

# Highlands Newspaper

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Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com

Thurs., June 27, 2024

## Town adopts \$45.2M budget for FY '24-'25

*Increase from FY '23-'24 \$29.6M budget is due to capital project grant funding for Dog Mountain water line, Mirror Lake dredging, water plant improvements and more.*

By Kim Lewicki

At the June Town Board meeting the final town budget for FY 2024-'25 at \$45.2 million was adopted with amendments.

Since the May meeting when the FY 2024-'25 budget was accepted by the board at \$44.9 mil-

lion, the budget request increased to \$45.2 million due to carryover capital projects from the FY 2023-'24 budget. The increase will come out of the undesignated fund balance.

Town Manager Josh Ward said specifically the increase is due to

\$27,000 for the tank replacement project, \$27,000 for striping on Little Bear Pen Road, \$51,000 for ongoing sidewalk repairs, \$25,000 for a snowplow and spreader, and \$82,000 for the community building renovation project which will

• See **BUDGET** page 12

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## Commissioners move on amortization ordinance

*Commissioner Patterson says Highlands is a resident town not a visitor town*

By Kim Lewicki

At the June Town Board meeting, commissioners voted 4-1 to send ordinance verbiage to amortize short-term rentals beginning Sept. 15, 2027 to the Planning Board.

The current verbiage in the Unified Development Ordinance

is: Notwithstanding anything in this UDO, short-term rentals in operation as of September 15, 2022 are nonconforming uses in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts.

The proposed amended verbiage is: Notwithstanding anything in this UDO, short-

• See **AMORTIZATION** page 10

## Highlands commissioners advocate for new playground in Highlands

*Appeal goes out to Macon County and Highlands*

By Brittney Lofthouse

In an appeal to the Macon County Board of Commissioners, newly elected Highlands Town Board member Jeff Weller passionately championed the cause of constructing an all-inclusive playground in Highlands.

Accompanied by fellow commissioner Brian Stiehler,

Weller presented a compelling case for the \$1.6 million project, highlighting its potential to serve children with disabilities and bring families together.

"I know every time you all see me coming," Weller began, acknowledging his frequent appearances before the board on

• See **PLAYGROUND** page 15

## Mountaintop Art & Craft show is Sat. & Sun.



Get ready for the 18th Annual Mountaintop Art and Craft show in Highlands, in KH Founders Park on Pine Street. The two-day event is Saturday, June 29 from 10a to 5p and Sunday, June 30 from 10a to 4p. Rain or shine. There will be more than 100 exhibits as well as live music and food options.

- Photo by Cyntia Strain

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### Please leave your road rage in your hometown

**M**y first task in the morning is to walk our dog, Zoe, for a mile or so. Sallie and Zoe, the two females of the household, gave me his task. It is a routine that I must follow or suffer the consequences of dereliction of duty.

So, last Tuesday at about 8 a.m., I put Zoe on the leash, and we proceeded to our daily route down Cullasaja Drive from our home on Pinecrest Road. This route entails taking a short turn on US 64 to proceed down the half-mile stretch on Cullasaja.

Zoe is very anxious when we arrive at US 64 and the corner of Cullasaja because large trucks are normally on the highway, making a lot of noise. Zoe is a sensitive dog and hates loud noises.

We had just made the turn onto Cullasaja when Zoe and I were suddenly startled by a loud, continuous horn from a vehicle. She jumped around to see what was



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

happening, and I initially thought a traffic accident on 64 was imminent. But that was not the case. A white pickup truck was coming down US 64 and headed to town at about the speed limit of 25. Behind the truck was a maniacal-looking driver behind the wheel of a black Audi sedan, sitting on his horn for about 10 seconds as he tailgated the truck.

As the two vehicles passed by, I wondered what was the problem? Was the person feverishly honking his horn, angry that the truck was going too slow? Was the honker late for work? Had the honker been cut off, or had there been a hit-and-run fender bender? As the two vehicles traveled toward town, I worried this situation might evolve into a road rage situation. Later on, I checked with the police to see if it had. Fortunately, it had not.

This incident illustrates something I wrote about just a few weeks ago. If one is coming to Highlands from a large urban area leave the metropolitan baggage there; don't bring it to this peaceful mountain sanctuary. If I had been in New York, Miami, or Atlanta and heard the angry Audi driver using his car horn as a type of personal weapon, I could accept it as just another action of big city life.

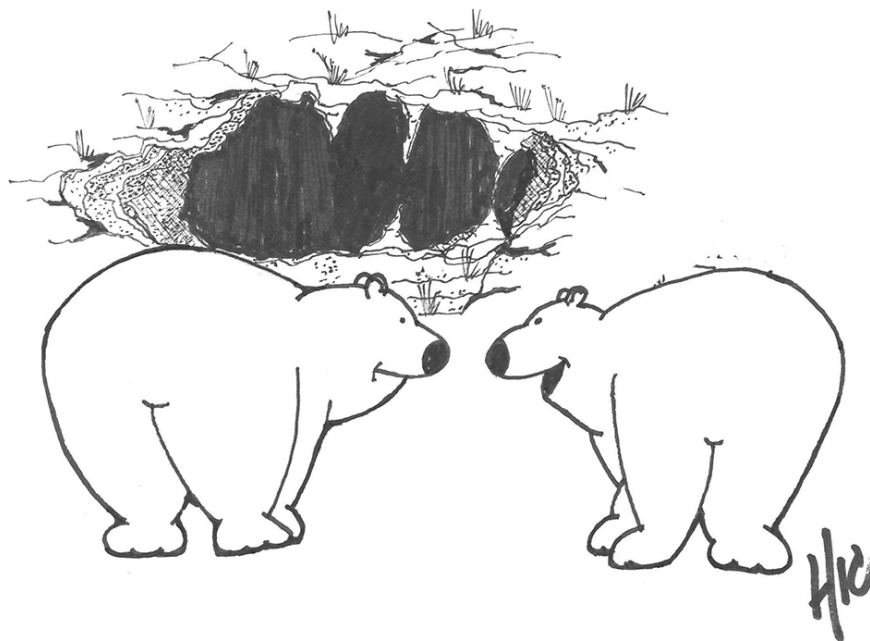
Such behavior in Highlands isn't necessary or acceptable, and it can be dangerous, as it can lead to an escalation with serious ramifications. In these cases, it is always better to take the side of patience. Don't overreact, and if possible, allow the troubled driver to pass.

By the way, road rage is not something limited to big cities. Several weeks ago, in Glenville, there was a road rage incident where shots were fired into a vehicle with three occupants. The good news is that the one person who was hit in the car will recover. I hope the perpetrator gets the full review from our justice system. Not being kind and considerate can have tragic consequences.

To end on a positive note, we are Bee City! We are also a bird sanctuary. As a civil and caring community, we are also a BEE Kind City! Our Highlands-Cashiers





• See **MAYOR** page 10

## • HIC'S VIEW •



*"Let's clean out the bats and snakes  
but keep the mice, they're delicious."*

## • WEATHER •

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### Highlands Newspaper

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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:

We do not charge for obituaries at this time, but we reserve the right to edit as needed for space.

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# • BIZ/ORG NEWS •



From left: President Dave O'Harra, Jill Helmer, Lou Rosebrook.

Rotarian Lou Rosebrook volunteer and treasurer at Mountain Findings which is an all-volunteer 501(c)3 thrift store here in Highlands spoke at Rotary last week. With a 9-member Board of Directors, Mountain Findings has a staff of 40 volunteers. With very low overhead, Mountain Findings is able to donate 90% of all proceeds to local nonprofits. Since its' modest beginnings in 1969, this organization has donated approximately 5.5 million dollars back into our community while also funding \$50,000 in scholarships to local students for further education, whether it be for college or technical education. Also joining Lou at the meeting was Jill Helmer, President of the Mountain Findings Board of Directors.



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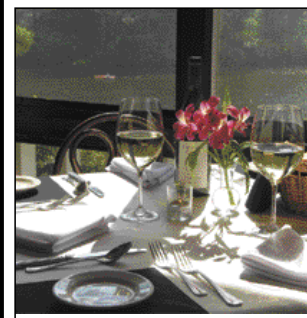


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# • DINING •

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# • OBITUARIES •

## Dr. James Vernon Barrett Jr



Dr. James Vernon Barrett, Jr., 73, of Highlands, NC passed away Friday, June 7, 2024. He was born on February 9, 1951, in Dothan, AL, to the late James Vernon Barrett, Sr. and Annie Louise Bruner Barrett.

James was a member of the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham, AL and the Church of the Incarnation in Highlands, NC. He practiced dentistry in Fayette, AL, and was later employed with Protective Life in Birmingham. Dr. Barrett was a member of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity. He graduated Birmingham-Southern College in 1973. He received a master's degree from Samford University in 1975 and then graduated from the University of Alabama School of Dentistry in 1980.

Survivors include his beloved wife of 44 years, Marilyn Barrett, a sister, Cynthia Wingard (Charles) of Birmingham, AL, and many nieces and nephews.

A Celebration of Life service was held June 26, 2024, in the chapel at Church of the Incarnation in Highlands.

Online condolences can be left at [www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com](http://www.bryantgrantfuneralhome.com).

Bryant-Grant Funeral Home & Crematory of Franklin, NC is honored to serve the Barrett family.

# • LETTERS •

## Highlands should listen to its paid legal counsel

Dear Editor,

Despite Save Highlands' hopes for an amicable ending to the ongoing STR lawsuit, we are aware of Commissioners Patterson's and Stiehler's intent to persuade the planning board and remaining commissioners to terminate all short-term rentals in town beginning in 2027.

It is our sincere hope that the remaining members will tread forward with reason and independent thought, heeding the legal advice of the town's paid legal council over the whims of those aforementioned commissioners.

Amortization is not a tool meant to be weaponized against property owners and it sets a dangerous precedent not only for STRs, but for everyone who owns property in Highlands.

A vote for amortization will catapult the town into at least one lawsuit and will likely amass hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal debt to be paid for by local taxpayers.

Again, we are hoping for an amicable resolution, but should the Town choose to ignore the advice of their legal council, we will pursue justice through our only means necessary--the law, which we steadfastly and unequivocally believe is on our side.

Save Highlands

• See LETTERS page 19

## Friends & Clients!

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**Enhance your home's value and mountain lifestyle with a well-designed outdoor**

A mountain home is more than just a place to live—it's a sanctuary, a retreat from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

One of the most effective ways to improve the value of your serene escape is through the design and creation of a well-crafted outdoor space. Here's how a thoughtfully designed outdoor area can transform your mountain home into a valuable and enviable property.

First, imagine a space that allows you to fully embrace and connect with the natural surroundings. By creating spaces that highlight views, incorporate native plants, and blend seamlessly with the environment, you enhance your home's appeal and value.

Imagine sipping your morning coffee on a rustic deck overlooking a misty range or hosting a dinner party in a garden that seamlessly integrates with the forest.

When considering the design, ensure it effectively expands your living area, providing additional room without the cost of an actual extension. Patios, decks, and outdoor kitchens offer places for relaxation, dining, and entertainment, making your home more versatile and spacious. This is attractive to potential buyers, thereby boosting your home's market value. The aesthetic impact is paramount too.

Curb appeal is crucial in real estate, and a beautiful outdoor space can significantly enhance the first impression of your mountain home. Landscaping that complements the natural surroundings and features like water elements, fire pits, and



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well-placed lighting can create a visually stunning and inviting atmosphere.

This aesthetic appeal can be the key factor that sets your home apart in a competitive real estate market.

A home's privacy and security can be improved too. Strategically placed trees, shrubs, and natural fences can create barriers that provide seclusion from neighbors and passersby.

Also, consider how your design can be leveraged for entertaining and building a sense of community. Your outdoor spaces should serve as gathering places for friends, family, and neighbors, enhancing your and their mountain life experience.

Features like fire pits, walking gardens, and stone patios with seating areas are perfect for hosting get-togethers, enabling your home to be a hub for social activity.

This communal aspect not only enriches your mountain living experience but also adds intangible value to your property.

In conclusion, a well-designed outdoor space is more than a luxury—it's an investment in your home's value and your quality of life. You can transform your mountain home into a haven that is both personally rewarding and financially advantageous.

Whether you plan to stay for decades or consider selling in the future, the benefits of a thoughtfully designed outdoor space are undeniable.

**Filing for Macon County School Board Elections ends July 5**

The filing period for candidates interested in running for the Macon County School Board have until noon, July 5, to submit their candidacy for three crucial seats.

The elections will cover District 1 (Highlands), a seat currently held by Hilary Wilkes, District 2 (Nantahala), a seat currently held by Melissa Evans, and an At-Large seat for District 4, currently held by Jim Breedlove, who also serves as Chairman of the board.

As of Tuesday evening, three candi-

dates have filed for the District 4 at-large seat - Incumbent Jim Breedlove, Danny Reitmeier, and John deVille. Incumbents Wilkes and Evans have also filed.

The MC School Board holds significant responsibility in overseeing the district's educational policies, budget allocations, and administrative appointments. Effective leadership on the board ensures that the educational standards and resources provided to students meet the community's expectations and state requirements.

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## ...MAYOR continued from page 2

Health Foundation, in partnership with the Counseling Center of Highlands, initiated the BEE Kind program this year. Being kind to others and understanding one another is a pillar of a healthy community and personal well-being. I hope as we go through this busy and exciting time of the

year, we all will remember to be kind.

As a matter of safety, I have asked our law enforcement agencies to continue to be on the lookout for aggressive and reckless drivers, but the real enforcement has to come from all of us motorists in being mindful, calm and patient.

## ...AMORTIZATION continued from page 1

term rentals in operation as of September 15, 2022 are nonconforming uses in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts until September 15, 2027. After September 15, 2027, short-term rentals are not permitted in the R-1 or R-2 zoning districts, and all short-term rentals in those districts must be discontinued.

True to character, Commissioner Jeff Weller voted against sending the proposed verbiage to the Planning Board because he didn't think amortization should be on the table.

"We have problem houses, and we need to deal with those, but I am not in favor of sending this to the Planning Board because I am not going to be in favor of it if it comes back for us to amortize," he said. "There should be regulations and rules and we need to understand the best way to enforce our ordinances, but we are heading in the right direction with the current ordinance."

During the public comment Thursday night, STR owner Kevin Gabbard said that the current ordinance has allowed him to keep running his in-town STR, which is how he makes his living, but the proposed verbiage would affect him greatly.

"It's been a couple of years, and now we're back on this topic again and you're trying to eliminate my livelihood," he said. "I've had no issues with my STR and from what I hear there are very few issues in town. Why are we still going down this road? And you have heard the town attorney's advice and the fact that there is not a local government in North Carolina that has attempted to amortize. I think taxpayers' money is better spent in town on the electrical system, sewer system and town

repairs instead of STR legal costs."

For Commissioner Brian Stiehler, who first brought up amending the verbiage in the UDO to amortize STRs, the issue is personal.

"In my Mirror Lake neighborhood I have multiple problem houses, but for now we are just talking about sending this to the Planning Board. There will be plenty of time to discuss more. There will be a public hearing and we will hear all this," he said.

But Mayor Pat Taylor, Attorney Bob Hagemann and Commissioners Amy Patterson and Weller had plenty to say.

"I have made my position clear. Whereas I think everyone's goal would be to see a reduction in STRs in residential areas, I feel like we ought to stay the course and if necessary, improve our enforcement. That is a change in my past position, but I will respect the board regardless of the outcome," said the mayor.

Attorney Hagemann spoke at length regarding the outcome of adopting the amended verbiage to do away with STRs in R1 and R2 by Sept. 15, 2027 and the town's chances of winning a legal battle in the courts.

Though North Carolina courts have only ruled for amortization on billboards which are a visual nuisance on highways, when drafting the verbiage as requested, he picked the amortization period of five years because the courts would likely consider that period reasonable and because he is confident that the legal challenge will take that long to go through the trial court, the court of appeals and possibly an appeal to the state supreme court.

• See AMORTIZATION page 14

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# Highlands Hurricanes swim team beats Smoky Mountain Aquatics Club

By Steve Hott  
Head Coach

On Thursday, June 13, the Highlands Hurricanes Swim Team traveled to Waynesville to swim against Smoky Mountain Aquatics Club (SMAC). The Hurricanes won 1976-1262. The boys' team is now 3-0 for the summer.

Leading the Hurricanes was 15-year-old Jr. Olympian Jazmine Abranyi who won all four of her events, scored 80 pts, shattering four team records in the process. Abranyi broke the girls 100-yard backstroke by 10 seconds, the girls 200-Individual medley (IM) by nine seconds, the girls 50-freestyle by two seconds, and the girls 100-freestyle record also by two seconds. Abranyi scored 11% of the Hurricanes girls' points at the meet.

Bella Batista scored 78.5 pts. winning three events. Jaycee Powell, Jr. Olympians Finneas Garner, Aniah McKim, and Justin Powell all brought home 77 pts. winning two events, and a second-place finish each.

Jr. Olympic qualifier Aleks Petric-Sakonjic and Jr. Olympian Chase Kenter scored 76 pts. winning two events and a

third place finish each.

Max Basil brought home 74 pts, a blue ribbon and two red ribbons. Alex Lopez, Ivan Shchelgachov, and Nikita Denisoff all scored 73 pts. with a 1st, 2nd, and a 3rd place finish each. Penelope McRae brought home 71 pts a first and three seconds.

Annabelle Searles had 69 pts, while Anna Shchelgachov and Morgan Mason had 68.5. Asa Garner earned 67 pts. and Hayden Bysura 65. Xincheng Dodo Zhang and Emilina Hernandez scored 60 pts. with three wins each. Valerie Nadzorau had 58.5 pts., Ian Batista 57 (two wins), while Rocco Basil (one win) and Ben Shchelgachov each scored 54.

Emma Denisoff had 51, Emily Mason and Jr. Olympian Paolo McRae scored 49. Ellie Bysura brought home 48, Cooper Fisher (at his first swim meet ever) 33, Zoe Ivey 32, Agatha Jestin 30, and Jr. Olympian Conner Hughes 20. Brother and sister Grayson and Annabelle Grayson swam good exhibition swims. Brother and sister Ben and Dasha Halldin were out sick.

For more info about The Highlands Hurricanes call 828.421.4121.

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## Highlands-Cashiers Center for Life Enrichment Program Highlights

### Gelli Printing (A Creative Workshop)

Instructor: Cindy Guinn, Monday, July 1, 10am-noon,  
\$70/\$80

### Barbary Pirates: Politics, Faith, and Violence on the Mediterranean

Presenter: Max Owre, Monday, July 1, 2-4pm, \$30/\$40

### The French Foreign Legion and its Colonial Legacy

Presenter: Max Owre, Tuesday, July 2, 10am-noon,  
\$30/\$40

### Apple Maps

Presenter: Loraine Smith, Tuesday, July 2, 1-3pm,  
\$40/\$50

### Fitness and Health Apps

Presenter: Loraine Smith, Tuesday, July 2, 3:30-4:30pm, \$40/\$50

### Notable Music Encounters: Beethoven and Brahms

Presenter: Scott Yoo, Friday, July 5, 10am-noon, \$30/\$40

### A Citizen's Guide to Election 2024

Presenter: Chris Cooper, Tuesday, July 9, 10am-noon,  
\$30/\$40

### Mono-Printing and Stamping (A Creative Workshop)

Instructor: Mary Cavaoli, Tuesday, July 9, 1-3:30pm, \$85/\$95

### Clementine Spencer-Churchill

Presenter: Tim Riley, Wednesday, July 10, 2-4pm, \$30/\$40

### Churchill and the Middle East

Presenter: Tim Riley, Thursday, July 11, 10-noon, \$30/\$40

### Puzzling Polyhedrons: Woodworking Demo and Private Studio Tour

Presenter: Hamp Stevens, Thursday, July 11, 2-4pm, \$40/\$50

### The Melting of "Frozen Conflict" in the Baltic States: Putin's War in Ukraine and the Upending of History

Presenter: Jordan Kuck, Friday, July 12, 10am-noon,  
\$30/\$40

### Growing Herbs and Greens for the Kitchen

Presenter: Shannon Quattlebaum, Friday, July 12, 2-4pm,  
\$30/\$40

### Botanical EcoTour: Highlands Botanical Garden

Leader: Adam Bigelow, Monday, July 15, 8:30am-noon,  
\$50/\$60

To register for these and other CLE programs, please visit [clehighlands.com](http://clehighlands.com)

(828) 526-8811

office@clehighlands.com





# ...BUDGET continued from page 1

hopefully be completed by the end of July. The property liability for the town also increased.

“We opted an increase in the current coverage to lessen the town’s exposure,” said Ward.

The fund balance appropria-

tions from the general fund and the water fund are increased to cover these additional needs,” said Ward.

Prior to the allocations for the budget increase, based on the FY 2024-’25 budget presented

at the May Town Board meeting, the General Fund Balance was approximately \$2 million, the General Fund Reserve was \$5.3 million and the Electric Reserve Fund was \$7.25 million.

The ad valorem property tax rate remains \$0.1022 per \$100 valuation. The tax rate does include .015 earmarked for street paving projects. With the continued need for resurfacing town streets, the amount is again figured into the tax rate for the upcoming fiscal year.

The valuations are determined by the Macon and Jackson County Tax Departments. This rate is based on the overall approximate valuation of \$3,000,000,000 and an estimated collection rate of 98%.

The Highlands Fire Department tax rate remains for now at \$.0191 per \$100 valuation.

The rate is based on an approximate valuation of \$5,842,000,000 and an estimated collection rate of 99.62%.

The current Town of Highlands charges for electric and sanitation services remain unchanged.

The sanitation department is no longer one of the town’s three enterprise funds. It has been included within the general fund for FY 2024-’25 due to the difficulty of balancing it as a separate enterprise fund.

The charges for sanitation service will be evaluated each year to ensure the operational costs as-

sociated with the service are being covered or remain within a specific overall percentage to avoid a burden on the ad valorem property tax revenue.

“With the Sanitation Department’s move from an enterprise fund to the general fund, the Sanitation fees will need to be thoroughly analyzed each year,” he said. “Sanitation department deficits can be supported by increasing the fees for the service or increasing ad valorem property tax rates to cover the cost.”

In addition, the town will no longer charge a rental fee for commercial bear-resistant toters. Entities will be responsible for maintaining and replacing their toters as needed.

The Town of Highlands base rates for water and sewer for both residential and commercial are both increasing \$10 per month.

Due to an increase in the cost of parts, the water connection fee inside the town for a ¾” meter will increase from \$1,000 to \$2,400 which will include the cost of the meter and the installation and \$3,900 outside of town. Subsequent meter sizes have also increased.

Sewer connection fees remain the same, but the cost of installation will now be included.

The proposed budget includes a 5% cost-of-living adjustment for employees.

The proposed budget includes employee salary adjustments total-

ing \$51,000 as recommended by the recently completed salary study.

The employee health insurance premiums with BlueCross BlueShield NC remains the same as in FY 2023-’24.

The Local Option Sales Tax Distribution is projected to remain strong, as well as, the Ad Valorem Property Tax collection.

“The financial outlook for the Town of Highlands remains strong and the town’s undesignated General Fund Balance and Reserve remain strong as does the Electric Fund Balance and Reserve, but it will be used heavily to fund critical electric grid upgrades over the next few years,” said Ward, which means that rates could potentially increase. “The fund is also supporting the water enterprise fund balance with a loan. Caution should be taken in the upcoming years in deciding to fund any new water and sewer projects until a healthy fund balance is re-established.”

In addition, Ward said there will likely be additional water and sewer rate increases in the near future to ensure the water fund balance is recovering effectively without needing a loan to balance.

There were no comments during the required budget public hearing at the June Town Board meeting. The budget passed unanimously and will go into effect July 1, 2024.

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# Independence Day Celebration

**THURSDAY, JULY 4**

9 - 11 a.m.

**Water Rockets**

Town Ball Field

**Free Hotdog Lunch**

Town Ball Field

11 a.m. - 12 p.m.

**Field Games**

Town Ball Field

12 p.m.

**Visit MAMA**

(Mtn. Area Medical Airlift)

Town Ball Field

1 p.m.

**Ladder Truck Spraydown**

Town Ball Field

2 p.m.

**Duck Derby**

Bridge at Mill Creek

6 - 8:30 p.m.

**Outdoor Concert Series**

**The Business**

Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park

9 p.m.

**Fireworks!**

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## ...AMORTIZATION continued from page 10

“In addition, I am confident the courts will not allow you to enforce a STR amortization period while the litigation is pending,” he said. “And it is almost certain that there will be a legal challenge.”

He reminded the board that two years ago, when amortization was brought up, the Institute of Justice, a national public interest law firm with a libertarian bent and a strong belief in property rights wrote the town and made it clear there would be a legal battle.

“I anticipate their arguments will be that the town lacks the authority to amortize. And even if the town had the authority, it is unconstitutional under a variety of unconstitutional theories,” said Hagemann. “One of which is that the NC constitution protects citizens’ rights to the ‘fruits of their labor’ and we are seeing that clause come forward more and more.”

Furthermore, Hagemann said over the last 15 years, there is a trend in NC court rulings that tend to favor property rights over local government authority which has made government authority more narrow.

“This is not an attempt to dissuade you if you choose to go this route, and I am not saying I won’t defend it, I just want you to do it with your eyes wide open. We need to consider the makeup of our courts and the direction our courts have gone,” he said. “I think it will be more of a challenge to defend amortization in court now than it would have been 15 years ago.”

But Commissioner Patterson was hearing none of it.

“Overnight accommodations are commercial and commercial doesn’t belong in our residential neighborhoods,” said Patter-

son. “The planners we hired called them mini-hotels and no one wants to live next to a mini-hotel.”

She said just about every neighborhood in Highlands has an STR.

“Seems to me, that people who have homes have the right to quiet enjoyment of their home. They come from wherever they come from, and they come and live here and become part of the community and they contribute to the community. They ought to have the right to have some place where they can live that doesn’t have a business next door to them.”

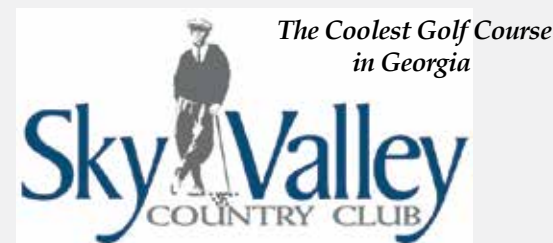
She went on to describe her version of Highlands.

“One of the things that sells Highlands, which is why our economy has always been good and weathered the ups and downs is the calm and the quiet we sell which you can’t get anywhere else,” she said. “Yes, the cool and the climate and the natural beauty but it’s also the calm and the quiet.”

She said in addition, having renters every week or two leads to the overuse of the area’s natural environment because renters visit those areas weekly instead of now and then like full-time residents.

“If I live here full-time, maybe I go up to Satulah a couple times, or Whiteside or Iron Bridge a couple of times, but every week someone in my house doesn’t go up there,” she said. “When you have a lot of rentals, suddenly those people are crowding and degrading our natural environment, which means part of what people are coming for we will lose if we become a visitor place as opposed to a

• See AMORTIZATION page 22



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## ...PLAYGROUND continued from page 1

behalf of children's initiatives. "Everything I come to the county for is related to children, whether it be the schools, the soccer field, the rec department, etc."

Weller detailed the town's proactive steps in securing funding.

Funding includes a \$250,000 commitment from the town (representing 15% of the total expense) which the Highlands Town Board agreed to at its June meeting, a \$500,000 PARTF grant application, which will be announced hopefully in August, and ongoing efforts to raise private donations. To date, \$130,000 has been raised from private sources, demonstrating significant community support for the playground, he said.

"We're trying to bring families into the park, families together, giving them options and things to do as a group," Weller explained. "We can start talking about the service required so that every child can participate."

The proposed playground designed to be all-inclusive - which makes the structure and its components more expensive than a traditional playground - aims to provide a welcoming and accessible environment for children of all abilities. Weller emphasized that the high cost of the project is due to the necessary inclusivity features, but assured the board that the investment is worthwhile.

Since the playground request wasn't considered during the county's FY '24-'25 budget, Weller will request the county's contribution of \$350,000 come from its undesignated fund balance. The county's contribution would represent 20% of

the total project cost. Weller highlighted that the majority of the playground's users would be from outside the town, underscoring the regional benefit of the project.

"If you look at it this way, the county gets \$1.6 million for your \$350,000 contribution," Weller noted. "The remaining \$700,000 is all going to be privately funded."

He also pointed out that his family has long utilized local parks and recreational facilities.

Weller concluded his plea emphasizing the positive impact the playground would have on the broader community. "We're going to raise that money," he affirmed, expressing confidence in the project's success and community backing.

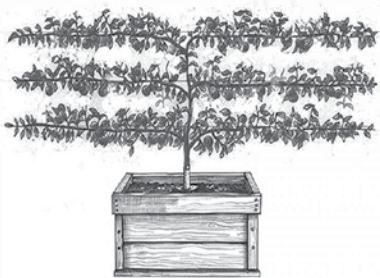
The Macon County Board of Commissioners has yet to make a decision on the funding request, but Weller's presentation highlighted the importance and urgency of investing in inclusive recreational facilities for the benefit of all children in the region.

At the Highlands June Town Board meeting, Weller said he will be requesting the county's contribution of \$350,000 at its July 9 commission meeting.

During that meeting Weller and Stiehler will present a Powerpoint demonstration.

Commissioner Stiehler said they hope to wrap up funding by late fall 2024 and being construction the spring of 2025. He said materials will be ordered as soon as funding and the contract is completed saying it will take months for the components to be delivered to Highlands.

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MAY 17  
Silly Ridge

MAY 24  
McClain Family Band

MAY 31  
Byrds & Crows

JUNE 7  
The Foxfire Boys

JUNE 14  
Spare Parts Bluegrass Band

JUNE 21  
Curtis Blackwell Band

JUNE 28  
Johnny Webb Band

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MAY 25  
Southside Station

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High 5

JUNE 8  
Bill Mattocks

JUNE 15  
Back Porch Orchestra

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The HC Oaks Band



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## • HIGHLANDS EVENTS •

### SUMMER POOL SCHEDULE

**Lap Swim** Mon.-Fri. 6am-9:45am, and Saturday 10am-1pm 6 lanes. **Water Aerobics** 18 years plus Mon.-Fri. 10am-1am with Karen Chambers. **Public Swim** Mon. thru Thurs. 11am-7pm, Fri. and Sat. 11am-6pm and Sun. 1pm-6pm. For info, call 828-526-1595.

### PICKLE BALL

• At the Recreation Dept. every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 10am-1pm indoors for the winter (notice the days and time has changed), everyone is welcome meetings

### ALL WEEK

• Alcoholics Anonymous: "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. program of recovery. Highlands Mountain View Group holds open meetings in Highlands at the First Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 PM and Wednesday and Friday at noon. The Cashiers Valley Group holds open meetings at the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library Monday at 8:30 AM, Tuesday at 7 PM, Friday and Sunday at 5 PM, and Saturday at 9 AM. For more information, please visit [www.aawnc80.org](http://www.aawnc80.org) or to speak with a member of AA 24/7 at 828-349-4357.

### ON-GOING

• At Hudson Library, Readers from 0 to 99 will have adventures this summer as Hudson Library presents "Adventure Begins at Your Library" summer learning program. The 2024 Summer Learning Program is free to all participants and starts June 1. No registration is needed for any of these programs. For more information about any of these summer activities, contact Hudson Library at 828-526-3031, or stop by the library during open hours.

### Thurs., June 27

• At The Bascom, Artist Talk with Kelly Oden. 4-5 pm | Free

• Hudson Library continues Summer Learning Programs with special events for children. Thursday at 3:30 PM, the library welcomes Friends of Panthertown for a program introducing Leave No Trace. Friends of Panthertown will get kids acquainted with the Leave No Trace ideas for being in nature wisely – to protect both people and nature! There'll be games to play and fun for all.

• Bingo for The Gordon Center 6:30-8:30 pm at the Rec Park. \$1 per card. 15 games in all. Cash only.

### Fri., June 28

• Please join us on Friday, June 28 at 11 AM in the Hudson Library Meeting Room for Community Coffee with the Mayor. The topic will be: "State of the Town Update"

• A Bourbon & Bluegrass Concert Fund-raiser for REACH. Buffet and bar at 6p and concert at 7p. Tickets are \$250 per person available at [highlandsp Performingarts.com/special events](http://highlandsp Performingarts.com/special events).

• Friday Night Live on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – Johnny Webb Band

• OEI's Chef Dinners at The Farm. Chef

to be announced. Book Online at [OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners](http://OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners)

### Sat. & Sun., June 29-30

• Art and Craft Show in KH Founders Park on Pine Street. 10a to 5p Saturday and 10a to 4p on Sunday. Rain or shine.

### Sun., June 30

• Worship at Christ Anglican Church Adult Christian Formation at 9:30a and Morning Worship at 10:30a with choir and music. 464 US 64 east in Cashiers. 828-743-1701. [christanglicancashiers.org](http://christanglicancashiers.org).

### Tues. July 2

• Highlands Wreaths across America and American Legion Post 370 will be placing flags on veterans' graves in observance of July 4th. This will take place on Tuesday July 2nd, 4:30PM at Highlands Cemetery. Please gather at the flagpole on top of the hill. All are invited to participate.

### Thurs., July 4

• 4th of July celebration: Water Rockets at the town ball field 9-11am. Field games at the town ball field 11a to noon. MAMA helicopter visit at the town ball field at noon, weather permitting. Ladder Truck Spraydown at the town ball field at 1 pm. Duck Derby at Bridge at Mill Creek at 2 pm. Outdoor Concert at KH Founders Park on Pine Street 6-8:30 pm. Fireworks at 9 pm. Free Hotdog Lunch at the ballfield during games.

### Fri., July 5

• Join Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust for a mushroom log inoculation workshop and hike at the Edward Baker Preserve. Through this educational and hand-on workshop, participants will inoculate a log with choice mycelium and take it home! During this workshop we will go over the type of mushroom spawn to use, different inoculation methods, and different inoculation tools, 10a to 2p. Cost is based on a sliding scale of \$20-\$75. Please RSVP. The workshop limit is 18 people. Contact [americorps@hcltnc.org](mailto:americorps@hcltnc.org) or call 828-525-1111.

• Friday Night Live on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – Nitrograss

• OEI's Chef Dinners at The Farm. LAURENT-PERRIER CHAMPAGNE DINNER. Book Online at [OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners](http://OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners)

### Sat., July 6

• At The Bascom, Will Henry Stevens Bridge Rededication. 10 am. Free

• At The Bascom, Community Day. 11am – 2 pm. Free

• Saturdays on Pine features a variety of popular, regional bands and musicians at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. – Blaze the City.

### Sun., July 7

• Worship at Christ Anglican Church. Adult Christian Formation at 9:30a and Morning Worship at 10:30a with choir and music. 464 US 64 east in Cashiers. 828-743-1701. [christanglicancashiers.org](http://christanglicancashiers.org).

Orchard Session  
**Brandon Crocker**  
Thursday, July 11  
THE FARM  
at Old Edwards

buy tickets



# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

## Mon.-Thurs., July 8-11

• Little Highlander Basketball Camp for grades K-8, 1:30-4:30pm at the Highlands Rec Park. Cost is \$75 per player and includes a T-shirt. Coaches Bishop and Lamb with the help of current and former Highlander players will be conducting the camp. Register before or on first day at the Rec Park. Make checks payable to Brett Lamb or Venmo Coach Lamb @ Brett-Lamb-4

## Tues., July 9

• Highlands Central Baptist, and Short-off Baptist are sponsoring "Drive-Through-Prayer" in the parking lot of the Shortoff Baptist Church. There will signs and literature for any passers-by who want to stop their vehicles for a moment and visit and pray.

## Thurs., July 11

• At Hudson Library, Talewise program (formerly ScienceTellers) presents Science Heroes: Adventure of the Lost Treasure, an exciting production with lots of special effects, at 3:30 PM. Even better, the program will also show everyone how those effects are created, and volunteers from the audience will be invited to help out. It's a delightful way to have fun with science, suitable for the whole family, best for age 4 and up.

• Chantelle Rondell, aquatic biologist with NC's Wildlife Resource Commission's

Aquatic Wildlife Diversity Program will speak at 6 p.m. at the Macon County Library on Siler Road. All are invited and membership is not required [https:// app.joinit.com/o/nantahalalikingclub](https://app.joinit.com/o/nantahalalikingclub). A FREE raffle is awarded. Remember, a winner must be present to claim the raffle.

## Fri., July 12

• At Hudson Library, local author Susan Posey will give a talk about her new historical novel A Weave of Old and New at 11 AM at Hudson Library. Books will be available for purchase and signing at this free program.

• Friday Night Live showcases traditional mountain music and exceptional local talent on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – Silly Ridge

## Sat., July 13

• Pop-Up Bag Pipers are scheduled from 4:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

• Saturdays on Pine features a variety of popular, regional bands and musicians at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. – Dive Bar Divas

## Fri., July 19

• Friday Night Live on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – Leadfoot Lily

## Sat., July 20

• Saturdays on Pine features a variety of popular, regional bands and musicians at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. – Laz-luvr

## Wed., July 24

• Sky Valley Garden Club Art & Crafts show 10a to 2p inside the Sky Valley Country Club in Sky Valley, GA, and is open to the public.

## Fri., July 26

• Friday Night Live showcases traditional mountain music and exceptional local talent on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – Kettle

## Fri., Aug. 2

• Friday Night Live in Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – Ezra & Katie

## Sat., Aug. 3

• Pop-Up Bag Pipers are scheduled from 4:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

• Saturdays on Pine features a variety of popular, regional bands and musicians at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. – The Holiday Band

## Mon., Aug. 5

• High Mountain Squares is sponsoring a new class for beginning students beginning Monday. The classes will be taught by Keith Lester, caller and instructor, from 6:30-8:30pm at the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building on Highway 441, Franklin, NC. The first two of 12 classes are free; the remaining ten classes are \$50 per person. For more information call Betty at 828-787-2324 or Bob at 828-332-0001.

## Fri., Aug. 9

• Friday Night Live showcases traditional mountain music and exceptional local talent on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. – ABC Combo

## Sat., Aug. 10

• Saturdays on Pine at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. – Will Thompson Band



MOUNTAINTOP

ART AND CRAFT SHOW

## ART AND CRAFT SHOW

JUNE 29TH-30TH

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# • SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



## What manner of man is Jesus

Mark 4:41

Michael D. Matlock  
Rector  
Christ Anglican Church

In the fourth chapter of the Gospel of Mark, we read how Jesus calms the storm for his disciples and demonstrates he is the Lord of human beings and of nature — the Lord of all of Creation (Mark 4:35-41). He commands the elements, and they obey. The lesson is simple and straightforward. As Christ followers, we believe that Jesus stilled a real storm with a word of command. The disciples ask themselves, “What manner of man is Jesus, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

I offer you two things to consider about this account in Scripture. First, the Gospels show us a supernatural Christ. In this particular passage, Jesus speaks to the storm, “Peace, be still,” (Mark 4:39) as if it were the fever that Peter’s mother-in-law had and that Jesus healed (Mark 1:31). He treats the storm, in fact, as he treats the demons that he drives out of human lives that they have invaded (Mark 1:25; 5:8). In his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has dealt the powers of evil a decisive blow. The universe is restored to God, its rightful owner. Jesus can still a disordered and turbulent life just as he quiets the wind and the waves. If we can but trust God with our life storms, would that not allow our minds more calm and peace that we desperately need?

Second, Jesus, asleep on a pillow in the boat, was far more concerned with what was going on than it appeared to the scared and anxious disciples. It appeared to the disciples that he didn’t care about their situation — “Don’t you care that we perish?” (Mark 4:38). It is easy to put ourselves in the disciples’ place. The Christian faith and the Church of Christ can seem pointless, having little to do with the realities of our stormy world. I think it is a special vice of “enlightened” minds to live in water-tight compartments apart from the transforming power of the Spirit of Jesus. So we turn from faith and from the Church with impatience — “there is nothing here for us.” Yet I say to you that Jesus was more deeply concerned with the urgent facts of the situation than any of his disciples. However, he took a different approach than they were expecting him to take in dealing with the problem they were facing. He dealt with their storm by speaking directly to it, by attacking the power of Satan himself.

Christ is at the heart of the world’s storms and he is Lord of all. And a Church that stands with her Lord is at the heart of all the storm centers of life, with the revolutionary power of Christ himself. When the Church really is the Church of Christ, it is not irrelevant. Rather, it is driven by the inner necessity of its being, by the truth of the Gospel that is entrusted to it, to be concerned about all our world’s issues and our inhumanity to one another. The Church becomes involved with Christ in the total human situation, sharing as his instruments in the release of the divine peacemaking activity. Christ is the only hope and answer for all of our problems. May Christ’s followers exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit through the power of the good news of Jesus Christ! And may God bless all of you as transformation occurs in you over time through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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# • POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

**Highlands Police entries from June 13. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

## June 13

• At 9:50 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on Hickory Hill Road.

## June 15

• At 9:31 a.m., officers responded to a call for service at a residence on Old Farm Road about an unattended death of a 32-year-old woman.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from June 18.**

## June 18

• At 1:51 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on US 64 east (Cashiers Road).

• At 7:40 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on 4 1/2 Street.

• At 8:16 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on S. 4th Street.

## June 20

• At 11:39 a.m., the dept. investigated the source of an odor at a residence on Apple Orchard Road.

## ...LETTERS from page 7

Dear Editor,

We would like to thank Tom Neal CEO and all the staff at Highlands Cashiers Hospital for their excellent treatment during Wolfgang's stay.

From admissions to departure it made a difficult time a positive experience.

The nursing staff, RNs and CNAs were competent, caring, attentive and thorough in their treatment and attention to detail.

There is a positive atmosphere and every staff member came in with a smile. The Physical Therapy department shared all these same qualities and were tremendously helpful, as well as the staff administering various tests.

Many thanks for a job well done. We are so grateful to have a hospital of this caliber in our area.

Wolfgang and Mindy Green

• At 2:52 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Old Edwards Lane.

• At 7:54 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Hickory Street.

## June 21

• At 4:57 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 5:01 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a grill fire at a residence on Highgate Road.

• At 8:43 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

## June 22

• At 12:47 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Norton Court.

## June 23

• At 10:41 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 10:50 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Holt Circle.

• At 11:20 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Worley Road.

• At 2:25 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Shortoff Road.

• At 2:10 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Chestnut Street.

## June 24

• At 8:19 a.m., the dept. responded to a medical alarm at a residence on Old Wagon Road.

• At 2:48 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Sparkling Lakes Road.

• At 3:22 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD.

• At 3:29 p.m., the dept. responded to a medical alarm at a residence on Morewood Road.



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• See CLASSIFIEDS page 22

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## ...CLASSIFIEDS continued from page 21

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## Barbary Pirates and French Foreign Legion at CLE July 1 and July 2

By Matt Salerno  
CLE Program Assistant

On July 1, from 2pm-4pm, Dr. Max Owre, executive director of Carolina Public Humanities will be coming to the Highlands-Cashiers Center for Life Enrichment to give a lecture titled “Barbary Pirates: Politics, Faith, and Violence on the Mediterranean.”

In this presentation Dr. Owre will dive into the United States’ first foreign war. The echoes of the war are still heard in the lyrics of the Marines’ Hymn, “from the Halls of Montezuma to the Shore of Tripoli,” but many Americans do not possess in-depth knowledge of the conflicts in the Mediterranean during this time.

Politics and religion made theft, murder, and enslavement on fast ships an act of statecraft and Max will place the Barbary Pirates within the long history of seaborne violence and teach us who benefitted from their existence for centuries.

The next day, Tuesday, July 2, from 10am-noon, Dr. Owre will make a presentation on “The French Foreign Legion and its Colonial Legacy.” Most public knowledge about the French Foreign Legion

comes from popular films, but the reality of its history is much grittier and less romanticized. The FFL is deeply tied to France’s brutal colonial conquests in Asia, Africa, and throughout the world. It was used to impress foreign subjects into the French military as well as serving as a dumping ground for deserters and criminals. Dr. Owre will not only unearth the bloody history of the legion and its complicity in some of the ugliest episodes of France’s imperial history but its continued role throughout the world today.

Carolina Public Humanities, an organization that connects the faculty of UNC Chapel Hill with communities throughout the state by offering educational programs and lectures. As a professor of Modern European History at UNC Chapel Hill, Dr. Owre is a principal organizer and frequent host and moderator of Carolina Public Humanities Events.

Admission to both lectures costs \$30 for CLE members and \$40 for non-members. For more information on programs and registration, please visit [www.clehighlands.com](http://www.clehighlands.com), call (828) 526-8811, or visit the office anytime Monday through Friday, 9:30am to 4:30pm.

## ...AMORTIZATION continued from page 14

resident place.”

She said the expansion of area churches, the Performing Art Center and The Bascom are all the result of seasonal and full-time residents not people who come to town and stay at an STR.

“STR people may visit those places, but they didn’t build them. That’s done by people who are part of the community. We need to seriously think about our long-term economy and what we love about Highlands, so Highlands doesn’t become a visitor place.”

She said the 2022 ordinance prohibiting STRs after Sept. 15, 2022 stopped the proliferation of STRs but it hasn’t healed the wounds. In her mind, amortization would heal those wounds.

Commissioner Weller reiterated what he has said from the start. The proliferation of STRs Highlands experienced during the pandemic has abated and had the town done nothing there would have been a serious problem on many levels. But that is now in the past, he said.

“We just listened to our attorney, and he was giving us all the possibilities. We are going to get in a lawsuit, no question, if we keep going down this road. We stopped the bleeding,” he said. “I can’t see spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayers’ dollars to fight something that I think we are already heading down the path to regulate.”

At the May Town Board meeting, Commissioner Patterson said Highlands’ traditional neighborhoods needed to be preserved, something Weller said doesn’t exist in the traditional sense in Highlands partly because like it or not, Highlands is a tourist town.

“I have heard you bring up the term – traditional neighborhood. I grew up in a traditional neighborhood. I knew all people in the neighborhood, I played with and went to school with all the kids in the neighborhood and we lived there 12 months a year. Highlands’ traditional neighborhood is different,” he said. “Where I lived in town, 5-7 months of the year half the people are gone. I love the people when they came back, obviously, seasonal people are fantastic to have here. They are part of the fabric of our town.”

He also said when he came to Highlands 31 years ago, STRs were the tradition and there were real estate companies that only handled STRs which was their livelihood.

Patterson said the fact that Highlands may have had STRs in the past doesn’t mean they should be in the future when they have become so out of control.

Weller said contrarily he had problems

with his full-time neighbor but never from a STR renter who occupied the seasonal residents’ homes in his neighborhood.

“Highlands is a residential community, but it is also a tourist town - and I know a lot of people cringe when we say that - but that’s not going to change,” he said. “We need enforcement not just at STRs, but at hotels, and for loud and obnoxious people walking down the street.”

Patterson agreed that Highlands’ neighborhoods aren’t a 12-month scenario, but they are Highlands’ own neighborhood tradition.

“I know people who get together with their neighbors who are seasonal residents every year for summer gatherings and neighborhood parties, so that’s a traditional neighborhood. I’m told it doesn’t work anymore because there are now STRs in the neighborhood,” she said. “When 20% to 50% of a neighborhood is STRs, that’s not good for Highlands’ long-term economy. That makes the economy cyclical.”

She also complained that there are homeowners who rent their homes two times a year just so they can be grandfathered as a STR.

“They aren’t renting it long-term and they aren’t going to sell it so that doesn’t help the economy,” she said. “We already have a housing problem because rents are too high and people with jobs can’t even afford to buy.”

She cited a couple who prior to the pandemic rented a home for \$21,000 for three months because if 90 days they didn’t have to pay the sales tax. But when the pandemic hit, the owner raised the price to \$42,000 for three months which meant the couple couldn’t afford to rent it anymore.

“The owners could have made money on the house for \$21,000 but they decided they wanted to make more money as opposed to the money they could make for a long-term rental and we lost people in our community,” she said.

At that Weller said “house prices are crazy everywhere.”

“We are just going to have to agree to disagree because I am on the other side of this,” he said.

According to the mayor, the Planning Board now has three choices regarding the amended verbiage: one, to recommend approval, two, to recommend not to approve, or three, to take no action.

The next Planning Board meeting is July 22 either at the Rec Park or the Community Building if renovations are complete.



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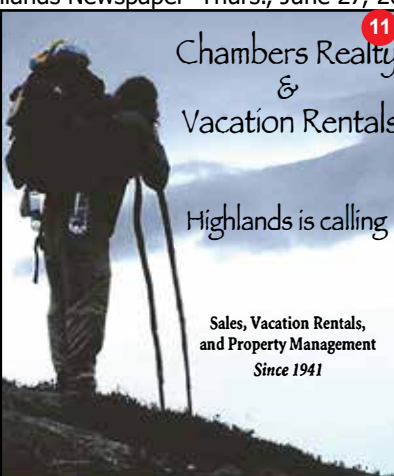
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