

# Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., May 28, 2026

## Highlands FY '26-'27 budget is \$40,517,775

*Property tax to increase 3 cents, fire tax 1 cent and water/sewer rates 10%*

By Kim Lewicki

After several budget workshop meetings over the last few weeks, the final version of

Highlands FY '26-'27 budget was announced.

Town Manager Josh Ward presented the budget as required

prior to adoption, though there will be a public hearing on the budget at the June Town Board

• See BUDGET page 5

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## Highlands Fire Tax OK'd by MC BOC

*2-cent request denied; 1-cent OK'd*

By Kristin Fox

This week, the Macon County Board of Commissioners held another budget work session to work toward finalizing the 2026-2027 county budget. The work session, continued from last week's regular scheduled meeting, opened with a discussion about the proposed fire tax increase from the Town of Highlands.

After a lengthy discussion with Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart and Highlands Town Manager Josh Ward, the board voted unanimously to allow a one cent fire tax increase instead of the requested two cents increase.

• See FIRE TAX page 17

## Highlands School Class of 2026



HS Class of 2026 graduation is Sat., May 30 at 10a in the new gym. Graduates are: Layla Babac, Sergio Barranco, Lillyanna Cambrook, Cheyann Carver, Hunter Conner, Olivia Corbin, Aiden Crook-Jenkins, Heidi Doerter, Jackson Gagne, Conner Hughes, Bryan Jarquin Colmenares, Soraya Lopez, Kristopher Magliocca, Aniah McKim, Gustaf McRae, Jesus Mendoza Tentle, Cayden Pierson, Jaylin Raby, Isabel Ramos Ramirez, Lillian Rutter, Claire Sherwood, Gavin Small, Isaiah Vilardo, Anderson Woods, Anne-Elizabeth Woods, and Claire Worley. Mascots are 1st graders, Emmlyn Green and Harrison Hirschfeld. See more on page 12.

## Highlands is being sued over solicitation ordinance

By Kim Lewicki

On May 12, Highlands Beauty and Art, owners of Wellspring at 370 Main Street, filed a civil complaint against the Town of Highlands and Highlands Police Chief Andrea Holland over the Nov. 3, issuance of a \$500 citation for "solicitation and distribution of free samples."

Attys Nick Tosco and N. Cosmo Zinkow, both of Poyner, Spruill of Asheville, will represent the town Monday, June 1, at US District Court for the Western District of NC in Asheville.

Due to the lawsuit, at a special-called Town Board meet-

• See SUED page 16

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### Where Mirror Lake dredging stands now

This past week, we had a long Town Board meeting that adjourned shortly after 10 pm. It was a long agenda, even with the last-minute removal of the noise ordinance review.

A special meeting will be announced soon to discuss the noise ordinance. At that daytime meeting, the police will conduct an outdoor demonstration of decibel readings, which are currently part of the noise ordinance. I asked the police to develop a demonstration of the actual sound levels currently in the ordinance. Commissioner Weller emphasized that such an experiment needed to be conducted outdoors, where decibel levels could be measured more accurately. After this meeting, the review of the noise ordinance will again be placed on a board meeting agenda.

The announcement of this special meeting will be made 48 hours prior to its occurrence. It will be posted on the



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

town website and sent to those people on the Town of Highlands Sunshine List. If you are not on the list and want to be, call the Highlands Town Hall at (828) 526-2118. Ask to speak with Gibby Shaheen, the Town Clerk, and she will add your email address to the current list.

By the way, I wrote the Highlands Town Hall because we have a new restaurant that opened last weekend called Town Hall. I expect some ongoing confusion with the use of the name.

The first agenda item was Mike Hanson's report on McGill Engineering's work preparing for the dredging of Mirror Lake. His report has been posted on the town website. I sat in the meeting listening to the report and having flashbacks of some 25 or 30 years ago. Back then, Sallie and I would come to Highlands from Atlanta to visit her mother and Buck Trott, her newly married husband. Buck loved living near Mirror Lake in the home they had built in 1984. He would take me around the lake and talk about how they had revived the Mirror Lake Improvement Association. People would come up to us while on a lake tour and tell us how enthusiastic they were about an active improvement association working to upgrade the lake.

Buck would also show me the plans he had developed for dredging the lake. Those plans involved using a dredger to pump sediment to a site where trucks would transport it to a nearby farm or other land. It seemed to be very straightforward to carry out, although Buck admitted raising the million dollars or so would be a challenge.

But Buck had a plan for that, too; he would go to Washington, his old stomping ground as an Air Force staff officer and find the money. He came so close but never got the money from DC. He passed away in 2015, never knowing that Mirror Lake would eventually be dredged 30 years later.

So, as I listened to Mike Hansen's report, I, along with others in the room, was once again reminded of the complex-

## • MILESTONE •







Photo by Kim Lewicki

### A brother, a soldier, a Highlander remembered

At the American Legion Post 370 Memorial Day service held at the Highlands Community Building, the flag given to (PFC) Lawton Arvil Keener's wife Paulette Icenhower Keener Corbin, after his death was given to Keener's siblings, Harley Keener and Wanda Keener Rogers by Paulette's son, Paul. See story on page 4.

## • WEATHER •

Thu, 28-May	Fri, 29-May	Sat, 30-May	Sun, 31-May
			
76°F 57°F	68°F 59°F	68°F 56°F	68°F 57°F
A thunderstorm in spots	Cloudy with a thunderstorm	Cloudy with a thunderstorm	A thunderstorm in spots
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#### Letter Policy:

There is a 500-word limit. We reserve the right to reject or edit letters-to-the-editor. No anonymous letters will be accepted. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper.

#### Obituary Policy

Obituaries are \$8 per column inch.

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**PAT ALLEN**

828.200.9179 | pat@patallenrealtygroup.com

**JULIE OSBORN**

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"We are happy to return this to you," said Zach Claxton of American Legion Post 370. Pictured are Paulette Corbin's grandchildren, Olivia and Alice and her son Paul.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

## A brother, a soldier, a Highlander remembered

By Kim Lewicki

This year's annual Memorial Day ceremony orchestrated by American Legion Post 370 was extra special.

At the packed house ceremony held at the Highlands Community Building due to pending rain, veterans, family members and citizens remembered Highlander Private First Class (PFC) Lawton Arvil Keener, as well as every fallen soldier from Highlands and beyond.

PFC Keener was killed in action Jan. 12, 1969, from small arms fire at the age of 20, while serving in the Vietnam war in Binh Thang, Thanh pho Di An, Binh Durong, Vietnam. He served with the 1st Platoon, Delta Company, 6th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division, USARV.

Posthumously, he was awarded The Combat Infantryman's Badge (CIB), The Bronze Star Medal, The Purple Heart Medal for his combat-related wounds, The Vietnam Service Medal, The Republic of Vietnam Campaign Service Medal, and The National Defense Service Medal.

PFC Keener is listed on panel 35W, line 077 of the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington D.C.

Now, thanks to the work of Highlands School Military History student Nathan Wright, Keener's life and service will be remembered by more than just family and friends in Highlands.

Wright conducted research on the life and story of PFC Keener, who grew up on Gold Mine Road in Highlands and has produced a museum exhibit now ensclosed in the Highlands Historical Society building on N. 4th Street.

After conducting a filmed interview with Keener's family including his sister, brother, brother-in-law, and childhood best friend Jack Dendy and information pulled from local newspapers and various Vietnam memorial websites, he produced the museum exhibit including five posters: an overview of the Vietnam War; a timeline of Keener's life childhood through his tragic death in Vietnam; the U.S. Army's 9th Infantry; his life in detail pulled from information from the interviews he conducted; and video clips from the interviews and cited sources that he used for his project.

Also on display are photos from Lawton's life, and family, his military commendations and prints of newspaper articles from the time period (1967-1969).

PFC Keener was married at 20 years old to his high school sweetheart Paulette Icenhower who remarried after his death to Alex Corbin; they bore two children, Tony Corbin (Crystal) of Manteo, NC, and Paul Corbin of Highlands NC.

Upon his death, Paulette was given the flag from his military funeral but

• See REMEMBERED page 14

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## ...BUDGET continued from page 1

meeting. After the public hearing, commissioners will weigh the comments from the public before adopting the budget for implementation beginning July 1, 2026.

According to Town Manager Ward, there are issues that need to be addressed.

“The Town’s undesignated General Fund Balance had been declining over the last several fiscal years. Major contributors for the decline can be attributed to the funding of several major capital projects, the inability to use the electric reserves to fund capital needs and the inflation experienced over the last several years.

“The proposed ad valorem property tax increase of 13.22 cents per \$100 valuation will ensure the operations of the general fund will be supported without appropriation and provide some additional revenue to assist with capital needs in the future.

“The Electric Fund Balance remains strong, but the reserves have decreased considerably, due to the funding of the critical electric system upgrades currently underway. A large portion of the reserve funds were also used as a loan to support

the water fund balance, something the state no longer allows.

“With the water and sewer rates increasing for the third consecutive year, the funds will be available to service the debt payments to the electric reserve and will continue to assist with building back the water fund balance.

“Beginning next fiscal year, the auditor’s recommendation of an annual schedule of continued small percentage increases will ensure the water fund will keep pace with inflation costs. Without grant funding, only emergency water and sewer repair projects should be considered for the next several years until a healthy fund balance is re-established.

“With the increase in sanitation charges in FY ‘25-‘26, the sanitation department is supporting its operational costs for the first time in several years.

“As required by the General Statutes of North Carolina and The Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the revenues and expenditures presented within the FY ‘26-‘27 budget are balanced -- as presented, the overall FY ‘26-‘27 budget has revenues and expenditures totaling \$40,517,775,” he said.

To balance the budget, Ward said it was necessary to appropriate \$2,955,698 from the undesignated General Fund Balance, \$133,985 from the Water Fund Balance and \$1,177,200 from the Electric Fund Balance.

“These fund balance appropriations are necessary to offset capital project deficits and debt service within each department,” he said.

The current General Fund Reserve is approximately \$3,600,000; the current Electric Reserve Fund is approximately \$3,000,000; the current Water Improvement Reserve is approximately \$4,200,000.

### Budget Highlights:

Commissioners voted to increase the ad valorem property tax rate 3 cents -- up from 10.22 cents to 13.22 cents -- per \$100 of property valuation.

Several years ago, commissioners agreed to temporarily earmark 1 ½ cent of the property tax for street paving projects, which is always behind. But now that 1 ½ cents will be made permanent. It’s not extra, it’s just that 1 ½ cents of the 13.22 cents will be used for street paving/sidewalk projects.

“Resurfacing town streets is an annual

maintenance item, which requires continuous revenue to support,” said Ward.

Property valuations are determined by the Macon and Jackson county tax departments and are based on the overall valuation of \$3,037,119,671.

At Tuesday’s continued BOC meeting, commissioners voted to allow a 1-cent fire tax increase instead of the requested 2 cents.

Consequently, the Highlands fire tax will be increased by 1 cent to 2.91 cents per \$100 of valuation.

The rate is based on an approximate valuation of the Town of Highlands and the Highlands Township at \$6,092,000,000.

The increase means salaries of the six full-time firefighters don’t have to be paid for with the department’s fund balance, which has been the case, but the three new firefighters -- one per shift -- will not happen this year.

The only other increase to Town of Highlands taxpayers is a 10% increase for residential and commercial water/sewer customers, which will be ongoing for a while. Other enterprise fund rates will

• See BUDGET page 10



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If you haven't, here is all you need to know: it follows an English noble family and their household staff across some of the most turbulent decades in modern history, from 1912 to 1925. Economic upheaval, a world war, a pandemic, and sweeping societal change force every character, wealthy and working alike, to adapt or be left behind.

Sound familiar? One century later, Highlands' real estate had its own dramatic run. From 2012 through 2025, our market experienced the kind of plot twists that would fit right into the show.

In the early seasons of Downton, the estate reeled from financial losses, and the family scrambled to find solid footing. That was the Highlands' real estate market in 2012. The national subprime mortgage collapse had pushed even high-end properties to steep discounts. Then slowly over the next seven years, home prices incrementally improved, like a show finding its stride. But the market recovering quietly was only part of the story.

During those same years, Highlands itself was relatively quiet. Main Street closed up by 6:30 pm, and by 7pm the sidewalks were nearly empty. The town, much like the Downton estate in its leaner years, was still looking for better days ahead. Then COVID arrived, our own unexpected plot twist.



John Sheehan, Broker  
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Just as Downton's characters braced for the worst only to find unexpected opportunity on the other side, Highlands real estate boomed rather than experiencing another collapse. Demand surged in ways no one anticipated, and the town was altered with it. Today, Main Street hums seven days a week, well into the evening, in every season.

Numbers tell the story. The average single-family home sale in our MLS was \$673,000 in early 2020. To-

day, that figure sits near \$1,750,000, a 160% increase. Those figures span our broad MLS from Highlands to Lake Toxaway. In Highlands' gated communities, averages range from \$2,200,000 to \$3,320,000. While many homeowners have benefited from significant appreciation, rising values have also created affordability challenges for some buyers seeking to purchase in the Highlands and Cashiers area. In the show's final chapter, the characters don't have all the answers, but the ones who thrive are those who stayed informed, leaned on trusted advisors, and adapted with optimism. The same holds true here. Working with knowledgeable local real estate professionals who know this market deeply is one of the smartest moves you can make.

• *John Sheehan is a Broker at Mountain Life Properties serving the luxury real estate sales market. Stop by our log cabin office at 134 Maple Street, visit [MountainLifeRE.com](http://MountainLifeRE.com), or call 828-239-8814.*



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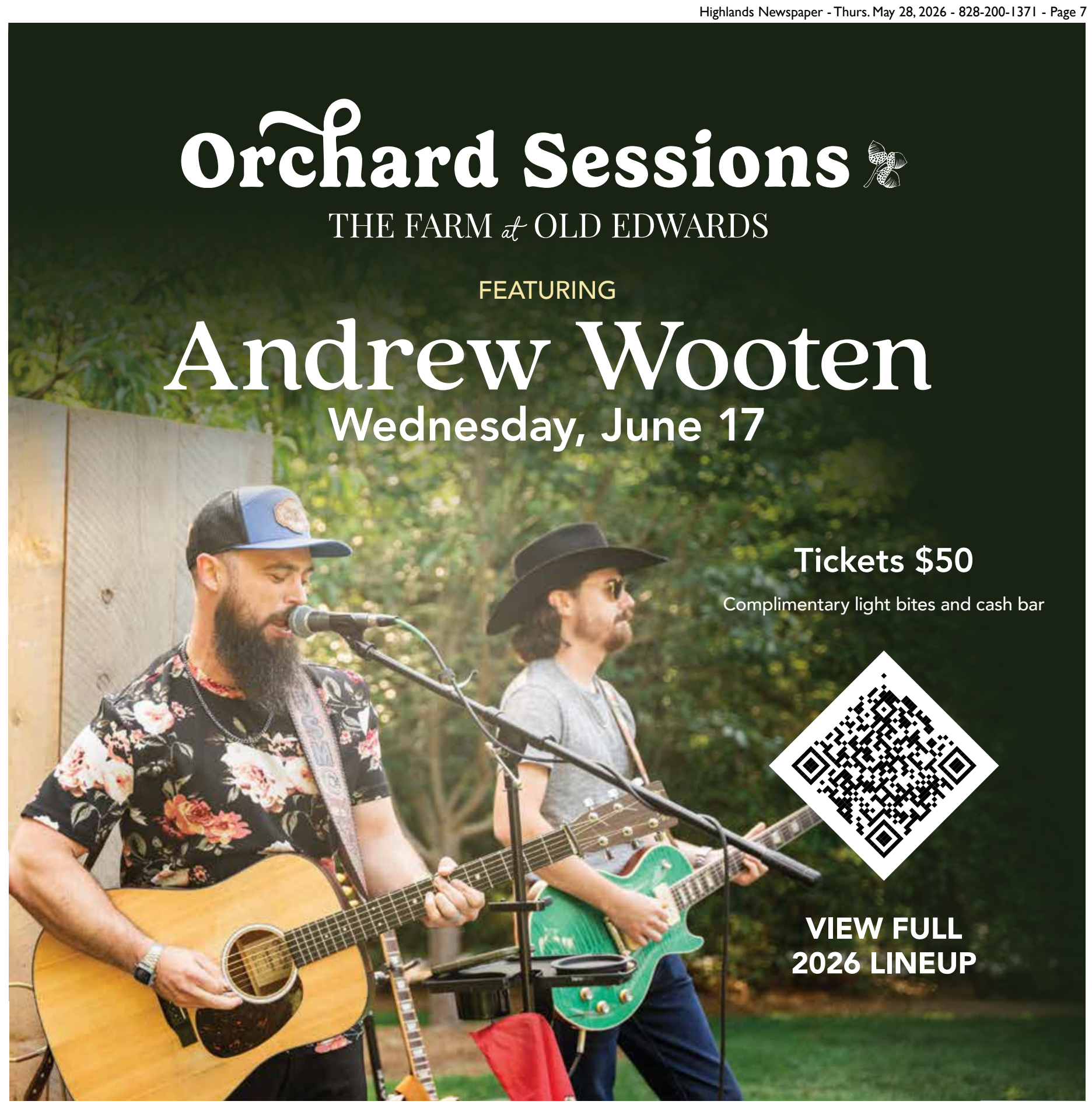
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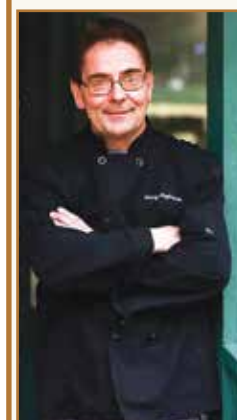
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# • OBITUARIES •

## Marlene Salo



In lieu of flowers, services or other tributes, please consider a simple, meaningful act: take a friend to lunch and celebrate life knowing the Spirit of the Divine will be in your midst. It's a chance to share stories, laugh, and connect honoring Marleen, not with a somber gift, but with a vibrant moment of shared joy. Let this act of friendship and celebration serve as a living tribute, a reminder that the best way to honor a beautiful life is to live your own to the fullest.

Where two or more are gathered ...

## Remember

By Christina Rossetti

*Remember me when I am gone, far away  
into the silent land when you can no more hold  
me by the hand, nor I half turn to go yet turning  
stay.*

*Remember me when no more day by day to  
tell me of your future that you plann'd' only re-  
member me; you understand it will be too late to  
counsel then or pray.*

*Yet if you should forget me for awhile and  
afterward remember, do not grieve; for if the  
darkness and corruption leave a vestige of the thoughts that once  
I had, better by far you should forget and smile than that you  
should remember and be sad.*

# • LETTERS •

## Here we go, again

Dear Editor,

I remember proudly going to register to vote when I turned 18 in my hometown of Rome, GA. After filling out the forms, I noticed a jar of beans sitting on a shelf. With my usual curiosity, I asked about the jar. The clerk told me very calmly, "If a N-word wants to register to vote, they have to guess the correct number of beans in the jar." In shock I said, "You didn't ask me to guess the number of beans in the jar." Quickly, the clerk said, "Of course not. You are not a N-word."

Maybe I shouldn't have been surprised since the department store across the street had two water fountains – White & Colored – one was never washed. The Greyhound bus station had a separate Colored waiting room. I also remember the Black doctor in town being arrested and having cigarettes put out on his back because he attempted to eat at the same lunch counter where I sat as an 11-year-old.

The good news is we saw this unfairness fade through the efforts of many brave Black and some moral white people supporting equality. Then there was the Voting Rights act of 1965 which enforced the 15th Amendment. Among the Black leaders to give his all was Congressman John Lewis. I was fortunate enough to hear him speak

during a Diversity Celebration at Saint Mark United Methodist Church, Atlanta, when I was the Senior Minister there. His example and challenge to get involved in "Good Trouble" touched legions of us.

Then, April 29, 2026, became a day of shame and a reminder of the Jim Crow era from the late 19th century to the mid-1960s. (A part of our history where persons of color had fewer rights, like voting, which were enforced by strict legal and violent means.)

Almost instantly, Southern states began redrawing voting districts with the clear purpose of neutralizing the votes of Black people. This obvious prejudice occurred with joy and full intention. The votes of Black citizens that make up 20-30% of some states are being GERRY-MANDERED away. This is not a Political or Party issue. This is about what is right, ethical and fair. I don't have an immediate answer for this injustice unless it sensitizes us to vote in large numbers to undo an embarrassing tragedy.

In the meantime, I say again, VOTE and seek some GOOD TROUBLE.

**Dr. Mike Cordle**  
United Methodist Minister, Retired  
Highlands, NC

## A successful presidency is not the accumulation of power, but the well-being of the American people

Dear Editor,

Recent election cycles have demonstrated that our country remains deeply divided, with economic factors often determining presidential outcomes. Since President Trump took office, we have seen extreme levels of national hostility, fear and suspicion not experienced since the Civil War. While responsibility for this climate is shared, the current administration's actions and policies are particularly concerning.

The President has disregarded court orders, issued illegal tariffs, alienated our allies, and usurped Congressional powers. His attempts to restrict free speech threaten the foundations of our democracy. His handling of the broken immigration system has been inhumane.

President Trump's attempt to establish a \$2 billion fund to reward political supporters, many of whom are convicted felons – is deeply problematic. Additionally, his

• See LETTERS page 14

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**...BUDGET continued from page 5**

not be increased.

Auditors said the fund has to become self-sufficient without using money for operations from the undesignated fund balance or from other sources.

Due to the rising cost of everything right now, with fuel expenses noted by commissioners most of all, employees are getting a 3% cost-of-living adjustment.

The town will continue to pay employee health insurance but with a 29% increase from last year, it will cost the town a little more than \$200,000 more this year.

This is a benefit the town offers not only attract employees but to offset their need to travel to Highlands from elsewhere.

Capital Expenditures included in the budget total \$20,368,300, of which most – \$15,183,000 – is grant funding for several water projects.

**Total Expenditures**

Capital items expenditures within the general fund total \$2,952,800.

The Administration Department includes \$158,000 to replace the genera-

tor at Town Hall, a replacement vehicle, a study of the Town Hall property and exterior repairs to the building.

The Street Department includes \$520,000 for an excavator and trailer, the paving of streets and parking, sidewalk repairs, road striping, and road salt.

The Sanitation Department includes \$340,000 for the replacement of a full-sized garbage truck.

The Police Department includes \$101,800 to replace a patrol vehicle with equipment and replacement of three tablets.

The Parks & Recreation Department includes \$1,663,000 for the construction of the new playground (though those funds mostly represent donations, the figure must be entered as an expenditure), a replacement vehicle and HVAC upgrades in the Recreation Center.

The Planning & Development Department includes \$95,000 for a replacement vehicle and carryover for the Unified Development Ordinance legal review.

The MIS/GIS Department includes \$75,000 of capital, for the replacement of a vehicle and video server replacement.

Debt service within the general fund includes \$394,000 for the fiber system, a construction loan and \$15,698 debt service for Kelsey Hutchinson Park Stormwater Improvements which was taken out about 20 years ago.

**Enterprise Funds Expenditures for Water/Sewer and Electric Water Fund**

Total expenditures for the FY '26-27 Water Enterprise Fund are \$2,353,985.

Total capital needed within the Water Enterprise Fund is \$200,000, which includes a truck replacement, excavator trailer replacement, Little Bear Pen tank sight gauge, valve replacement, water tank cleanings and pump rebuilds.

Debt service in the Water Enterprise Fund includes \$20,685 for the Lake Sequoyah water intake project and \$250,000 to the electric fund for a past loan to support the fund balance. However, "borrowing" from the electric fund is no longer allowed.

**Sewer Fund**

Total expenditures for the FY '26-27 Sewer Enterprise Fund are \$1,081,967.

This includes \$354,000 for the US 64 Force Main Repairs, Shelby Place lift station improvements, Lower Brushy Face

lift station improvements and Arnold Road pump station roof and debt service of \$56,967 for the past Mirror Lake sewer project.

**Electric Fund**

Total expenditures for the FY '26-'27 Electric Enterprise Fund are \$7,694,200.

This is \$1,678,500, for the Electric Delivery Point and System Improvements currently underway, two replacement trucks, underground fault locator, mulch head attachment, and contract tree trimming.

**Special Revenue Funds**

Special revenue funds for the FY '26-'27 Budget include the funds for the Fire Department and other capital projects.

**Fire Department Fund**

Total expenditures for the FY '26-'27 Fire Department Fund are \$2,457,075 including \$300,575 toward the purchase of a new pumper truck and the total debt service of \$600,000, which is the loan payment for the construction of the main station.

Revenue for the Highlands Fire Department to provide service to the Town of Highlands and the Highlands Township, which includes a portion of unincorporated areas of Macon and Jackson counties comes solely from the fire tax.

**Capital Projects Fund**

Total expenditures for the FY '26-'27 Capital Projects Fund are \$15,576,350. These funds are allocated for new construction projects including: Sewer Force Main Repair (\$300,000) Water Treatment Plant Improvements (\$6,672,000), Mirror Lake Dredging (\$4,886,000), Black Rock Waterline Replacement (\$410,000), Hammond Road Waterline Replacement (770,000), Web Branch Waterline Replacement (417,000), Buttermilk Waterline Replacement (325,000), Chowan Road Waterline Replacement (530,000), Water Treatment Plant Generator Replacement (\$1,173,000), Debt Service for Mirror Lake Sewer Project (\$56,967), Debt Service for Kelsey Hutchinson Park Stormwater Improvement (\$15,698), and Debt Service for Lake Sequoyah water intake project (\$20,685)

Ward says he looks forward to implementing the budget and hopes the town can continue to achieve its priorities and goals of providing quality public services to the community.

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# Highlands School soccer field ideas

*County is still weighing budget which includes Board of Education requests*

By Kristin Fox

At Monday's regular meeting of the school board, Masters Architecture PLLC of Asheville presented school officials with four field design options with rough pricing estimates for the Highlands School soccer field.

## Option A – Current Soccer Field

Option A would include the re-grading and resurfacing of the existing soccer field located behind the school. This option would include field demolition; subterranean drainage and grading; astro-turf for the soccer field; demo and reinstallation of existing covered walkway; engineering fee and architectural fee at an estimated cost of over \$2 million dollars.

The pros of Option A as presented by the architectural firm was keeping the existing track and concession building. An additional pro is keeping the facility on the Highlands School campus, eliminating the need to transport athletes to another field in a different location.

The cons presented included the unknown problems with the condition of the existing field, potential for large cost escalation, interruption of parking area & walkway during construction, potential water contamination mitigation required, no regulation size track and downtime during construction.

Under this option, astro-turf is recommended due to poor drainage. This option also notes the potential for construction of a new concession stand.

## Option B – Current Track Field

Utilizing the track field in the front of the school, Option B proposes a track and soccer field on this location. This option would include the track and concession demolition; subterranean drainage and grading; new concessions building; Astro-turf for soccer field; new 200 m "All Weather" track; demo and installation of existing covered walkway; engineering fee and architectural fee.

The rough estimate for this option also over \$2 million.

Pros for Option B include gaining a 200m regulation sized track; keeping the athletic facilities on site and ability to fix hydrostatic pressure on school slab.

Cons include the potential for only a smaller 200 m track; interruption of parking area and covered walkway during construction; downtime during construction. With this option a grass field could be installed instead of turf field cutting cost by half.

## Option C-1 Zachary Field Soccer Field

This option includes astro-turf for the soccer field, engineering fee and architectural fee. Estimated cost for this option is \$1,164,000. Pros of this option are that it is the least expensive option, and there would be no interruption of school during construction. Cons include athletic facilities not located on school grounds; no regulation sized track and option to install grass field for around half of astro-turf cost.

## Option C-2

### Zachary Park Track & Field

The final option presented was the construction of a track and soccer field at Zachary Park. This option was the highest estimate at over \$3 million dollars due to the necessity to build a 18' x 600' block retaining wall. Other costs would include the need for fill dirt; astro-turf for soccer field; new 300 m "All Weather" track; engineering fee and architectural fee.

Pros of this option would include gaining a 300 m regulation sized track and no interruption of school during construction. Cons would be the high cost of this option, and the athletic facilities would not be located on the school grounds.

The presentation by Masters Architecture PLLC was for informational purposes, and the school board took no action on the Highlands School soccer field.

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UNC-Chapel Hill



**Salutatorian**  
Hunter Conner  
UNC-Chapel Hill



Aiden Crook-Jenkins  
Full-Time Employment



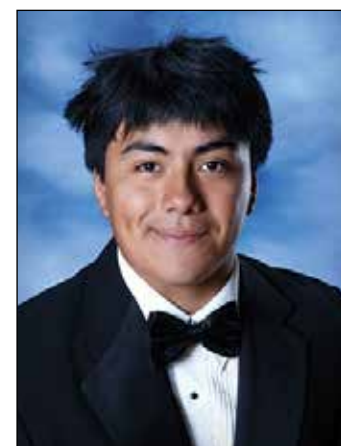
Anderson Woods  
Georgia Southern University



Aniah McKim  
Western Carolina University



Anne-Elizabeth Woods  
NC State University



Bryan Jarquin Colmenares – N  
Georgia Technical College



Cayden Pierson  
UNC Chapel Hill



Cheyann Carver  
Southwestern CC



Claire Sherwood  
Auburn University



Claire Worley  
UNC Chapel Hill



Conner Hughes  
Military Service

# Highlands School Class of 2026



Gavin Small  
Southwestern CC



Gustaf McRae  
East Carolina University



Heidi Doerter  
Georgia Southern U



Isabel Ramos Ramirez  
Full-Time Employment



Isaiah Vilardo  
North Georgia Tech



Jackson Gagne  
Full-Time Employment



Jesus Mendoza Tentle  
Western Carolina University



Kristopher Magliocca  
N Georgia Technical College



Layla Babac  
Full-Time Employment



Lillian Rutter  
East Carolina University



Olivia Corbin  
Southwestern CC



Sergio Barranco  
Full-Time Employment



Soraya Lopez  
Southwestern CC



Lillyanna Cambrook  
Gulf Coast State College



Class of 2026 Mascots  
Harrison Hirschfeld and  
Emmlyn Green

**Highlands School Class of 2026 graduation,  
is Sat. May 30 at 10 am in the new gym at the school.**

## ...REMEMBERED continued from page 4

upon her recent death this past April, her family chose to give the flag to PFC Keener's siblings.

Monday, May 25, American Legion Post 370 presented the flag to her son Paul Corbin who was in attendance who subsequently presented it to PFC Keener's siblings, Wanda (Keener) Rogers and Harley Keener.

Wright said he began researching veterans from the area, specifically Highlands, since he goes to Highlands School, and ultimately picked Keener as the sub-

ject of his project.

"He's from a here, a really small town, and I think he should be remembered," he said, "also, he is connected to a lot of people here."

His history teacher at Highlands School, Caleb Brown said through his school project, Wright had the opportunity to celebrate the life and history of a local family and bring the community together while exemplifying the sacrifices made by America's soldiers ensuring they won't be forgotten.

## ...LETTERS from page 9

proposal to exempt his family and businesses from future IRS audits is an insult to all American taxpayers.

The true measure of a successful presidency is not the accumulation of power, but the well-being of the American people and the strength of our democracy. By these standards, President Trump's presidency is a failure. Economic fairness, freedom and equality are forgotten values unless we send a message in the 2026 election.

**Linda Arnold  
Highlands**

## Let's hold Duke accountable

Dear Editor,

This is a letter to Mr. Sideris CEO of Duke Energy.

Mr. Sideris, I am writing to you about Duke Energy's recent request to the NC Utilities Commission for a 15% rate increase for electricity provided to your NC customers. Your 2025 profit, according to my sources, was 4.9 billion dollars and Duke Energy paid no federal income tax for that year. Correct me if I am wrong. It is unconscionable to increase value for stockholders and cost customers more when increasing income inequality is running our society into the ground.

From 1945 to 1975 (approximately) US businesses subscribed to a stakeholder business plan - customers first, then employees, shareholders, and the general good of society. Many businesses today put the stockholders (and the high-level executives) first and all else a distant second.

Historically, increasing income inequality ends in the collapse of society (A Concise Economic History of the World, Cameron/Neal, among other books about economic history). Project 2025 began with the Powell Memo back in 1971. Some wealthy businessmen want to undo all the progress we have made since WWII and have complete control of our economy and government. Do you want to contribute to this or preserve our society and democracy?

**David Stearns  
Otto**



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## Highlands-Cashiers students graduate from Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School



Margaret Cole of Highlands accepts her diploma from Head of School Jeff Miles. She will be attending Mississippi State University.



Coby Bloedow of Highlands accepts his diploma from Head of School Jeff Miles. Coby will attend NC State University this fall.



Owen Madden of Cashiers, NC, accepts his diploma from Head of School Jeff Miles. Madden will attend the United States Military Academy West Point this fall.

Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School honored the accomplishments of the Class of 2026, its largest class in school history, during the 123rd Commencement Ceremony on Sunday, May 17. Graduations from Highlands-Cashiers include: Coby Bloedow of Highlands, Margaret Cole of Highlands, Wesley Cox of Cashiers, Isabella Edelheit of Scaly Mountain, Owen Madden of Cashiers, and Monica Tretiakov of Cashiers.

The Class of 2026 departs Rabun Gap with a powerful legacy of academic achievement, securing a perfect 100% college acceptance rate into four-year institutions. The 107 graduates accumulated an impressive total of more than 365 acceptances and will matriculate to 65 universities spanning 33 states and five countries. Reflecting Rabun Gap's high-caliber academic curriculum, acceptances included prestigious Ivy League institutions, service academies, 14 universities ranked in the U.S. News & World Report Top 50, and five premier universities from the Forbes 2026 "New Ivies" list.

The Class of 2026 destinations showcase the broad opportunities available to Rabun Gap graduates. Fifty-two will attend public universities, 30 will head to private liberal arts colleges, 24 will attend Georgia institutions, and 11 will attend schools in North Carolina.

# Highlands-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival

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## ...SUED continued from page 1

ing Tuesday, May 26, the town slightly amended the October 16, 2025, ordinance which is the subject of the lawsuit.

In its opening statements, the ordinance states that because the Town received numerous complaints and reports regarding solicitation by individuals and employees of businesses who use excessive and intimidating sales tactics, misleading promises, unwanted touching, spraying of perfumes and mists, and rubbing of creams and other products in an attempt to pressure individuals to donate, contribute, or pay large sums of money to solicitors; and because the town received numerous complaints from businesses located along Main Steet and in the B-1 zoning district where such solicitation has occurred regarding negative impacts to the business as a result of such solicitation of individuals located on public property;

And to ensure the safety and welfare of its citizens, ensure adequate access, manage the traffic flow and congestion of pedestrians and customers on sidewalks and streets, and protect the local economy from adverse impacts, the Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners amended Chapter 6, Article III, of the Town of Highlands Code of Ordinances to further define solicitation and prohibit solicitation in the B-1 zoning district.

The amended solicitation ordinance specifically addresses and prohibits aggressive manners of employees whereby passers-by upon their person or property as a result of aggressive behavior.

Aggressive behavior includes touching someone without their consent, using obscene or abusive language while attempting to solicit; forcing oneself upon another by engaging in close proximity to a person after a negative response either verbally, by physical sign, or by attempting to leave is given; blocking the passage of a person solicited, or engaging in conduct that could reasonably be

construed as intending to compel or force a person to accede to a solicitation; acting with the intent to intimidate someone into giving money, purchasing goods or services or other conduct that a reasonable person being solicited would regard as threatening or intimidating in order to solicit.

Mainly, the ordinance says it is unlawful for any person to solicit on public property in the B-1 zoning district or upon private property without the expressed permission of the owner, proprietor or person in control of the private property for commercial purposes.

Removed from the previous ordinance are all references to charitable and nonprofits being allowed to solicit. This levels the playing field because now the ordinance offers equal protection under the law -- no one is allowed to solicit on public property in the B-1 district.

The plaintiff, Highlands Beauty and Art represented by Attys John Scarbrough of Scarbrough & Scarbrough, PLLC, of Concord, NC and Lucy Inman of Bryson Harris Suci & DeMay, PLLC, of Raleigh, NC are basing their case on the ordinance prior to amendments made Tuesday night at the special-called Town Board meeting.

They contend the ordinance bars its employees from offering free samples to passersby which is a customary means of promoting its goods, attracting customers, and generating revenue necessary to sustain its livelihood; alleges violations of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, including claims of violation of freedom of speech, denial of equal protection, and denial of due process, as well as related claims under the North Carolina Constitution – equal protection and law of the land, and fruits of labor.

They are seeking preliminary and permanent injunctive relief, declaratory relief and damages.

They say on Nov. 3, 2025, two weeks after the Ordinance was enacted, Chief Holland issued a \$500 citation to Plaintiff's employee, who was standing just outside the store adjacent to the sidewalk and offering free samples of products to passersby on the sidewalk.

As a direct and proximate result of town's enactment and enforcement of the Ordinance, they say they have suffered: (a) loss of constitutional rights; (b) lost business opportunities; and (c) monetary injury and will continue to suffer injury if enforcement of the ordinance is not enjoined pending the resolution of the action and permanently after the conclusion of the action.

Specifically, they want the ordinance declared unconstitutional on its face and as applied; that it violates Article I, Section 1 of the North Carolina Constitution and is void and unenforceable.

Furthermore, they want the court to Issue a preliminary injunction prohibiting enforcement of the ordinance during the pendency of this action; and want it to Issue a permanent injunction prohibiting future enforcement of the ordinance.

In addition, they want to be awarded damages, including the refund of the \$500 which they paid, be awarded attorneys' fees and awarded such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

In preparation to counter the suit, the town held a special-called meeting Tuesday, May 26 where a final version of the amended ordinance was presented. Commissioners voted to accept the changes with the ordinance effective immediately.

Commissioners hope not exempting nonprofits and charitable organizations from adhering to the ordinance will satisfy at least one of Highlands Beauty and Art's complaints --violation of equal protection.



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## ...FIRE TAX continued from page 1

Consequently, the Highlands fire tax will be increased by one cent to 2.91 cents per \$100 of valuation. The rate is based on an approximate valuation of the Town of Highlands and the Highlands Township at \$6,092,000,000.

Prior to the vote, Ward spoke to the board in an effort to bring clarity to the request that was proposed.

Several years ago, the fire department came to commissioners to ask for an increase to help build a new main fire station which was needed. The board of commissioners approved the two-cent increase to build the new fire station. Taxes were collected for a few years before the building was completed resulting in the department building a fund balance while the new facility was being constructed. Ward said the town tried to make a balloon payment on the loan but was unable to due to restrictions within the terms of the loan documents.

“The Town Board decided the reason for building a new fire station was to hire full-time firemen,” said Ward. “Having the fund balance, the town decided to go ahead and hire six full-time firemen while the new station was being constructed using those funds. For the last three years, the town paid for those firemen with the fund balance which continued to decline.”

Ward said the proposed fire tax increase for FY '26-'27 was a three-prong request. The first prong to the request was a one cent increase to balance operations covering the costs of the six firemen that were already hired using the monies from the fund balance.

With the approved increase of 1-cent, the salaries of the six full-time firefighters will no longer be paid with the department's fund balance.

The next two prongs of the request were half cent increases for three proposed full-time fireman positions and half the cost of a new fire truck. The half cent would give the town around \$300,000 to pay for the proposed \$600,000 truck with plans to finance the remaining balance.

The three prongs to the request added up to the two cents fire tax increase the fire department and town were proposing to commissioners.

“It is critical to understand that one cent is needed now to balance operations that we have now that we hired those six full-time firemen,” said Ward. “Those six

full-time firemen are critical. The amount of calls we get in Highlands has increased; we are on an island. Our fire department covers 69 square miles with us protecting almost half of the valuation of this county in the Highlands fire district.”

Ward urged commissioners to look at the quick response team needed to meet the demands of the fire department which was the reason for the request of the three new positions. The goal was to have two people called out to respond to calls with one firefighter left to cover the station.

However, because the commissioners only approved a one cent tax increase, the three new firefighters -- one per shift -- will not happen this year.

“We have a handful of volunteers who are dedicated, but that is all we have and they are getting older. When that handful ages out I don't know what we will have,” said Ward. “We are going to have to fall back on these full-time firemen to cover and protect the Highlands fire district.”

Currently, the Highlands Fire and Rescue Department has two administrative positions -- a fire chief and assistant fire chief. Although the two positions are administrative, both respond to fire calls. They are firemen and are listed on the state roster as part of the 19 firemen who make up the fire department.

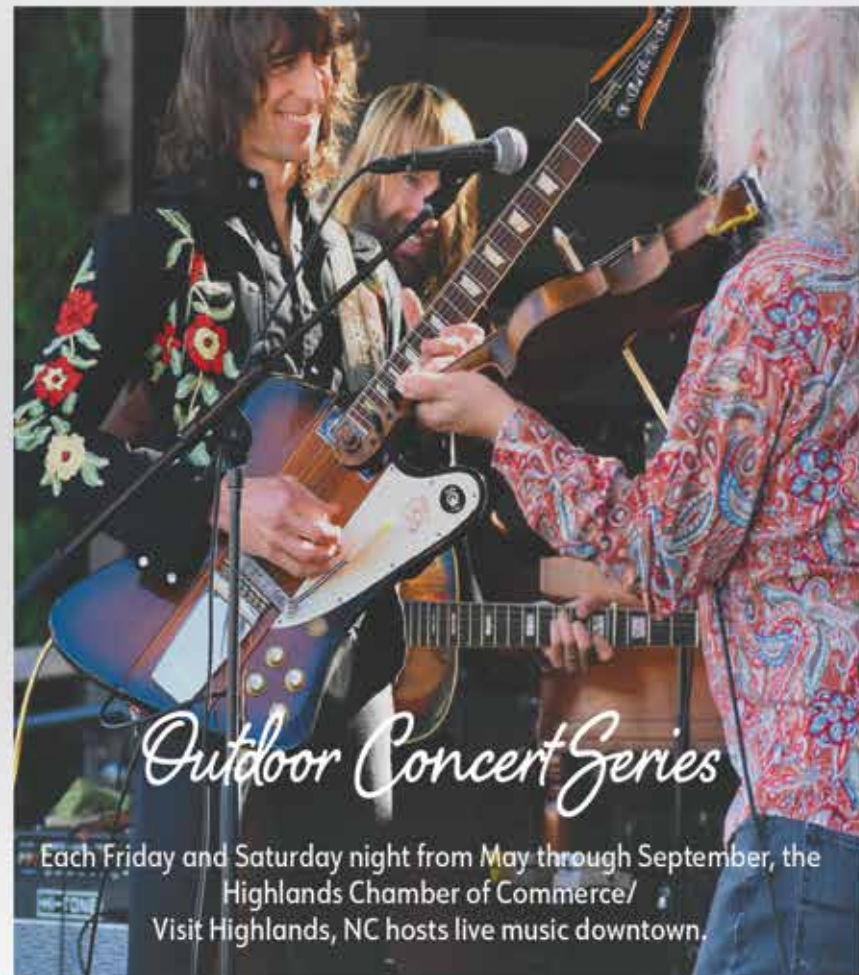
Ward and Highlands Fire & Rescue Chief Ryan Gearhart discussed the need for a new fire truck. Currently the fire department has 2004 and 2006 fire trucks that need to be replaced. The department would like to purchase a new truck and pay for it over two years and then have the ability to purchase another truck over the next two years to keep them in rotation. While the current fire trucks passed a recent pump test, the department also had to make a costly repair of \$10,000 after having a shift issue while out on a call.

Chief Gearhart said at some point those trucks have to be replaced.

“My fear, as a fire chief, is that while we are out fighting a fire the engine of the old truck shuts down or blows up and a guy is inside,” he said. “Chances of a new truck failing you are less.”

Chief Gearhart said he is disappointed that the county didn't OK the two-cent fire tax increase, but he is grateful for what the department got.

• See FIRE TAX page 22



## Outdoor Concert Series

Each Friday and Saturday night from May through September, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/ Visit Highlands, NC hosts live music downtown.

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MAY 22

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# SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING



## What if?

**Pastor Dan Robinson**

Highlands Central Baptist Church

Memorial Day and Labor Day (respectively) form the unofficial bookends for Summer. A total of just over 100 days. These days are promoted in our culture as a time for leisure, vacations and endless sales events. The marketing strategy coming at us from almost every angle is seemingly breathless. Buy Now! Sale Ends Soon! Time Is Running Out!

In 1869 the New York Times warned that Memorial Day Observance “could become a sacrilege and lose its sacred status if it focused too much on pomp and oratory.”

I think we’re walking a fine line. What do you think?

As we think together let’s consider some applications and comparisons between Memorial Day and Scripture:

Our Days are also numbered. (Psalm 90:12). We all have a starting place and we will all have an ending place. Bookends. We know when we started. Only a Holy God knows when our lives will end (John 21:17). Someone has noted that on most cemetery monuments the date of birth as well as the date of death are engraved with only a “dash” in between. On occasion I will visit my family cemetery in Candler, NC. And there on a certain grave marker is my name. Following my name is the year 1953. Then there is a dash and a blank space. It matters both now and eternally what you and I do during the “dash.”

Memorial Day Observance dates back to the Civil War. Some 683 thousand lost their lives making it the costliest war in U.S. history. In comparison, some 420 thousand lost their lives in WW2. But are we not on solid ground when we say that the greatest battle in the history of the world was fought and won at Calvary? There, one man died, the Lord Jesus Christ. But He died so that innumerable hundreds of millions would never have to die eternally. Almost everyone knows John 3:16 which promises that whosoever believes in Him shall NEVER perish but have eternal life. You and I are the “who-so-evers.” Have you given your life to Him?

When the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Last Supper He instructed His disciples that every time they observed this special occasion it was to be “in memorial” of Him (Luke 22:19). Some churches practice this ordinance weekly. Others, quarterly. It is indeed a sacred Memorial and should not be overcome or overwhelmed by “much pomp and oratory.” It seems that some are right on the edge however of doing just that. One wonders at times whether they are attending church or the theater! Something of a performance seems to take place in both venues. Our sense of holiness is being threat-

• See SPIRITUALLY page 21

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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](mailto:jacob@cashiers.church) • 743-5470

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

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

## CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinar

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

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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

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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

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 • [mountainsynagoguewnc.com](http://mountainsynagoguewnc.com).

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

Kippur.

## MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

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

(4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

## OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS

### CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone – 526-2418

Sat. 4pm 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

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## 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 19. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

## Accidents

### May 19

Unit 1 was traveling south on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

Unit 2 was traveling south on NC 106 (Dillard Road), in a turn lane to make a left turn.

Unit 1 driver stated that Unit 2 traveled into her travel path and made contact.

There is no physical evidence to support this claim. Any damage to Unit 1 does not appear to have been attributed to the incident.

### May 21

Vehicle 1 leaving the parking lot of High Country Wine and Provision to make a left turn on to US 64 west (Franklin Road).

Vehicle 2 was traveling west on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

Vehicle 2 hit Vehicle 1.

Both vehicles came to rest in roadway.

This week 2 Citations were issued and 12 Warning Tickets were issued.

## The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from May 20.

### May 20

At 9:41 a.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at a residence on Flat Mountain road.

At 11:38 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Upper Lake road.

At 5:03 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Richie Lane.

### May 21

At 11:16 a.m., the dept. responded to call of a tree done on N. 4th Street.

At 7:27 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

At 7:04 p.m., the dept. was

first-responders to a location on Clubhouse Trail.

### May 22

At 10:28 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Moonlight Lane.

At 11:57 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

At 1:26 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Lower Cliff Road.

### May 23

At 9:16 a.m., the dept. investigated a possible gas leak at a residence on NC 28 south (Walhalla Road). No leak was found.

### May 25

At 2:58 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a tree down on N. 4th Street.

At 10:29 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Oak Street.

At 8:08 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Sage Trace.

# THE FIREWOOD COMPANY



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## ...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 18

eningly absorbed by a consumer mindset wanting entertainment but not transformation.

I hope you had a blessed Memorial Day. I hope you will have a blessed summer. I hope you will come to Labor Day with a sense of accomplishment and readiness for a beau-

## ...MAYOR continued from page 2

ity of this project. That notion of depositing the dredging material on a farm has now transformed into an expensive plan to deposit it at the old landfill at Rich Gap Road. The county and town have entered into a comprehensive agreement to make the deposits in a safe and environmentally sound manner. That short travel distance will save a lot of time and money, resulting in more dredging of the lake.

The bid documents and construction plans are in the final stages of development. Mike will come back to the board sometime this summer to give an update and report. Once more information

tiful Fall. More than all of this however, I hope you will think about a hypothetical "What if." Namely, what if you knew that the other bookend of your life would be in just a little over a hundred days? What would you do? How are your relationships? What is your relationship to the

is available about the dredging operations, the board will hold a public information meeting about the start and completion of the project.

At last week's board meeting, the idea of doing this project quickly with minimal disruption was floated. Mike's response will be that we all want to work as fast as possible, but he believes the efficient use of resources, without hurried time deadlines, will allow as much dredging as possible for the 5-million-dollar grant funding the project. As with all construction projects, disruptions and inconveniences will occur, though efforts to minimize them will also be on the agenda. The

Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know Him personally? Are you ready for the other bookend?

I hope you will consider these things. Because not only is it important regarding how well we begin but certainly how well we finish.

NC Department of Environmental Quality will monitor all phases of the dredging process.

Now, about the dredging costs. If I could have foreseen the future and told Buck back in the 1990s that the dredging of Mirror Lake would cost five million dollars and be limited to only certain critical areas, I doubt he would have believed me. Me too, for that matter. Mayor Trott was always an enthusiastic, "can-do person," whether he was flying a combat mission or serving his beloved community. We should all give him credit for his vision and leadership as the dredging of Mirror Lake becomes a reality in the next couple of years.



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SESSION 2: 7/27-7/30

**FATHER CHILD CAMP**  
Session: 6/20

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# • CLASSIFIEDS •

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## SERVICES

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

**CAREGIVER/PET SITTER** – Veteran, 20 years experience. References in Palm Beach area and Highlands. Call 561-685-0700. (6/4)

**PLATEAU PAINTERS** – Interior and exterior

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## HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS HANDYMAN

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## • BIZ/ORG NEWS •

According to Dan Rupp, President, “We are incredibly proud to support Claire as she takes this next big step toward her dream of helping others. She has been an invaluable asset to our volunteer team, and we know she will bring that same dedication to her nursing career.”

This award is part of a broader commitment by Mountain Findings to support local youth. This year, the organization handed out \$64,000 in scholarships to Highlands High School seniors. Additionally, Mountain Findings continues to endow approximately \$40,000 in scholarships to past recipients to support them through the completion of their degrees.



### Mountain Findings awards scholarship

Mountain Findings, a 100% volunteer-run non-profit organization, is proud to announce Claire Worley as the recipient of the 2026 Impact Scholarship Award. Worley, a graduating senior at Highlands High School, will receive a \$20,000 four-year scholarship to support her upcoming studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The Impact Scholarship Award recognizes a graduating senior who demonstrates financial need and a deep, firsthand understanding of the Mountain Findings mission through active volunteerism. Over the past year, Worley worked extensively alongside the organization's volunteers, assisting shoppers, moving furniture, loading vehicles, and operating the register.

Worley's long-term career goal is to become a critical care nurse, providing vital medical services both domestically and internationally. By lessening the financial burden of higher education, Mountain Findings aims to empower students like Worley to achieve their academic goals and drive positive future change through their careers and life actions.



### Highlands Historical Society awards scholarship

Congratulations to Claire Worley, recipient of our Ran Shaffner Scholarship. Claire will be attending UNC Chapel Hill in the School of Nursing. Dr. Price Kloess, President of HHS, and Karen Price, Scholarship Committee member, presented Claire with this \$5,000 scholarship.



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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. there are three indoor Pickle Ball courts and six outdoor courts. Pickle Ball can be played every Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs. and Friday 10am-pm outdoors for the summer

## MOUNTAIN FINDINGS

• **Summer Hours:** Open: 10 am - 1 pm. 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 to 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" for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. recovery program. Open meetings are held in Scaly Mountain at Grace Chapel, 9915 Dillard Rd., Scaly Mountain each Tues at 5:30 pm and Highlands at the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Mon. at 5:30 p.m. and on Wed. & Fri. at 12 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

## Sun. thru Labor Day

• At the Church in the Wildwood, traditional Hymn-Sing 7-8 p.m. Non-denominal. All are welcome. 10 minutes from downtown Highlands in Horse Cove. A family-friendly summer tradition for more than 30 years. Call or text 919-523-7067 for directions or questions.

## 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

## 2nd 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

## 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)

## 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.

## Wednesdays

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

## Through 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.

## Thurs., May 28

• At Highlands Mercantile, Obagi Day 10ato 3p.

## Fri., May 29

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

## Sat., May 30

• Highlands School graduation, 10 am in new gym.

• At The Bascom: "From Tuber to Trophy: A Dahlia Growers' Talk" on Saturday, from 11a.m. to 12p.m. at 323 Franklin Road in Highlands. Led by seasoned local growers Peggy Boruchow Arnette and Libby Eustis, the free talk is designed to help growers at every level produce a bloom ready for the show table. The talk is free and requires no advance registration. For more information, visit [TheBascom.org](http://TheBascom.org) or call 828.526.4949.

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

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

9047.

## Sun., May 31

• Blue Valley Baptist Church 5th Sunday Singing featuring Georgia Mountain Trio at 10am. 11 Mack Wilson Road.

## Mon.-Fri., 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).

## Fri., June 5

• At Highlands Sotheby's Main Street location, Artist Reception Meet & Greet featuring Christie Taylor 4:30-6:30p.

## Sat., June 6

• Pop-Up Pipers

## Thurs.-Sat., June 11-13

• Highlands Motoring Festival.

## Sat., June 20

• Highlands-Cashiers Film Festival Summer Screening Trail Mix, noon at the Village Green in Cashiers and at 3p at PAC in Highlands. FREE. It follows a 2,000 mile journey from Georgia to Maine along the Appalachian Trail.

## Sat & Sun, June 27-28

• Mountaintop Rotary Club's Art and Craft show in KH-Founders Park.

## Sat., July 11

• Pop Up Pipers.

## ...FIRE TAX continued from page 17

Total expenditures for the FY '26-'27 Fire Department Fund are \$2,457,075 including \$300,575 toward the purchase of a new pumper truck and the total debt service of \$600,000, which is the loan payment for the construction of the main station.

Revenue for the Highlands Fire Department to provide service to the Town of Highlands and the Highlands Township, which includes a portion of unincorporated areas of Macon and Jackson counties, comes solely from the fire tax.

"We can't hire the three new firefighters which would have enabled us to have three per shift," said Gearhart. "We have two firefighters per shift now."

"If we had gotten the two cents, we would have been OK for a few years, but now we will have go back next year and ask for an increase again," he added. "There's no telling what that will be at this point."

The board of commissioners will hold a public hearing on the budget on June 9, 2026 at 6 p.m. Following the public hearing, the board will vote to adopt the upcoming budget. At this time, commissioners did not set any dates for additional budget work sessions.

# SILVER EAGLE

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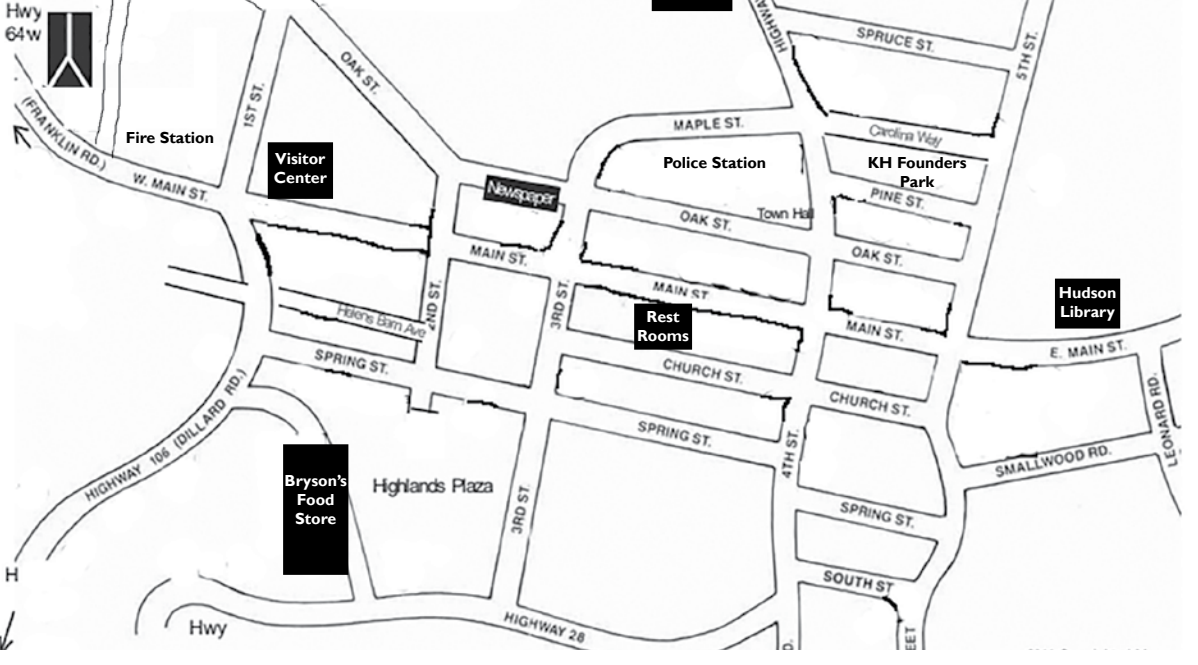
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