Highlands Newspaper

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Planning Board talks land use & housing

By Kim Lewicki

At its second meeting since the Town Board charged it with evaluating and possibly updating the 2022 Community Plan, the Planning Board made quick work of its first subject: Land Use & Housing.

At the October meeting, members thoughtfully discussed making changes to the land use and zoning map to address the need for more housing in Highlands and moving from the terms affordable and workforce to "attainable" as suggested by member Daryl Griswold.

• See PLANNING page 25

•INSIDE THIS ISSUE•

Mayor on Duty	2	Letters	11
Weather	2	Shopping Pullout	14-15
MileStone	2	Spiritually Speaking	22
The Understory	4	Police and Fire	23
Investing at 4118 Ft.	6	Events	26



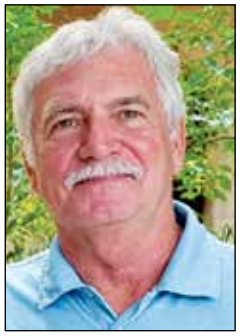
Diedre Breeden
BOE District 4



Stephanie Laseter
BOE District 2



Kaleena Messer
BOE District 2



Robert Perkins
BOE District 4



Gary Shields
BOE District 2

Q&A with MC BOE candidates for Districts 2 & 4

This past budget year has been particularly difficult for the Macon County School System with a funding deficit from the county at 2.7 million. The five candidates – two incumbents, Breeden and Laseter and three new comers – were asked questions the community would like answers to.

Diedre Breeden
District 4

Do you think the school board needs new blood to adequately meet the growing needs of the system?

Let's start with addressing the term "new blood." For our school system, we need board members who are involved in the community, in tune with student needs and trends, and invested in the future of our schools.

Our students are our "new blood" because they are the future, so whoever is serving on the board needs to be passionate about our kids, all of them. I meet that criteria. I have had and still have kids in our school system. I have family and friends who are teachers. I align with the needs of our students, teachers and faculty and have the desire to listen, learn and fight for what is needed. I have worked incredibly hard over the last four years and learned so much. Now my four years of experience plays a part in what qualifies me to serve in this role. After spending a term learning the role, I have momentum building that I believe will enable me to play a part in continuing to pursue success for our Macon County school system.

That being said, a board member always needs to be humble, open to new perspectives and willing to make the changes necessary to meet the needs of our district, regardless of how long they have served. That is what is needed to meet the growing needs of our system.

How efficiently a school system operates depends on funding from the county, state and federal governments. Given the state's wish to cap income tax and property taxes – the fund counties and the states literally use to fund education and other services -- how can the school system not only maintain the status quo but grow where needed?

I hear the uncertainty that accompanies these amendments, however, for our district, this is something we are already used to

• See Q&A page 8

Early voting numbers are climbing

By Kristin Fox

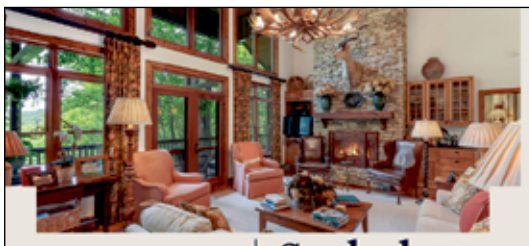
There is a lot on the ballot this 2026 mid-term election.

With constitutional amendments to referendums regarding alcohol sales and the 1/4 of a penny sales tax increase; the NC House seat 120, NC Senate seat 50; MC Commission seats in Districts 1 and 2 and Board of Education seats in Districts 2 and 4; not to mention the US Senate and US House of Representatives, voters could be responsible for a lot of change this election.

Macon County residents have only four more days to cast their vote in the 2026 midterm election.

To date, like across most of the country, voter turnout at the county's two early voting sites – the Highlands Civic Center and the Franklin Robert C. Carpenter Community Building has been higher than at the same point in

• SeeVOTING page 23



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• The Plateau's Position •

• Mayor on Duty •

Far flung energy needs affect Highlands



Highlands Mayor Patrick Taylor

The impact of data centers has already hit the Town of Highlands. No, not the building of one in town. With the current moratorium, the town is revising its ordinances to address this situation, so I suspect a data center in Highlands is a remote possibility.

But let me share with you this cautionary tale about the boom in constructing data centers that is affecting towns, counties, and cities across the nation. This rush to construct data centers for the expansion of AI technology is the largest construction effort in history, dwarfing such earlier expansionary projects such as the railroad and the interstate systems.

Here is what has happened. While the Highlands' fourth electrical circuit on the Franklin Road was finished by the contractor in early fall, it has not been activated and remains dormant. Not to worry, Joe Allison, head of our electric department, says the town is still in good shape for any peak demand this winter since we now have three operational circuits; however, it is frustrating that we cannot fire up the fourth circuit now.

The problem is that the three recloser devices essential to connecting the fourth circuit to the Duke Energy transfer station have been back ordered. The new delivery date is now March of 2027. What is frustrating is that we ordered these reclosers almost a year ago, and we were assured that they would arrive by the first of October.

The town was told that the reclosers were back ordered because of high demand for reclosers and similar equipment in data center construction. Specifically, they require a high-end chip that is now in short supply. So, data center construction has affected our electric department in an unanticipated way. The demand data centers are putting on the electric utility supply chain is enormous, not to mention other areas of the construction business.

This rush to build-out data centers to support this exponentially expanding AI technology has immediate financial impacts that affect all of us, from our stock portfolios to the cost of groceries. Time will tell in a noticeably short period whether this massive investment in AI will be a payout for all of us, for just a few, or for none of us. And I do not want to guess in this piece about the social implications.

Now for some good news. I was doing a routine drive-through in the town yard just recently. One section was full of electrical transformers and other electric equipment. The electric department stockpiles these critical components for our electric grid, so in the event of a major storm, replacements are at hand. Thank goodness we are well stocked; no telling how long it would take to replace things like transformers and whatnot, all of which are in high demand for building

• See MAYOR page 6

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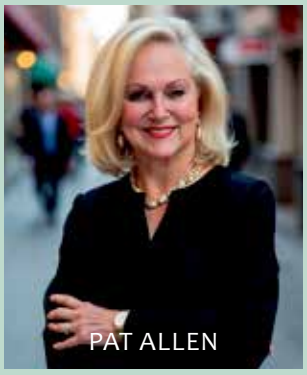
• Weather •

Thu, 15-Oct	Fri, 16-Oct	Sat, 17-Oct	Sun, 18-Oct
77°F / 52°F	74°F / 40°F	54°F / 31°F	54°F / 31°F
Warm with clouds and sun	Partly sunny, breezy and warm	Cooler with plenty of sun	Plenty of sunshine
RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®
High: 81° Low: 51°	High 73° Low 45°	High: 62° Low: 37°	High 59° Low 32°

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Leave the Leaves — It's Chic

Every autumn in Highlands, we are treated to one of nature's great spectacles. The maples turn scarlet, the hickories go gold and for a few glorious weeks the mountains look as though someone turned the saturation all the way up.

And then we panic. Out come the blowers and rakes. Leaves are chased from one end of the property to the other, stuffed into bags, blown into piles and hauled away — as though the trees have spent October depositing trash all over our gardens.



Ashley Hagan Binder
Hagan Binder Landscape Architects

As a landscape architect, I am here to offer a somewhat radical alternative: Leave them.

Or at least leave a lot more of them. Better yet, move them to where they can actually do some good. Leaving leaves is not laziness. Done intentionally, it is good horticulture, good land stewardship and — perhaps most importantly for Highlands — good design. It's chic. The best gardens — particularly mountain gardens — often benefit from a little looseness. A scattering of leaves beneath rhododendrons looks right because it is right. Moss growing between stones looks right. Ferns emerging through last year's leaves look right. There is luxury in restraint.

Walk through an undisturbed forest on the Plateau and look at the ground. You will not find exposed brown dirt carefully blown clean beneath the rhododendrons. You'll find leaves. Overlapping, settling, compressing and slowly decomposing. Over time, becoming part of the dark, rich forest soil that supports the next generation of plants. The system largely feeds itself.

"Leaf Discretion" is especially important in Highlands because we do not exactly suffer from an excess of flat land. Leaves can be enormously useful on wooded slopes and naturalized areas. A layer of leaf litter softens the impact of rainfall, slows surface runoff and helps protect exposed soil from erosion. Bare soil is vulnerable soil. Leaves create thousands of tiny interruptions, catching water, slowing it.

Our native woodland plants evolved with leaves falling around them every year. Mountain laurels, rhododendron, ferns, trilliums, dogwoods, sourwoods, hemlocks and countless other plants are perfectly comfortable growing through a natural leaf layer. As those leaves break down, they return organic matter to the soil. They moderate soil temperature, help conserve moisture and support the fungi and microorganisms responsible for healthy soil. A surprising amount of life spends the winter in leaf litter. Moths, butterflies, beetles and other beneficial insects may overwinter in or beneath fallen leaves as eggs, larvae, pupae or adults. Those insects, in turn, support birds and the larger ecology of our local ecosystems.

Sophisticated gardens are not biologically empty.

Lets talk about Sound. A woodland floor covered in leaves, plants and organic material is acoustically different from bare soil, pavement or gravel. Will three inches of oak leaves silence Highway 64? Sadly, no. But a soft woodland floor contributes to that hushed acoustic character that we associate with being deep in the woods.

The goal is not abandonment. The goal is editing. Of course, clear leaves from places where they are genuinely problematic. Then let the woods keep the rest.

Leave the leaves. It's chic.

• *Ashley Hagan Binder is the Founder of Hagan Binder Landscape Architects, with Offices in Highlands NC & Havana FL.*

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Balancing Act: How luxury demand is reshaping the Highlands market in 2026



Gary Scott, President
Howard Hanna Allen Tate
Howard Hanna Virginia

Highlands, North Carolina, is experiencing an energetic resurgence in luxury real estate activity as we move through 2026.

Tucked away on the scenic southern plateau of the Blue Ridge Mountains, this sought-after enclave continues to draw buyers seeking premier mountain estates and a tranquil retreat from city life.

The most prominent story shaping the market is a remarkable acceleration in high-end purchasing.

Transactions for seven-figure properties reached peak momentum during the third quarter, with more closed transactions than we've seen in the last five years.

Motivated buyers have consistently absorbed upper-tier listings throughout the year, demonstrating robust confidence in the area's lasting value and driving closing figures well beyond prior benchmarks.

At the same time, available inventory has pulled back noticeably from this same time last year. The previous surplus of active listings is being steadily absorbed by this sustained wave of buyer interest. Rather than sitting on an oversupplied market, the luxury segment is regaining its balance, creating a healthier equilibrium where well-positioned properties capture attention.

For homeowners contemplating a sale, this absorption creates an advantageous window to list. With total inventory trimmed down from last year's highs, standout properties benefit from greater visibility among an active pool of committed purchasers.

For prospective buyers, the environment offers a dynamic selection of elite homes, while a balanced market allows buyers time to carefully consider their purchase.

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...MAYOR from page 2

data centers.

One other note. Many people worry about the impact of large data centers in rural areas. Another issue is acquiring rights-of-way over farmland to supply these behemoth structures. The new transmission lines carry such heavy electrical loads that they have to be carried on poles that are 150 feet tall, well above current transmission-line standards. Can you see such towering structures running over the Blue Ridge Mountains in beautiful Western Carolina? I have a problem with such an image. It is that progress-versus-preservation thing I constantly struggle with.



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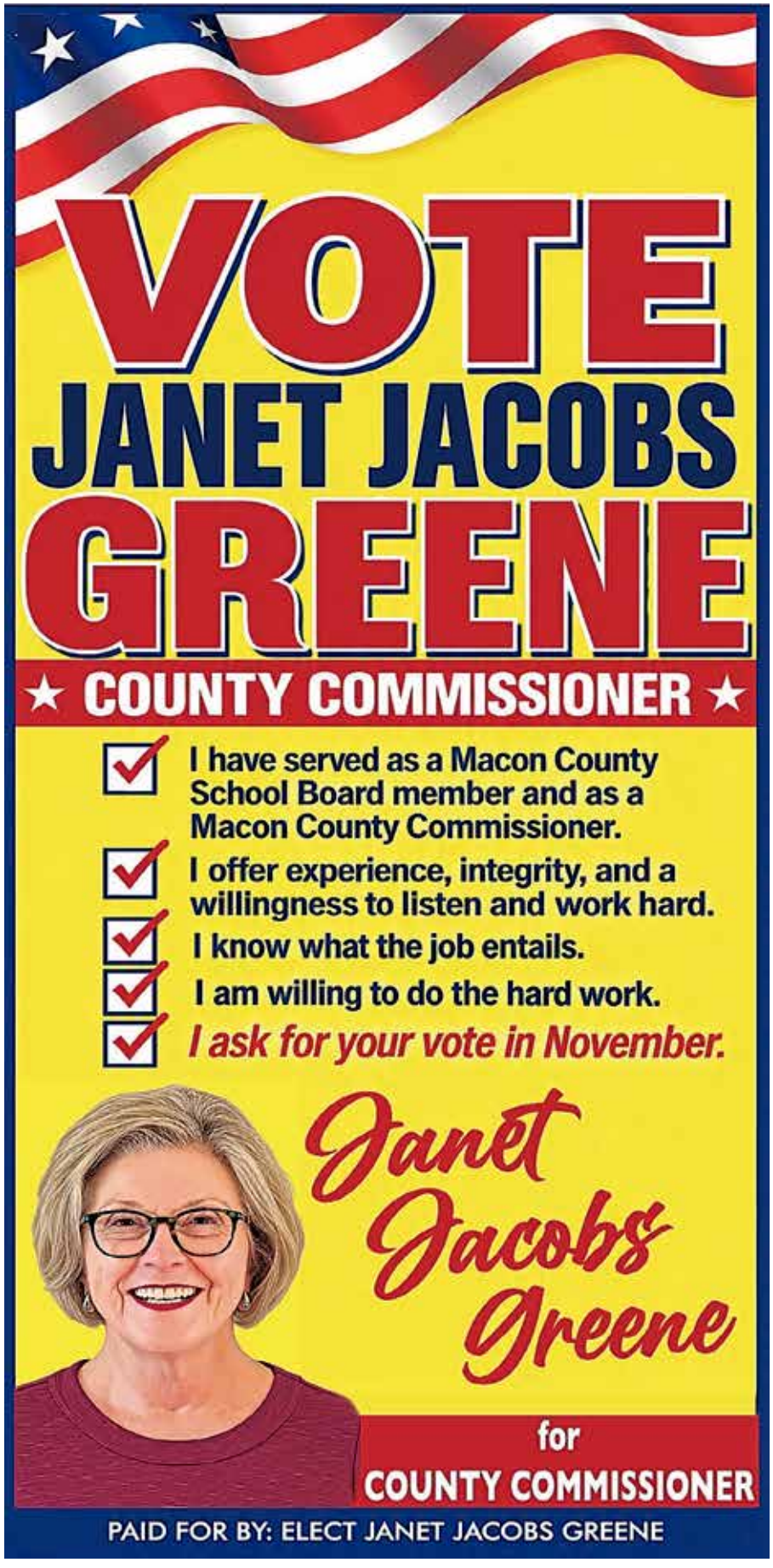
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...Q&A continued from page 1

navigating. As a western NC county, impacted by unique geography and two K-12 schools, we have never fit neatly into the state funding formula. Unfortunately, our state doesn't fully fund education, and we need reform in this area.

We have to continue advocacy for our needs as a district on the state level as well as continue improving the relationship with our local government in order to fill the gaps. I have solid relationships with both our state representatives and local boards, and as I have said many times, my spiritual gift is to be the squeaky wheel. I work continuously to bring attention to things. I strongly believe that's where the power of a local representative is strongest; continuing to bring things into focus that need improvement. As a local leader, we do not have the ability to do much on our own, but when we team up, we have the ability to get things done.

Low test scores and grades indicate Macon County Schools students' educational needs aren't being met. How can this be remedied?

I'm going to answer this in two parts. First, the school "grade'=" system many refer to when talking about our schools being "failing" is one thing I am concerned about because I don't feel it measures a student's success accurately. The school grades are awarded based on a student meeting 80% proficiency and 20% growth. A student can display immense growth in a year but still be "failing" if they have not met proficiency. And yes, we should always strive for proficiency, however, sometimes there are things outside of the measured academics that limit achievement of proficiency and in those cases, I would like to see more emphasis given to the growth occurring.

This brings me to the second part of my answer. One of my passions is improving our schools' relationship with technology. I recognize that technology is a permanent part of our society, but the speed in which we became dependent on it has begun to impact our student academic achievement in a multitude of ways. Traditional skills such as handwriting, critical thinking, and language development, etc. are being diminished because technology replaces or AI does for us. I have been working on supporting our district in finding ways to bring some traditional learning methods back into the classroom. I am the "squeaky wheel" in this area, continuing to explore ways our students' academic success can be nurtured and challenged.

Pre/K has been identified as a significant need in Macon County. Highlands built two new classrooms and a playground for Pre/K, but the school board voted to withdraw funding for the teacher and teacher's aide for the class -- a mere $117,000. How do you think the school board should remedy this situation?

I would love to be able to offer a solid, specific plan for how to remedy this as much as I know the public would love to hear it. However, it just isn't that simple. Pre-K programs offer immense benefits to our students, with ample research supporting this stance. However, NC pre-K is not self-sustaining and we have to have supplemental help. The way things are structured, that help comes from the county.

With us being in a deficit, we have to prioritize. When you phrase it "a mere $117,000," that doesn't seem like a huge amount, and we all definitely have that goal of being able to offer pre-K services in Highlands and elsewhere, but it is a recurring operating expense that we have to plan for annually. We just don't have the funding for it currently. The state doesn't require pre-K services, so we have an obligation to meet the mandated services prior to expanding offerings. I assure you, this remains on the list, and given the benefits stemming from pre-K, this will remain on the list for future boards as its value is more than supported. Our remedy for this situation is to continue working to find ways to address the deficit so we can work toward expansion of services.

How would you address the shortage of activity buses in the school system?

Our board actually just used some of this year's capital outlay monies from our local board of commissioners to purchase a new activity bus. We have had many discussions looking at plans for gradually dedicating more capital money to replacing and/or updating our aging fleet. Ideally, we would develop a rotating plan for purchasing buses that set us up for more success in this area, not leaving us in a situation where we have to turn down opportunities for students because of the worry our buses won't be able to handle the trip. I believe our board has made progress in addressing this issue in particular and will continue to dedicate attention to the matter to ensure progress continues.

Stephanie Laseter
District 2

Do you think the school board needs new blood to adequately meet the growing needs of the system?

If you are asking if we should add additional members beyond 5, I would answer

• See Q&A page 11

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• Letter •

Welcome to yellow and black arrow signs North Carolina

Dear Editor,

Wonder which politician thought this up. Hundreds of signs brighter than any attractive view. A few, maybe on dangerous curves where people may exceed the posted speed — but so many! And nary a sign that suggests using the turn-outs if backing up traffic.

Maybe we should think long and hard about raising taxes if this is the way public money is wasted.

Glenda Bell
Highlands, NC

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...Q&A continued from page 1

no. If the question is whether to replace the incumbent (myself), I also answer **no. I'm** really proud of the amount of work accomplished in just four years.

In 2023, Smoky Mountain News highlighted this particular board for the amount of work accomplished, under extremely tight budgets. Over the course of my tenure, this board has hired a new superintendent, written and received the grant for FHS, built the new wing at Highlands, upgraded the Nantahala septic system, Macon Middle School new track and soccer field, paving projects at many schools... all while doing the day to day work of board policy.

Having this institutional knowledge going into the next term will be extremely useful for Macon County as we approach a new East Franklin School project.

How efficiently a school system operates depends on funding from the county, state and federal governments. Given the state's wish to cap income tax and property taxes – the fund counties and the states literally use to fund education and other services -- how can the school system not only maintain the status quo but grow where needed?

It is going to be extremely detrimental to all public schools across NC, if these amendments pass. We simply cannot run two school systems in NC: private and public.

If we continue to offer public funds for private schools we will face a funding crisis beyond what we have now; and if corporate taxes are also reduced (projected to be 0% by 2030), then NC public education funding will fall to counties with the only option as sales tax or property taxes. It's maddening.

It will be a challenge that our counties have not faced and I sincerely hope all of us are working to explain how dire this will be for County budgets. I have been talking about this at every opportunity. To answer your question-- I really don't know. School boards and Counties will have to work very closely to align budgets with needs.

Low test scores and grades indicate Macon County Schools students' educational needs aren't being met. How can this be remedied?

I disagree with statement. Do you mean individual test scores or school grades?

I am not a fan of school grades. Yes they are an indicator, but the number of factors that play a role are complicated and not at all clear when giving a school a grade. I much prefer looking at individual student growth over time (or year over year). And for high achievers- their growth may be small (A honor roll each year), but their course rigor is considered. There is so much to this conversation that isn't captured in headlines of 'school grades' or low test scores.

If you mean individual test scores- are we talking about SAT and ACT, or elementary EOGs?

A lot we can unpack on both of these and are national conversations around public education and the issue of funding.

Bottom line: I don't like the current system of school grades. I'm a big fan of student growth indicators (year over year); I'm not a fan of using EOGs as any indicator of student achievement; and definitely want to see our trades courses, certification exams for CTE, ACT/SAT prep as important priorities at the high school level.

Pre/K has been identified as a significant need in Macon County. Highlands built two new classrooms and a playground for Pre/K, but the school board voted to withdraw funding for the teacher and teacher's aide for the class -- a mere $117,000. How do you think the school board should remedy this situation?

This year, we faced a funding shortfall of $2.6M from our local funds and had extremely hard choices to make. I'm looking forward to working alongside the County in the coming year to accomplish the goals we've established.

How would you address the shortage of activity buses in the school system?

A new bus was ordered for Highlands last month. As buses age we are able to rotate a few of the oldest into shorter, more local trips so that newer ones are used for longer routes.

The bus itself is only one issue-- with ever rising gas costs, we are (as stated in #2) going to face continued budget concerns. We try each year with capital outlay to address fleet and facilities as best we can and stay within budget.

Kaleena Messer
District 2

Do you think the school board needs new blood to adequately meet the growing needs of the system?

I wouldn't necessarily call it "new blood," but I do believe fresh perspectives are needed. I value experience and the knowledge that comes with it, but I also believe there is a lot of value in having people who are willing to ask questions, listen, and look at things from a different perspective. We need board members who are consistently visiting our schools, listening to teachers and staff, understanding the challenges they're facing, and making themselves accessible to the citizens they represent. I also believe it's important for board members to understand education law, their responsibilities as elected officials, and how their decisions impact students. You can't fully understand the needs of a school system by simply attending board meetings. You have to be willing to walk through the doors, have conversations, and see firsthand what's happening in our classrooms. At the end of the day, every decision should come back to what's truly in the best interest of the education of Macon County's students.

How efficiently a school system operates depends on funding from the county, state and federal governments. Given the state's wish to cap income tax and property taxes – the fund counties and the states literally use to fund education and other services -- how can the school system not only maintain the status quo but grow where needed?

I believe financial sustainability starts with responsible planning, transparency, and understanding where our money is going. Over the past several months, I've spent a considerable amount of time reviewing school budgets, funding sources, enrollment trends, and financial reports. One of my concerns is the continued decline in our school system's fund balance. We can't continue operating reactively, addressing financial challenges only when they become urgent. We need a long-term financial plan that anticipates changes in enrollment, funding, and the needs of our schools.

We also need to make sure we're taking advantage of every available resource, including state and federal funding, grants, and community partnerships, while understanding how those funds can legally be used. I believe stronger communication with our county commissioners and state

• See Q&A page 12





...Q&A continued from page 11

legislators is equally important, especially when it comes to advocating for the unique challenges of educating students in a rural, geographically diverse area such as Macon County.

We have aging facilities, transportation challenges, growing student needs, and teachers we need to retain. These aren't things we can afford to address one budget year at a time. Maintaining what we have is important, but so is planning for what our students and schools will need five and ten years from now. Every dollar should have a purpose, and every financial decision should ultimately support the education of our students and the needs of our district.

Low test scores and grades indicate Macon County Schools students' educational needs aren't being met. How can this be remedied?

I think this is a question that requires looking much deeper than test scores alone. Those numbers are important, but we need to understand why students are struggling and whether the instruction and support we're providing are actually working.

One thing I would really like to see examined is our curriculum and how it's being implemented. Are we consistently using the curriculum we've invested in? Are teachers receiving the training and resources they need to use it effectively? And most importantly, is it actually helping our students learn and grow?

I'm also concerned about whether we're adequately supporting our exceptional children, resource teachers, and English language learners. We need to look at the instructional pathways students are placed on, the services they're receiving, and whether we're giving them the opportunities and support they need to be successful.

Through my own experiences as a parent and advocate, I probably understand the importance of early and consistent intervention more than most people realize. We cannot afford to wait until a child is significantly behind before we start addressing their needs. That's where programs like MTSS, or Multi-Tiered System of Supports, are so important. It's a framework designed to identify students who are struggling and provide different levels of academic, behavioral, or social-emotional support based on their individual needs. But simply having those interventions in place isn't enough. We have to consistently monitor progress and be willing to change our approach when something isn't working.

We also have to listen to our teachers. What do they need to do their jobs well? What challenges are they facing that may be affecting student outcomes? I don't believe improving academic performance is simply about raising a school grade. It's about making sure our students are actually learning, making progress, and being prepared for whatever comes next.

Pre/K has been identified as a significant need in Macon County. Highlands built two new classrooms and a playground for Pre/K, but the school board voted to withdraw funding for the teacher and teacher's aide for the class -- a mere $117,000. How do you think the school board should remedy this situation?

This is something I would really like to look into further. I've reviewed the county commissioners' budget discussions from May, where funding for a Pre-K teacher and assistant at Highlands was included in the school system's budget request. Then, just a few weeks later, the June 30 school board meeting included eliminating that funding as a potential budget reduction of approximately $117,000.

I'm not currently on the board, so I don't know all the details behind that decision. I understand enrollment may have played a part, but I would want to know what those numbers were, what changed, and whether other options were considered. We've already invested a significant amount of public money into these classrooms, so I think it's fair to ask what the plan was for staffing and operating them in the first place.

I know how important early childhood education is and how much of a difference those early years can make for a child. I certainly want to see those opportunities available to our children, but I also believe we have to be mindful of taxpayer dollars and make decisions based on the full picture. This is absolutely something I would make a priority to look into because I believe there are still questions that need to be answered.

How would you address the shortage of activity buses in the school system?

I thought Mike Bale did a fantastic job addressing this issue at the August school board meeting. He brought some very concerning information to the board about the age, mileage, and overall condition of our activity buses, including one in Highlands that may need to be taken out of service because of rust.

I think we need to take those con-

• See Q&A page 16

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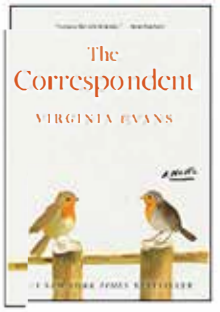
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... Q&A continued from page 12

cerns seriously. Some of these buses are more than 20 years old, and with new activity buses costing approximately $169,000, we can't afford to wait until one breaks down before figuring out how we're going to replace it. We also have to think about the safety of our students, especially those traveling long distances for athletics, field trips, and other school activities.

This goes right back to something I've talked about throughout my campaign. We have to stop being so reactive and start planning ahead. I would like to see us work closely with our transportation department, look at the condition and expected lifespan of our current fleet, and develop a realistic replacement schedule that we can plan and budget for over time. I also believe we need to look at potential funding opportunities and work with our county commissioners to address these needs. Our students deserve safe, reliable transportation regardless of which school they attend, and I don't think we should wait until we're facing an emergency to make it a priority.

Robert Perkins
District 4

Do you think the school board needs new blood to adequately meet the growing needs of the system?

I am not running because I think the Board needs new blood. In fact, I have been watching the Board since February, and they have been doing the best they can with what they have. I am running because I feel there should be an educator on the Board. I taught grades 7-12 for seven years, and I have taught people to be teachers for the last 37 years. Some of my former students are teachers in Macon County. I am running to support them and their students.

How efficiently a school system operates depends on funding from the county, state, and federal governments. Given the state's wish to cap income tax and property taxes – the funds counties and the state literally use to fund education and other services -- how can the school system not only maintain the status quo but grow where needed?

If these constitutional amendments pass, public education will likely suffer. Caps on the taxes that support education can only harm Macon County Schools. These two amendments will limit the capacity of the state and county to provide for public education.

The current board relies on federal, state, and county money to filter down to their budget. At the state level, that has been inadequate. $840,000 of Macon County public education money went to private schools in the form of Opportunity Scholarships (vouchers) in 2025. Some of that money actually went to Georgia. Our current legislators have actually voted to increase that amount.

Additionally, there is currently a statewide cap on the percentage of the school district population of students with disabilities. The cap is 12% of the population. Macon County's percentage of students with disabilities is currently over 16%. Because there is a mandate for school districts to provide services to students with disabilities, Macon County has to fund teachers that should be funded by the state. Because private schools do not have to meet the same standards as public schools, they also do not need to enroll students with disabilities, which aggravates the percentage of students with disabilities in Macon County.

Low test scores and grades indicate Macon County Schools students' educational needs aren't being met. How can this be remedied?

Adequately funding the schools is probably the most important step. Current federal and state financial support has decreased recently, with an expectation that local school districts will pick up the slack.

Part of this issue at the state level can be attributed to vouchers. Private schools do not have to take low-performing students, but public schools do. Since school performance is based on averages, private schools taking only the brightest students could influence

• See Q&A page 20

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• HS Athletics Recap •

Highlanders battle heat, secure soccer win, and prep for hoops action

CROSS COUNTRY

Kituwah Mound — Runner Francisco Gooch braved grueling conditions at the SMC Cross Country Championship, competing under a scorching race-time temperature of 83 degrees. Battling through the oppressive heat, Gooch completed the course with a time of 24:07, securing a 42nd-place finish in a competitive field.



Brett Lamb
HS Athletic Director

VARSITY BOYS SOCCER

Highlands 1, Madison 1

Highlands wrapped up its non-conference schedule in dramatic fashion against 3A opponent Madison High School. Madison held a tight 1-0 lead for the majority of the match, keeping the Highlanders on their heels. With time ticking away and just 1:30 remaining on the clock, Michael Munoz found the back of the net to notch the crucial equalizer. Highlands pressed hard and created several scoring opportunities in the final seconds, but ultimately settled for a 1-1 draw.

Highlands 3, Swain 0

The Highlanders kept their momentum rolling on Monday, traveling to Swain for a commanding shutout performance. Highlands took control early, storming out to a 3-0 lead by halftime behind goals from Rowen Cranes, Jensen Bowers, and Todd Vilardo. Camden Westendorf and Elmer Hernandez provided the setup work with an assist apiece.

With the match well in hand, Highlands utilized the second half to rotate players into new offensive positions and build depth. The defense held firm to preserve the 3-0 victory.

The varsity squad returned home on Wednesday to face off against Summit Charter. More on that next week.

MIDDLE SCHOOL BASKETBALL

The Middle School Basketball team is gearing up for its upcoming season. The team will travel to Rosman on Wednesday for a pre-season scrimmage to fine-tune its play before official competition begins.



HS Senior Soccer Players: From left: Jack Sumner, Stephen Pierson, Blaine Dendy, Chase Kenter, Francisco Gooch, Pierre Damian, Aiden Dendy, and Elmer Hernandez

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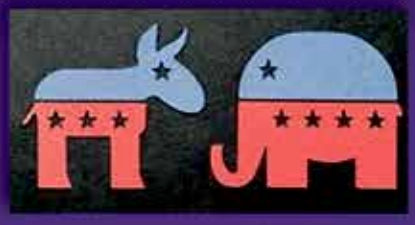
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- Make housing, fuel and food more affordable
- Ban congressional stock trading
- Raise taxes on the ultra-wealthy
- Make medical care affordable for all
- Oppose data centers
- Place stricter guardrails on AI
- Save Social Security by raising or eliminating the income cap
- Increase SNAP benefits
- Raise the minimum wage to $15/hr

These are just a few, but it is clear there are issues our legislators could and should work on to improve life for all Americans.

Voters want to get things done, and they want representatives to cross party lines to do it.

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• Biz/Org News •



Pictured from left are: Bonnie Potts (LLC), Steve Ham (HMF), Cindy Trevthan (REACH), Craig Nixon (HMF), Mary Adair (REACH), Betsy Gehring (CCC), Mark Chmar (HMF), Faviola Olvera (CCC), and Ricky Siegel (HMF).

Highlands Motoring Festival proceeds go to three area nonprofits

The 2026 Highlands Motoring Festival® was very successful by every measure including financial support to local human needs charities.

To commemorate this accomplishment, there was a presentation of the funds to the three human needs charities. Representatives for the Literacy and Learning Center of Highlands, REACH of Macon County, and the Community Care Clinic of Highlands and Cashiers along with HMF volunteers and Town officials were on hand for the official check presentation.

The festival's net proceeds of $105,000 have been distributed equally between the three charity organizations. Highlands Motoring Festival® is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and is an all-volunteer team of classic car enthusiasts. Over the years this team has donated over $865,000 to local charities.

The eighteenth annual Highlands Motoring Festival® was held on June 11-14, 2026. Amazing collector cars could be seen on town streets during the four-day festival which consisted of two days of driving tours, an evening gathering, a Main Street of Classics parade, and two car shows.

The centerpiece of the motoring festival was Saturday's "Classics in the Park" juried car show that attracted thousands of people to experience eighty-five classic cars. The motoring festival has grown significantly in stature over the years, by raising the quality level of the cars by going to an invitational entry process. Increasing the number of show cars is not feasible due to the limited capacity of Kelsey Hutchinson Park.

Over fifty volunteers joined the fifteen-member planning committee to stage the events. The Highlands Motoring Festival® Committee would like to thank the entire Highlands community, including citizens, volunteers, businesses, organizations, and Town officials and staff, without whom none of this would have been possible.

The twentieth annual Highlands Motoring Festival® will be on June 10-13, 2027. Along with other classic cars, the featured theme for 2027 will be the cars of Auburn, Cord, and Deisenberg. Registration opens in early January 2027 at: www.HighlandsMotoringFestival.com

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...Q&A continued from page 16

Macon County Schools' performance. The NC legislature has increased the number of vouchers recently.

Additionally, funding is influencing the situation in other ways. Teachers are finding they can make more money in Jackson County, or in South Carolina and Georgia.

North Carolina is near the bottom of funding nationally, and Macon County is near the bottom in North Carolina. Under the current budget, which was to continue service at the same level as last year, Macon County is $2.67 million short. The Board is now having to determine where to make cuts to meet this deficit.

Universal Pre-K is another step. The earlier we can educate students, the more successful they can be. We need to have the state mandate and financially provide for Pre-K.

Lastly, I would like to make sure teacher input regarding curriculum and what they need is heard by administration and the board. I am very familiar with the training teachers receive, and they are up for the job. We need to respect what teachers are doing with what they have, and make sure they are getting everything they need. Unfortunately, respect for teachers has diminished because they are having to shoulder burdens beyond what they should. Some of the negative things on social media (ie., schools are performing transition surgery, etc.) just keep aggravating things for no reason. In other countries, teachers are honored; we should do the same.

Pre/K has been identified as a significant need in Macon County. Highlands built two new classrooms and a playground for Pre/K, but the school board voted to withdraw funding for the teacher and teacher's aide for the class -- a mere $117,000. How do you think the school board should remedy this situation?

I think universal pre-K is an important initiative. Research shows that the earlier students receive services, the better. However, pre-K is not mandated by the state, and Macon County would be required to foot the bill. The Board of Education and the superintendent are having to make hard decisions because of the $2.67 million deficit. I have not been a party to the budgeting process to address the deficit, so I am not able to come up with a solution. Trying to come up with $117,000 at this time may not be feasible.

How would you address the shortage of activity buses in the school system?

Again, this is an issue that is becoming key with the current deficit. I have attended board meetings where the activity buses have been discussed. They are aging and require money to keep them running and replace them as needed. Until more funding comes to the school district, this may be a continuing problem.

Gary Shields
District 2

Do you think the school board needs new blood to adequately meet the growing needs of the system?

I feel my experience of 37 years in education and 29 of those years in the Macon County School system with 21 years as the Principal of Franklin High School, allows me to have historic knowledge. With this experience, I retired in 2010 and chose to run for the BOE and won a 4-year term that ended in 2014. In 2014, I chose to become a Macon County Commissioner and in November, I will be completing my 12th year as a Macon County Commissioner and have been the liaison to the Macon County Board of Education for these 12 years.

I feel that my liaison experience for the past 12 years will allow me to have a shorter learning curve and due to AI and a new high school and other capital and current expenses needs, this NEW BLOOD will allow the BOE needs to move quicker and leaving the Macon Commissioner Board will allow me to have historic knowledge to problem solving.

Given the state's wish to cap income tax and property taxes – the fund counties and the states literally use to fund education and other services -- how can the school system not only maintain the status quo but grow where needed?

How efficiently a school system operates depends on funding from the county, state and federal government.

No truer words have been spoken about the three funding sources. These three funding sources are critical to our schools. We all know if a funding source(s) become nonexistent, we have to depend on grants and or our local sales and property taxes. It is essential that the county government board and local school board work and prioritize together.

Low test scores and grades indicate Macon County Schools students' educational needs aren't being met. How can this be remedied?

The BOE has the responsibility to become knowledgeable about student progress and seek the RHYME AND REASON for this deficiency and seek answers via home and school needs. I am a firm believer that our nonprofits are not being

• See Q&A page 25

• Biz/Org News •



From left: Rebecca Horowitz, Madison Owenby, Johanna Fein, Tina Rogers, Mayor Patrick Taylor and Amy Ramey.

95 years old and growing

The staff of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce was honored to celebrate its 95th anniversary on October 21, 2026, alongside Mayor Patrick Taylor, who presented an official proclamation recognizing Support Your Local Chamber of Commerce Day.

Since 1931, the Chamber has proudly supported local businesses, strengthened community connections, and helped make Highlands a wonderful place to live, work, and visit. We sincerely thank Mayor Taylor for recognizing the important role the Chamber plays in our community and are grateful for 95 years of support. We look forward to continuing this work for many years to come.



From left: Rotarian Robert E. Smith, Rotary District Governor Karolyn W. Killian and Josh Bryson, Rotary Club of Highlands President, Josh Bryson.

Rotary District Governor Karolyn W. Killian recently awarded Highlands Rotarian Robert E. Smith a Roger Ackerman Circle Pin for his recurring donations to the CART Fund (Coins for Alzheimer's Research Trust). The Circle is named in honor of Roger Ackerman, the driving force behind the creation of Rotary's CART Fund in 1995.

KARL GILLESPIE

As a fifth generation Maconion, small business owner and farmer, I understand the unique needs of our district. I am proud to be from Western North Carolina and it has been my honor to represent you in the North Carolina House.

We have delivered record funding for new schools, fire and EMS, water and sewer, community colleges, record raises for teachers, law enforcement and state employes. And all while lowering your personal income tax rate to 3.99% .

I am running again to represent NC House District 120, which includes Cherokee, Clay, Graham, and Macon Counties.

My priorities are serving this district by providing responsive constituent services, honest representation, and upholding our mountain values.

I humbly ask for your consideration and your vote.

Thank you,

Karl Gillespie



N★C HOUSE
DISTRICT 120

Paid for by the Committee to Elect Karl Gillespie

Spiritually Speaking



Seasonal metaphors in a 'seasonal town'

Sr. Pastor
Gary Hewins
Community Bible Church

In the early '90s, there was a popular television show that took place in rural Alaska. "Northern Exposure" ran for just over five years. The show opened with a moose walking down Main Street. In one episode, the townspeople gathered in early November to make projections for the upcoming winter. Each resident was boldly announcing their goal for the number of pounds they felt like they needed to gain as chilling breezes were quickly ushering in frigid winds. Warmth is at times more important than vanity.

While we in Highlands have no moose, we do have an occasional bear on Main Street. While we are no arctic tundra, we certainly do experience seasonal shifts. Perhaps you, too, put on a few pounds each winter? I'll confess to that for sure. We are deemed by many to be a seasonal town that swells in some seasons with seasonal visitors living in seasonal homes. These seasonal neighbors and friends seemingly evaporate about this time of year only to return to their less seasonal other lives. We on the other hand, remain. We tend to down shift, resting more, enjoying cozy fires and the acorns we gathered for many months previous. We after all are Highlanders.

Seasons matter. Seasons change. Seasons test us and seasons make life so very interesting. What season of life are you in? Are you storing up or winding down? Are you in a season of preparation or a season of execution?

In the fall of 1965, the Birds released their highly popular single titled Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There is a Season). Whether you rely on the wisdom of Solomon in the third chapter of Ecclesiastes or turn to the Birds for life advice is no matter, each work of art in this case originated with our Creator who longs to weather each season with us.

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens…

*…a time to be born and a time to die…*May you know your maker and the tender care in which he formed you. May you live a life worth dying for.

…a time to plant and a time to uproot… May you be rooted in a faith in Christ that helps you endure the seasonal storms of life.

*…a time to kill and a time to heal…*May you willingly die to self as you remain an agent of healing in those who come your way.

*…a time to tear down and a time to build…*When your thoughts and attitudes need renovation, may the Lord help you remodel the inner motivations of your heart.

*…a time to weep and a time to laugh…*May you become good at mourning, for it is the blessedness of mourning that ushers in comfort. May the Lord laugh along with you, may you giggle more than fret.

…a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them… May

• See SPIRITUALLY page 25

• Places to Worship •

BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor 706-782-3965
Sundays: School:10 a.m. , Worship:11
Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7p
5th Sunday Singing featuring Georgia Mountain Trio;
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
Senior Pastor: Rev.Amy Spivey
Assoc. Pastor: Rev.Wonyeong Lee828-743-5298
Sundays: School at 9:30;Worship & Kids 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
743-5470 • www.cashiers.church
Sun. 10:45a;Wed Study5:15p supper and childcare.

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

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH
Pastor Jim Kinard
Sundays: School:10 a.m.;Worship:11a.m.
1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7.p.m.
Wednesdays –Supper at 6 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685
3645 Cashiers Rd. Highlands. NC • Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins
Sun: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am
Wed.:Youth 5:30-7pm;Women's Bible Study: Mon. 4:30pm,Tues. 10am; Men's Bible Study:Wed. & Thurs. 7am @ Zookeeper

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION
Rev.W. Bentley Manning, Rector • 526-2968
5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org
Sunday: Rite I, spoken, 8 am in Chapel, Rite II with Choir 10:30 am in Sanctuary,Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel,
Morning Prayer: Mon-Thurs 8:30 am in Chapel

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS
828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org
Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 220 Main Street, Highlands
Sun.:Worship 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study 9:30 am
Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am;Women's 10:30 am

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rev. Emily Wilmarth, pastor, Rev. Kelley Connelly Asso. Pastor
828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org
Sun.:Adult Ed.: 10a;Worship 11a.;Tues: Men's Group 10a;
Wed: Bell Choir 4p. Chancel Choir:5:30p

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH
(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)
Sunday School:10 am.Worship Service:11 am

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS
Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship
242 Hwy 107N. 1/4 miles from Crossroads in Cashiers
www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814
Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

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

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

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

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376
In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services
909a Bluegrass and 11a Traditional
www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA
2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741
Rev. Ken Langsdrof
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.
Rabbi led service 3rd Saturday AM, 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 thru 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
Bazaar Barn outreach is open Fri & Sat. 11am-3pm

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP
85 Sierra Drive. Franklin • 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 Oct. 9. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

• Over the week, officers issued 5 Citations and 27 Warning Tickets.

Oct. 19

• At 11:05 p.m., Bailey Spring Schmitt, 24, of Clayton, GA, was arrested for DUI in Highlands Plaza. She was issued at $600 secured bond. Her trial date is Nov. 5.

Oct. 21

• At 5 p.m., officers were notified about a lost necklace valued at $24,000 that was left in a room at Old Edwards Inn.

Oct. 23

• At 4:19 p.m., officers responded to a call of a suspicious person in Subway in Highlands Plaza.

• At 9:30 p.m., Karis Lael Stephenson, 26 of Old Fort, NC, was arrested for DUI, Driving left of center while impaired and resisting arrest when pulled over on Memorial Park Drive and US 64 east. She was issued a $1,400 secured bond. Her trial date is Nov. 19.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Oct. 20

Oct. 20

• At 9:17 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at the hospital.

• At 6:30 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Lucerne Drive.

• At 11: 15 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Holly Tree Lane.

Oct. 21

• At 1:08 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cobb Road.

• At 4:16 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Billy Cabin road.

• At 7:56 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on N. 4th Street.

Oct. 22

• At 8:19 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD.

• At 8:28 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clearview Lane.

Oct. 24

• At 1:53 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at Skyline Lodge.

• At 7:41 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Cullasaja Club Drive.

At 7:56 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at Skyline Lodge.

• At 8: 58 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Dendy Orchard Road.

• At 9:53 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Skyline Lodge Road.

Oct. 25

• At 7:49 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cheney Lane.

• At 6:31 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a chimney fire at a residence on Falls Drive West.

Oct. 26

• At 3:49 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Falls Drive West.

• At 8:20 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Skyline Lodge Road.

• At 9:33 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Woodland Ridge Drive.

...VOTING continued from page 1

the 2022 midterm election.

As of Tuesday night, when the early voting polls closed at 7 p.m., a total of 1,005 ballots had been cast at the Highlands one-stop voting and 6,708 ballots cast at the Board of Election (Franklin community building) one-stop site – a total of 7,713.

Comparing votes cast at the early voting sites Tuesday night, a week before Election Day in the 2022 midterm election, a total of 6,148 ballots were cast at both sites.

Totals do not include absentee ballots that won't be calculated until Election Day.

Voters have three more days to take advantage of early voting Thursday, October 29th and Friday, October 30th from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, October 31st from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Early voting will end on Saturday, October 31st at 3 p.m.

After Saturday, voters who have not voted at the early voting polls, will cast their vote on election day at their assigned precinct.

On Tuesday, November 3rd, the early voting one-stop sites will become the Highlands Precinct and the Franklin community building will become the Union Precinct.

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 3 from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Election Day is always held on the first Tuesday of November after the first Monday in November.

Absentee ballots must be returned by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

If you are unsure of your polling place, call the Macon County Board of Elections at (828) 349-2034.

The county canvass, the official certification of the county election results, will be held on Friday, November 13th at 11 a.m.







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We're proud to be a family-owned company with 43 years in the business, and even prouder to now serve the Highlands community.
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...PLANNING continued from page 1

"Not everyone working here, wants to live here so it's not just about what someone can afford," he said.

Though conditional zoning is the current way to allow more structures on a parcel – for instance changing a B3 zone to a B1-conditionall zone like was done for Eight on Oak – the group focused on changing the zoning of large R1 parcels to a new R4 zoning designation and allow more development per parcel while still being mindful of the underlying watershed built-upon requirements.

For instance, in R4, instead of one structure per one acre, maybe four per acre would be allowed, even suggesting voluntary annexation of property if it laps over the town line into the county.

If more structures are allowed on a parcel, builders might be enticed to do more on the property without having to inflate prices -- with a denser criteria, more housing options would be available, they said.

"This would give developers more incentive to do higher density and offer a variety of housing," said John Muir.

Town Planner Michael Mathis said if the Planning Board wants the town to consider a new R4 zone, it makes the recommendation, the Town Board considers it and then it charges the Planning Board with coming up with the standards associated with the new zone.

Accessory Building Units (ADUs) were also discussed.

Currently, ADUs are allowed in Highlands R1 and R2 zones if there is enough property and only if they are attached to the primary structure either physically or with a breezeway.

This has stymied the building of ADUs because not everyone wants an ADU attached to their home and in some cases, particularly in R2 zones, the lots are too small as currently regulated to fit ADUs.

"With changes, ADUs could be used as long-term rentals," said Muir.

But Mathis said the town can't make regulations based on the use of the property.

"You can't tell someone what they have to do with the structure or tell them they have to sell it for a certain amount," he said.

The group also expressed the need for more mixed use areas along the corridors into town – specifically, US 64 east (Cashiers Road), NC 106 (Dillard Road) and NC 28 (Walhalla Road.)

"Not all commercial businesses need to be in town," said Muir. "You don't need an auto repair place downtown."

Short-term Rentals were brought up by a couple of board members, but Chairman Chris Wilkes said there was no need to rehash what has already been addressed and that regulations are in place.

Muir agreed saying their purpose is to consider future land uses.

The meeting wrapped up outlining several Action Items: To create a new R4 zon-

• See PLANNING page 26

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 22

you collect with gratitude and zealously disburse with joy and generosity. May what you "own," never own you.

*…a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing…*Being alone isn't the same as being lonely. There is a time for companionship and a time for solitude. Each matter.

…a time to search and a time to give up… Always seek your Maker more than what your Maker can do for you. Some of the best victories are won through surrender. The battle is often more His than ours.

... a time to keep and a time to throw away… There are certainly seasons to cherish and there too are those when we really need to take out the trash.

…a time to tear and a time to mend… Some things and some people will rend your hearts, God is near to those who are crushed in spirit and brokenhearted. He is your primary "Mender".

…a time to be silent and a time to speak… Someone in your life desperately needs an active listener in their life. May you speak most often when it is an improvement on silence.

…a time to love and a time to hate… Our Lord gives us license to hate but one thing…" sin." Perhaps hating sin is a luxury we too seldom take advantage of?

…a time for war and a time for peace… The skirmishes and wars within us drown out the still, small voice of our Lord, don't they? May you enter a season of sensitivity to His voice and enjoy a gentle and medicinal peace.

There is no greater decision in life than that of coming to faith in Christ.

It was the fall of man that elicited Christ's desolate winter on the cross which led to His death. It was He who did spring from death into new life only to provide you with the newness of eternal life. In the heat of the summers of your life, may you know His desire to walk with you in every season of your life.

...Q&A continued from page 20

sought out enough to help families and schools with their expertise.

Pre/K has been identified as a significant need in Macon County. Highlands built two new classrooms and a playground for Pre/K, but the school board voted to withdraw funding for the teacher and teacher's aide for the class -- a mere $117,000. How do you think the school board should remedy this situation?

My experience with Pre/K is that the state won't adopt this program due to the Capital expansion that will occur. Many of us remember our 1st grade class and when the K-12 system was adopted, more teachers and additional capital projects were mandated and the state was mandated to build these additions and if Pre/K becomes mandated, our educational capital and current expenses will be passed on to the voters.

How would you address the shortage of activity buses in the school system?

Due to this being a funding question, I would need to update myself as a board member regarding the use of Activity Buses for school trips. Should there be school trips reductions via miles and should AM and PM trips be reviewed regarding emergency necessities. Costs and trip necessities should be reviewed during fuel shortages, etc. Parents may be encouraged to be careful drivers for short distances of trips especially weekends or athletic events after school. Activity Bus usage can be viewed through cost and distance and educational necessities priorities.

• CLASSIFIEDS •

HELP WANTED

Lupoli Construction is looking for a quality candidate to fill our Office Manager/Executive Assistant position. Outgoing personality, extreme professionalism, and polished written and verbal skills are required, knowledge of the construction industry is a plus. Must be highly organized and proactive, able to manage multiple ongoing tasks. Compensation based on experience and skill level. Year-round position. E-mail regina@lupoliinc.com (st. 10/29)

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COTTAGE ON LAKE BURTON $129,500 - North Georgia Mountains. 1br/1ba. 1 year old with modern design, all appliances and furniture. Beautiful gated community. www.sugarmillcreek.com Tel: 912-222-2448



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1.06 AC LOT ON 8900 Buck Creek Rd. $79,900. 828-421-0124 (st. 7/9)

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PLATEAU PAINTERS – Interior and exterior painting, pressure washing, decks, and sanding and staining wood floors. Division of Chatlos Construction. Fully insured. Free estimates. Call Mike at 828-200-4071. (6/25)

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NEED FURNITURE MOVED OR ANYTHING HAULED AWAY? Call or text James of Going Gone at 828-421-2655. (7/30)

• Highlands Area Events •

POOL SCHEDULE

• Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri. 6am-9:45am, and Saturday 10am-11pm - 6 lanes. Water Aerobics: 18 y+ Mon.-Fri. 10-11am with Karen Chambers. Adult Swim: 18y+ only. Weekend public swim: Sat., 11am-6pm and Sun., 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

MTN FINDINGS

• Open: 10 am - 1 pm. Thurs-Sat.. Spruce Street. 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 at Grace Chapel, 9915 Dillard Rd., Scaly Mountain each Tues & Sat at 5:30 pm;

• In Highlands at the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Mondays at 5:30 p.m. and a NEW WOMENS'S GROUP Thursdays at 5:30 pm; and on Wednesdays & Fridays at 12:00 noon.

• Open in-person meetings are also held in Cashiers at the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library, 249 Frank Allen Rd. on Sundays at 5 pm, on Tuesdays at 7 pm, on Friday at 5:30 pm and on Saturday at 9 am. For more information please visit our website www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of A.A. 24/7 call our HELP Line 828 349-4357

Mondays

• GED Classes at the Literacy & Learning Center 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Mon.& Thurs.

• At First Presbyterian Church, ArtSpace is open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The next exhibit will start in mid-August. For information contact fpch-kelley@gmail.com

Monday & Friday

• Karate: Build confidence, focus, and fitness with Karate! Rick Yinger will be offering classes Monday and Friday at 5:15pm. Call 828-421-3119 for more information.

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.

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

4th Mondays

• Highlands Planning Board meeting 5:30 p.m., in the Community Building.

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

Tuesdays

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

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

Tuesdays & Thurs.

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

• 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 10a-noon 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. Free and open to the public.

2nd Wednesdays

• Highlands Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting at 5:30 in the Community Building

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.

3rd Thursdays

• Highlands Town Board meeting 7 p.m., in the Community Building.

3rd Saturdays

• Greenway Workday begins at 9a to noon at the Rec Park.

• 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 or just join us at 9am.

Thurs., Oct. 29

• Highlands Soccer Field Town Hall meeting, 6-7 in the Community Building next to the ballfield. Community input on future of the field is wanted.

Fri., Oct. 30

• At the Highlands Biological Center, Creepy Critter Crawl, 9-10a. Meet at 111 Lower Lake Rd. FREE. No registration.

• At the Sky Valley Scaly Mountain Fire Dept. on Hale Ridge Road, Trunk or Treat dinner and haunted hallway 6-9 p.m.

• HCP presents a free holiday show – Orson Welles' War of the Worlds 1938 radio script at 7pm at the Martin-Lipscomb Theatre on Chestnut Street.

Sat., Oct. 31

• Halloween on Main, 6-8 p.m. Trick-or-Treating, hot dogs and Hot chocolate. Live music – 64 and Down, High 5 and DJ Mike Murphy.

Sat., Nov. 7

• Highlanders are invited to attend a Day of Hope, Strength & Connection on Saturday from 10a-3p to learn about Stage4Hope and its Wellness Retreats. For information and to register call 833/402-8391.

Sat., Nov. 21

• Highlands Farmers Market in the Rec Park 10a to 3p.

• A community drum circle will be held Saturday from 6-8 p.m., at the Macon County Public Library. People of all ages are invited to participate. Bring your hand drums and rhythm instruments or use one of ours. In mild weather we drum outdoors so bring a lawn chair.

Sun., Dec. 6



• "Papertown," is the opening film of the HC Film Fest Prelude at 4 p.m. at the PAC big screen in Highlands. It was "The Best Documentary" winner at the 2026 HC Film Festival. The film follows the closing of the Canton paper mill and what it means for the people of Haywood County and WNC. Tickets are $20 at www.highlandsperformingarts.com/events-tickets or call 828-526-9047. Parents of children in area schools, $10 per adult.

Sat. Dec. 12

• Highlands Farmers Market in the Rec Park 10a to 3p.

...PLANNING from page 25

ing district to allow higher density development; to re-evaluate ADU standards; re-evaluate land use density zones on the future land use map; and to create an Attainable Housing Task Force to pull together public/private initiatives.

Next up: Tourism.

The next Planning Board meeting is Monday, Nov. 16 at 5:30 in the Community Building.

Fresh Georgia pecans available at Highlands Farmers Market

Holiday baking season is almost here, and the Cashiers-Highlands Chapter BJ of P.E.O. International is ready to help! The chapter will host a pecan sale and bake sale at the

Highlands Farmers Markets on Saturday, Oct. 31, and again on November 21st and December 12th.

Freshly harvested Georgia pecans will be sold for $14 per one-pound bag, in either halves or evenly chopped pieces. Pecans are ideal for holiday baking, freeze well, and make an easy, thoughtful gift. The bake sale will also include other baked goods that will be great for holiday desserts and snacking.

Pecans are more than a holiday favorite. They are rich in heart-healthy unsaturated fats, and studies suggest that eating nuts in moderation can help lower LDL bad cholesterol. They also provide fiber, plant protein, and antioxidants, along with vitamin E, magnesium, zinc, and manganese. Because pecans freeze well, shoppers can buy several bags and keep a supply of nutritious snacks on hand year-round.

P.E.O., Philanthropic Educational Organization, was founded in 1869 and promotes educational opportunities for women through scholarships, grants, awards, and loans. The organization also owns Cottey College, a nonprofit liberal arts college for women in Nevada, Missouri.

For more information about P.E.O. or to preorder some bags of this limited supply of pecans, contact Sarah Wallin at 828-200-1598.

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