

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Jan 23, 2014

TB makes board appts.; tables ABC board appt.

Allegations by ABC Store employees concerning board behavior causes TB to pause

Board appointments at Town Board meetings are usually OK'd with little fanfare, but last Thursday the issue got more airtime than usual.

Michael Rogers was reappointed to the Zoning Board for his second term – by NC statute members are allowed two, three-year terms.

Term limits for the town's other boards aren't mandated; and last year the board adopted the one-year policy so each January members can either be reappointed

or new members appointed.

Applications for the Planning board included Ashley Hagan-Binder, David Bee, Sam Edgens,

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Landscaping awards questioned

Town mowing and landscaping bids are usually "no news" items at Town Board meetings, but last Thursday, there was a lot to say on the subject.

Town Manager Bob Frye said to get the best price, the town bids the jobs out and normally the town awards the bids to the lowest bidder.

Bids are for contracts for Highlands Recreation Park properties, Zachary Park, Highlands Memorial Park (the cemetery), Town General Landscaping and Kelsey-Hutchinson Park.

Town Attorney J.K. Coward said by NC law the town wasn't required to bid out landscaping contracts but since that is the town's policy, he suggested the commission consider the awards carefully.

"There is a possible conflict of interest with one of the low bidders," he said. "There is an active lawsuit with the town in Shearl vs. Town of Highlands and Shearl [J&J Landscaping] is one of your bidders. I am not recommending that he be removed from the bidding process, I am just

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PB to consider extending downtown parking restrictions

A 'changing' Highlands initiated discussion about extending downtown parking restrictions through the end of each year.

At the Jan. 16 Town Board meeting, Jerry Moore, owner of Kilwins in Town Square on Main Street said a bustling downtown through the holidays warrants changes to the parking restrictions.

"Highlands is changing. In

eight years, I've watched the months of November and December get significantly busier, especially on the weekends -- Friday and Saturday in December and just before Christmas well into Jan. 5th or 6th depending upon when kids from Georgia and surrounding areas go back to school," he said. "One thing that frustrated me this December, particularly on the weekends, was so many employees of shops and owners parked on Main Street. About 25 cars that I knew of belonged to merchants."

Moore said people won't do their Christmas shopping if they can't pull in and get a parking space especially if it is raining – which happened twice on weekends toward the end of the year.

"On December 30, I was

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Fireman of the year, David Leffler with Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart at the annual Highlands Fire & Rescue Award Dinner Saturday night.

Fireman of the Year and more subject of annual awards banquet

At the Jan. 18 annual fire department awards dinner, volunteers and guests enjoyed a meal prepared by Bob and Kristy Lewis of The Sports Page and much needed down time together.

Each year the department recognizes their own where the Fireman of the Year is declared, years of service recognized, as well as officers and those with perfect attendance at the weekly meetings held every Tuesday night.

This year David Leffler was voted Fireman of the Year by his peers. Chief Ryan Gearhart said

he epitomizes all that is good in the department and "leads by example."

Service pins and certificates were presented to five, 10, 15 and 30 year members – Chris Barden, Hunter Leffler and Ryan Perkins have served for five years; Buddy Miller has served for 10 years, Jim Tate and Ryan Gearhart have served for 15 years and Gary Ammons has served for 30 years.

New members to the department were welcomed – Kelly Dendy, Eric Fielding, Robby Reed, Austin Reese, Seth Schmitt

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SBI called in to investigate MC BOE

Last Thursday evening, Jan. 16, 2013, Macon County Sheriff Robert L. Holland was contacted by County Manager Derek Roland regarding some questionable business practices and some possible irregularities with some records from the county Board of Election's Office.

Sheriff Holland met Roland and County Attorney Chester Jones at the County Board of Election's office and after a brief investigation recommended the locks be changed to deny access to the office until further notice.

Friday morning there was another meeting which included the county manager, the county Finance Director Lori Hall, the county attorney and Sheriff Holland who recommended that the State Board of Elections be contacted as well as the District Attorney's Office. Holland also requested the assistance of the State Bureau of Investigations (SBI). It agreed and has initiated its investigation.

The Sheriff's Office will not release any other information regarding this matter and all other inquiries should be directed to the SBI's Asheville Office or the District Attorney's Office.

"At my request, the SBI is

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• LETTERS •

Shining a light on God, part 2

Bob Lambert's letter in the January 9th issue of the Highlands Newspaper was well written and thoughtful, which tells me that it just might be possible for religion and science to find some common ground.

We must, however, keep in mind that other religions have their own Holy Books so the Bible is not unique.

There is another factor that one must consider and that is the religion we belong to is entirely a matter of where we were born. We have no choice either while still in the womb or as children and God certainly does not play games with human life. If you were born in Saudi Arabia, you most certainly would be a Muslim and understanding this requires us to keep an open mind.

When we refer to science, we must also keep in mind that science represents what we know about the world and universe around us, keeping in mind that new science discoveries occur almost daily.

Since the known universe is governed by the laws of physics no one can break, it seems to me dangerous to ascribe magic to God and this is where we have problems with the Bible as translated. (Or the Torah or Koran for that matter) Does God really need magic in order to function? Would it not be better to assume that God simply uses the laws of physics much in the same manner as we did when we invented airplanes or electromagnetism but with far more knowledge than we currently possess?

Surely a God learned in physics need not resort to magic. Even the inference of magic takes us into a treacherous path logical people resist. In one African country recently a goat was jailed for stealing a car because the local people believed that the goat was really a man who turned into a goat to escape the police. This is what magic brings us when we ignore science.

Every new discovery draws us closer to God which should be our ultimate goal, to understand God, and I firmly believe that that's what She wants. (We only assume God is a man because ancient tribal leaders thought of women as inferior)

At this time in human history, we aren't doing too well when it comes to finding peace on this planet and much of the division involves religion and it looks like things are going to get a lot worse be-

fore they get better. A world religion based on science and knowledge, free of magic, could prevent turning ourselves into toast and going extinct.

I've seen no empirical evidence that God has given us any instructions for around 2,000 years which implies that if we are to have a destiny for ourselves, it's going to be up to us to make that destiny and the way to do so is to understand nature and the sciences, both of which are probably God anyway."

Bob Wilson
Franklin, NC

The unemployment rate

Are you concerned if you are in your 50s or late 40s that the social security fund

could be running out of money a lot sooner than you think?

In December only 74,000 people found jobs and some of those may have been part-time jobs. The USA is going into the sixth year of high unemployment. Millions have left the work force which means they have not been putting money into the fund. Employers only pay into the fund when people are employed. Yet thousands of people could have been working building the Keystone Pipe Line and drilling for oil and natural gas. We could have been well on our way to being energy self-sufficient. Instead of putting millions on welfare and food stamps we could have hired people to build roads and bridges.

We will never be able to recover all of the lost money that could have gone into the Social Security fund had we put people

to work. In November let's elect people who believe in putting people to work. Keeping social security solvent should be a high priority for all of us, especially if you are counting on it.

Jim Mueller
Glenville, NC

• THANK YOU •

From the Owens Family

Words cannot describe the gratitude we feel during the passing of our dear mother, Martha Munger Owens. For all the prayers, kind words and generosity expressed by our community, the wonderful bounty provided by Bryson's Food Store and many friends and family members, the amazing performance by Gibby and Savannah Shaheen and the special eulogy presented by both Oliver Rice and Clinton Owens. We are blessed beyond words to live in a community that will always hold us up when we are weak and hope that we can display the same kindness in return. Thank you for honoring my mother's memory in a way we will never forget.

...PARKING continued from page 1

heading out of town and I was amazed at how many cars were coming into town; it was like summer. I think it would behoove us to consider extending restrictions until the end of the year – only 30 more days. Parking is already restricted through November," said Moore. "The town is changing and we are getting more and more visitors. Obviously it's not an issue now, but April through December merchants and employees should stay off Main Street."

Moore said he has asked shop owners why they are parking on Main Street on a Saturday when there are still plenty of people in town and they say, "It's all right to park here now."

"Of course, that's true, but logically it's not a good idea because they are keeping people from coming into their shops," he said.

Currently merchants and their employees are restricted from parking in designated areas on Main Street, S. 4th Street, parts of 5th, Church and Third streets so there will be convenient and

LETTERS-TO-THE EDITOR-POLICY

We reserve the right to reject or edit submissions.

NO ANONYMOUS LETTERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of Highlands Newspaper.

Please EMAIL letters by Sunday at 5 p.m. There is a 500-word limit without prior approval.

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and Taylor Parrish. They bring the department total to 28 members.

For 24 years running Roger L. Wilson has had perfect attendance; joining him this year was Jimmy Petrone and Jason Tardo.

Bob Houston, who is retiring after 50 years of service with the department was presented several plaques and words of appreciation from the department, Highlands Mayor Pat Taylor, President of the Macon County Fire Commission Dave Cabe, Fire Marshall Jimmy Teem, Director of Emergency Dispatch Todd Seagle and past chief James "Popcorn" Manley.

"Bob is the backbone of the fire department and he will be missed," said Manley who retired last year after 33 years

of service. "You made me what I am today. Congratulations for all the years you served. I love you."

The total number of calls for 2013 was 478 an increase of 47 calls from 2012; fire related calls including alarms was 248 of that total – 25 more than in 2012.

There were 92 calls within the town limits and 156 calls outside the town limits.

Rescue and first-responder calls came in at 230 – an increase of 22 from 2012. Calls within the town limits were 106 and outside 124.

Major equipment purchases included a 2013 Chevy utility service truck, an all-purpose gas detector and two portable generators.

Concerning annual training and man-

• See FIRE page 13



2014 Officers front from left: Chief Ryan Gearhart, 1st Lt. Roger L. Wilson, Secretary Lenny Metrick, Rescue Capt. Jim Tate. Back from left: Asst. Chief Robbie Forrester, Fire Captain Matthew Wilson, 2nd Lt. Jimmy Petrone and Rescue Capt. Eric Pierson.



From left: Jimmy Petrone, Roger L. Wilson and Jason Tardo were recipients of Perfect Attendance awards.



On Saturday night, the HF&R department, the town, the MC Fire Commission, the MC Fire Marshall and the MC Emergency Dispatch honored Bob Houston for 50 years of service. He is retiring at the end of the month. Left, Mayor Pat Taylor presents Bob with a plaque of appreciation. Below: President of the MC Fire Commission Dave Cabe, Fire Marshall Jim Teem and Director of MC Emergency Dispatch Todd Seagle presented Bob with a plaque.

Photos by Kim Lewicki



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...APPTS. from page 1

Dan Chapman, Dixie Barton, Mary Bynum, Tony Potts, Thomas Craig, Glenda Bell, Alan Marsh, Steve Abranyi III, Chris Boltz, and Patrick Leonard.

The only person not reappointed for 2014 was Alan Marsh. Landscape architect Ashley Hagan Binder was recommended to take his place. Commissioners voted 4 to 1 to accept the Planning Department's recommendation.

Commissioner Donnie Calloway voted against Hagan-Binder's appointment on the grounds that she is too new to town.

She and her husband have lived in Highlands over a year – which is a stipulation when applying to boards.

Planning Director Josh Ward said that according to her application she has a lot of experience in design work. Since the Planning Board has assumed the duties of the dissolved Appearance Commission, her background was considered useful.

Commissioner Eric Pierson said the Land Use Committee (he and Commissioner John Dotson are on the Land Use Committee) took her background into consideration.

"It is pretty extensive and we are trying to get different aspects on boards. Besides these are just one year terms so boards can change next year," he said.

The 2014 Planning Board is Tony Potts, Thomas Craig, Glenda Bell, Steve Abranyi, Chris Boltz, Patrick Leonard and Ashley Hagan-Binder.

Susie deVille and Jack Calloway were reappointed to the Scholarship Committee.

ABC Board

Georgia Sanders' term on the ABC Board has expired, but the board agreed to table the pending appointment due to concerns about that board.

According to ABC Board minutes, disputes among ABC Board members and employees about employee duties, manager duties, hours of employment, as well as conduct during board meetings have been brewing since January 2013. At that time board member Jack Calloway suggested the newspapers attend meetings to ensure they are conducted in a civil manner.

"ABC Board meetings have become so contentious that having an outside agency present would hopefully mean that discussion of issues would be carried out in a

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...APPTS. continued from page 4

more professional manner,” he said at the January 2013 meeting. “A way to keep the newspapers from attending meetings is for those in attendance to remember that members may not have the same opinion about all issues, but each member deserves the right to express his/her opinions as well as make motions as they see fit. As with any board, the majority rules when a vote is taken.”

(It should be noted that ABC Board meetings are open meetings and as such the press and the public can't be barred from attending.)

During the Town Board's public comment period last May and again Thursday night, January 16, 2014, two ABC employees requested time to speak about issues at the ABC Store.

In May, then Mayor David Wilkes and Thursday, Mayor Pat Taylor, both denied the request on the grounds that the Town Board doesn't oversee activities at the ABC Store; it only appoints board members.

Though store manager Sandra Baty wasn't permitted to discuss concerns at the May Town Board meeting, the minutes from the May 2013 ABC Board meeting indicate that Baty and Finance Officer Skip Keener said they attended the May Town Board meeting to express concern about the possibility of the number of employees' hours being cut from 40 hours a week to 30 hours a week.

Last Thursday night, Assistant Manager Lisa Talley presented a letter to each board member and the mayor saying “there are some issues that need to be resolved.”

Her letter outlines conduct at a Special Called ABC Board meeting on January 7, 2014 in which she accuses board member Jack Calloway of conduct unbecoming a board member – specifically cursing – conduct which she and Manager Baty consider grounds for removal. She says the outburst was heard in the sales room, as verified by Baty when a customer approached her about what they heard.

However, neither person was allowed to voice their concerns at Thursday's Town Board meeting.

“This board doesn't supervise employees. We do appoint the board that supervises you but it isn't appropriate for us to discuss personnel issues,” said Mayor Pat Taylor. “With that said, we are aware of the paper you just shared with us and we will be meeting and looking at the concerns that have been expressed by different people.”

However, Baty told the board that according to the ABC Commission, the Town Board both appoints members to the ABC Board and can also remove them. At the regular January ABC Board

meeting held Wednesday, Jan. 15, 2014 at the store, the minutes of the Jan. 7 Special Called meeting were presented but not accepted because according to Baty the one-sentence minutes were incomplete and didn't properly disclose the goings on at the meeting. Secretary Brenda Pierson, who prepared the minutes because recording secretary Jerry Talley wasn't able to attend the Special Called meeting, said she didn't know how “diplomatic” she should be concerning the verbal exchanges that took place that day. On the 15th, Baty called Assistant Manager Talley in to substantiate her claim concerning the incomplete minutes and the exchange between board members on the 7th.

Talley, who was in her adjoining office during the Jan. 7 meeting, said “she felt very uncomfortable overhearing the profanity.”

“I went out to the showroom to wait on a customer and shut the door behind me all the while hearing him [Jack Calloway] continue ranting and cursing,” she said.

However, a copy of the amended Jan. 7 minutes, which will be considered at the regular February ABC Board meeting, outlines unbecoming behavior of both Georgia Sanders and Jack Calloway. Due to profane language allegedly uttered by both, the meeting ended with Secretary Brenda Pierson saying she didn't feel like listening to this and refused to remain at the table “mainly in fear of what would happen next.” She walked out first followed by Calloway and Sanders, according to the amended minutes. Pierson prepared the amended minutes as requested on the 15th.

The contentious changes in the ABC Store personnel policy, which according to Calloway would be one way to bring costs down, were precipitated by the pending Cashiers ABC Store, which has yet to break ground.

At the regular January ABC Board meeting, Baty said that since Calloway has been on the board numerous policies have been changed. “If what we are doing was good enough for David Wilkes, Eric Pierson, Lynn Magner, Mike Thompson and Georgia Sanders why isn't it good enough for Jack Calloway?” she asked. “If it's something personal you should put it under the table.”

Calloway said changes have nothing to do with displeasure with Baty whatsoever. “It has to do with the items I put in writing in a memo in Oct. 2012 – things I thought could improve the operation of the store.”

When Baty asked just what he wanted improved he said the board has already made some improvements. “For one thing we have cut employee hours by 25%.”

Baty went on to say in her 27 years at the store she has never been so put down

• INVESTING AT 4,118 FT. •

Highlands Real Estate Market Report for 2013

Usually it gets pretty quiet for real estate when the weather gets cold, but thanks in no small part to the Old Edwards Inn and Spa, weekends during November and December were packed with shoppers and those looking for a respite from the hustle and bustle of big cities. Thus, we continued to remain busy and productive through the end of the year.

As Realtors, we are often asked about the changes in the real estate market from year to year. I am passing on the statistics since 2008, thanks to Judy Michaud, Owner/Broker of Meadows Mountain Realty. These were taken from the Highlands-Cashiers MLS as of the end of December for Highlands Township single family residential sales:

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of sales	95	103	77	102	121	155
Days on market	294	1166	619	528	513	430
Median price	\$490,500	\$550,000	\$550,000	\$440,000	\$425,000	\$399,000
Avg. price	\$676,757	\$688,179	\$679,078	\$572,129	\$565,586	\$572,481
List to sale ratio	89.08%	87.29%	86.52%	86.68%	87.27%	88.21%
Foreclosures/ Short sales	0	11	8	27	29	20

As you can see, although the number of sales are continuing to increase year over year along with the list to sale ratio, prices have not rebounded and actually the median prices have declined. We expect that this trend will continue until our inventory of unsold homes begins to decrease.

Following is the breakdown by price range for 2013 residential closed sales compared to 2012.

Highlands		
	2013	2012
\$300K and under	52	39
\$301K-\$500K	48	30
\$501K-\$750K	21	30
\$751K-\$1M	13	4
\$1M-\$2M	16	18
\$2M and over	5	0
Totals	155	121

In addition to the sales above, currently there are 13 homes which are either under contract or pending. Looking back at our banner year of 2007, there were 165 sales with an average selling price of \$815,580 and a median price of \$550,000, with a 91.78% list to sale ratio and an average of 240 days on market. We have a long way to go with pricing to come even close to those numbers. I believe we have a couple more years of soft prices.

There were 32 land sales last year, with an average selling price of \$221,391, average days on market of 572 and a list to sale ratio of 78.99%. There is one sale pending and 221 unsold homesites/acreage on the market.

There were 17 condominium sales last year at an average sales price of \$309,559, average days on market of 614 and a list to sale ratio of 90.18%. There are four pending sales and 67 unsold condo listings on the market.

There were 20 foreclosure/short sales with 11 (6 homes and 5 home sites) on the market. Distressed properties are definitely on the decline as well.

Here are the numbers of current unsold residential listings by price range compared to the end of 2012:

	Current Unsold Homes	Unsold Homes end of 2012
\$300K and under	69	65
\$301K-\$500K	120	121
\$501K-\$750K	74	64
\$751K-\$1M	66	64
\$1M-\$2M	67	72
\$2M and over	26	30
Totals	422	415



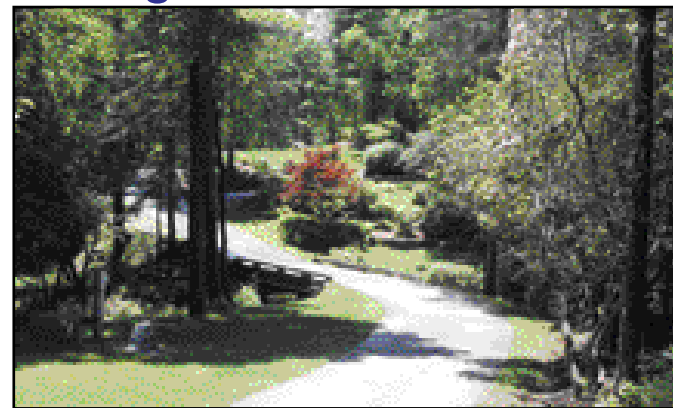
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...APPTS. continued from page 6

and led on as in the last year and a half.

"I'm not appreciated, I don't have a job and Jack Calloway... you can't please him with a golden platter. He has told me that everything I do does not suit him. I don't know what to do to please the man so I'm out of here. I hope you can find someone who can. And good luck because a manager's job is a whole lot more than

what you all expect.

"For 27 years this store has run flawlessly. All of a sudden no one does anything right. All this commotion over nothing. I mean our benefits, our pay, our hours... big deal. It's been fine for 27 years, why does it have to change now? I think the Town Board needs to know this and I think the public needs to know this. I'm not going

to leave here just saying 'I'm retiring.' I'm going to let you all know why I'm retiring at my last meeting. Hope the next person doesn't get the treatment I've gotten in the last year and a half," she said.

When asked what other changes bothered her, she said for one thing the manager has been in charge of hiring and firing with board's approval but now the board has first option on that.

"The manager has no job. If you ask me what my job is, I don't have a job. And that's one reason I'm retiring. I can do a budget for you, but it's not good enough [Jack Calloway]."

Sanders agreed saying the criticism of Baty by Calloway has been relentless for a year and a half. Consequently,

In the memo Calloway referred to at the January regular meeting, which is in the October 2012 minutes, Calloway suggested changes to store operations and policies to "provide convenient access to alcoholic beverages, operate in an efficient, effective manner and maximize the amount of funds earmarked for the beneficiaries."

"The store is facing several challenges today that could have a profound effect on its viability including a continuing sluggish economy, unprecedented high rent (though since then, the board has extolled the generosity of landlord Margaret O'Donnell who decreased its rent from \$6,500 a month to \$4,000 a month through June 2014) and the likelihood of a competing store in Cashiers," he said in the memo. "In reviewing data from this store, data from stores throughout the state system and an onsite visit from ABC consultants Sara Brewer and Mike Myrick, I'm convinced that we as board members aren't upholding our responsibilities to the Highlands Town Board nor to the citizens of Highlands if we don't address various issues."

In the memo, he went on to cite 11 stores with equal or greater gross revenues and lower expenses than the Highlands store. Of the 161 boards in the state, about 93% use part-time employees. Highlands is one of 7% that doesn't; being paid weekly rather than every two weeks, which he said is considered grossly cost inefficient. He said the employee benefit package has evolved

over time without taking into account what is prudent, affordable within community and industry standards.

For instance, he said an employee with 15 years of service could miss four months of work in one year and be paid for it under the existing benefit package.

"I believe the great majority of the business people within the community would be appalled to learn that the current sick leave policy allows up to 320 hours to be taken annually," he said. "Another area of concern is that all benefit days not taken are credited toward the employees' retirement, which when looked at statewide may help to explain why the state legislature struggles with continued funding of the retirement system."

Specific recommendations of October 2012, some of which have been put into effect, include: no more overtime unless OK'd by a board member; cutting 40 hours of employee time from the current 160 hours; two weekends off per month per employee; adjust staffing hours – one employee from 9a to 1p four of the five week days for at least six months of the year; employ and train two people to work part-time when needed for vacations; institute and adhere to seasonal and non-seasonal work schedules; pay every two weeks; have the sick leave policy mirror the policy of the Gastonia employee handbook; discuss vacation leave; update job descriptions; get feedback from employees on how to cut expenses; and continue to work with Margaret O'Donnell to keep rent manageable.

"I believe with these changes and additions, the store can operate more efficiently and effectively which should help ensure it as an ongoing entity," said Calloway. "The amount of funds distributed to the beneficiaries should increase substantially."

Meanwhile, the Town Board is considering concerns involving board behavior and other issues.

– Kim Lewicki

Note: At press time, Wed, Jan. 22, Georgia Sanders submitted her letter of resignation to the Town Board, effective immediately, citing personal conflicts.

...PARKING continued from page 2

plenty of parking for customers and visitors. Mayor Pat Taylor agreed with Moore's findings.

"As new mayor, I have been driving around and I can confirm what he said and I was delighted to see the influx of tourists."

Commissioner Amy Patterson said since Highlands now has a retail season through the holidays it would be a good idea to extend parking restrictions for merchants and their employees but suggested getting a

recommendation from the Planning Board.

Bob Keiltyka, president of the Chamber of Commerce said his board had discussed the issue at its last meeting and will likely poll its business owners to see if they have any comments on the issue.

It's likely parking restrictions throughout town – not just those on Main Street – will be considered by Planning Board at its meeting Monday, Jan. 27.

– Kim Lewicki



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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

My vote for biblical marriage and family values

By Pastor Mark Ford
First Baptist Church

The concepts of Christian marriage and family have been under attack for some time now. Anyone over the age of 30 would have to be in a self-induced coma not to realize the radical changes and challenges that have confronted what have been called “traditional values” of home life and definitions of marriage. The reality is that these cultural shifts are about three generations in the making, and numberless people no longer identify with or even remember what the Bible teaches about the covenant of marriage and God’s blueprint for the home. A vote to return to those Scriptural teachings, and reject present day challenges and assumed “new norms” for relationships and sexuality will quickly get you placed in the proverbial categories of irrelevant, uncharitable, and narrow minded. So be it.

Scriptural marriage is an intimate and complementing union between a man and a woman in which the two become one physically and in the whole of life. The purpose of marriage is to reflect the nature of the Godhead and glorify our Creator. Humankind was created in God’s image with a plural composition of male and female. The bringing together of male and female in the covenantal bond of marriage was to reflect “oneness” and yet “diversity” in complementary union – a relational unity-in-plurality. Male and female are distinct in their gender and roles, but equal in nature, essence and purpose. Like the Trinity, oneness in marriage is a mystery, but each member functions in concert to make a beautiful whole.

Marriage between a man and a woman is the most basic and significant social relationship to humankind. When nurtured by the Spirit and guided by the Word of God, it serves society as no other social institution. Without it, history has proven time and again that society will fail. It is not humanities prerogative to arbitrarily separate or redefine what God has ordained to be put together as one (Mt. 19:6). The Scriptural nature of marriage is that it is to be complementary, permanent and intimate in a manner that is treated with dignity, honor and purity. In this unique relationship between a man and a woman, there is a counterbalance of each other’s strengths and weaknesses. And because of this “one flesh” relationship that is God’s ideal, there is a disallowance in God’s Word of perversions like polygamy, adultery, pre-marital sex, incest, homosexuality, and prostitution that undermine and distort what marriage is to reflect – the nature of the Godhead as an exclusive unity-in-plurality. But as the Bible testifies to time and again, sin has marred God’s ideal, infecting not just the world in general, but even God’s people. The Bible is not shy about revealing how even the people of God have allowed our fallen natures to encroach upon this Divine institution of marriage and family, producing distortions and painful consequences because of our compromise and rebellion.

Simply and directly stated, God has a plan for the relationships of men and women, and it does not allow for redefinitions or challenges to God’s Word. Sin as pride and lust is the culprit. Marriage commitments forsaken, living together out of wedlock, and perversions of the plurality-in-unity are the by-products. The world may change the rules, but my vote is to remain with our Lord’s Word which changes not and whose plan is for our best, the good of society, and God’s glory.

Proverbs 3:5 • PLACES TO WORSHIP • John 3:16

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Wednesdays: 9 a.m. Healing and Prayer w/Holy Communion

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Rector: Jim Murphy, 252-671-4011
464 US Hwy 64 east, Cashiers
Sun.: Chirstian Education, 9 a.m.(Bucks in Cashiers) Family
Worship with music and Communion, 10:30 a.m.
Mon.: Bible Study & Supper at homes - 6 p.m.
Wed.: Men’s Bible Study -8:30 a.m., First Baptist Church

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Pastor Steve Kerhoulas
Sun.10:45am, S.S 9:30am. Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.
Tue. Guys study 8am, Gals 10am.

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Pastor Jim Kinard
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11
Wednesdays -- 7 p.m.

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Senior Pastor Gary Hewins
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10:30am: Middle & High School; 10:45am: Children’s Program,.

10: 45am: Worship Service
Wed.: 5pm Dinner (\$7 adult, \$2 child), 6pm CBC University

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Rev. Bruce Walker • 526-2968
Sundays: Holy Eucharist Rite I (chapel), 8 am, Education and
choir rehearsal, 9 am, Holy Eucharist Rite II, (sanctuary),10:30
Thursdays: Holy Eucharist, (chapel), 10 am

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 526-4153
Sun.: Worship 10:45 a.m.; School – 9:30 a.m.
Wed.: Men’s Bible Study 8:30 a.m., Prayer Meeting – 6:15
p.m., Choir – 5 p.m.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Dr. Lee Bowman, Pastor • 526-3175
Sun.: Worship – 11 a.m.; School – 9:30
Mondays: 8 a.m. – Men’s Prayer Group & Breakfast
Wednesdays – Choir – 7

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Sundays: Worship – 11

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Pastor Dan Robinson
670 N. 4th Street (next to the Highlands Civic Center)
Sunday: Morning Worship 10:45 a., Evening Worship, 6:30 p.
Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Pastor Paul Christy 526-3376
Sun: School 9:45a.; Worship 9:09 & 10:50.; Youth 5:30 p.
Wed: Supper; 6; 7:15 – children, youth, & adults studies; 6:15 –
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Thurs:12:30 – Women’s Bible Study (nursery)

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Worship/Communion – 10:30

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

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Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg. – 7 p.m.

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290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Alfred Sizemore • 526-3212
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p.m.

Wed: Adult Bible Study & Youth – 7 p.m.

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Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study – 7

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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers
Sunday School – 10 am, Worship Service – 11 am

...AWARDS continued from page 1

bringing that to your attention. If you decided to remove him, I would support that decision."

Coward said if the town issues a contract to Shearl, the commissioners need to understand that the conflict of interest is due to Shearl's adverse interest and the active lawsuit against the town that will cost Highlands money if he wins.

Mayor Patrick Taylor said the litigation has been going on for years, and J&J Lawn Services has had contracts with the town in the past.

"Has there ever been any record of him not executing the contract properly?" he asked.

Public Service Administrator Lamar Nix said the only contract he has been involved with concerning Shearl is the cemetery contract.

...SBI from page 1

the lead agency and we are assisting," said Holland. "We have been instructed not to discuss the case."

Macon County Commissioners have been instructed to do the same. However, Tuesday night, Chairman Kevin Corbin had this to say:

"After County Manager Derek Roland got a tip from an internal source involving a situation with the Board of Elections, he contacted Sheriff Holland. Each of the commissioners were then informed of the circumstances and agreed with the manager and sheriff's recommendation to close the office and to allow the SBI to conduct an investigation. It is our hope to have the office open as soon as possible."

Vice Chairman Ronnie Beale said he hoped more information will be available soon.

"As you know, we have been instructed not to comment other than what was said in the press release. However, I will say this is a very serious matter. Hopefully more on this will come forth soon"

When contacted, District Attorney Bonfoey's office said there wasn't anything to report yet, but hopefully there would be something before the week's end.

Highlands to get one-stop voting

"He has done that for many years, though Zoellner Landscaping got it last year. But I have never had any issues with J&J Lawn Services."

Shearl vs. The Town of Highlands is now in the appeal process.

"It has gone through the administrative process with the town and that has been affirmed by Judge Downs in a court proceeding. Shearl has appealed that to the NC Court of Appeals, so the next move will be to go to Raleigh to argue it," said Coward.

For Commissioner John Dotson, the issue was black and white.

"We are providing the funds to essentially afford the lawsuit against the town. Should the town lose at some point in the future,

Tuesday night, the MC Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to open a second early-voting location in Highlands.

Due to recent changes in NC legislation regarding the length of time one-stop voting can operate, members of the MC Board of Elections requested funds from the county to open a second location.

Luke Bateman, chairman of the Board of Elections, spoke to commissioners about state-

we have supplied the money in essence for our own lawsuit; we certainly will have a group of taxpayers who are displeased."

Commissioner Amy Patterson's view was the opposite.

"Citizens should have the right to question what their government does. That's the way it's done and I'm not sure you should penalize someone who does a good job and fulfills their contracts because they disagree with the government," she said. "I understand that it does sound like we are funding his lawsuit, but at the same time if I disagreed with one of the government's decisions, I would want the right to take it to the next step. That is what our government is for. We are not autocrats. We have an opportunity to refute that and that doesn't necessarily mean you can't go on

mandated changes to voting that will be implemented over the next few years. This year, new legislation will effect one-stop voting whose period will be shortened by one week, however the hours of operation must remain the same.

With a week less to be open, Bateman said 123 hours need to be made up elsewhere and the shortened one-stop voting window will impact the upcoming

• See SBI page 14

with your normal job."

Commissioner Brian Stiehler said he saw both sides but seconded Commissioner Patterson's motion to award the landscaping contracts to the lowest bidder. The final vote was 4-1 with Commission Dotson voting "nay."

Highlands Rec. Park was awarded to Zoellner Landscaping at \$18,482; Zachary Park was awarded to J&J Lawn and Landscaping

Services at \$14,283, Highlands Memorial Park was awarded to J&J Lawn and Landscaping Services at \$31,318, Town General Landscaping was awarded to Tate Landscaping at \$17,100, and Kelsey-Hutchinson Park was awarded to J&J Lawn and Landscaping Services for \$2,982.

The total is \$84,165 down from last year's total of \$86,428.

— Kim Lewicki

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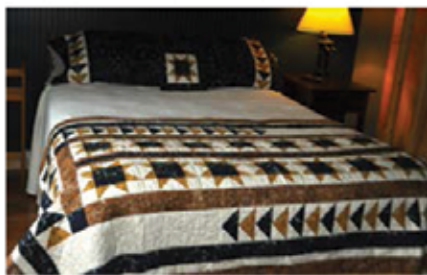
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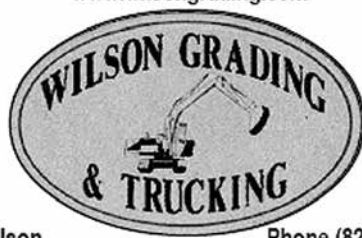


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...FIRE continued from page 3



Service Awards for 5, 10, 15 and 30 years of service were awarded to front from left: Chris Barden (5), Jim Tate (15), Buddy Miller, (10), Gary Ammons (30). Back from left: Ryan Perkins (5) Hunter Leffler (5) and Ryan Gearhart (15).

Below left: Austin Reese received the Stork Award from Bob Houston who is the only other department member to help deliver a baby on the job. This past October Austin aided in the birth of Michael Passmore. In 1993, Bob helped deliver Michael Shearl.



• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands PD log entries from Jan. 6. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor, or public officials have been used.

Jan. 6

• At 1 p.m., officers responded to a report of shoplifting at the Farmers Market where a \$1.39 beef stick was taken.

• At 7 p.m., officers responded to a report of trespassing by a 23 year old male at Neumann Law Office on N. 4th St.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log entries from Jan. 15

Jan 15

• At 9:14 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clear Creek Road. There was a problem with an alarm.

Jan. 16

• At 2:13 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Brushy Face Road where a 79 year old woman had fallen.

• At 4:30 p.m., the dept. responded to an alarm at a residence on Oak Street. It was due to burned popcorn and cancelled en route.

• At 11:21 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Blue Valley Road where a man had fallen.

• At 10:33 a.m., the dept. responded to an alarm at the hospital. It was false.

Jan. 19

• At 8:53 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Shelby Court.

Jan. 20

• At 1:26 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Hicks Road.

...FIRE continued from page 3

hours, 26 firemen completed training at 15 fire and rescue schools at various community colleges for a total of 1,054 hours. In addition, 1,433 manhours were logged at local training/meetings and 2,186 manhours were spent on fire, rescue and first-responder calls.

A final good-bye and celebration of his 50 years of service will be given Bob Houston Friday, Jan. 24 from 2-4 p.m. at the Highlands Fire and Rescue Department on Oak Street.

— Kim Lewicki

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...SBI continued from page 11

primary election.

"This makes finding a solution more pressing," he said. "We could stay open for 10-15 hours a day at the courthouse for the entire one-stop voting period, but we just don't think that is feasible," said Bateman.

Currently, voters wishing to participate in one-stop voting have to go to the courthouse on Main Street in Franklin. Members of the Board of Elections decided that a second location in Highlands would not only meet the state requirements, but will hopefully generate more interest for early voting in Highlands.

"A second locations will allow more people to vote and will allow us to be in compliance with the new law," said Board of Elections member Gary Dills. "We can do it cost effectively, too."

The second one-stop voting location will be in the Highlands Civic Center and will hopefully give Highlands residents and

people who work in Highlands, easier access to one-stop voting.

"Because it's so hard for people living in Highlands and people who live in Franklin and work in Highlands to get to the courthouse for one-stop voting, this second location will help get more people to the polls," said Bateman.

Highlands is the largest precinct in the county, but despite the numbers of eligible voters, the one-stop voting numbers have been historically low, causing the polls on election day to be overwhelmed with voters causing a backup and long wait times.

Though equipment isn't needed, Bateman said for the second site to meet state requirements \$7,500 will be needed to change locks to a room in the center of the building to ensure only the Board of Elections would have access to it, as well as getting secured internet and phone access to the room.

– Brittany Burns

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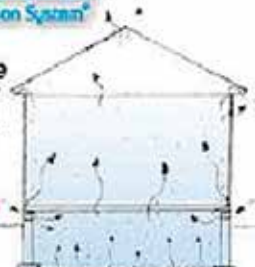
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