Amateur radio, often called "ham radio," allows licensed operators to communicate globally using radio frequencies. Portable operations such as this expedition demonstrate how radio communication can connect people across great distances using independent equipment and technical skill and provide a source of reliable communications during emergency conditions when Internet and cellular services may be shut down.

For Snyder, Marich, and Lowery, the trip was about more than radio contacts. It was an opportunity to represent their local amateur radio community abroad while promoting international friendship and goodwill — longstanding traditions within amateur radio.

Despite travel days, hauling equipment around and long operating hours, the operators returned home with full logbooks, new friendships, and the satisfaction of having connected Macon County to voices around the world from the shores of the Bahamas.



HIGHLANDS
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

PRESENTS

BROWN BAG



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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18 | 11:30AM - 1PM

Highlands Community Center, 869 N 4th St

Learn how to optimize your profile to:

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- Build Trust
- Boost Search Visibility
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Class, beverages and snacks provided by The Highlands Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with Southwestern Community College Small Business Center.



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Scan for
Registration.



Mark your calendar for upcoming classes!

APRIL 15

Canva



MAY 20

A.I.



...AUDITOR continued from page 4

\$1,143,571; Fire Taxes bring in \$1,217,551 which is what keeps that department running; with the “other” category amounting to \$1,002,383.

Compared to FY '24-'25, revenues were up across all divisions.

The Governmental Fund Summary for Expenditures

equaled \$9,465,302.

Public Safety amounted to the most in expenditures this year as it did for last year at \$2,921,115 (31%); next was General Government at \$2,145,530 (22%); then Streets which includes sidewalks and all repairs at \$1,385,105 (14%); then Culture and Recreation at

\$1,145,028 (12%); Debit service at \$1,018,908 (11%); and Sanitation (now part of the General Fund) at \$929,697 (10%).

Expenditures, which for the first time included Sanitation, were up for Public Safety, Culture and Recreation, and Debt Service – though Keever said the town’s long-term debt position is good and not an issue. Expenditures were down for General Government and Streets for FY '25-'26.

The available Fund Balance, money that isn’t designated for

specific use and so can be used to fund projects as needed, is a bit over \$3 million.

Currently, as a percentage of net expenditures, Highlands’ available Fund Balance is tracking substantially lower than other municipalities at a little over 40% vs. 60% elsewhere. This wasn’t always the case. From 2021-2023 it tracked at about 65% -- higher than other municipalities. This means that the town has used undesignated fund balance money to pay for various capital projects and other expenses.

...PLANNING continued from page 9

bylaws for the planning board drawn up by the county attorney which will lay out the membership reduction.

The new bylaws state that the county planning board will consist of five members appointed by the Macon County Board of Commissioners. All members of the planning board shall be residents of Macon County and will be selected to represent various areas of the county when possible.

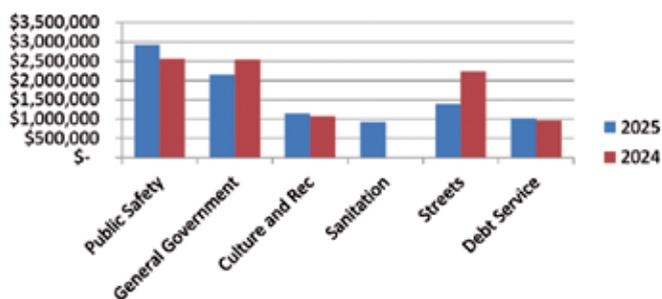
Members will be appointed for terms of three years which will be staggered to provide for continuity of the board. Members may be re-appointed for consecutive terms, not to exceed two consecutive terms.

In addition to the five board members, the Town of Highlands and Town of Franklin will each appoint a non-voting representative to attend all planning board meetings to serve as liaison for the municipalities.

In addition, the Macon County Planning Director shall serve as a non-voting “ex-officio” member of the board and will serve in an advisory capacity and can be called upon to provide general technical assistance. Commissioners will also appoint a liaison from its board to serve as a non-voting member of the planning board. The person is currently Commissioner John Shearl.

At the February meeting, prior to the vote, commissioners held a public hearing to give the public the chance to speak on the matter. During public hearing, some speakers expressed concerns that a smaller board might lead to a loss of town representation and limit the expertise on the board. This change could impact the board’s ability to address community concerns effectively, they said.

Governmental Funds – Expenditure Comparison



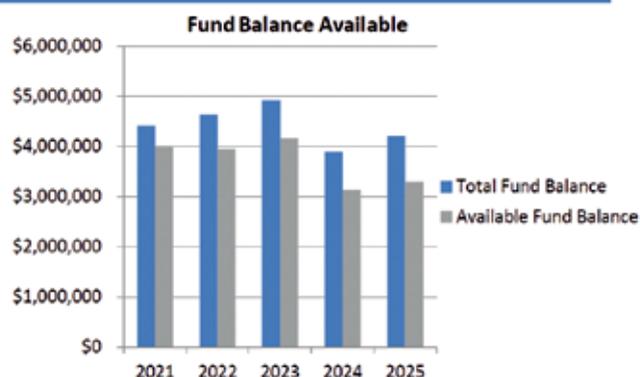
Enterprise Fund Summary

Electric Fund	2025	2024
Working capital	\$7,284,177	\$6,010,273
Unrestricted net position	\$11,598,801	\$10,583,550
Operating income (loss)	\$1,371,514	\$497,177
Grant Funds Received	\$787,305	\$0
Cash flows from operating activities	\$1,149,821	\$434,506
Net increase (decrease) in cash	\$928,557	\$(4,395,428)

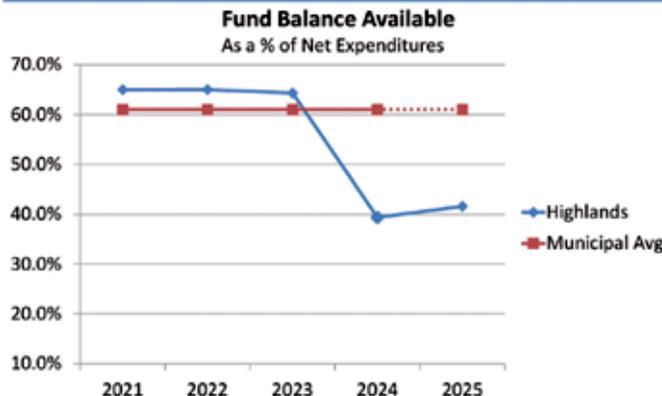
Enterprise Fund Summary

Water & Sewer Fund	2025	2024
Working capital	\$7,005,066	\$6,979,883
Unrestricted net position	\$(2,289,866)	\$(2,853,588)
Operating income (loss)	\$(993,602)	\$(969,922)
Grant Funds Received	\$564,760	\$5,000,000
Cash flows from operating activities	\$(145,325)	\$260,749
Net increase (decrease) in cash	\$(359,829)	\$7,075,312

General Fund Summary



General Fund Summary



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• HS SPORTS •

Highlands Golf swings into action with back-to-back matches

The Highlands High School boys golf team officially opened their season this week, enduring a grueling schedule of back-to-back matches across two different counties. Facing stiff competition and demanding courses, the Highlanders showed steady improvement and grit as they shook off the off-season rust.

Testing the Waters at Sky Valley

The season commenced on Monday, March 2, at the scenic Sky Valley Country Club. Hosted by Franklin High School, the match featured a competitive field where Pisgah High School ultimately claimed the top spot.

Highlands finished the day in 4th place with a collective team score of 209. Leading the way for the Highlanders was Sam Conner, who turned in a solid round

of 44. He was supported by Gavin Small, who carded a 53, and Chase Kenter, who finished close behind with a 54.

Climbing the Leaderboard in Cherokee

With no time to rest, the team traveled to Sequoyah National Golf Club in Cherokee the very next day, March 3. The quick turnaround seemed to favor the Highlanders, as the team tightened up their play and shaved four strokes off their previous day's total.

Highlands secured a 2nd place finish with a team score of 205, narrowly missing the top spot by just four strokes to the host team, Cherokee. The Highlanders saw a balanced attack at the top of their score-



Brett Lamb
Highlands School
Athletic Director

card:

- Sam Conner: 49 (Tied for 2nd overall)
- Rowen Carnes: 49 (Tied for 2nd overall)
- Chase Kenter: 50

Spring Break Hiatus

The busy start to the season will be followed by a brief period of recovery. All Highlands athletic programs are sidelined this week as the school observes Spring Break.

Fans won't have to wait long for the action to resume, however. Golf, soccer, and track programs are all scheduled to return to their respective arenas the following week to continue their spring campaigns.



HS golfer Sam Conner at Sequoyah National.

...PLANNING continued from page 9

Highlands Mayor Patrick Taylor spoke on behalf of himself as well as the Franklin Town Mayor Stacey Guffey who was unable to attend the meeting.

"I think the spirit of elected government is to include everyone and listen to multiple voices in different perspectives," said Taylor. "I've had a conversation with Mayor Stacey Guffey of Franklin who couldn't be here tonight, but we both agree that the towns should have representation on the planning board. We have ordinances on erosion control, land use, all the things you address with a planning board."

Taylor urged the board to not exclude towns in the reorganization of the planning board, to continue to have representatives for each town as a part of the planning process of the entire county and to continue to allow them to vote.

"Don't forget these municipalities; we're centers of economic development, population densities with residents and neighborhoods," added Taylor. "We don't want to lose our voice on the county planning board."

Lee Walters, whose term as vice chair of the planning board ended on February 21, 2026, also spoke during the public hearing.

"Macon County utilizes ordinances to govern land use and adopted a comprehensive land use and environment

plan created in 2019 under a 19-member planning board," said Walters. "When I look at that work accomplished by those 19 members, I am in awe."

She said the citizens of Macon County were well represented by the group of civic-minded volunteers giving countless hours of their time and effort to provide government officials with a broad spectrum of knowledge and expertise so the commissioners could make responsible and accurate decisions.

By making a reduction, the planning board cannot replicate the background and knowledge of that 19-member board," she said."

Mayor Taylor said now the towns of Franklin and Highlands will have little or no voice in county planning and development.

"Since Chairman Young put it before the vote to create a five-member county planning board and with the vote to move forward unanimous, it appears he and others do not want members on the planning board who represent communities with zoning and land use ordinances."

The bylaws directing the five-member board with four non-voting liaisons – one from Highlands, one from Franklin, one from the MC Board of Commissioners, and the MC Planning Director – were finalized.

• CHHS NEWS •



Bugs is two years old with plenty of playful energy and he loves the company of other dogs. He is a sweet pup looking for a lifetime human companion who is loving and gentle. Bugs is neutered, microchipped, up-to-date on vaccinations and his adoption comes with a free training session with our professional dog trainer. Call (828)743-5752 for more information.

Photo by Marty Boone



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March 19 - 22 and March 26 - 29, 2026

Thursday - Saturday at 7 pm
Sunday matinees at 2 pm

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- HighlandsCashiersPlayers.com
- Scan QR code



A treat for amateur sleuths everywhere!

Highlands Performing Arts Center
507 Chestnut Street, Highlands, NC

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING



What time is it?

Pastor Randy Lucas
Highlands United
Methodist Church

Still fresh off from losing our “Springing Forward” hour of sleep this past weekend, our bodies may be adjusting to the time-change for a while yet. Though admittedly more a fan of our “Falling Back” experience in the fall, I’ll eventually appreciate the additional hour of sunlight at the end of the day. Eventually.

Engaging in an extra yawn or two this week has caused me to think about the importance of time, which has reminded me once again of Koheleth, the preacher/teacher of the Wisdom Book of Ecclesiastes from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Bible’s Old Testament. In my seminary days, our Homiletics (Preaching) professor, Dr. Andre Resner once suggested that the key to navigating life in a healthy way is knowing what time it is.

He was reflecting on the well-known third chapter of Ecclesiastes that begins,

“For every thing there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

- a time to be born, and a time to die;
- a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
- a time to kill, and a time to heal;
- a time to break down, and a time to build up;
- a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
- a time to mourn, and a time to dance” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-14).

The litany continues for a few more verses, but you get the idea.

Dr. Resner’s point was simple. Living fully into life’s moments is important. Denying the hurt doesn’t help the hurt to heal. When it’s time to mourn, mourn fully and completely. Cry out to God if you need to. Question God if you don’t understand. Be honest about your anger with God if you’re angry with God. Be honest about your pain. Give voice to your suffering. Be authentic in your humanity. If it’s time to wail, wail boldly and unapologetically. It’s important to know what time it is!

And when it’s time to dance and laugh and sing, throw your soul a party. Let yourself feel joy, be giddy, dance and sing like nobody’s watching or listening (metaphorically or literally). There’s nothing wrong with delighting in delight, especially when the time is right. It’s important to know what time it is!

As we continue to inch our way toward Easter, the Daylight Savings Time clock, mild temperatures and budding flowers remind us of the coming of spring.

• See **SPIRITUALLY** page 15

• 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)

Wed: 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

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

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

March 3

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 14

And as welcome as the outer changing of the seasons can be, I extend a simple inner invitation to you regarding time. Consider the wisdom of Ecclesiastes, remembering that every-

...HOSPITAL continued from page 10

remains lower than ideal, largely because many people simply do not know the recommendation has changed.

If you are 45 or older and have not yet been screened, now is the time to talk with your primary care provider about your options. Individuals with a fam-

• At 3:31 p.m., the dept. received a call about a banning notice due to ongoing harassment at a location on Carolina Way

March 6

• At 4:57 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of shoplifting at Bryson's Food Store

thing has its time and every time has its season.

And no matter what time it may be for you just now, may you live this time fully, confidently and courageously. May

ily history of colorectal cancer or certain inherited conditions may need to begin screening even earlier.

Colorectal cancer is one of the few cancers we can often prevent through early detection and removal of precancerous tissue. Increased awareness of updated

where \$14 of consumable goods was taken.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from March 3.

March 3

• At 12:59 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

• At 1:03 p.m., the dept.

God steady your steps, guide your direction and bathe you in grace and goodness. May you be healthy. May you be strong. May you be at peace.

What time is it?

screening guidelines can make a meaningful difference in outcomes for individuals and families throughout our region.

If you are 45 or older, consider scheduling your screening. It's a simple step that can have life-changing — and life-saving — impact.

responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Upper Divide.

• At 10:11 p.m., the dept. responded to a mutual aid call from Cashiers FD, but it was cancelled en route.

March 5

• At 3:14 a.m. the dept. was first-responders to a residence on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

• At 9 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street but it was cancelled en route.

March 6

• At 12:45 p.m., the dept. responded to a mutual aid call from Cashiers FD regarding a rescue.

• At 7:38 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Buck Creek Road.

March 7

• At 7:07 p.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a residence on Hideaway Trail.

March 8

• At 11:21 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

• At 1:29 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cypress Lane.

March 9

• At 6:26 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

• At 11:09 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Willow Way, but it was cancelled en route.

Paving the path to citizenship at TL&LC

Becoming a United States citizen is a profound milestone that represents years of hard work, hope, and dedication. To support community members on this journey, The Literacy & Learning Center is proud to offer a FREE weekly Citizenship Class led by Faviola Olvera beginning March 11. Held every Wednesday from 5:30 to 7 pm at 675 S 4th St in Highlands, this program is designed to help students navigate the complexities of the U.S. naturalization exam with confidence.

Comprehensive Test Preparation

The naturalization process requires applicants to pass a multi-part exam, and the TL&LC curriculum addresses each requirement through guided instruction:

• The English Test: Students practice the basic speaking, reading, and writing skills necessary for the exam.

• Reading and Writing Proficiency: During the official test, applicants must read one of three civics-based sentences aloud and correctly write one of three sentences. The class provides structured practice for these specific tasks.

• The Civics Test: Instruction covers the 100 possible questions regarding U.S. history and government provided by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Key topics include the principles of American democracy, the system of government, the colonial period, the 1800s, and integrated civics such as geography and national symbols.

A Tradition of Success

The impact of this focused preparation is best seen through the success of students like Violeta Rojas Quintero. Working alongside Faviola Olvera, Violeta spent months mastering the 100 history and government questions and refining her English pronunciation. Despite the demands of her job and the care of several children, Violeta's diligence was rewarded. She passed her exam on the first try, with no errors, and was officially sworn in as a U.S. citizen in April of 2023.

To learn more about programs at The Literacy & Learning Center, contact Caroline Cox at ccox@theliteracyandlearning-center.org or 828-526-0863 or visit TheLiteracyandLearning-Center.org.

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BGCP and The Bascom Partner on "Drawn to the Plateau" Youth Exhibition

The Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau proudly hosted its first-ever art show, "Drawn to the Plateau," a one-night-only youth exhibition presented in partnership with The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts and sponsored by the North Carolina Arts Council's Grassroots Art Program Grant.

For one night, the BGCP Club, typically home to after-school programming for local children and teens on the Plateau, was transformed into a vibrant, gallery-style experience showcasing the creativity and talent of its members.

Families, supporters, and community members were invited to enjoy hors d'oeuvres while strolling through the thoughtfully curated exhibition. The event featured more than 164 two-dimensional works created by student artists, along with an impressive collection of ceramic pieces. Guests experienced a diverse range of artistic styles and mediums, including multimedia, pop art, watercolor paintings, wire sculptures, and more.

In preparation for the event, The Bascom volunteered their time and expertise to work directly with members from the Cashiers, Highlands, and Teen Clubs.

The Bascom's Community Engagement team carefully matted each two-dimensional piece and installed the full collection, helping transform the Club into a professional exhibition space. With walls assembled, curtains hung, and each artwork intentionally displayed, the Club became an engaging gallery celebrating the collective work of these young artists.

"Drawn to the Plateau" was a powerful reflection of what is possible when young people are encouraged by dedicated teachers and a supportive community. The evening highlighted not only artistic talent, but also the confidence, creativity, and pride that emerge when youth are given opportunities to express themselves. The exhibition stood as a testament to the impact of collaboration, demonstrating how extraordinary things can happen when a community comes together to uplift and invest in its young people.

The Boys & Girls Club of the Plateau extends heartfelt thanks to the incredible staff at The Bascom, the Art League of Highlands-Cashiers, and the North Carolina Arts Council for helping make this special evening possible.

For those who were unable to attend, there is more to come. Plans are already underway to bring "Drawn to the Plateau" to The Bascom's Education Gallery, offering the broader community another opportunity to experience the creativity and talent of these remarkable young artists. This expanded exhibition will allow even more friends, families, supporters, and visitors to celebrate the hard work and artistic growth of Boys & Girls Club members. "Drawn to the Plateau" will be on display at The Bascom from March 7th through June 6th, with participating artists recognized during The Bascom's Spring Exhibition Reception on March 21st at 3 p.m.



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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

NOTE:

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

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

• 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 Literacy & 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

• The Literacy & Learning Center is proud to offer a FREE weekly Citizenship Class led by Faviola Olvera beginning March 11. Held every Wednesday from 5:30 to 7 pm at 675 S 4th St in Highlands, this program is designed to help students navigate the complexities of the U.S. naturalization exam with confidence. To learn more about programs at The Literacy & Learning Center, contact Caroline Cox at ccox@theliteracyandlearningcenter.org or 828-526-0863 or visit TheLiteracyandLearningCenter.org.

• 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, 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).

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.

Sat., March 21

• nAt the Bascom, Boys & Girls Club "Drawn to the Plateau" exhibit and reception at 3 p.m.

Sat., April 4

• Annual Easter Egg Hunt at the Rec Park at 10a.m. for ages 0-9.

Sat., April 18

• The Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, annual Plateau Pickup. 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. for more info, email events@highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-5841.

• REC DEPT. NEWS •

The Annual Easter Egg Hunt will be **Saturday, April 4th** at 10am at the Highlands Recreation Department for ages 0-9 years old. The address is 600 North Fourth Street.

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.

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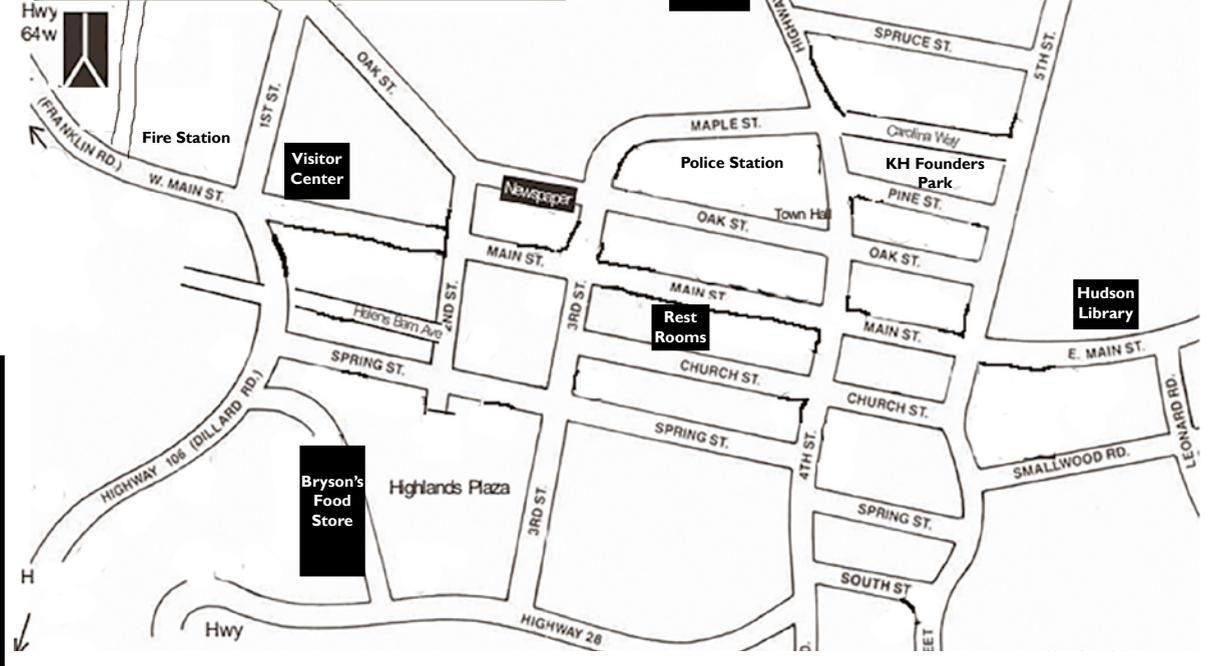
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