

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Jan. 9, 2025

SB382 may eliminate STR amortization

By Kim Lewicki

Due to Senate Bill 382, Highlands' plan to amortize short-term rentals in zones R1 and R2 effective September 2027 may now be null and void.

"Due to the breadth of the provision, numerous rezoning efforts currently in progress will likely halt, as well as future rezoning efforts," wrote the NC League of Municipalities last week. "The state House this week joined the Senate in voting to override Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of an omnibus end-of-year bill that includes a detrimental zoning provision, meaning that the bill becomes law."

SB 382 Disaster Relief-3/Budget/Various Law Changes set

aside additional money for the western disaster relief due to Hurricane Helene which also included numerous provisions stripping the governor of additional powers.

"More importantly for cities and towns, the final provision in the 131-page bill prohibits local governments from enacting

• See SB382 page 8

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Beware of fraudulent property deed transfers

By Kim Lewicki

Deed transfer fraud in North Carolina happens and involves the unlawful transfer of property ownership. This can happen without the owner's knowledge and can lead to serious issues.

Abby Braswell, MC Tax Administrator said taxpayers need to be aware of fraud possibilities regarding deed transfers and suggested registering for fraud alert with the MC Register of Deeds at www.macon.com.

The reason fraud can occur is because all deed information is public record, she said.

"This is why many people receive offers for their land – the information is on our website and can be given by our office if requested because we are also required by law to give out any public information," said Braswell.

To clarify, the reason the unlawful transfer of property can happen is because under North

• See DEED page 8

Following the sun



Geese at Harris Lake make their way from the frozen overflow pond to take a dip in the sunshine on Monday. Harris Lake was partially frozen the past couple of days after a stint of cold weather in Highlands.

– Photo by Brian O'Shea

Financially, Highlands is doing well ... as usual

By Kim Lewicki

At the December Town Board meeting, Highlands got a clean bill of health from auditors Gould, Killian, CPA Group, PA.

Highlands never really gets a bad audit, the only issue raised over the years is a material weakness in internal control over financial reporting which was due to

having a small staff who typically shared duties.

However, since last year, that has been dealt with so auditors reported "no material weakness in internal control over financial reporting."

Auditors issued an unmodified opinion on financial statement

• See HIGHLANDS page 9

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

NC needs to step up its recycling programs

Every year the Highlands Chamber of Commerce organizes the Highlands Plateau Pickup in April, usually near Earth Day. This coming cleanup will be my 12th as mayor. I wish there were a way to avoid this cleanup where folks risk life and limb to make our community healthier and cleaner.

I am always so grateful for the caring, volunteer citizens who take part in the cleanup. After the event, we all have a wonderful feeling of accomplishment only to be frustrated by uncaring people who will continue to pollute our roadways with plastic bottles, cans, plastic shopping bags and paper from fast food purchases, etc.

It is a noble effort for us to try to prevent this trash from ending up in our critical watershed. Just recently, a world conference addressed the proliferation of plastic items and the concern that microplastics are infiltrating wildlife, people, and, of course, the water supply and food chain. The conference did not get a united resolution for



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

this problem, but it did warn that plastic use will increase fourfold over the next three decades. What does this plastic explosion portend for the health and welfare of humans living on this planet?

The food and beverage industry is now pushing a campaign that their new plastic bottles are better to recycle. People for several decades were told by this industry that all those plastic containers were being recycled,

only to discover the ugly truth that they were simply being shipped to third-world countries to be discarded. That practice continues, especially with electric devices composed of metal and plastics. These countries have large burn pits where the plastic is burned into the atmosphere, and the metal is salvaged.

In the 1950s and 1960s there was a recycling system in place where people were paid for the return of glass soda bottles. Then, distributors developed the single-stream system using a steel can containing beer and soft drinks. People were told to throw them away because the steel cans would rust and decay. That information was accurate until the aluminum and plastic containers were introduced. The aluminum can was recyclable and the plastic container, but no deposit system was put in place like the ones for glass coke and beer bottles.

To add to the outrage, beverage producers came up with an ad campaign, Keep America Beautiful, using supposedly a Native American shedding a tear when he viewed container trash. The message was that the consumers were responsible, not the beverage industry that forsaken the deposit/recycling program, to develop the single stream, end-user plan. Don't even get me started on the landfill impacts.

As I have traveled throughout the United States, I have noticed that some states have much cleaner roadways, free of the plastic litter we see everywhere in North Carolina. Riding through one of these clean states, I asked a friend why this was the case. He responded that some states, like Maine and Vermont, have bottle bills that mandate deposits on glass, metal, and plastic beverage products. Those recycling deposit fees motivate some folks to collect this waste on the roadways and make money at recycling

• See **MAYOR** page 4

• SNAPSHOT •

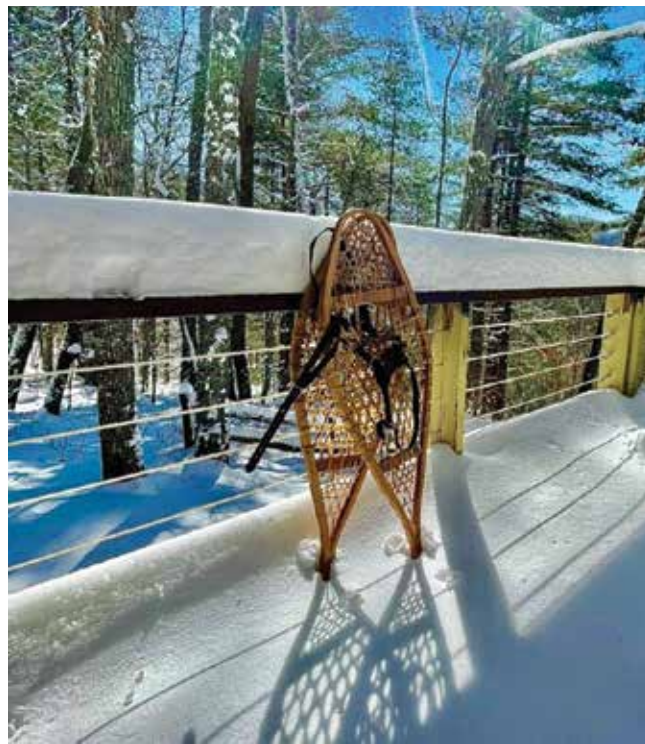






Photo by Bill Paisley

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• WEATHER •

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...MAYOR continued from page 2

centers.

Ten states have such programs. A deposit is paid for each glass, metal, or plastic container. Those who return the containers to a recycling center are reimbursed part of the deposit. The remainder of the deposit goes to the handling organization.

I like to explore solutions instead of doing the same old thing, like having a volunteer trash pickup. What about incentiviz-

ing people to do the right thing or motivating them financially to do what is needed? We need such a program in this state.

North Carolina State legislature should consider passing a bottle recycling bill. But, the lobby opposition might be intense. Nevertheless, it is the right thing to do, not just for us now but for future generations. Can the world survive a fourfold increase in the production of plastics?



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Always show love

A few years ago, a favorite pair of boots needed resoled. I asked my sweet mother-in-law who referred me to a little old man on a side street on St. Simons Island. When I picked the boots up, I looked at the soles and saw a few threads that were sticking out. I asked him if he could do something about those threads, and he looked at me with tired eyes and said: "Lady, nobody is going to be staring at the soles of your boots." Hmmph, I thought.

Later that week, I mentioned to my mother-in-law that the cobbler was a bit grumpy when I picked up my boots. She paused for a moment and said: "He died yesterday." I was floored. I asked what he died of, and she told me he had been battling cancer for a long time.

What a jolt! It was a real low point for me. Here was one of this man's last days on earth and instead of being grateful and uplifting, I was complaining about a few threads. This experience haunts me every time I focus on minutiae that is totally inconsequential in the scheme of life.

As we barrel down life's highway, we have many worries and concerns. Most of them never come to fruition, and we waste valuable time and energy fearing that something bad is going to happen. Or we obsess on tiny issues that do not deserve our attention.

How does this relate to real estate? Buying and selling homes is very emotional. Of-



Jody Lovell
Highlands and Cashiers
Sotheby's International Realty
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tentimes the owner is selling because of unexpected life problems. It is imperative to always be an empathetic counselor to all parties. One of our Sotheby's mantras is to be "unshakably nice" regardless of how upset someone else is.

In the book, "The Happiness Project," Gretchen Rubin describes a difficult boss that no one can work with except this one individual. Gretchen asked her how she managed to relate to this person. She said: "I

always show him love."

As we start this new year, let us remind ourselves to "always show love" not just to our loved ones, but to everyone with whom we interact. We never know what the other person is dealing with that day. Let's overlook the threads and focus on what a wonderful world we live in with people just trying to do their best. May you and your loved ones have a happy, healthy and prosperous 2025!!

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• LETTERS •

About 'Barstool' talk

Dear Editor,

As I take my seat at the bar and start to enjoy my cold IPA, I glance to my left and to my right, and I give thanks for the freedom that allows such diverse conversations. I have come to learn that my beliefs and my ways may not be those of my bar stool companions and for that I am grateful.

I also give thanks for that small group of rebels who wanted to take the pilgrims desire of religious freedom to another level. Those rebels embarked on a battle that

would take many of their lives, so that we can sit at the bar and speak our mind without fear of persecution or retribution.

We must never forget the sacrifice made by so many to ensure you can be you and I can be me. As we embark on a new year, I would encourage you to let nobody come between us and our common desire to be free.

Jerry Moore
Highlands, NC & Dillard, GA
• See LETTERS page 11

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• OBITUARY •

Wesley Mickel Graham, Sr. (Mickel)

Wesley Mickel Graham Sr. (Mickel), 75, died on Tuesday, December 24, 2024, in Decatur, GA.

Born October 15, 1949 in Shreveport, LA, Mickel graduated from Hillcrest High School (Memphis, TN) in 1968 and went on to earn his Bachelor's degree from Georgia State University. Before graduating from GSU, Mickel attended UT Martin and briefly Emory University Candler School of Theology.

He retired in 2015 from Union Bank of California as a Vice President for Sales and Marketing.

While at Union Bank, Mickel was also

active in Community Associations Institute, where he taught accreditation classes for community managers and other industry professionals.

Mickel was active both at home in Decatur, GA and in Highlands, NC where he spent his summers and fall.

He was an active volunteer for Mountain Findings in Highlands. For several years, Mickel volunteered as a tour guide at Atlanta's historic Oakland Cemetery. He was also a founding



member of the Gay Fathers' Group in Atlanta plus an advocate and champion for PFLAG.

Mickel is survived by his husband Lin Callihan; his younger sister Penny Graham; two sons Wes Graham and wife Mariam and granddaughter Alex (13), Matt Graham and partner Chris Hoopaugh; and daughter Jo Sedlack and husband Tom.

A devoted father and grandfather, "Daddy Mickel"

was most proud of his granddaughters Evelyn Sedlack (Nick), Rachel Sedlack-Pritt (Nate), Olivia Sedlack (James), plus five great grandchildren: Leif (10), Phe (8), Lyla (8), Lochlan (6), and Zion (5).

His extended family also includes his ex-wife Judy Graham, her sister Danny Dunworth, and Mickel's nephew Mikey Dunworth and his wife Jana.

The family intends to hold a memorial service to celebrate Mickel's life in the spring. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that donations be sent to Mountain Findings, Highlands United Methodist Church, the Trevor Project, PFLAG, or a charity of your choice.

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...SB382 continued from page 1

certain “down-zoning” changes without first obtaining the written consent of all property owners in the new zone,” said the League. “Along with the new prohibition, legislators expanded a pre-existing definition of “down-zoning” to include commercial and industrial non-conformities that result from any new zoning.”

Not only does the law prohibit down-zoning without written permission from the property owner, it applies to local government ordinances adopted during the 180 days prior to the date the law became effective – Dec. 11, 2024. “Ordinances adopted in violation of this section shall be void and unenforceable,” it reads.

“Because this provision was first introduced as part of a conference report and legislative

rules do not allow for changes to conference reports, there was no opportunity to modify the provision,” said the League.

Even though Highlands amortization ordinance was enacted with a 4-1 vote in September 2024, clearly within the 180-day window, Town Attorney Bob Hagemann said it’s too early to “opine” on the matter.

“I’m aware of the legislation, but I’m not prepared to opine on whether or how it affects Highlands’ amortization provision for a couple reasons. First, the amortization provision doesn’t “kick in” until September of 2027, so there’s no real urgency,” he said. “Second, there are rumblings that the provision, which popped up with no advanced notice in the conference report and was voted on by

the House and Senate the same day, might be reconsidered or revised by the General Assembly in 2025. I think it would be prudent to see if and how that plays out.”

Mayor Pat Taylor said he agrees with Attorney Hagemann.

“The reverberations across the state may cause the legislature to revisit their hasty action on down-zoning,” he said.

Meanwhile, after the upcoming November 2025 municipal election, a 3-2 vote from the new board could have amortization go the way of Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) when previous Commissioner Larry Rogers, initiated the vote that did away with the ETJ ordinance which had been previously enacted in Highlands

...DEED continued from page 1

Carolina law, Registers of Deeds are statutorily obligated to accept and immediately register documents in conformity with G.S. 161-14. However, the Register of Deeds is not required to verify the legal validity of a deed when it is presented for registration, nor are they required to verify the credentials or legal standing of the notary or drafter of the document (G.S. 47-14).

Such an incident made the news when despite being up-to-date on taxes and mortgage payments, a Raleigh homeowner found out his home was no longer in his name but rather in the name of a complete stranger.

A woman across the country had filed a false warranty claim deed against this house and basically tried to steal it.

She has since said it wasn’t her intention to take anyone’s home but to find abandoned property and restore it. Once she learned the property wasn’t in foreclosure, she said she stopped all paperwork and intends to return the ownership to the rightful owner.

In addition, though people have tried, Braswell said it’s important to know that property in North Carolina cannot be obtained by paying taxes on someone

else’s property.

“In North Carolina you can only obtain property by deed, will, court judgment or tax foreclosure. Tax lien sales do not happen in North Carolina. If you want to make sure that we are actually contacting you for tax purposes, call 828-349-2142,” she said.

Furthermore, Braswell said the Macon County tax office will never come to someone’s house to pick up current or delinquent taxes.

“The tax office will call if you are delinquent, and we may send you an email to let you know you are delinquent, but we will never come to your house,” she said. “And, if you are delinquent, the tax collections office can also provide you with payment options such as partial payments,” she said.

According to Braswell, North Carolina does not offer “homestead exemption” either but offers property tax relief for the elderly, disabled or disabled veterans. Contact the office at 828-349-2182 for more information on this program.

Braswell offered a few more things to note: the tax office doesn’t take credit card payments over the phone, but there is an 888 number to make a phone payment

for taxes.

To mail a check, send it to the Macon County Tax office, 5 West Main Street. There is also a drop box in front to deposit a check but not cash.

Meanwhile, though Macon County does offer a fraud alert program, NC lawmaker, Mary Wills Bode, NC Senate District 18, says not all counties in North Carolina offer it.

“Legislatively we would like to see an appropriation for every register of deeds in North Carolina to be able to have that program, but also we would like for that program to be an opt-out program as opposed to an opt-in program,” said Bode.

A fraud alert won’t stop the deed transfer from happening, but it would notify the property owner immediately after anything is recorded that involves that name. This ensures the property owner was notified and could stop something more from happening.

Perpetrators often target vacant or unoccupied homes, investment properties, or properties with absentee owners. They may also target properties with no mortgage or a large amount of equity.

• HERE'S THE THING •

An Open Letter



Bud Katz

I feel anything resembling disrespect, neglect or forgotten. When they were in my presence, which I know can sometimes be overwhelming, they reminded me who they were, told me why they were there, explained what they were doing or were going to do, and let me know when I'd next see them.

I know this was just two days, not two weeks or two months, but this was my experience, and I feel blessed for

having had it.

Here's the thing: this ramble has nothing to do with the American healthcare system, the American health insurance system, or any system other than the smooth operation of professionally delivered service I personally experienced at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. I have opinions on those other institutions, but this is not that. This is about saying thanks.

First, let me give some love to our town's first-responders. Upon arrival, the EMT team (five professionals) immediately took control, which in our house is no mean trick. They assessed conditions, bundled me up, and delivered me, to HCH.

Once there, everyone, from Dr. Hunt and Dr. Wright, Nurse Duane, and CNA Bella in the ER, Hospitalist Greg, Nurse Supervisors Hannah and Jessica, Nurses Amanda, Caitlyn, and Dawn, CNAs Kim, Savannah, and Carlos, Renee and Janet from food service and the unseen folks from housekeeping tasked with the care and feeding of the older gentleman in 208, all deserve and have my gratitude, admiration, appreciation, and most important, respect for what they do, how they do it, and for being there for me and the rest of us.

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital is a jewel, a powerful asset in our community. Let's remember that and please treat it as such.

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

I recently enjoyed a brief stay as a guest at Highlands Cashiers Hospital, or what we locals refer to as, in shorthand, HCH.

I can't and won't speak for anyone else, but as a rule I don't proactively frequent hospitals. That said, after having spent a lovely Christmas day with close friends here at home, my wife noticed that, in her words, I wasn't quite myself. This was her way of informing me the EMTs were on their way.

Now, in general terms I consider almost any in-patient experience at almost any hospital, for almost any reason, to be avoided at almost any cost. Hospitals, I'm often reminded, are for sick people. I soon learned that I was, in fact, one of those people.

I'm sure many of you have endured much worse than I did. That said, all anyone wearing scrubs ever heard from me during my almost 52-hour stay at HCH was some whiny version of, "When can I go home?" I was often reminded that I was, in fact, exactly where I needed to be.

My two adult daughters, upon first learning of my reason for being, as the British say, in hospital, lamented that I was in a tiny 24-bed hospital in some small western North Carolina town, in some remote corner of the forest, instead of somewhere much larger and therefore ready to deal with many more real or imagined contingencies and therefore much more capable, and perhaps much more willing, to keep me there for as long as they thought was necessary.

As things played out, what I encountered was a well-trained, extremely competent team of hard-working men and women who, I was certain, had only my best interests in their hearts and minds. Everyone, and I do mean EVERYONE, inspired confidence in me and my loving and protective wife.

As one who regularly deals in the currency of words, these few come to mind about the staff at HCH: professional, knowledgeable, gentle, cheerful, caring, and sharing. They all provided on point answers to the myriad questions my wife and I threw at them.

I don't know exactly how many patients were ensconced in HCH, or on my wing while I was in hospital, but never did

...HIGHLANDS continued from page 1

and no instances of material non-compliance with state laws and regulations.

As has been mentioned over the years, the water/sewer enterprise fund doesn't bring in enough money to cover current operating expenses, debt service or future capital needs.

The operating income is still at a loss: -\$2,853,588.

"This indicates a need to raise rates," they said.

It's likely the issue will be discussed at the upcoming town retreat in February or March.

They also noted a budget violation in the Public Buildings Department of \$66,025 due to the Community Building Renovation Project.

The project was underbudgeted due to the anticipated reimbursement by Highlands Rotary, but the auditors said in the future, the full cost of repairs should be budgeted

without consideration of contributions from other entities.

Revenues for the town remain high and constant with the highest revenue – 38% – from ad valorem taxes at \$3,064,128.

Sales tax held steady for 2024 – 20% of the governmental fund pie at \$1,587,173. This fluctuates depending on tourist spending, which is directly related to visitors and lodgers.

Fire taxes and "other" each account for 15% of the pie – \$1,206,433 and \$1,220,998, respectively.

And finally, intergovernmental revenues accounted for 12% of the pie -- \$982,110.

Intergovernmental revenue is funding

• See HIGHLANDS page 11

MOVIES at PAC's MLPC

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Fr. Jason Barone
Our Lady of the Mountains
Catholic Church

Please do not consider this a sermon written for the town, but rather a personal reflection that I have come to appreciate over the years as a priest. I am speaking about the feast and season of Epiphany.

While not all Christian denominations share the same liturgical calendar, many do have common elements. I trust that most non-Catholic liturgical calendars include the basic cycle of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Even if these events aren't strictly observed on their calendars, the concepts themselves are generally understood.

Why is the liturgical year structured this way? Of course, it centers on the two main tenets of the Christian faith: the Incarnation and the Redemptive work of Jesus. However, I would also like to reflect on how this structure benefits the Christian soul.

There are three kinds of persons: divine (as in the three Divine Persons of the Trinity), angelic, and human. But what constitutes personhood? Boethius gives the classical definition: "an individual substance of rational nature." In simpler terms, a person is something that has intellect and will — the capacity to understand and choose.

If our soul is made up of these two faculties — intellect and will — and if God intends to sanctify us completely, then we need help in the sanctification of both. This is where the basic structure of the liturgical calendar seems to be of particular benefit.

In essence, there are two main movements that revolve around the Incarnation and the Redemption. Each movement has three parts: a preparation, an event, and an application. For the Incarnation, we have the preparation of Advent, the event of Christ's birth at Christmas, and the understanding of that event through the Epiphany. As for the Redemption, we have the preparatory time of Lent, the event itself — Christ's passion, death, and Resurrection — and then, the application of that event comes with the reception of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, allowing God to dwell in our hearts (our will).

So, let's focus specifically on the Epiphany. The Epiphany comprises three key events: the visit of the Magi and their offering of gifts, the Lord's baptism, and His first miracle at the wedding at Cana, where He turns water into wine. These three events are often referred to as theophanies — manifestations of God to humanity. In other words, these events reveal who Jesus is in His divinity.

What good is it if Christ comes into the world but we never truly see Him or understand who He is? And by "understand," I do not mean intellectual knowledge of what is claimed about Jesus, but a deeper enlightenment

• See **SPIRITUALLY** page 11

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

BLUEVALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice. Pastor (828) 421-1315
Sundays: School: 10 a.m., Worship: 11
Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7
Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting: 7 p.m.

BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

828-269-3546 • Rev. Jamie Passmore. Pastor
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Aryn Williams-Reubel. Pastor 828-743-5298
Sundays: School at 9:30; Worship 10:30

CHAPEL OF THE SKY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999
Sundays: 10 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Rev'd Dr. Michael Matlock, Rector
464 U.S. Hwy. 64E, Cashiers, NC

CAC@christanglicancashiers.org • 828-743-1701

Sunday: 9a Fellowship; 9:30a Adult Christian Ed; 10:30a Holy Eucharist Tues., 9a; Thurs., 12p Prayer & Book Study

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS

Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470 www.cashiers.church
Sun. S.S 9:30a, 10:45a; Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.;
Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

283 Spring Street - Sunday Service: 10:30 a.m.
Testimony meeting: 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

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

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

706. 746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447
Pastor Steve Kerhoulas
Worship: Sun. 10:30 a.m. Holy Communion 2nd Sunday

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

Emily Wilmarth, pastor, Kelley Connelly Asso. Pastor
828-526-3175 • fpchighlands.org
Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10 a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.
Tues: Men's Group 10 a.m. Wed: Bell Choir 4 p.m.. Choir: 6p

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)
Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am
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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. Wednesday Worship is 6:30p

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376
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www.highlandsmethodist.org

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Rev. Ken Langsdorf
Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

8 miles south of Highlands on N.C. 28 S in Satolah
Pastor Zane Talley
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11. Choir: 6 p.m.
Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

Franklin • 828-634-1312 • mountainsynagoguenc.com.
Services: 1st Fri. and 3rd Sat. and Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur.

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church
Sun: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church. 4224 Big Ridge
(4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS

CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone - 526-2418
Sat. 4pm 5/24/25-10/25/25; Sun. - 11am

SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby
Sundays: School - 10 a.m.; Worship - 11 a.m. & 7
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212
Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.

ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mass: Tues. noon (Latin). Thurs. 9a.; Fri.. noon; Sat. 5:30p; Sun. 9a

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www.goodshepherdofcashiers.com

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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 Dec. 24. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Dec. 24

• At 12:57 p.m., officers responded to a call of a woman being bitten by a dog on Main Street.

Dec. 27

• At 1:45 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 64 west (Franklin Road) and Mirror Lake Road.

Dec. 28

• At 6:26 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on NC 28 south (Wahalla Road) at Many Road.

• At 6 p.m., officers responded to a call of an assault on a female at a residence on Holt Circle where a decorative wooden ball was intentionally thrown at her head.

Dec. 30

• At 4 p.m., Joshua D. Lovins, 20, of Highlands, was arrested for assault on a female. He was issued a \$2,500 unsecured bond. His trial date is Jan. 23.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Dec. 24.

Dec. 30

• At 11:01 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on Flat Mountain Road.

Dec. 31

• At 9:17 p.m., the dept. was first-re-

sponders to a residence on Center Drive.

• At 9:25 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

Jan. 1

• At 9:46 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Upper Lake Road.

Jan. 2

• At 8:58 a.m., the dept., responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east (Cashiers Road.).

• At 4:26 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mt. Lori.

• At 4:34 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a possible gas leak at a residence on Hudson Road.

• At 11:43 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers Fire Department.

Jan. 3

• At 6:46 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mt. Lori.

• At 9:05 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on N. 4th Street.

• At 9:22 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mt. Lori.

Jan. 4

• At 10:30 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Old Rock Road.

• At 1 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a residence on Mt. Lori.

Jan. 5

• At 7:38 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Ravenel Ridge Road.



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...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 10

of the intellect of divine faith.

Thus seen, the Epiphany can be appreciated as vitally important. How can we love someone we don't truly know? Knowledge precedes love. The cycle of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany is ordered to our intellect, so that our wills can be properly disposed for the cycle of Lent, Easter, and Pentecost wherein we receive anew the Holy Spirit by whom we are able to love with divine charity.

...LETTERS continued from page 4

Impasse is perpetuated by likes of 'Catlin'

Dear Editor,

Mr. Bodie Catlin's odious letter in the Jan. 2 edition of Highlands Newspaper entitled 'Barstool-ers' count ironically demonstrates everything he accuses the Democrats of doing or being.

He is sarcastic, demeaning, belittling and contemptuous of an over generalized group of people he has no interest in getting to know or engaging with as he perches on his bar stool.

It is SAD and exemplifies the impasse our country, and unfortunately, parts of our precious Highlands community, finds itself in.

Carole Light
Scaly Mountain

...HIGHLANDS continued from page 9

received from another government, either in the form of a grant or as reimbursement for costs incurred. The recipients of these funds record them as revenue.

As to expenditures, Public Safety and General Government each account for 27% of the expenditure pie – \$2,559,795 and \$2,540,299, respectively.

Transportation accounts for 24% of the pie – \$2,233,831 with culture and recreation next at 12% -- \$1,074,059 and debt service at 10% – \$964,241.

Infrastructure expenditures has eaten up more of the total fund balance than usual – it's a little under \$4 million this year versus in 2023 which was a fraction under \$5 million. Likewise, the available fund balance is less than 2023 – a fraction over \$3

million versus a fraction over \$4 million.

The available fund balance is the money accessible for immediate use without strings attached.

The town's fund balance available as a percentage of net expenditures is substantially lower this year compared to last year as well – and as compared to the average of similar municipalities – about 40% versus about 65%.

Again, this is due to infrastructure investments mainly in regards to expanding the town's electric system to include redundancies so a repeat of the winter of 2022's polar vortex when the town's system grinded to a halt isn't repeated.

The last week of December 2022, a

• See **HIGHLANDS** page 13

Winter may not be beach weather – BUT...
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SEASONED FIREWOOD - Any size load. call 828-342-6806. (st. 1/25)

TINY HOME LOTS FOR SALE. \$55k-\$85k ea. Each lot comes with water, power, and sewer run to each lot. www.TinyMountainEstates.com for more info. (st. 11/22/24)

RV SITE - class A only - in Wildflower Creek RV Resort. Just minutes from Highlands and Sky Valley. Full hook-up, concrete pad, landscaped and storage shed. \$195,000. For more info call 828-421-1709 or email bobnancync@gmail.com. (st. 1/25)

FOR RENT

MIRROR LAKE 2/2 COTTAGE. Newly Renovated. six months to one year lease. Available starting February 2025. For more information email Scott@CottageConcierge.biz (st. 12/12)

2/2 FURNISHED RENTAL only minutes from Cashiers crossroads. King beds, fast internet, paved access in a quiet safe neighborhood. 8-12 month lease. \$2,600 month plus electric. No pets. 828-577-0748. (st. 12/5)

WORKFORCE HOUSING - 2 bedroom/2 bath and 3 bedroom/2 bath with between Highlands & Cashiers. Includes hi-speed internet, water, & washer/dryer. No dogs. Inquires, Marcy (706)982-0444 or (828)482-4239, (st. 5/2/24)

SERVICES

CAREGIVER/SITTER with 40 years experience available for part-time personal care, errands, transportation, meals, etc. Highlands full-time resident. Robert Doe 828.399.0262. (st. 8/29)

MURPHY'S PAINT CO. - interior/exterior painting/sheetrock repair/wallpaper removal/log homes/decks.

...HIGHLANDS continued from page 11

powerful Arctic blast brought a ground blizzard and life-threatening wind chills to North Carolina. Temperatures were 5°F or colder for six days, with lows in the minus teens. Pipes all over town burst straining the town's electric and water infrastructure.

The remaining enterprise fund is the Electric Fund which for years has basically supported other funds and numerous projects – something the League of Municipalities said will be ordered to stop in the near future.

For 2024 it has \$6,010,273 in working capital, a \$10,583,550 unrestricted net position and operating income of \$497,177. This year \$0 was transferred to other funds.

The Sanitation enterprise fund is no longer – it has been moved to the General Fund, because it couldn't support itself.

Insured. Free estimates. 828-332-0525 or 828-421-8600. (3/28)

NEED FURNITURE MOVED OR ANYTHING HAULED AWAY? Call or text James of Going Gone at 828-421-2655. (3/28)

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Complete property cleanup - house, garage, property, etc. Call at 828-200-2855. (st. 9/28)

HIGH COUNTRY PHOTO/KEVIN VINSON: scanning photos, slides & negatives to CD or DVD for easier viewing. Video transfer to DVD. Everything done in house. Leave message at 828-526-5208.



HIGHLANDS
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

LEADERSHIP HIGHLANDS

Join Our Team as the Digital Marketing Coordinator!

The Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC is looking for a part-time Digital Marketing Coordinator to collaborate with our Marketing & Communications Director to create engaging content, track key metrics, and maintain our digital presence. Your contributions will play a pivotal role in showcasing the beauty and rich culture that Highlands, NC has to offer.

Key Responsibilities

- Social Media & Web Content: Develop and implement compelling content and monitor performance metrics.
- Email Marketing: Create and distribute regular e-newsletters for the community, members, and visitors.
- Data & Reporting: Gather and manage data to generate insightful reports and maintain accurate distribution lists.

What We're Looking For

- Marketing Knowledge: Experience with social media, public relations, and digital marketing strategies.
- Tech Savvy: Proficient in Microsoft Office, CRM platforms, and e-communication tools.
- Organized & Detail-Oriented: Able to juggle multiple tasks efficiently while maintaining a positive attitude and keen eye for detail.

Why Join Us?

- Collaborative Team: Be part of a passionate team that values creativity and community impact.
- Make a Difference: Help shape the way people experience and connect with Highlands, NC.

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If you're self-driven, tech-savvy, and knowledgeable about Highlands, NC, we'd love to hear from you! Visit www.highlandschamber.org/live-work/job-board to learn more and apply.

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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

WINTER POOL SCHEDULE

Lap Swim: Mon.-Fri. 6am-9:45am, and Saturday 10am-11pm - 6 lanes.

Water Aerobics: 18 y+ Mon.-Fri. 10-11am with Karen Chambers.

Adult Swim: 18y+ Mon.-Thurs. 11am-3:30pm, Friday 11am-1:30pm
Public Swim: Mon. thru Thurs. 3:30-7pm, Saturday 11am-6pm and Sunday 1-6pm

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. Women's Group 5:30, Tuesdays. 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 info, please visit www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of AA 24/7 at 828-349-

4357.

PICKLE BALL

• At the Recreation Dept. every Monday - Friday 10am-1pm indoors for the winter (notice the days and time has changed),

MOVIES

• Movies at the Martin Lipscomb Performing Arts Center at PAC on Chestnut Street. See ad on page 9.

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. The class is led by Cathy Hodgson. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

Second Mondays

• The local chapter of PEO, an off-campus sorority founded in the 1800s that provides grants and loans to women with financial need who want to return to school or further their education meets at 10 a.m. More meeting places call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004
• Indivisible Highlands from 5:15-6:15pm at the Hudson Library

Meeting Room.

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 information 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. Aim for strong, lean muscles using light weights, body weight, and high repetition to shape and tone. Learn proper form and range of motion to safely target all muscle groups for a metabolic boost and feel great.

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Workshop for Writers – Tuesdays from 5-6:30 PM. Facilitated by Sam Renken, this group has a simple mission: to foster and provide consistent community for local writers thereby giving writers of all ages and genres the opportunity to write, read, revise, and present their work to the group.

• ESL classes are held at the Presbyterian Church in Highlands from 6:30-7:30pm. No registration required – just show up and participate. Questions? call 828-526-0863 or email info@maconnc literacy.org

2nd Wednesdays

• Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health topics, held on the first Wednesday of each month at 11 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health topics of particular interest to them, but all ages are welcome to attend. The November 1 program is Dementia: A Deeper Understanding. Reservations are required for this free event. To register, stop by the library or call 828-526-3031.

2nd & 4th Wed.

• Digital Navigators will be at the Hudson Library the second and fourth Wednesdays 1PM - 3PM of each month to help patrons with their tech needs. Bring a smartphone, laptop, or other digital device to receive free assistance and support. No appointments are required - all are welcome.

Mon., Tues., Thurs.

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

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

exercise. Call the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information

Thurs.-Sat.

• Mountain Findings Hours: 10a to 1p.

Thursdays

• Kickboxing 8:15-9:15 am. at the Rec Park. An exhilarating and fun mix of martial arts for a calorie-burning workout. No martial arts background necessary. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more info.

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

Fridays

• At Hudson Library, Friday afternoons at 2 PM, there's a variety of children's programs including board games, STEM programs, and crafters.

Saturdays

• Story Ballet - a gentle ballet & creative movement class for Children 3-4. The flow of class follows a story or theme that changes each month, engaging imaginations! Saturday 5:30-6:30pm. 828-421-6720

• Adult Ballet - crafted for beginners, but mindfully taught for all levels. Ballet is an excellent way to move, grow stronger, improve balance, flexibility and coordination while having fun. 6:30-7:30pm. 828-421-6720.

3rd Saturdays

• The American Legion Post 370 meets at the First Methodist Church at 315 Main St. in their community room/909 chapel. We serve breakfast at 9 AM and hold our monthly meeting at 10 AM. We invite ALL veterans to attend - email ncpost370@gmail.com for more information or just join us at 9 AM.

Sundays

• At Wayfarers Chapel, Sunday Service: 10 AM Sunday Morning. Stick around for visitation and coffee hour immediately after service. (Coffee hour is replaced by potluck dinner the 1st Sunday of each month).

Through-March

• Ice Skating in the Park The hours are Thursdays, 3:30-8pm, Fridays, 3:30-10pm, Saturdays, 1-10pm, Sundays, 1-5pm. The price is only \$8, with or without skates. Coffee and hot chocolate are available for purchase.

Beginning Jan. 1

• At the Mountain Learning Center Youth Programs – Mountain Camp Registration opens on January 1!

Reserve your spot now. Mountain Camp creates an environment where youth can learn to be sure of themselves and their values, while enjoying recreation, adventure, education, and creativity. These weekend programs provide the perfect opportunity for youth to form lifelong bonds and memories while experiencing nature. Learn more and reserve your spot Spring Elementary CON (3rd-5th Grade): Feb 14 - 16; Spring Intermediate CON (6th-8th Grade): Feb 28 - March 2; Spring Senior High CON (9th-12th Grade): March 14 - 16 <https://www.themountainrlc.org/event/homecoming-2/>

Beginning Jan 9

• Christ Anglican Church on 64 East in Cashiers will host "lunch and learn" brown bag sessions beginning Thursday, at noon led by Michael and Robin Matlock. For eight weeks, the book, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Scazzero, will be the focal point. Come learn how healthy spirituality and healthy emotions are inseparable! Purchase your book copy at Amazon or your favorite bookstore. Call 828-743-1701 or email cac@christanglicancashiers.org with questions. All are welcome.

Jan. 23

• Upcoming Workshop with Hagan Binder Landscape Architects, The Art of Bulb Forcing at 4 p.m. Register online at haganbinder.com

April 13-18

• At the Mountain Learning Center, Music Week – Experience our engaging Music Week through classes, workshops, and one-on-one sessions with nationally touring musicians you will discover your magic in music. Early-Bird Discount - \$50 off if registered before Valentine's Day! <https://www.themountainrlc.org/event/homecoming-2/>

Sat., April 26

• Plateau Pickup. Keep Highlands beautiful. Participate in Plateau Pickup, a community-wide cleanup day dedicated to preserving our town's natural beauty. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

1st Sat., May-Oct.

• Pop-Up Pipers Discover the magic of live music as the Pop-Up Pipers perform throughout town, adding a charming, musical twist to a Main Street stroll. For more info, go to highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-2112.

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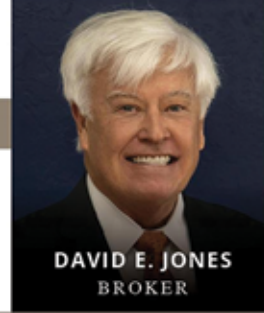
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