

# Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., May 14, 2026

## Town continues to work on the budget

*Property tax increase needed to meet all town's needs*

By Kim Lewicki

Three budget workshop sessions in and the town is still putting the finishing touches on

its proposed \$45,584,075 budget for FY '26-'27, but commissioners agreed to meet one more time next Tuesday.

**Property tax increase**  
The biggest decision made at the Tues., May 11, afternoon

• See TOWN page 15

## County's proposed budget comes in at \$68,045,009

*No property tax increase planned a this time*

By Kristin Fox

At this week's regular session meeting, Macon County Board of Commissioners got their first glimpse of the 2026-2027 proposed county budget as presented by County Manager Warren Cabe. The proposed budget of \$68,045,008 does not include a tax increase maintaining a tax rate of 27 cents per \$100 of value.

Cabe opened the presentation with a review of the accomplishments of the county over the last year. They included the continuation of the Franklin

• See COUNTY page 5

## Lady Highlanders win opening round of NCHSAA Playoffs.



Lady Highlanders' stifling Highlands defense secured a 5-0 shutout victory against Davidson HS at home Mon., May 11, punching their ticket to the second round of NCHSAA Playoffs in Kernersville today, Thurs., May 14, to face the NC Leadership Academy. See more HS sports on page 10. From left: Jordyn Borino, Taylor Hays, Annabelle Hays, Aubree Brooks and Miley Zagal-Damian.

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## Highlands School soccer field not on county's or BOE's radar for '26-'27

*Not considered in either entities' budget for '26-'27*

By Kristin Fox

It's another budget cycle, and another year without a plan to fix the soccer field at Highlands School.

Although there seemed to be renewed interest in the project at a liaison meeting held in April with the Macon County Board of Education and Macon County Commission, the project once again did not make the final cut in the school system's capital outlay requests for the upcoming county budget.

After many years of meetings among citizens and government boards, the project continues to be at a standstill with little to no progress made in a decision to fix the field. Despite the continued delays in the project, interested parties are actively working

on getting things back on track.

At this week's Macon County Schools budget meeting, money for the field renovation was not included in the final list of the capital improvement requests, but the board did decide to include \$10,000 in its budget requests to cover the cost of general upkeep of the field.

Over the years, three locations have been considered for the soccer field – the existing soccer field at Highlands School, Zachary Park and the existing track field at Highlands School.

From its beginning in 2009, the school's soccer field has been plagued with severe water and drainage issues. There have even been past seasons where home matches were impossible due to

• See SOCCER page 7



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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### Final touches remain for FY '26-'27 budget

I see it all the time, people walking with rather ordinary, even ugly, dogs all around town. They love those dogs and believe their dog is the best dog ever. True confession: I am one of those dog walkers, too, with the same jaded belief about my mixed-breed, rescued dog.

I encountered a parallel phenomenon at the annual conference of North Carolina cities, aka City Vision. Every mayor I conversed with had immense pride and love for the city that they serve. As we commiserated with each other, we all held back our conviction that while the other mayor may have a nice town, our town is a much better place to live, and we are the best. That bias is an understandable and predictable human behavior, just as loving your dog is. Mayors do love their towns. I didn't meet a mayor at the conference who wasn't enthusi-



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

astic about the future of their community, even amid the challenges and problems we faced as we attended workshops and programs at City Vision, the annual gathering of municipal officials of the North Carolina League of Municipalities. All the officials in attendance were seeking information and support to help their towns and cities flourish and function better.

Nevertheless, I was at the NC Mayors Association luncheon on Tuesday, and after lunch, the conversation centered on what was happening in the legislature, which was in session down the street. The legislature is considering putting controls on how much a county or city can raise property taxes each year. It seems that outgoing Senate President Phil Berger is pushing for a moratorium on property tax revaluations and increases. The house under the new leader, Destin Hall, is working on a constitutional amendment for state voters to approve. The amendment would enable the legislature to control property tax rates. Let me speak for my colleagues in stating that almost every mayor opposes the legislature getting involved in property tax issues. We believe that counties and municipalities are responsible for providing critical services and making tax decisions best made at the local level. Voters can always change their elected officials if they do not want to pay more taxes.

Whether either of these bills is passed in the session remains to be seen. Nothing is certain in the NC legislature until the gavel comes down, ending a session. But local elected officials are in limbo as we prepare budgets for the next fiscal year, which begins July 1. Unlike the state, towns and counties must adopt a new, balanced budget each year. The legislature has not approved a full state budget since 2023. North Carolina may be drifting toward the budget model used by the federal government.

With all this said, the Highlands

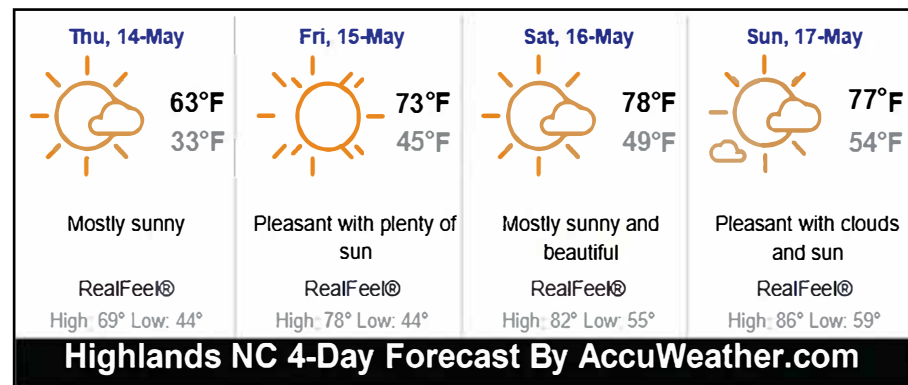
Town Board held another special budget meeting on Tuesday, May 12, to discuss a possible property tax increase, which would be the only one since 2014. In earlier budget sessions this spring, the board did discuss raising taxes to meet growing demands in the general fund. The consensus was to delay the tax increase until the 2027/'28 fiscal year. But with a possible moratorium or other measures from Raleigh looming, it may be wise to raise taxes this year.

As I have said before, the good old days of using reserve funds to cover revenue shortfalls have gone away. Our

general fund reserves are now below the 50% threshold that we adopted several years ago as a budget policy. Most small towns follow the best operating practice of maintaining high reserves between 50 to 100% of general fund operating costs. If taxes are not increased, our reserve fund will continue to be depleted to the point where we have to cut back operating costs for essential services. As an elected official, I do not want to see our town accepting such a retrenchment mode.

Our millage rate is now 10.22 mills, an extremely small number.

## • WEATHER •



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[www.highlandsinfo.com](http://www.highlandsinfo.com)

Phone: (828) 200-1371

Email:

[HighlandsEditor@aol.com](mailto:HighlandsEditor@aol.com)

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## ...COUNTY continued from page 1

High School project; repairs and roof replacement at the Macon County Public Library and Macon County Detention Center; upgrades to the Greenway; complete tennis court renovation and construction of the pickleball court area at the Macon County Recreation Park. Many of these projects were completed with grant funding the county received last year totaling \$3,873,314.

Goals for fiscal year 2026-2027 include continuing to provide quality service delivery at an economically efficient level; continuing to maintain existing county facilities; addressing space needs for various agencies; and continuing to develop a strong capital improvement plan.

Cabe said Macon County has significant space needs which the county should address including senior services, veterans, board of elections, housing department and the need for a justice center.

“The county is facing significant space issues that we need direction on to figure out how we are going to address

them,” said Cabe. “This needs to be a priority of the county in the upcoming year.”

Specifically, for the upcoming year he cited the completion of the pickleball court area and possibly initiating the next phase of the recreation master plan; boardwalk replacement on Arthur Drake Road; repairs to the Macon Early College building; electrical upgrades at the Macon County Courthouse; remodeling of the National Guard Armory building; and resurfacing the driving track at Southwestern Community College to accommodate CDL licensing classes.

In addition, the county will complete the Carson Convenience Center and a complete renovation and upgrade to the recovery and recycling buildings at the landfill. These projects will be completely funded with grant funding.

The proposed budget maintains the property tax rate at 27 cents per \$100 value. Revenues are slightly higher due to increase in taxable value of properties; increased quantities of service fees collected; slightly higher tax revenues; and slight increases in intergovernmental transfers.

However, the requests for the 2026-2027 budget exceeded projected revenue by \$7,683,085. Cabe said almost all departmental and agency requests have been included in the upcoming budget.

“Even with all the revenues we expect to receive, the requests exceeded our projected revenue by \$7,683,” said Cabe. “As much as we could whittle, as much as we worked, as much effort as we put into the budget, there was no way we could get to the point where we could fund all of those requests even though we know many of them are valid.”

He said they had to prioritize and make decisions on what we need to do in the county.

“Honestly, I don’t know if there was a department or agency who didn’t see an increase just because of their normal operating expenses. Purchasing items is more expensive, fuel is more expensive, anything you do anymore is more expensive, and we basically saw that across the board.”

The largest source (54%) of general fund revenue is tax collections of

\$37,054,763. Sales tax follows contributing 21% of the revenue at \$14,416,536. Other sources of revenue include intergovernmental (13%) at \$8,561,757; service fees (7%) \$5,065,752 and miscellaneous (3%) \$1,796,200.

The revenue side of the budget also includes a fund balance appropriation of \$1,150,000. This appropriation will help to fund education expenses which include the Macon County school system and Southwestern Community College.

In the 2026-2027 budget, general expenditures include: 30% for public safety at \$20,429,331; human services (20%) \$13,709,701; education (21%) \$13,951,621; general government (15%) \$10,403,541; and recreation/cultural (5%) \$3,422,364. Transportation (2%) \$1,523,134.

Macon County Schools requested a \$3,593,622 increase in operational funding to \$14,275,956. Total operational funding allocated is \$10,731,569. Total capital outlay funding is allocated at \$1,150,000 funded with a one-time allo-

• See COUNTY page 13



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## Getting your mountain home ready to sell (without losing your mind)

If you've been thinking about selling, let me ask you this — when was the last time you walked up to your home and looked at it the way a buyer would? Or stepped inside and asked yourself, "Could someone else picture their life here?"

As we move into the heart of the season on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau, the market is picking up. Buyers are here, they're motivated, and they're often seeing multiple properties in a short amount of time. That first impression matters more than ever.

To those of us in real estate, this is something we see every day. We know how quickly a buyer forms an opinion and how much small details can influence that decision. But for many homeowners, it's easy to overlook just how impactful those "little things" really are.

Start with the outside. Your home's setting is one of its greatest assets — but is it being shown in its best light? Fresh mulch, trimmed landscaping, a clean entryway ... these simple touches can completely change how a property feels



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before a buyer even walks through the door.

Inside, take a look around. Is there anything that feels crowded or overly personal? Decluttering doesn't mean removing everything that makes your home yours — it simply allows the space itself to shine. Buyers aren't just looking at your home, they're trying to imagine their life in it. Creating that space for them is key.

The same goes for personalizing. Family photos, collections, bold décor — these are meaningful to you, but they can make it harder for a buyer to see themselves there. A more

neutral, clean environment helps broaden that appeal.

It's also worth paying attention to the details that often go unnoticed — for example, making sure your light bulbs are consistent in color and tone throughout the home. Something as simple as mismatched lighting can subtly affect how a space feels, while warm, cohesive lighting creates a more inviting atmosphere.

And then there are the small fixes. Maybe it's a loose railing, a weathered deck board, or a few minor maintenance items you've been meaning to get to. Individually, they may not seem like much — but together, they tell a story. A well-maintained home gives buyers confidence, and that confidence often translates into stronger offers.

At the end of the day, buyers here aren't just purchasing a property — they're buying into a lifestyle. The goal is to help them feel that connection the moment they arrive.

So, before you list, take a step back and ask yourself: Does my home feel ready?

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## ...SOCCER continued from page 1

the poor conditions of the field. At times when rainy conditions are persistent, the water accumulates on the surface causing the field to become muddy, slippery and unsafe for play. Often home games are canceled or postponed when the field is water-logged.

After an extensive study including boring samples of the field, it was decided that the best option to fix the soccer field was to remove all the swamp muck and replace it with new soil. After treating the underground, a turf surface would be installed. However, this proposed solution came with a hefty price tag of \$840,000. Due to the expense of fixing the field, the proposal to fix the field has not gained the approval of county commissioners.

There has also been talk of using Zachary Field as the home soccer field for Highlands School. However, this solution is far from perfect. The current field at the park is not regulation-size and requires school teams to get a waiver from the state to use it.

It has been suggested to enlarge the field, but this would only be possible if additional land near the existing park was purchased by the county.

Scheduling issues would also be a problem at Zachary Park as the community soccer and baseball programs also use the field. Transportation to the Zachary Park fields on Buck Creek Road would also be an issue for students practicing after school.

The third suggestion to make the track field a soccer field is also not a viable solution. The track area isn't long enough for a regulation field. State regulations require a minimum length of 100

yards by 50 yards wide and that would also mean eliminating the track program at the school.

According to Principal Sarah Holbrooks, the lack of a decent soccer field has not discouraged students' interest in the sport.

In the past few years, the school has had over 20 middle school and high school boys and girls playing soccer for Highlands School each season.

"We do not believe that the field conditions have affected students from playing soccer," said Holbrooks. "But, we believe that it would make them feel a bit more proud to be a Highlander if they got the chance to showcase their turf field."

Holbrooks said a turf field would enable the teams to play during wet weather without canceling games, practices, or PE classes.

"Turf would also protect the goalie boxes from being overused during games and practices, as those are probably the highest-traffic areas on the field. Additionally, turf would eliminate the need to line the field each season. Currently, Coach Bishop and Coach Lamb mow and line the field during planning periods or on weekends."

She said she thinks Highlands School students and coaches deserve a field that is playable regardless of weather.

"We believe it would make the students more excited about playing, and we would all be very proud of our school, she said. "It has been nice to showcase recent renovations and additions from the Highlands School Project and we believe this would add even more attraction to our little community school on the mountain."

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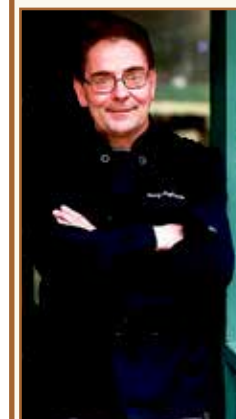
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# • LETTERS •

## Inaction has caused harm

Dear Editor,

Last Tuesday night, May 5th, while attending a baseball game at the field at Macon Middle School, my wife was struck in the head by a line drive foul ball. This resulted in a concussion, the long-term effects of which we are not certain.

Imagine my surprise when I discovered that this dangerous situation was known to school officials even to point of purchasing a net to rectify the situation. But the net has been sitting in a box for years waiting on installation. Other nets to address issues at other county fields are also awaiting installation.

Had the ball been a couple inches lower or to the left or struck a child this situation would have been much worse. I implore county officials to address this issue immediately.

Tony Potts  
Highlands

## Why can't I trust my decision makers?

Dear Editor,

As a semi-retired resident of Western North Carolina, I never expected to spend this stage of life focused on whether I can trust my decision makers to act in the best interests of our community, our region, and our country.

Years ago, while working with the United Nations, I was struck by how closely people around the world follow U.S. governance. They often understood our institutions better than we understood theirs. Someone told me, "It's easy for Americans to be apathetic because things work." That stayed with me — because today, things are not working, and for that I hold our representatives in Washington from North Carolina's 11th District, and in our state, accountable.

First, health and basic security. Why must I worry whether Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security will still be there for this and future generations? Why should I fear that public health protections against dangerous diseases are being chipped away? Why do your constituents have to crowd fund to pay constantly increasing health care costs? Why do we see vast detention centers instead of affordable housing and mental health care?

Second, justice, rights, and democracy. Why do I have to question whether people in our communities could be detained without due process, or whether our constitutional rights will be treated as optional? Why are racist, homophobic, and misogynistic policies tolerated while voting rights are weakened and elections made harder — not easier — for ordinary citizens?

Third, priorities and the future. Why are we pouring staggering sums into a war without full, honest debate,

• See LETTERS page 13

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## • HS SPORTS •

### Highlands Athletics Weekly Recap: Postseason fever hits the plateau

It was a week defined by play-off intensity and individual excellence as Highlands High School athletes took to the pitch, the links, and the track to represent the Plateau in postseason competition.

#### Soccer:

#### Lady Highlanders Dominate Opening Round

After a tough 3-0 road loss at Murphy to close out the regular season, the Lady Highlanders returned home with a vengeance for the first round of the NCHSAA Playoffs. Hosting South Davidson High School, Highlands wasted no time asserting their dominance.

The offensive fireworks began just 1:52 into the match when Jordyn Borino found the back of the net to give the Highlanders an early lead they would never relinquish. The scoring clinic continued with a balanced attack: Anabelle Hays: 2 goals; Aubree Brooks: 2 goals, 1 assist

The stifling Highlands defense secured a 5-0 shutout victory, punching their ticket to the second round. The Lady Highlanders now prepare for a long road trip to Kernersville this Thursday to face the North Carolina Leadership Academy.

#### Golf:

#### Conner Climbs the Leaderboard at States

The Highlands Boys Golf team traveled to Meadowbrook Golf Club in Rutherfordton for the Regional Match, finishing a respectable 5th place overall.

The standout story of the week, however, belongs to freshman sensation Sam Conner. After shooting an 89 at Regionals to qualify for the State Championship, Conner headed to the Gates Four Course in Fayetteville to compete against the best in North Carolina.

Through Day 1 of the two-day tournament, Conner is putting the field on notice. He carded an impressive 83, placing him 7th out of 48 golfers heading into the final round.

#### Track & Field:

#### Hurdlers Headed to Greensboro

Over at Montreat College, the Highlands Track and Field team competed in



**Brett Lamb**  
Highlands School  
Athletic Director

the West Regional Track Meet with several State Championship berths on the line.

Success came in the form of technical precision, as Anabelle Hays and Stephen Pierson both dominated the 110m hurdles. Their performances earned them a trip to the State Championship at NC A&T this Thursday, where they will represent the Highlanders on one

of the state's biggest stages.

#### Highlanders Upcoming Schedule

**Thursday, May 14:** HS Soccer goes to Kernersville, NC for 2nd Round @ NC Leadership Academy

**Thursday, May 14:** HS Track goes to Greensboro, NC, for State Championship @ NC A&T

**On Going:** HS Golf goes to Fayetteville, NC, for State Championship @ Gates Four.



Freshman Sam Conner at Meadowbrook Golf Club in Rutherfordton at the Regional Match. He shot an 89 and is headed for the State Championship match in Fayetteville.

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# • HOSPITAL NEWS •

## This May, we salute the excellent Highlands-Cashiers Hospital team — and their central impact on our community

As we usher in the richness of spring in our beautiful mountains, we also recognize three weeks during May that highlight our healthcare teams.

National Nurses Week (May 6–12), National Hospital Week (May 12–18), and National Nursing Home Week (May 11–17) each highlight the critical roles that nurses and healthcare facilities play in our lives. At Highlands-Cashiers Hospital (HCH) and Eckerd Living Center (ELC), these observances are more than calendar events, they reflect the fact that the nurses who provide the most advanced, yet compassionate care for patients at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital (HCH) and Eckerd Living Center (ELC) make our facilities true places of healing.

Every day at HCH and ELC, I see the depth of that commitment. Our nurses are highly skilled professionals who navigate complex clinical environ-

ments and rapidly evolving technology. Just as importantly, they bring empathy, intuition, and the ability to understand what patients may not always be able to express. That balance of science and humanity is what makes the impact of nurses so powerful.

National Hospital Week carries an equally fitting theme: “Healing Happens Here.” The tagline’s subtitle is also true: Hospital save lives, communities thrive. Hospitals are far more than mere facilities — they serve as essential community anchors.

At HCH and ELC, we take this responsibility seriously and are proud to partner with Emergency Medical Services, law enforcement, and other community organizations to ensure coordinated, high-quality care. During EMS Week



**Tom Neal CEO, CNO**  
Highlands-Cashiers  
Hospital

(May 19–25), we especially recognize the paramedics and emergency responders who are often the first and most critical link in a patient’s care journey. Well before a patient reaches our doors, these dedicated professionals are delivering life-saving care, making rapid decisions under pressure, and ensuring a seamless handoff that allows our teams to continue that care.

That trust is reflected in the recognition our team continues to earn. Highlands-Cashiers Hospital is a four-time recipient of the Guardian of Excellence Award, recognizing top performance in patient experience, clinical quality, and workforce engagement, and has achieved top rankings in physician satisfaction and nursing care. Notably, in HCH’s physician survey, results showed 100% satisfaction with nursing care, a powerful reflection of the trust, collaboration, and clinical excellence that define our nurses and care teams.

We strive to continue earning the community’s trust, and within HCA Healthcare, HCH has been recognized as a top performer for service and quality which serves as proof of our team’s commitment and consistency across every department.

This recognition ultimately belongs to our people and their devotion, teamwork, and pride in delivering exceptional care make this achievement possible.

We also remain committed to advancing the level of care available close to home for our community members. Our designation as an Acute Stroke-Ready Hospital by The Joint Commission ensures that patients experiencing a stroke receive immediate, life-saving treatment, with access to specialized neurological expertise, and rapid transfer when needed.

I am happy to report that while we strive to maintain these standards, we also continue to grow. From expanding surgical services to recruiting outstanding clinicians, we are increasing our ability to meet our community’s evolving needs and always maintaining the personal, high-touch care that defines HCH.

Ultimately, our success comes down to one thing: our people. A hospital is not defined by its building or equipment, but by the individuals who show up every day with skill, compassion, and a commitment to serve.

This May, I encourage you to join me in recognizing the people behind the care we provide at HCH — the nurse at the bedside, the caregiver in long-term care, the EMS professional answering the call, and every member of our hospital team. I have the privilege of seeing their work up close, and I am continually reminded that what makes HCH and ELC special is not just what we do, but how we do it — with heart, purpose, and a steadfast commitment to this community.

• *Tom Neal, RN, MBA, MHA, is the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. Neal is a proven leader with more than 30 years of progressive healthcare experience. Prior to his role at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, he served as Chief Executive Officer of both Bernick Hospital Center in Bernick, Pennsylvania, and Greenbriar Valley Medical Center, Ronceverte, West Virginia, which are each part of Community Health Systems (CHS). Tom has an MBA from the University of Louisville, MHA from the California College of Health Sciences, BSN from Regents College of New York and an ADN from Jefferson Community College.*

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## ...LETTERS continued from page 9

while allowing our national debt to outpace our GDP? Why do so many here struggle with increasing basic living costs such as groceries and fuel? Why are our natural resources not being protected with urgency?

So, I ask again: why can't I trust you? I call, I write, I visit and there is no adequate response or accountability.

For the sake of our mountains, our communities, and our children's future, I will be supporting alternative candidates who are committed to protecting the people they serve, defending democracy, encouraging the strength that comes from our diversity of people and skills, and carrying forward what America stands for while helping us grow into the best version of who we can be as a nation.

**Constance Neely  
Scaly Mountain**

## ...KATZ continued from page 14

In other words, we must, as individuals and as a society, be able to trust what we get when artificial intelligence is deployed in our day-to-day lives. I'm reminded of a pithy but appropriate phrase uttered nearly 40 years ago in an entirely different context by then-President Ronald Reagan. "Trust but verify."

Oh, before I forget, Co-Pilot asked me to say 'hi'.

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 Bud, regarding this column or for information about the Highlands Writers Group, at [brucefkatzauthor@gmail.com](mailto:brucefkatzauthor@gmail.com).

## ...COUNTY continued from page 5

cation from fund balance.

In the proposed budget, Cabe suggested the one-time allocation from fund balance instead of a tax increase. Without the fund balance allocation, a \$0.0087 tax increase would be necessary.

Allocation for education includes \$50,000 for the CTE PULSE internship program from the economic development commission fund; \$1,141,573 for the SRO program and \$418,040 for the school nurse program in the general fund budget.

Cabe told the board he was comfortable making the recommendation for the one-time fund balance allocation because over the last four years the fund balance has continued to grow, and he feels next year the cycle will continue with the fund balance breaking even or actually increasing.

Cabe also reviewed future needs in the county to be discussed. These needs

include a prior request of \$350,000 for the Hudson Library in Highlands. In addition, other future needs include the next phase of the Macon County Recreation Department master plan at \$650,000 contingent upon PARTF funding: a \$36 million replacement of East Franklin Elementary School with lottery fund grant; and addressing maintenance needs of the Greenway as well as at existing county facilities.

Commissioners will review the proposed budget which is posted on the county website at [maconnc.org](http://maconnc.org) for the public to review. In the upcoming weeks, commissioners will hold budget work sessions in an effort to finalize a budget for fiscal year '26-'27.

A public hearing on the budget will be held on June 9 at 6 p.m. Following the public hearing, the board will vote to adopt the proposed budget.



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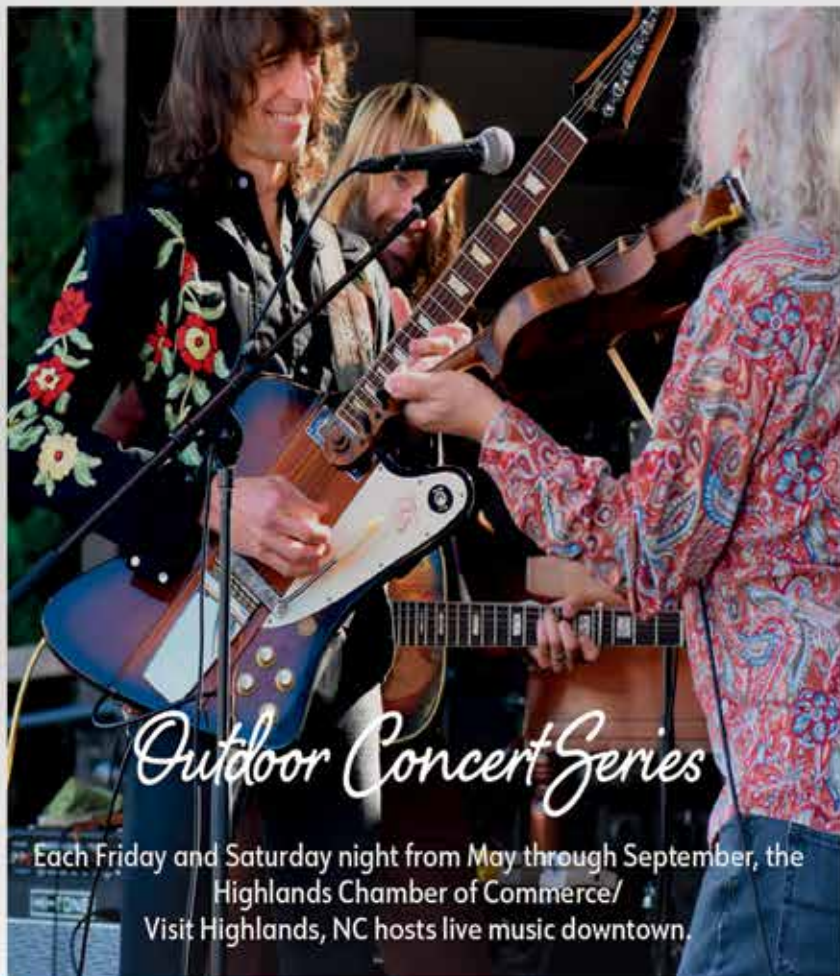
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# • HERE'S THE THING •

## It's here, and it's not going away

When one reaches a certain age it's not unusual to feel intimidated by new things we struggle to understand. One such thing involves what we've come to refer to as Artificial Intelligence, AI for short. To help make sense of the upsides as well as the potential downsides of this not-so-new phenomenon, I engaged my own AI pal, CoPilot, to help me weigh in on the subject. Hopefully, you will not reach erroneous conclusions as to who's words – mine or CoPilot's – you're reading.

First, a couple of foundational truths. Artificial Intelligence has been around since the end of World War II. Second, AI already impacts almost every aspect of our lives. It's in our homes, our computers, phones, and tablets, our "smart" television sets, our motor vehicles, our supermarkets, doctor's offices, hospitals, schools, restaurants, airplanes ... you can't hide from it. You may not see it. And, when you do come across it, you may not recognize it.

There are practical benefits to be derived from artificial intelligence in business and commerce. It can automate repetitive and mundane tasks, freeing human workers to focus on more complex and creative activities. It can aid in cost savings as well as increased productivity in many workplaces. It's at the core of robotics, which has already proved transformative in manufacturing, logistics and customer service. That last one – AI-powered customer service – can prove to be both highly effective and/or terribly frustrating.

AI in healthcare has impacted and enhanced both diagnosis and treatment. Currently, AI algorithms help analyze medical images faster and often more effectively than even expert radiologists. Some AI functions assist physicians in detecting cancer at earlier stages, at generating proven treatment plans, and at monitoring patients. AI assists in discovering new medications as well as other, non-pharmaceutical modalities. As a research tool, AI generates information many times faster and, sorry to say, often more accurately than human effort can produce.



Bud Katz

There's no doubt artificial intelligence can make many aspects of life simpler without eliminating the human element. That said, there are also both potential and existing downsides that must be acknowledged, and to the extent possible, remediated.

While AI improves efficiency in workplaces, it also potentially poses an obvious threat to many traditional, lower-level jobs, especially in sectors reliant on those previously stated routine and repetitive tasks. These include manufacturing and logistics.

In basic terms, AI exists by being able, literally in seconds, to tap into enormous amounts of existing, human-generated data. Those humans who generated that data come with biases. Biases are part of the human condition. This means AI can and often does contain the existing personal and societal biases of the humans who generated the source data. Consider AI-based facial recognition technologies that already come with built in higher error rates involving certain demographic groups.

There are also concerns about how AI addresses the ambiguities of personal privacy and both individual and national security. After all, can we truly foresee how our personal information will be used by a non-human tool? The ethical and social implications are not completely clear or, as yet, understood.

Here's the thing. Artificial intelligence holds immense promise for improving our quality of life, by driving innovation, and solving complex individual, local, national, and global problems. However, its rapid development and deployment also present significant challenges and risks that must be addressed in order for all of us to fully realize AI's benefits while minimizing harm. A balanced approach — emphasizing responsible development, ethical use, and to the extent possible, policies free of as much bias as is possible — will be essential as society continues to integrate AI into every aspect of our lives.

• See KATZ page 13

## ...TOWN continued from page 1

meeting was to raise property taxes by 3 cents per \$100 valuation.

It's been 12 years since the town has increase taxes.

That would put Highlands at 13.2 cents per \$100 valuation and possibly \$15.2 cents if the county agrees to the Highlands Fire & Rescue Department's request to increase the fire tax by 2 cents. So far there hasn't been any response from the county regarding that request.

There are currently two bills moving through the legislature – House Bill 1089 that wants to put a state-wide constitutional referendum on the November 2026 ballot which would give the legislature the power to regulate property taxes in towns and counties at will.

The second bill is a Senate bill that wants to put a moratorium on property revaluations and property tax increases across the state, though some senators have gone on record saying “we cut back on the state's responsibility to fund certain things and passed it on to towns and counties and now we want to cap their ability to raise funds to pay for these things.”

Mayor Pat Taylor said given the uncertainty at the state level and given the fact that the town's undesignated reserve fund is 38% of the general fund, the town should raise property taxes to build up the fund before the state says it can't.

As recommended by the NC League of Municipalities and the town's auditor, the preferred undesignated fund balance

should be 50% - 100% of the general fund. If a municipality's fund balance is too low, it risks being taken over by the state due to being fiscally irresponsible.

Like the other commissioners, Bill Grubb said he didn't like the idea of raising property taxes and thinks what the legislature is trying to do is terrible, but the fact that the town's reserve fund is at 38% is not good.

“We are well shy of the minimum 50% in available fund balance. We have developed a fiscally responsible budget, but we are pushing ourselves out of the safety zone,” he said.

Town Manager Josh Ward said it's important to have a healthy reserve fund for emergencies. He said for instance, after Hurricane Helene, the town had to hire outside contractors to help clean up and they were very expensive.

“Luckily, we had the money in the reserve at the time, and we hoped FEMA would reimburse us, which they did finally, but it took a long time, and it came in bits and pieces,” he said. “I think there needs to be some kind of increase.”

At the current property valuation, a 3 cent property tax increase will net the town \$911,135.90 per year.

### Insurance

At Tuesday afternoon's budget workshop, Town Manager Ward suggested an insurance carrier that through grouping with other municipalities offered only a 29% increase over Blue Cross Blue

• See TOWN page 16

# Rotary

Club of Highlands  
Chartered 1945



## Rotary Club Report from Josh Bryson, President, Rotary Club of Highlands



The Community Partner program is vital to the Rotary Club of Highlands because it strengthens our ability to serve and uplift our community. With the support of local businesses and individuals, we are able to broaden the scope and effectiveness of our service projects, meeting urgent needs and making a meaningful, lasting difference. We

invite you to become a Community Partner and join us in making a real difference for Highlands. Your support ensures that the Rotary Club of Highlands remains a driving force for progress and well-being in our community.

For more information or to become a Community Partner, contact Rotarian Bill Rockwell at (706) 540-4168.

IN SERVICE

Josh  
BRYSON  
PRESIDENT



## Bingo

Our Rotary Club of Highlands sponsored Bingo Night for May 2026 will be held on May 14th at 6:30pm in the Highlands Community Building and will benefit the Counseling Center of Highlands.

## The Rotary Club of Highlands is pleased to recognize and introduce the Students of the Month of April from the Highlands School.



Elementary School:  
Wilb James, 5th Grade

Middle School:  
Cristina Craig, 8th Grade

High School:  
Isiah Virdo, 12th Grade

**Congratulations  
to the Students of the  
Month for May 2026,  
and their families!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS



Coming up in May the Rotary Club of Highlands will feature weekly luncheon programs including:

- May 19: Cynthia Dandy presents the 2026 Highlands School who's who.
- May 26: Luke Stuchlik, PA, offers an overview of Orthopedic Care on the Highlands-Cashiers Plateau.



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# ...TOWN continued from page 15

Shield's plan last year while providing the exact same plan.

Town Manager Ward said going with the North Carolina Health Insurance Pool is the best bet. There are 41 government agencies across NC that participate in the pool, which includes 17,000 individuals covered. It is managed by the Gallagher company.

Not only did the Gallagher agree to a lower percentage increase this year for the same BCBS plan as last year compared

to all other insurance carriers queried, it also promised future annual increases wouldn't go over 6%.

Still insurance rates have skyrocketed and will cost the town, which pays for employees' health insurance – but not for their dependents – a little more than \$200,000 over last year.

Next week, commissioners will discuss whether to augment health insurance payments for employees with dependents.

The town pays health insurance for 65 employees and 27 of them have dependents. The cost for dependent insurance will go up about \$200 a month -- \$96 per pay period per employee.

Commissioner Amy Patterson said with rising gas prices and now the rise in dependent coverage, even with the COLA increase of 3% "their raise will get eaten up."

"I just think we should think about a way to offset the rising prices in gas and

now insurance," she said. "Mitigate in some way due to the bad economic situation right now."

The talk revolved around paying 50% of the dependent increase but will be decided next week.

Commissioners say offering free health insurance coverage is one way the town is able to get and retain employees.

### Hudson Library request

Like the county, the town hasn't decided if it will fund the Hudson Library's request of \$350,000 in this year's budget.

Last week there was talk of giving something but likely not the entire amount – even splitting the request over two budget periods. Library representatives said they would welcome any scenario.

The funds being requested are to renovate and refurbish the interior of the

• See TOWN page 17



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# • BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION NEWS •



## MountainTop Rotary hears about 'The Vineyard'

Since taking ownership three years ago, the new stewards of the Vineyard, Eric and Lesley Galloway, have transformed it into a thriving destination. They've carefully restored the vines and successfully produced several wines, bringing new life to the land. Beyond the vineyard itself, they've expanded its appeal by introducing live entertainment, creating a beautiful wedding venue, and making a range of improvements that have elevated both the experience and the property's charm. Pictured with the Galloways is Rotary president Bill Kirkman.

## ...TOWN continued from page 16

library. The exterior renovation that is currently underway was funded privately.

### Meter Rates

The other item on Tuesday night's agenda was increasing meter rates both inside and outside of town.

Meter rates depend on the size of the pipes – ¾-inch to 4-inch. The cost of materials has increased so the town must increase residential charges by about \$5 per pipe size inside town and by about \$10 outside of town.

Minimum charges for commercial meters will also increase.

At next week's meeting, set for Tuesday, May 19 at 3 p.m., commissioners will discuss augmenting employees' dependent insurance payments.



From left: Erin and Kyle Bryner, Josh Bryson, President of the Rotary Club of Highlands, Scott Carter, Rotarian and Host.

## Highlands Rotary hears from 'Master of 'Cue'

Kyle Bryner, 2025 winner of the Food Network's BBQ Brawl, recently spoke to the Rotary Club of Highlands about his passion for bringing the community together through food. This passion eventually led him to five more 1st place awards. Owner and Pitmaster of Blue Hound Barbecue in Dillard and the Blue Bike Café in Highlands, Kyle and his wife Erin opened the Blue Bike Café, in May of 2019.



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# SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

## If...then...



**Rev. Kirkland "Skully"**

**Knight**

The Episcopal Church of the incarnation

Do you remember the SAT? It's the test that most people take in high school, probably junior year, for college admissions? You get a score out of 1600. Well, do you remember the "if/then" questions they used to have on the SAT? Some are mathematical or algebraic, some are logical or philosophical, and some are simply used in reading and writing.

And there are multiple ways to try and "solve for" what is and isn't true in these statements. Think about this statement for a second, "If it is raining, then the ground is wet." I suppose that's true, but we would have questions there, right? Can some ground be dry in the rain? Sure. Under a tree or a car. Can the ground be wet if it's not raining? Sure. There are lots of ways for that to be true. So, this statement is more causal -- one thing causes another.

And then there are more conditional statements, "If the weather is nice, then I will play outside," or a slightly different higher stakes version might be, "If you love me, then you would do \_\_\_\_\_ for me." Get me a bowl of ice cream, take me to Paris, whatever. This statement is more conditional -- one thing depends on the other.

So, when Jesus says, "If you love me, [then] you will keep my commandments," we might hear it differently than someone else. Do we hear Jesus saying to his disciples, "If you love me, then you will be keeping my commandments whether you even realize it or not?" Or do we hear Jesus saying "If you love me, then you'll do this for me. You'll keep my commandments?"

Is Jesus saying that a) keeping the commandments is caused by their love for him? Is Jesus saying that b) their love for him is conditional on whether or not they keep the commandments? Or is there another answer? Is there a (c)? Maybe what Jesus is talking about is not cause or condition. Maybe what he is saying is that these are two parallel statements that together define what it is to love Jesus -- to love him is to keep his commandments, and to keep his commandments, is to love him.

We don't like the causal idea. That would mean our love or our keeping of the commandments is somehow coerced or forced, and that has never been what God's love is about. We also don't like the idea of there being conditions on our love or obedience to God. God's love being unconditional is one of the things we count on. It is at the heart of God's grace and mercy. So, when we think

• See **SPIRITUALLY** page 19

# • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

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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

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Fellowship 11:45a; Wed: Bible Study/Contemplative Prayer, 5p

## CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS

Pastor Jacob Tedder • [jacob@cashiers.church](mailto:jacob@cashiers.church) • 743-5470

[www.cashiers.church](http://www.cashiers.church)

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

## CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

283 Spring Street - Sunday Service: 10:30 a.m.

Testimony meeting: 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

## CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard

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

1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7 p.m.

Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

## COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

[www.cbchighlands.com](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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

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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](http://www.highlandsmethodist.org)

## HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

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Rev. Ken Langsdorf

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

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Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

## MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

Franklin • 828-634-1312 • [mountainsynagoguenc.com](http://mountainsynagoguenc.com).

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

## FR. 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 May 23-Oct 24.; 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](http://www.goodshepherdofcashiers.com)

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Open Fri & Sat. 11am-3pm

## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

85 Sierra Drive. Franklin • [uufranklin.org](http://uufranklin.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 May 3. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

## May 3

• At 9 a.m., officers responded to call about credit card auto teller machine fraud involving \$1,271.

## Accident

## May 8

• Vehicle 1 was backing up heading north in Highlands School parking lot. Vehicle 2 was behind Vehicle 1. Vehicle 1 collided with Vehicle 2. Vehicle 1 and 2 stayed in the parking lot and contacted Law Enforcement.

## Citations & Warnings

• The department 5 Citations and 18 Warning Tickets

## The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from May 5.

## May 5

• At 10:32 p.m., the dept. responded to a mutual aid call from Cashiers FD.

## May 6

• At 11:10 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Clubhouse Trail.

• At 12:55 p.m., the dept.

provided public assistance at a location on Horse Cove Road.

## May 7

• At 5:57 a.m., the dept. provided mutual assistance to the Scaly FD.

• At 11:57 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Church Street.

• At 12:20 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Panther Mountain Road.

• At 4:47 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at the HC Hospital.

• At 5:19 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Centennial Lane.

## May 8

• At 6:58 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD.

• At 8:47 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Falls Drive. West.

• At 9:54 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

## May 9

• At 12:02 p.m., the dept. responded to the result of a lightning strike at a residence on Highlands View Road.

• At 1:45 p.m., the dept. responded to a structure fire at a residence on Robin Hood Lane.

• At 6:50 p.m., the dept. responded to a miscellaneous fire at a location on Horse Cove Road.

## May 10

• At 11:28 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on US 64 east (Cashiers Road) but it was cancelled en route.

• At 11:57 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Rocky Ridge Road.

## May 11

• A little past midnight, the dept. was first-responders to a residence on 3 R Lane.

• At 1:11 a.m., the dept. responded to a miscellaneous alarm at a location non N. 4th Street.

• At 10:59 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Clubhouse Trail but it was cancelled en route.

• At 11:49 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Rocky Ridge Road.

• At 10:29 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Keener Road.

## May 12

• At 4:31 a.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Old Cove Road but it was cancelled en route.



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## ...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 18

about answer (c) these parallel statements, we might consider a few things; to whom is he saying this, what commandment(s) are we talking about exactly, and are we – today -- still expected to do this, and if so, how might the expectations have changed?

First of all, Jesus is speaking to his disciples. These are his last words, the things he is trying to make sure the disciples get, before they find themselves without him. So, if we think about it, Jesus is letting them know that they can still “be with him, love him” when he is not there. Jesus is letting the disciples know that they will be in him and he will be in them, in the keeping of his commandments.

And what are those com-

mandments? Earlier in the conversation that we hear today, Jesus says to the disciples, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Jesus has shared his body and blood with them, and he stooped to the ground, knelt before them, and washed their feet. Just in case the disciples wondered, “What do you mean, ‘as I have loved you?’” he shows them, teaches them what the commandment to love one another looks like, feels like. He wants them to see how to do it. How to love. How to keep his commandments.

So, what about us? Was that commandment just for those first disciples, or is it for all who have come after? Is it for us? I mean, if we’re not going to go around washing people’s feet, what are we going to do? How do we keep that commandment? Well, if we think back to the “if/then” statement, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments,” and we admit that is it not causal or conditional, we realize it is relational. When we are in a relationship with Jesus, we love him by doing his works and keeping his commandments, which are to love each other.

But how? I mean have you met people? We’re no picnic. We’re not the easiest bunch to love. In the Episcopal Church,

• See SPIRITUALLY page 21



# HIGHLANDS CHURCH

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# • CLASSIFIEDS •

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~ Bob Saladna, Owner

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(7/2)

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## ...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 19

we have a covenant that we make at our baptism, and there are questions that we answer, one of them being, “Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?” And we answer, “I will, with God’s help.” God knows we can’t love people all on our own. God knows us, I mean really knows us. So, God, sends Jesus to show us and the Holy Spirit to guide us, because God knows, for us to love each other will be hard.

We are invited to be in a relationship defined by love -- the servant’s love of Jesus Christ, who shares his body and blood, who washes our feet, who loves the least of us as much as any of us, knowing that we will never be perfect, and knowing that we will ask him for help, strength, compassion, and forgiveness over and over and over again. And he will give it to us, because he loves us. And if we love him, then we will keep his commandments, and love one another. Amen.

## American Legion Post 270 Memorial Day Weekend Events

**Fri., May 22**

• American Legion post 370 members will be placing American flags on the graves of all veterans in the Highlands Memorial Park Cemetery. Meet at the cemetery flag pole a 5:30 p.m. Community members are encouraged to assist in flag placement. We are getting older and need the help!

**Sat., May 23**

• It’s Poppy Day! American Legion Post 370 veterans will be manning Poppy Day saites from 10a to 2p. Places are Bryson’s Food Store and the Highlands Farmers Market. The red poppy has been symbol of remembrance since World War I. Please stop by and get a Poppy as a silent thanks to our fallen soldiers.

**Mon. May 24**

• American Legion Post 370 will conduct a short Memorial Day ceremony at 10a at Highlands Veterans Plaza in the Highlands Police Dept. parking lot. Come honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice and view the Honor Walk with more than 400 engraved bricks honoring veterans. New bricks will be dedicated during the event.



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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

• **Spring Hours:** Friday & Saturdays. Open: 10 am - 1 pm. May 15-16; Thurs., Fri, Sat.: May 21-23, May 28-30. Spruce Street. [www.mountainfindings.org](http://www.mountainfindings.org)

## FIBBER MAGEES

• Fibber Magee's Thrift Store on Laurel Street Hours. Wed. & Fri. - 10a too 4p. Sat. - 10a to 2p.

## FARMERS MARKET

• The "market" is open every Saturday 8a to 12:30p in KH Founders Park on Pine Street.

## 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](http://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](mailto:fpchkelley@gmail.com)

## Mon-Wed-Fri

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

• Balance, Stretch & Strengthen Class at the Rec Park 8:30-9:30am. The cost for

the class is \$30 a month and is led by Vivian Brewer. Call the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

## Mon., Tues., Thurs.

• The Food Pantry behind the Methodist Church on Spring Street is open from 10a-6p.

• Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at the Rec Park at 5:30. A combo class with different types of exercise. 828-526-3556

## Second Mondays

• The local chapter of PEO, an off-campus sorority founded in the 1800s that provides grants and loans to women with financial need who want to return to school or further their education meets at 10 a.m. For more info call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004

## Tuesdays

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

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

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

## 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](mailto:budandlynn@me.com)

## Wednesdays

• The Literacy & Learning Center offers a FREE weekly Citizenship Class led by Favola Olvera 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.

• 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.

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

## 3rd Saturdays

• The American Legion Post 370 meets at the First Methodist Church at 315 Main St. in their community room/909 chapel.

Breakfast ia at 9a; meeting is at 10a. Email [ncpost370@gmail.com](mailto:ncpost370@gmail.com) or just join us at 9am.

## May 14-24

• Highlands Cashiers Players present Blithe Spirit.

## May 15-19

• The Highlands Rec Park gym will be CLOSED to refinish the gym floor.

## Fri., May 15

• Friday Night Live in Town Square 6-8:30p featuring The Foxfire Boys.

• Headwaters Bird Alliance local chapter of the National Audubon Society outing at Alarka Laurel with Brent Martin, Franklin, NC. For more information or to reserve a spot for any of the outings, please email [hello@headwatersbirdalliance.org](mailto:hello@headwatersbirdalliance.org) or go to our website at [headwatersbirdalliance.org/](http://headwatersbirdalliance.org/) events.

## May 16-July 25

• At The Bascom, "Connecting to Place: Blue Ridge Craft Trails Invitational 2026" in the Thompson Gallery. Curated by M. Anna Fariello, a former Smithsonian Renwick Fellow and Fulbright Scholar, the exhibition brings together 20 craft artists from communities across WNC, including Franklin, Waynesville, Dillsboro, Bryson City, Cullowhee, Canton, Cherokee, Maggie Valley, and Brasstown. It's presented in partnership with the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area, which operates the Blue Ridge Craft Trails program. Admission is free.

## Sat. & Sun., May 16 & 17

• A weekend of live music, food & fun in the Secret Garden Sandwich Shop courtyard. (208 N. 5th Street in Village Square) On Saturday, Marc Hudson is performing progressive blue grass 12-3p. Food and drinks available for purchase. On Sunday, a Wine Tasting to the tunes of Highlands' own Katie & Ezra from 2-4p. \$40 per person. Food available for purchase.

## Sat., May 16

• High Style -- A Celebration of Art, Cuisine, Fashion & Music 9:30a to 4p at various locations around town.

• Saturdays on Pine in KH Founders Park 6-8:30p featuring LazrLuvr.

## Sun., May 17

• At PAC, Balsam Range at 4 pm. [boxoffice@highlandsp Performingarts.com](mailto:boxoffice@highlandsp Performingarts.com). 828-526-9047

## Fri., May 22

• At Rejuvenate Medical Spa, Obagi Day 10a to 4p. Free skin and scalp analysis, 20% off all products. On-site permanent makeup artist and permanent jewelry technician.

• At Hudson Library, Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor at 11a in the Meeting Room Subject: "Highlights for the Proposed Town Budget."

• American Legion post 370 members will be placing American flags on the graves of all veterans in the Highlands Memorial Park Cemetery. Meet at the cemetery flag pole a 5:30 p.m. Community members are encouraged to assist in flag placement. We are getting older and need the help!

• Friday Night Live in Town Square from 6-8:30p, Silly Ridge.

## Sat., May 23

• It's Poppy Day! American Legion Post 370 veterans will be manning Poppy Day saites from 10a to 2p. Places are Bryson's Food Store and the Highlands Farmers Market. The red poppy has been symbol of remembrance since World War I. Please stop by and get a Poppy as a silent thanks to our fallen soldiers.

• Highlands Historical Society Season Opening Celebration on Saturday from 11 a.m. to p.m. at the Historical Village in Highlands. Music, free food and a dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence to celebrate the United States Semi-quincentennial, and the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

• Saturday on Pine at KH Founders Park 6-8:30p, The Parks Brothers.

• Headwaters Bird Alliance outing at Tessentee Bottomland Preserve with Melanie and Keith Vickers, Otto, NC. To reserve a spot, please email [hello@headwatersbirdalliance.org](mailto:hello@headwatersbirdalliance.org)

## Mon. May 24

• American Legion Post 370 will conduct a short Memorial Day ceremony at 10a at Highlands Veterans Plaza in the Highlands Police Dept. parking lot. Come honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice and view the Honor Walk with more than 400 engraved bricks honoring veterans. New bricks will be dedicated during the event.

## Fri., May 29

• Friday Night Live in Town Square from 6-8:30p, Andrew Wakefield & Friends.

## Sat., May 30

• Saturday on Pine at KH Founders Park 6-8:30p, Snap.

• Highlands School graduation, 10 am in new gym.

• At PAC, The Texas Tenors, 7:30 pm. [boxoffice@highlandsp Performingarts.com](mailto:boxoffice@highlandsp Performingarts.com). 828-526-9047

• At The Bascom, From Tuber to Trophy: A Dahlia Growers' Talk, 11 am - 12 pm, Free.

## June 1-5

• Vacation Bible School "Camp Yahweh" at Community Bible Church. Rising Kindergarten through rising 6th graders. Register at [cbchighlands.com](http://cbchighlands.com).

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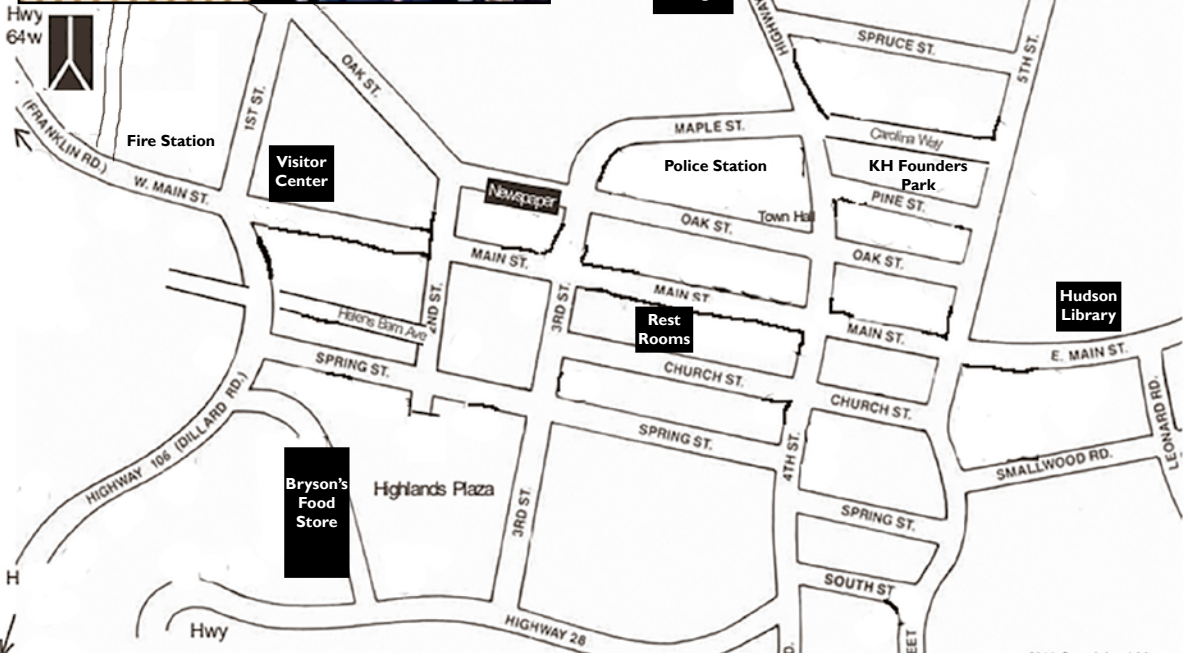
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