

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Jan. 22, 2015

Zoning Board affirms town's ruling in Shearl case

At the Jan. 14 Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing, the board upheld both 2009 Zoning Board rulings and the 2013 Superior Court ruling affirming a zoning violation issued by the town to John Shearl of J&J Landscaping

for having commercial activity on the residential portion of his split-zoned property on NC 28.

The board voted 4 to 1 that the town, represented by Attorney J.K. Coward, satisfactorily presented evidence and met the required

burden of proof that the zoning ordinance amending the depths of Shearl's split-zoned property – from the original 1988 depth of 230 feet from the center line commercial to 150 feet from the center line commercial in 1990 –

was in effect when Shearl purchased his property in November of 1993.

Charlie Dasher voted against affirming the ruling; Vice Chairman John Underwood, Michael Rogers,

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MC teacher bonus plan outlined for the state

By Merritt Shaw

In a specially called meeting on January 15, the Board of Education approved a Differentiated Pay Plan Response which is a proposal for Macon County Schools to be considered one of the 16 out of 115 school districts chosen to participate in a state funded pilot program for differentiated pay bonuses.

The response outlined how the School Improvement Committees feel the bonuses should be distributed and included serious reservations in regard to the original plan handed down by the state last year. The response was written by School Improvement Teams made up of teachers, parents and administrators from each school in Macon County.

Macon County School Superintendent, Dr. Chris Baldwin said it was important to note concerns with the original pay for performance plan, but appreciates the opportunity to come up with a pay plan that is the district's as opposed to something the general assembly or someone

else comes up with.

Baldwin said, the district's plan is based on two main things – the ability to offer a \$1,500 signing bonus for hard-to-staff positions and on performance based upon EVAAS (Educator Value Added Assessment System).

The hard-to-staff positions are Exceptional Children teachers, middle and secondary math, science and alternative school positions. He said Macon County has a unique problem in recruiting qualified candidates who will take positions in the two K-12 schools that are geographically isolated -- Highlands and Nantahala.

Concerning performance, without knowing how much the state will provide for bonuses, the response says each school that 'exceeds growth' would receive a portion of the allocated amount and then the school improvement team would decide how those bonuses are dispersed within the school with final implementation of that plan coming from a majority vote by the faculty.

• See BONUS page 13



At Saturday night's Highlands Fire & Rescue Awards Banquet held at OEI's Spring House, Eric Fielding was named "Fireman of the Year." Pictured with him are Asst. Fire Chief Robbie Forrester and Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart.

Photo by Kim Lewicki

Fire Dept. honors its own

It's an annual affair, but one whose purpose should be remembered and celebrated – the fact that the Highlands Fire and Rescue volunteers respond to citizens' calls 24-7, in all weather, 365 days a year.

Mayor Pat Taylor and MC Commissioner Vice Chair Jim Tate, who is a member, commemorated the service HFD does the Highlands community but also

the mentality behind it ... they run into burning buildings while everyone else runs out, said Mayor Taylor.

Commissioner Tate said due to his commission duties, he hasn't been a very good fireman the last few years, but his heart is with everyone in the department. He reminded all of the dedication – even having to get up from

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Donations and more discussed at TB meeting

At the Thursday, Jan. 15 Town Board meeting, among other things, designating the small parking spaces on Main Street for compact cars and accepting a donation to rework the planters was discussed.

There are several parking spaces on Main Street whose length is encumbered due to the trees next to the sidewalk. As it is now, oftentimes vehicles parked in those spots extend into the travelway on Main Street, which is a hazard

Commissioner John Dotson said since those spaces are too small for regular size pickup trucks, SUVs and extended vehicles, they should be designated just for compact cars.

The board agreed to designate the spaces for compact cars but the way to do that wasn't fi-

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Understanding the tax reveal

County property tax revaluations have been mailed out. There is good and bad news for residents in the incorporated area of Highlands. On average there has been a 15% decrease in property values in the unincorporated areas of Macon County. In some areas, such as Nantahala and Scaly, it is even more. The good news for the Town of Highlands is that the average decrease is only 4.7%. For Franklin even less of a decrease. Apparently, living in a municipality has become very desirable.

As a Highlands homeowner, I am glad my property has not lost 15% of its value. I had rather pay a few hundred dollars more in yearly property tax instead of seeing my house lose thousands of dollars in value. Admittedly, I am a math simpleton, but over a decade if I pay, say \$3000 or \$5,000 more in taxes, but end up selling my house for \$100k more because of its high evaluation, well it sounds like a win for me. I know some folks on tight incomes don't see it that way.

During the recent recession home values took a big hit, so apparently there



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

is a Highlands real estate come back. Some may counter that in recent years homes sold well below their tax appraised value. On the other hand, there has been a significant up swing in the market this past year, the time of the appraisal process. The average Highlands home sale price in 2013 was \$498,000. It went up to \$611,000 in 2014. While some older properties have declined, new homes are selling at premiums within Highlands. Downtown business properties also remain high. I met with the head of the Macon County Tax Office, Richard Lightener. He showed me his data that supports the 4.7% figure for properties within the town limits. The good news is that the small decline in property values in Highlands means a small adjustment, if any, of the town's 15.5 tax millage rate. That rate translates to 15.5 cents of tax per \$100 of property value. The town commissioners will decide whether to slightly adjust the rate later this year.

Now the bad news. Many town property owners will pay more in Macon County taxes. The county is required to make a revenue neutral adjustment to the county millage rate in order to maintain the current level of tax revenue. The revenue neutral formula developed by the county calls for about a 3.3 mils increase to the county tax rate. The concept behind the revenue neutrality is that whether property values increase or decrease, the tax rate is adjusted to where the county collects no more or no less tax revenue. The overall collections will remain the same, that is stay neutral, unless the board of commissioners vote for a tax increase.

For county taxpayers with property decreasing by 15%, their tax bill will remain the same even though their millage rate will increase by 3.3 mils. If a home's value has gone down below 15%, less taxes will be paid. The increase in the millage rate will not be a tax increase for taxpayers with property declines at the 15% average or more. But, if a property has not decreased in value by 15%, let's say only by 4.7% like most Highlands property, then the owner will pay more in county property tax since the 3.3 mils is applied across the board. The neutrality formula may not seem all that neutral if one's property has held its value

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• LETTER •

Silver Lining

Dear Editor,

There will most likely be some conversation over the coming days regarding the outcome of the John Shearl vs. The Town of Highlands lawsuit that both parties have been embroiled in over the past five years at considerable expense to both. Unfortunately, there were no clear winners in this case.

After hearing seven hours of arguments by the lawyers including the testimony from nine or ten witnesses, and after an abbreviated and truncated review of nearly fifty exhibits, consisting of over two hundred and fifty pages of documents and maps during that same time period, the Highlands Zoning Board was tasked with rendering a decision. We had to do so in a compressed timeframe and without the benefit of any private consultation among ourselves, and under the glare of all involved including the litigants, town officials, local press and several attorneys.

Although I have enjoyed the notion of serving our beloved community in some small and minuscule way, for the first time in my four years as a zoning board member, I felt the weight and consequence of these issues for both parties. Personally, I wondered if I was qualified for this task, and I could not find the right or the wrong in this case. It seemed to me that both parties were partly at fault for the dispute and misunderstanding at hand. However, we were not given the option of splitting this baby, or to implore upon the parties to work out their differences in an amicable and neighborly way among themselves.

After considering the overwhelming

amount of information the best that I could in the amount of time and in the forum that was allowed, my vote was a lone dissenting vote from the other four board members. My vote was, no, the Town of Highlands did not meet the burden of proof that it bore in this matter, and that the NC Court of Appeals had found that it bore in an earlier ruling regarding this case. My "no" vote may be considered by some as a vote against the Town of Highlands. It was not a vote against the town. It was a vote for a more accountable to its' citizens and, therefore; a better town.

For me, there was credible evidence on both sides for the litigants to make their respective cases for and against, however; the nearly even balance was tipped for me, and my decision was primarily informed by the testimony given by Richard Betz, who was in charge in an official capacity of those matters at that time. I still stand by my independent decision, and "no" vote, but I fully respect and support the wisdom of the overall board on this matter, and in that sense, a judicious decision has been rendered. I also hope for both parties sake, that this matter is over and finally resolved, and that they can both move on and learn and gain in some way by this tedious and costly experience.

The silver lining in this litigious and taxing exercise for the citizens and taxpayers of Highlands may be that the current and highly qualified staff, and other town officials at Town Hall, are now fast about the business of improving its records

• See LETTER page 11

• CLARIFICATION •

In the Jan. 8 edition, in the article "Dramatic increase in flu cases alarms health officials," Becky Barr of the Macon County Health Department was misquoted in the following paragraph: "There is a limited amount of vaccines available at this time, even though we are in what is typically the peak of the flu season and there is a higher number of flu cases this year as compared to in the past."

The paragraph should have read: "There is a limited amount of vaccines available, at this time, and we are in what is typically the peak of the flu season and yet there are a higher number of flu cases this year as compared to in the past. According to Barr, Macon County Public Health currently has no plans to order additional vaccine; however this may change in the future based on community need."

We regret the error and are happy to set the record straight.

Barr said there is currently plenty vaccine available in the community,



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Letter Policy:

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

...FIRE DEPT. continued from page 1



New Officers: 2nd Lt. Hunter Leffler; 1st Lt. Roger Lee Wilson; Asst. Chief, Robbie Forrester; Capt. Matthew Wilson; Rescue Capt. Eric Pierson; Rescue Lt., David Leffler; Sec/Treas. Lenny Metrick; Chief Ryan Gearhart; and Member at Large, Eric Fielding.



Perfect Attendance: Jimmy Petrone, Roger Lee Wilson, Matthew Wilson, with Asst. Chief Forrester and Chief Gearhart.



Years of Service Pins: Asst. Chief Forrester, 20 years; 1st. Lt. Roger Lee Wilson, 25 years; Jamie Barnes, 5 years; Travis Ramey, 10 years; also pictured Chief Gearhart.

Christmas dinner.

Chief Ryan Gearhart also thanked the wives and families, who put up with their early morning and late night hours and who graciously accept the intrusion into their personal lives.

Recognized were the Fireman of the Year, officers for 2015, new members, those with perfect attendance and those who have hit the 5-, 10-, 20- and 25-year mark with the department.



New Members and Jr. Firemen: Lea Dallmann and Austin Forrester. Not pictured: new fireman Paul Corbin and Jr. Firemen Benjamin Miller and Bert Zachary.

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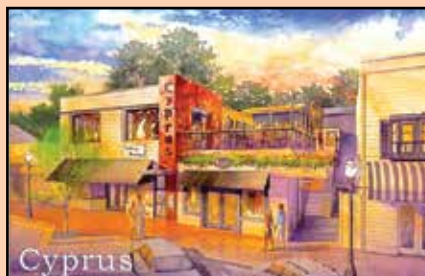
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...MAYOR from page 2

or increased. There are winners and losers in the revaluation process, including your mayor who has seen a 10% increase in his home's value.

So what does this mean for Highlanders? The town will be carrying even more of the tax load for Macon County than in the past. Some past estimates were as high as 50%. For many it is the painful truth, for others an often ignored fact. I want to make sure constituents understand where most town residents will fall in the overall revaluation process.

Now I am not passing the buck, but please don't expect us folks at Town Hall to adjust your property revaluation. Municipalities cannot by law do the property assessments. The county tax assessor is charged with the revaluation of all parcels in a county. Appeals to a revaluation are processed through the county tax office. The Macon County Tax Office has posted a complete PowerPoint presentation with information and examples concerning the revaluation process at: www.maconnctax.com. It also outlines how citizens can appeal their assessment to a county board of adjustment. The front counter at Highlands Town Hall also has brochures from the county that have information about the tax revaluation.

To be clear, the Highlands town property tax is collected by the Macon County Tax Office, who receives a small fee for doing so. For Highlands residents, the tax bill has a breakdown of the county tax and the town tax owed. Some town folks look at the total bill and assume that it is all town tax. The Highlands tax bill is just over 1/3 of the total tax bill.

To be fair, county taxes support major government responsibilities like the public schools, the sheriff's department, the landfill and fire departments. There are additional social and health services mandated by the state and federal government for the county to staff and operate. The county also funds most of the Highlands Recreation Department since all county residents have access to the facility and programs.

Highlands has been the most prosperous area in the county. This little hamlet of 940 permanent residents has a substantial portion of the real estate value in the county, therefore a big, collective tax bill. It is the price we pay for living in a highly desirable community. With that said, we all enjoy some of the lowest county and municipal tax rates in the state.

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• HS SPORTS •

Varsity Basketball

Tuesday, Jan. 13, the teams hosted Hiawassee Dam.

The Lady Highlanders went into halftime behind with a score of 32 to 18. They came out in the second half and played strong but ended with a loss of 67 to 37.

High scorers were Ann Marie Crowe with 9 points and Kirstyn Lamb and Courtney Henry with 7 points each.

The boys came out playing a very strong game. They went into halftime behind 29 to 25. They came out in the second half playing a very intense and close game but lost 46 to 43.

High scorers were Johnny Lupoli with 23

points and Brent Amundrud with 14 points.

Saturday, Jan. 17, the teams hosted Walhalla.

The girls went into halftime behind 31 to 17 but came out in the second half playing a very close game but lost 54 to 50.

High scorers were Whitney Billingsley with 16 points and Madison Lloyd with 11 points.

The boys went into halftime behind 31 to 23 and ended up losing 61 to 47.

High scorers were Brent Amundrud with 28 points and Johnny Lupoli with 10 points.

— Sierra Nylund



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...SHEARL continued from page 1

Jack Peay and Sam Green voted to affirm. Chairman Steve Chenoweth was absent.

Back Story

In September of 2014, the NC Court of Appeals determined the burden of proof verifying the existence of an amended 1990 zoning ordinance and map did not fall on Shearl as originally ruled by the Superior Court in 2013, but rather on the town.

As such, the Superior Court sent the case back to the Highlands Zoning Board of Adjustment to be heard again. The town was to provide evidence that the zoning map and ordinance were amended – decreasing the dimensions of the commercial part – prior to Shearl's purchase.

In both scenarios the residential portion begins at that demarcation line – whether from 230 ft. mark or the 150 ft. mark – and extends to the rear property line abutting a residential neighborhood.

The problem is the 1990 Zoning Map verifying the change has been lost – neither Shearl nor the town can find it.

Prior to the establishment of its own mapping department, mapping for Highlands was contracted out to surveyor Charlie McDowell and the Division of Community Assistance in Asheville and finally to the Macon County Mapping department.

Though the Superior Court said the 1990 map would be the best evidence, the town could submit other evidence verifying the amended map and zoning ordinance changing the demarcation of his split-zoned property.

Long story short – and it was a long story complete with 29 exhibits from Shearl's attorney Craig Justus, several exhibits from Coward as well as witnesses

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...TB MEETING continued from page 1

nalized.

Signage was discussed, as was stenciling on the pavement or on the curb face. Planning Director Josh Ward said the town was trying to diminish its signage but ideas will be presented at the February Town Board meeting.

Donation

Miguel Ortega of Palillos Stone Masonry has joined the recent lineup of philanthropists making donations to the town.

With the completion of the Third Street wall, Ortega has offered to rebuild the four planters on Main Street to match the walls on Third and Oak at the Town Hall complex – for free.

Of course the town accepted the generous donation only noting that steel pipes be placed on the parking space side of the planters to ensure their safety from vehicles. That's something the town will do.

The planters will be rebuilt one at a time to the same dimensions as the old ones and the material and equipment will take up two parking spaces.

Hydro-Electric Plant

During the public comment portion of the Town Board meeting, Tucker Chambers urged the town to retain ownership of the hydro-electric plant below the Sequoyah Dam on the Cullasaja River which a company from California is trying to claim.

"This could be a second resource for power and the citizens should have a say in the hydro-plant decision," he said.

Chambers said after repairing the plant for the estimated \$4-\$5 million, it would eventually produce income for the town and should be phased in as a capital outlay item after the repairs are made to the Lake Sequoyah dam and the intake valve is up and running.

Mayor Pat Taylor assured Chambers that he has heard and is listening to everyone about the FERC application and he and staff are monitoring the process. He also said he is will be announcing a hike down to the plant and will encourage citizens to join him.

Town Manager Report

Town Manager Bob Frye reported that the pool contract has been signed, materials ordered and construction has begun on the glass enclosure which will cover the pool and make it a year-round facility.

The lowest bids for work inside the Civic Center were opened and accepted, too.

The main level restroom bid and interior painting of gym walls was awarded to Warth Construction; the Floating Gym Floor was awarded to Carolina Hardwood & Construction; the Motorized Bleacher

• See TB MEETING page 13



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\$19.95 SERVES FOUR

THURSDAY: ROASTED MEATLOAF WITH MASHED POTATOES, GRAVY AND A LARGE SALAD
\$19.95 SERVES FOUR

FRIDAY: WILD CAUGHT FRIED SHRIMP, BAKED POTATOES, HUSH PUPPIES AND COLESLAW
\$22.95 SERVES FOUR

SATURDAY: IN-HOUSE SMOKED BBQ, COLESLAW, APPLE AND BACON BAKED BEANS, AND YEAST ROLLS
\$19.95 SERVES FOUR

WEEKDAY PIZZA SPECIAL:

16" NEW YORK STYLE PIZZA WITH UP TO FIVE TOPPINGS AND A LARGE HOUSE SALAD \$19.99 OR
BAKED PASTA, WITH GARLIC BREAD AND SALAD FOR 19.95
PASTA, TOMATO SAUCE, AND CHEESE WITH A CHOICE OF ITALIAN SAUSAGE, MEAT BALLS OR CRISPY CHICKEN.
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WE SELL ONLY 100% PREMIUM ANGUS BEEF, HAND CUT IN HOUSE. STOCK UP FOR THE WEEKEND EVERY THURSDAY WITH 35% ALL STEAKS AND GROUND BEEF. THEN STOP BY THE TAKE OUT CASE TO COMPLETE YOUR DINNER WITH TWICE BAKED POTATOES, FRESH SALADS AND MORE.

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DOZENS OF CHEESES, TAPENADES, OLIVES AND SPECIALTY ITEMS TO CHOOSE FROM INCLUDING OUR MADE IN HOUSE CRACKERS.

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• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

Ongoing

• The Cub and Boy Scouts of America have three drop offs for worn and tattered flags. They properly retire them. Drop offs at Highlands Doors and Windows 2242 Dillard Road, the Highlands Fire Station or Highlands United Methodist Church office. Contact Phil Potts for more information 828 526-3719

Monday

• Shortoff Baptist Church hosts a non-denominational Men's Meeting the first Monday night of each month at 7 pm and all men are invited to attend.

Tuesdays

• Reading dog "Beebles" will be at Hudson Library every Tuesday at 3:30pm. Please call (828)526-3031 to register.
• Free Community Table Dinner at the Community Bldg. at 6p.

• Zumba at the Rec Park at 8:05a. \$5.

Starting Tues., Feb. 24

• 12-week NAMI Program to educate families dealing with mental illness, 6:30 to 8:30p. The course has the dual focus of education, and understanding the experience of living with mental illness. Confidentiality is maintained. Class size is limited and pre-registration required. Contact: Ann 369-7385 or Linda 369-9838

Mon., Wed., Fri.

• Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9a.
• Zumba at the Rec Park at 9:05a. \$5

Wednesdays

• First Baptist Church is happy to present a new season of X-treme Games at the Highlands Rec. Park. The games will be held Wednesday nights from 6 to 7:15 pm. For more information or to pre-register your k - 6th grade child, please call 526-4153.

1st Wednesdays

• Family Movies at the Hudson Library at 3:30pm. Call 828-526-3031 for titles.

3rd Wednesdays

• General Audience Movies at Hudson Library at 2pm. Call 828-526-3031 for titles.

1st & 3rd Thursdays

• Free local ongoing support group for caregivers. Are you involved with the care of a loved one who is physically or mentally facing challenges? Sponsored by The Counseling and Psychotherapy Center of Highlands and the Highlands United Methodist Church, this group meets at 4 p.m. at Room 203 at the Peggy Crosby Center. Facilitated by Bonnie Gramlich, a licensed professional. Drop in or call for further info, 828.342.0546.

Thursdays

• Storytimes with Miss Carol at Hudson Library 10:40am. Open to the public.

• Highlands Writers' Group meets every Thursday from 1-3:30 pm at Hudson Library. Writers of all genres welcome. For info call 526-8009 or 526-2295.

• NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) offers a peer support group for individuals that are dealing with depression, anxiety, PTSD, bipolar, schizophrenia, etc. and the family members or friends of loved ones dealing with these challenges. Join us in a safe, confidential environment to share concerns and gain insight. Join us for our Weekly Support Group from 7 - 8:15 pm @ 14 West Palmer Street in Franklin NC, email dcwithnami@yahoo.com, Donita (828) 526-9510.

2nd Thursdays

• Sapphire Valley Needlepoint Guild meets at the Highlands Rec Park at 10 a.m. Newcomers welcomed.

Last Fri. of each month

• Weight Watchers support group meets every Thursday at 6pm at the Cashiers Community Center. Questions? Call Lisa 828-506-3555.

• Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor from 11a to noon at The Hudson Library.

Sundays

• At the Mountain Laurel Tennis Club at 4:30 pm. Multi-denominational, Interactive Bible Study and Fellowship. Open to all.

Thurs., Jan. 22

• PAC Youth Theater informational meeting at Highlands School at 9:30a in the Media Room.

• PAC Youth Theater informational meeting at Blue Ridge School at 12:15p in the commons area.

Sat, Jan. 24

• The Highlands Plateau Greenway monthly work day from 9a- noon. If you are interested in participating, please email Ran Shaffner at highlandsgreenway@nctv.com or leave a message at 828-526-5622. We'll meet at the large upper parking lot (near the pool entrance) behind the Recreation Center at 9:00 AM for a brief orientation session, where you will be furnished with the necessary tools and safety equipment.

• PAC Youth Theater auditions at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street at 1p. For more information call the Performing Arts Center: 828.526.9047.

• American Legion Post 370 Special Called meeting at 2 p.m., at the Highlands Civic Center on N. 4th St, Highlands. The purpose is to discuss the continuation of the post and to offer all veterans a chance to become familiar with the Legion's programs and possible membership. For more information, call Ed Jones at 828-743-0986 or Jack Greve at 828-389-0263.

• The Friends of the Scottish Tartans Museum and Heritage Center present THE BURNS NIGHT DINNER honoring

the 255th anniversary of the birth of poet Robert Burns on Saturday at 5:30 pm in Tartan Hall, Franklin Presbyterian Church. Tickets available at the Scottish Tartans Museum (828-524-7472) or tartans@scottishtartans.org. Reservations by January 20, 2015

• Live HD Series at the Performing Arts Center at 7p. National Theater of London Treasure Island. Tickets are available online: highlandspac.org or by calling 828.526.9047.

Sun., Jan. 25

• The Live HD Series at the Performing Arts Center presents the Bolshoi Ballet live from Moscow performing Swan Lake at 12:55 p.m. Tickets are available online: highlandspac.org or by calling 828.526.9047.

Tues., Jan. 27

• Two Ladies Night Out Programs on Healthy Eating. The guest speaker will be Jeffrey Whitridge, RD, CSO, LDN. Healthy eating starts with learning new ways to eat. One will be at 4 p.m. and one will be at 6:30 p.m.

• At the Tuesday Men's Night Out Program, the topic will be Financial/Investments. The guest speaker will be Russell W. Hawkins, II, Financial Advisor with Edward Jones. The meeting will be at Angel Medical Center in the Video Conference Room on the 3rd floor, at 6:30 p.m. For more info call Don Capaforte at 349-6887 or Dawn Wilde Burgess at 349-2426.

Friday, Jan. 30

• Community Coffee with Mayor Pat Taylor is held on the last Friday of each month at the Hudson Library in the Meeting Room from 11am 'til noon. This month's subject: Town Board issues and upcoming retreat.

Sat., Jan. 31

• At the Satolah Fire Dept., chili, music and more. Eating begins at 5p: \$6 plate includes chili, cornbread and a drink. Take out available. Music begins at 6p. Oliver Rice and Mark Visage. Auction items. Cake Auction. All money raised goes to the Clear Creek Baptist Church to help with its furnace replacement cost.

Live HD at PAC this weekend



The Live in HD Series continues at the Performing Arts Center next weekend. Saturday, January 24 at 7 p.m. the National Theatre of London presents Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island; a story of murder, money and mutiny. Suitable for 10 years and over. On Sunday, January 25 at 12:55 p.m. the Bolshoi Ballet presents live from Moscow the classic ballet, Swan Lake. An unforgettable tale of ideal love and good versus evil. Don't miss these two remarkable productions. Tickets are available online: highlandspac.org or by calling 828.526.9047.



Highlands Playhouse

NOW SHOWING:

Into the Woods

PG 2hrs 5min

**Showtimes: Jan 23, 24 & 29 @ 2, 5 & 8
Jan 25 @ 2 & 5**

No movies Mon-Wed during the winter

highlandspayhouse.org



Follow us on Facebook!
Check your favorite
showtime app for up to date showtimes



362 Oak St (828) 526-2695

• AREA EVENTS •

PAC Youth Theatre auditions this Sat.



The PAC Youth Theater is starting its NINTH SEASON! Join us for auditions at the Performing Arts Center on Saturday, January 24th at 1pm. Informational meeting will take place at the schools Thursday, January 22nd. Highlands School: at 9:30am in the Media Center and Blue Ridge School: at 12:15pm in the Commons Area. Come see what all the FUN is about for actors, tech crew, front of house, costumes and much more. For more information call the Performing Arts Center: 828.526.9047. Pictured are Tiffany Preda, Katy Potts and Dean Zuch in the 2014 production of Little Women.



Live in HD Series






Treasure Island
Saturday, January 24
7pm
Suitable for 10 years & over



Bolshoi Ballet
Live from Moscow
Swan Lake
Sunday, January 25
12:55pm

Highlands PAC 507 Chestnut Street
Tickets available online: highlandspac.org or by calling 828.526.9047

...SPIRITUALLY from 10

somed them by dying on a cross and shedding his own blood as payment. Those who know Christ relationally know they belong because they know others who walk in similar power and life-on-life experiences are powerful. Those who know Christ know love because God is love. Those who know Christ know they have someone to follow who will walk with them to reach their destination.

Those who don't know Christ seek in their own way to earn such things. God forbid this world gets an even greater hunger for these needs to be met while rejecting Christ as the answer. You think this age is violent? It's going to get even worse. I read ahead in the book. It's not pretty. Remember what he said, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me" (John 14:6).

COREY JAMES GALLERY

7th Annual

WINTER SALE

25% - 75% Off

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NEAPOLITAN PIZZAS

AUTHENTIC THIN CRUST PIZZAS WITH FRESH HAND-CUT INGREDIENTS \$11.95

CHOOSE CLASSICS LIKE:

RED MARGHERITA: FRESH MOZZARELLA, CRUSHED TOMATO & FRESH BASIL

PANCETTA: PANCETTA, ROASTED RED PEPPERS, MUSHROOMS, CRUSHED TOMATO & GRANDE MOZZARELLA

PROSCIUTTO ARUGULA: PROSCIUTTO DE PARMA, MUSHROOMS, GARLIC INFUSED EVVO, PECORINO, & FRESH ARUGULA TOSSED WITH EVVO

OR MODERN INTERPRETATIONS:

FIG & PIG: FIGS, PANCETTA, GRANDE MOZZARELLA, CRUSHED TOMATO, GORGONZOLA, TOPPED WITH ARUGULA TOSSED IN EVVO.

BBQ CILANTRO CHICKEN: PULLED CHICKEN, BBQ SAUCE, GRANDE MOZZARELLA, RED & GREEN ONION, FRESH CILANTRO.

...OR BUILD YOUR OWN.

N.Y. DECK OVEN PIZZAS

10 INCH \$10.95 / 16 INCH \$19.95

CHOOSE YOUR SAUCE:

ITALIAN RED TOMATO, ITALIAN WHITE CREAM, PESTO BASIL, OR BARBECUE

CHOOSE UP TO 5 TOPPINGS:

PEPPERONI, ITALIAN SAUSAGE, GROUND BEEF, HAM, BACON, CHICKEN, CARAMELIZED ONION, FRESH ONION, ROASTED RED PEPPERS, GREEN PEPPERS, BANANA PEPPERS, OLIVES, MUSHROOMS, PINEAPPLE, SPINACH, EGGPLANT, ARTICHOKE, ANCHOVIES, GRANDE MOZZARELLA, GORGONZOLA, PROVOLONE, FETA, AND PARMESAN

ITALIAN STREET FOOD \$10.95

LEMON ROSEMARY SAUTÉED CHICKEN, CRISPY CHICKEN FRITTE, ITALIAN SAUSAGE OR MEDITERRANEAN STEAK

ADD YOUR SAUCE: POMODORO, PESTO BASIL, ITALIAN WHITE CREAM, CREAMY PESTO

THEN IT'S ALL SAUTÉED WITH FRESH ANGEL HAIR PASTA, TOPPED WITH PARMAGIANO & SERVED WITH FRESH BAKED PIADINA

PIZZA AVAILABLE FROM 11AM UNTIL CLOSE EVERY DAY

STORE HOURS: 7AM-8PM MON - THURS, FRI & SAT 7AM-9PM, 8AM-6PM SUNDAY

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Why ISIS?

By Gary Hewins
Community Bible Church

On the darker side of things, why do people do what they do at seemingly great expense and potential loss of life?

Why would a man here in this country decide to leave the safety of the United States only to go to Syria and join the fight with ISIS as a radicalized fighter? Why do two masked men systematically execute a whole office of newspapermen in downtown Paris? Why systematically execute innocent children? Or for that matter, why does a young teen on the streets of Chicago join a street gang?

All of these endeavors are obviously evil in their intent yet they exist because they meet incredible needs present in every person in the human race. That's right, every person.

These incredible needs also exist in people who join causes that are for the good of mankind. Our motivation for joining causes is quite common in every person. Sometimes those motivations are so intense that we as humans engage in anything to have our needs met. Why do you think we have issues with sex, drugs, eating disorders, pornography, greed, etc.?

What are these unmet needs that thrust men and women into almost any initiative to have these needs met? These needs will always be the same because we are each sinfully deficient whether we like it or not. Another thing, we are going to have these needs met no matter what.

We have a need for significance. We have a need to belong. We have a need for purpose. We each have a need to follow. We have a need to be loved. In any context where these needs are not being met we will get them met.

All religions on earth that teach a way to happiness, Nirvana, knowledge, prosperity, eternal life or a better Karma end up disappointing. ISIS provides a way to purpose, mission, eternal life, significance and belonging to thousands of young men who couldn't discover such within their own religion or culture or family or themselves. In many respects they aren't that different from the rest of us. They just go to incredible extremes.

No religion can meet these needs though they all attempt to do so. By religion, I mean an organized set of beliefs that provide a way to a spiritual deity and a transcendent lifestyle. No religion works. Rather than religion consider this word—"Relationship"

Christianity is different because of the following: Jesus didn't teach a way to anything. He said, "I am the way." He didn't describe a way to a better life. He said, "I am the life." He didn't prescribe a means to discover a subjective moral truth. He said, "I am the truth." He is an all-inclusive package.

So apart from lifeless religion is this relationship he calls every person into. Knowing him alleviates the need to eradicate anyone who doesn't know him for there no longer exists any threat. To know him is to experience belonging. To know him is to have purpose. To know him is to know love. To know him is to have significance. To know him is to have someone to follow. Every need we have in life, and we all have them, is met in knowing Christ in a relational context versus a religious context.

ISIS exists because these basic human needs are not being met in terrorists by a religion that promises that they will be.

In conclusion, those who know Christ know they are of value before they do anything in his name because he ran-

• See SPIRITUALLY page 9

Proverbs 3:5

BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (706) 782-3965

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 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

CHAPEL OF SKY VALLEY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999

Sundays: 10 a.m.; Worship

Holy Communion 1st Sunday of the month

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

Communion

CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

Rector: Jim Murphy, 252-671-4011

464 US Hwy 64 east, Cashiers

Sun.: 9:15a Christian Education at Buck's Coffee Cashiers

Crossroads; 10:30a Faithful, Family Service w/ Music &

Communion.

Mon.: Bible Study & Supper at homes - 6 p.m.

CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Steve Kerhoulas • 743-5470

Sun. 10:45am, S.S 9:30am. Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.

Tues. Guys study 8am, Gals 10am.

CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

Wednesdays - 7 p.m.

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685

3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC

Senior Pastor Gary Hewins

Sun.: 9:30am: Sunday School

10:30am: Middle & High School; 10:45am: Child. Program,

10:45am: Worship Service

Wed.: 5pm Dinner (\$7 adult, \$2 child), 6pm CBC

University

EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. Bruce Walker • 526-2968

Sundays: Eucharist Rite I 8a in chapel; Education

and choir rehearsal, 9 am, Holy Eucharist Rite II,

(sanctuary), 10:30

Wednesday: 10 a.m., Morning Prayer

Thursdays: Holy Eucharist, (chapel), 10 am

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org

Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor

220 Main Street, Highlands NC 28741

Sun.: Worship 10:45 am; Sun.: Bible Study 9:30 am

Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Prayer Mtg 6:15 pm;

Choir 5 pm

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Worship: 11 a.m.; School: 9:30

Mondays: 8 a.m.: Men's Prayer Group & Breakfast

Wednesdays: Choir: 5:30p

GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd) • Rev. Carson Gibson

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

Bible Study: 6 pm

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS

Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship

242 Hwy 107N, 1/4 miles from Crossroads in Cashiers

www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter: 743-

9814

Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Hwy 107N. • Glenville, Nc • 743-2729

Pastor 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

Sundays: Worship: 11

HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson

670 N. 4th Street (next to the Highlands Civic Center)

Sun.: 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: 5:15; youth, & adults activities: 6; Handbell

rehearsal, 6:15; Choir Rehearsal 7. (nursery provided)

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

Chaplain Margaret Howell • 2152 Dillard Road • 526-

9741

Sun: School and Adult discussion group 9:30 a.m.;

Worship/Communion: 10:30

HEALING SERVICE on the 5th Sunday of the month.

MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

8 miles south of Highlands on N.C. 28 S in Satolah

Pastor Troy Nicholson, (828) 526-8425

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11, Choir: 6 p.m.

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

MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church, Franklin

828-369-9270 or 828-293-5197

MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

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

4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS CATHOLIC

CHURCH

Parish office (Father Francis): 526-2418

Mass: Sun: 11 a.m.; Sat. at 4p

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 Alfred Sizemore • 526-3212

Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

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

SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11

Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 7

THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

1448 Highway 107 South, Office: 743-2359

Rev. Dr. Virginia Monroe

Oct-May: Sunday Services: Rite I, 8a Rite II, 10:30

June-Sept: Sunday Services: Rite I, 8a, Rite II, 9:15 & 11a

Nursery available for Rite II services

Sept 7- Oct 26- Informal Evening Eucharist: 5:30 p.m.

Thursday: Noon Healing Service with Eucharist.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

85 Sierra Drive • 828-524-6777

Sunday Worship - 11 a.m. Child Care - 10:30a - 12:30p

Religious Education - 11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Youth 8th - 12th grade meets 2nd Sundays 5 - 7:30p

WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

...SHEARL continued from page 6

and cross-examination with proceedings lasting seven hours and 15 minutes.

In the end, the Zoning Board determined that the numerous maps and a 1993 survey attached to Shearl's deed which is recorded at the Register of Deeds in Macon County, satisfactorily showed the split-zoned portions of the property measuring 150 ft. from the center line with the portion along the road zoned B3 (commercial) and the back portion beyond the 150 ft. mark zoned R1 (residential) was in existence and thereby in effect when Shearl purchased his property.

Since 2009 and again Wednesday night, Shearl said he hadn't seen the 1993 survey and didn't know it was attached to his deed until he was issued the zoning violation in 2009.

This all started in 2009 when adjoining landowner Gerald Hedden lodged a complaint about Shearl's commercial enterprise encroaching on the residential portion of his property, basically negating the residential buffer between the Hedden property and the Shearl enterprise.

"I am concerned with the commercial use next to my house. I think everyone should abide by the same laws. Why can he run a commercial business on his residential part, if I can't run a business on my residential property? Everyone should be treated fairly," he said.

Past Town Administrator, Richard Betz, was called to testify to the authenticity of various maps. On a 1988 map, a note on a bottom corner says "this map is replaced by the 1990 map." The 1988 map shows the commercial portion of Shearl's property ending at the 230 ft. mark and the 1990 map allegedly shows the line at the 150 ft. mark.

Betz said he routinely made replacement notations on maps, folded up the old one and put it in the file.

As it turns out, a 1991 map was found in McDowell's office by his wife Gladys. Charlie is infirm as is his wife now, so further perusal of his office isn't possible. However, the 1991 map shows the amended zoning designations. So even though the 1990 map

is missing, Attorney Coward contended that the 1991 map could stand instead, showing the 150 ft. line of demarcation prior to 1993 when Shearl purchased the property.

But Attorney Justus disagreed saying that since it wasn't the town's official copy, its existence didn't count – in fact, none of the town's evidence was official.

With the acceptance of the 1991 map as well as the 1993 survey by Surveyor Steve Foster which is attached to the deed, the Zoning Board ruled that the town had supplied sufficient evidence that proved the zoning map had been amended and Shearl was in violation and so the original ruling stood.

If the 230 ft. mark had been accepted, the commercial storage unit built on the back of the property (and subsequent related commercial activities) would be in compliance. With the 150 ft. mark it is not.

Throughout the proceeding, Attorney Justus objected to each exhibit entered by Coward and every witness called by him on the grounds that the original map and the ordinance substantiating it were the only pieces of evidence that should be admitted and furthermore, the town was out of compliance with its ordinance and state statute.

Section 103 of the town's zoning ordinance says the zoning map and all explanatory matters be made a part of its ordinance and together with a copy of this ordinance be permanently kept on file in the office of the Town Clerk. Justus contended that since the 1990 map was lost, the town was in violation of its own ordinance.

In addition, Justus said according to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160A-77 (2013) a town's ordinances establishing or amending boundaries of zoning districts shall be codified by appropriate entries upon official map books to be retained permanently in the office of the city clerk or some other city office generally accessible.

He also cited N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160A-78 (2013) which says "each city shall file a true copy of each ordinance adopted on or after January 1, 1972, in an ordinance book separate and apart from the

council's minute book.

"We believe the town failed to comply with its obligations under local ordinances and state law by failing to keep official zoning maps on record for public inspection," said Justus.

In the past Highlands has amended its zoning ordinance and the adoption of its maps by logging such actions in its Town Board minutes.

Though Attorney Coward agrees that the town's record keeping has been "sloppy" in the past, he said steps have been taken to change that.

"All of the previous ordinances were properly adopted by the previous boards and are fully enforceable; they just weren't housed in the right book," he said. "The town is now creating the correct record keeping process."

After hearing the 4 to 1 vote, when requested to do so by both Attorney Justus and Highlands Planning Director Josh Ward, the Zoning Board also considered grandfathering Shearl's commercial use on the residential portion of the property.

Justus called several witnesses – John Munger, Denver Chastain and Roger Lee Wilson – to verify that the entire tract, regardless of it being split-zoned commercial/residential since 1988, had always been used commercially by H.L. Wilson Construction, who occupied the property prior to Shearl's purchase.

Though the 1988 split-zoned uses weren't enforced, Roger Lee Wilson did say that his father, who owned H.L. Wilson Construction, told him that the town did say he had to remove the commercial items off the back part of property, which he said he did. However, according to Shearl, some items remain on the property today, maintaining that the property has always been used commercially.

When the motion was called, the Zoning Board voted 3 to 2 not to allow grandfathering. Dasher and Green voted to allow it; Peay, Rogers and Underwood voted against it.

Even though a vote in favor would have negated the previous vote, Coward allowed it.

"The grandfathering issue was not heard properly before the

board, but I sensed we would win on that issue and didn't oppose it."

According to Coward, Shearl should technically come into compliance immediately and cease commercial activity on the residential portion of his property.

"But if he appeals to the Superior Court, which is his right, a court would enter a stay of

enforcement if asked to do so by his lawyer," said Coward. "So the town is going to wait and see if he appeals before spending any money on lawyering which would ensue if we started to enforce in the near future."

When asked by phone Monday, Shearl said he intended to go back to Superior Court.

...LETTER continued from page 2

keeping methods, and general housekeeping, so that this type unfortunate dispute will be far less likely in the future. It is also worth noting that the dispute and misunderstandings do not reflect poorly on any current staff members and administration in any way. There is cruel irony in the fact that the burden of repairing and enduring the consequences of what happened in past administrations from twenty-five years ago involving sloppy record keeping and lost zoning maps, which has been the basis and foundation of this case, has fallen on the current staff and administration to remedy. Thankfully, we now have an administration and staff that is up to this task, and that is transparent and deferential enough to learn from any past mistakes.

In addition to the able leadership that we currently enjoy, we are also very fortunate as stock holders in this community to have so many generous benefactors and involved citizens to ensure that we, as a community, move deftly into what is shaping up to be a very progressive 2015 and future. There are simply too many of these benefactors and supportive citizens to mention. I would be willing to bet there aren't many towns this size or larger that can boast about a wonderful new public park in the center of town that is being painstakingly developed as an outdoor concert venue with winter recreation facilities in the form of an ice skating rink, not to mention a heated and covered swimming pool with additional amenities to come at the recreation park. And if that were not enough, it is only a part of all that is happening in our so blessed community. There really is an abundance to be grateful for and look forward to in our uniquely charming Highlands!

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

The Highlands Police log entries from Dec. 28. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Dec. 28

• At 4:38 a.m., Alec Devon Schmitt, 25, of Boston, MA, was arrested for DWI on 6th Street.

Jan. 2

• At noon, officers were called about a larceny at a residence on Cullusaja Drive where a flat bottom kayak was taken while the owner was away from the home.

Jan. 4

• A little past midnight, officers responded to a call of assault and battery at a residence in High-

lands Walk Town Homes.

• A little past midnight, Scott C. Lagessie, 43, of Navarre, FL, was arrested for simple assault at Highlands Walk Town House.

Jan. 6

• At 4 p.m., officers responded to a call of a man being threatened with the tire tool at a residence on US 64 west.

Jan. 9

• At noon, the dept. responded to a two-vehicle accident on NC 28.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue Dept. log entries from Jan. 5.

Jan. 5

• At 10:16 p.m., the dept. assisted Scaly Mountain F&R in a search.

• At 10:26 p.m., the dept. stood

by at the hospital for the MAMA helicopter.

Jan. 7

• At 7:39 a.m., the dept. responded to a laundry fire at the hospital.

Jan. 8

• At 6:14 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Main Street.

• At 7:20 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Main Street.

• At 1:37 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers FD on a structure fire at a residence on Whiteside Cove Road.

• At 6:43 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to Highlands

Mountain Club.

• A little past midnight, the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers FD.

Jan. 10

• At 12:51 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Church Street.

Jan. 14

• At 8:31 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Broadview Circle.

Jan. 16

• At 3:06 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Hickory Trail.

• At 6:49 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Flat Mountain Trail.

• At 9:19 p.m., the dept. re-

sponded to a possible gas leak on Main Street.

Jan. 18

• At 8:10 a.m., the dept. provided traffic control on Horse Cove Road.

• At 10:14 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Buck Creek Road.

Jan. 19

• At 7:32 a.m., the dept. stood by for the MAMA helicopter at the hospital.

• At 1:27 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashiers on a structure fire.

• At 3:44 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Upper Divide Road.

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

Highlands Middle School collects donations for MC Animal Shelter



During the month of December, the Highlands Middle School Student Government Association held a fundraiser for the Appalachian Animal Rescue Center in Franklin. All students from Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade were asked to participate in this supply drive to benefit homeless animals of Macon County.

The students were asked to bring contributions of pet food, pet supplies, cleaning products, linens, and toys to assist the shelter in its efforts to help the animals. The class that donated the most supplies was rewarded with an ice cream party. Mrs. Dooley's kindergarten won the party.

Cathy Howman, the shelter director, was very grateful for the generosity of our students. "This is wonderful!" she said. "These supplies are really needed." She described how the shelter benefits from the donations of community members and how much the efforts of Highlands School students are appreciated.

Ms. Howman and her assistant, Ms. Shlatter, extended an invitation for the students of Highlands to come to the shelter to volunteer or tour the facility.

...BONUS continued from page 1

Those schools that 'meet academic growth' would receive 25% less per student than the schools meeting 'exceeding growth', but the parameters are the same, he said.

The amount each school receives will be based upon that school's ADM (Average Daily Membership) which is a count of students that is taken at different times of the year to satisfy local, state and federal data collection needs and to ensure that school districts are adequately funded, according to student population.

The committee felt that

it was important to state that the bonuses needed to be equal across all job descriptions. "We felt all the teachers and employees at the school should receive the same amount with the alternative school teachers included," said Baldwin.

According to Baldwin the state will use the \$10 million that was set aside for the original bonus program for the top 25% highly effective teachers last year to fund this pilot program and \$3 million will be taken from another pot for a total of \$13 million – "not a lot of money to work with," he said.

School Board Attorney, John Henning said there are aspects of the session law that are unclear. "The session law calls for the funding to be a teacher pay program but it is not clear whether you can spread the money across an entire school. A lot of districts are doing the same thing as Macon County and it's a good approach, but who we will actually be able to give bonuses to is yet to be seen."

The response was due by Jan. 15.

...TB MEETING continued from page 6

and Goal System was awarded to Learning Environments.

Total for the projects is \$279,786.16 with the Williams donation paying for \$235,000; \$44,786.16 will be appropriated from the town's undesignated fund balance.

He also said rain has impeded the draining of Lake Sequoyah – it was halfway down to where it needed to be to repair the dam but rain filled it back up again. Two more pumps have been ordered to maintain the flow of drainage, so the project is back on track.

He also said steel plates have been installed under the bridge on US 64 west to retain water in Big Creek so that the water plant can continue to operate properly.

Landscaping bids

Mountain Hardscapes was

the low bidder on all the town's landscaping contracts this year.

Those include Highlands Park and Recreation, Pine Street Park and Amphitheater, Zachary Park, Highlands Memorial Park, and general Town Landscaping.

Commissioner Dotson said since the town appears to be changing contractors year to year, that this year's contract as well as contracts in subsequent years, should include verbiage giving the town permission to swap out contractors to the next in line if the town isn't satisfied with the work during the course of the year.

Personnel Study

David Hill from HR Essentials Consultants presented the results of the recently completed Salary and Position Classification

Study where statistics from like municipalities were used to determine if Highlands' pay scale was on par with other like municipalities. Except for five positions, it is at the minimum grade.

He recommended the town adopt the Pay Plan with the placement of each employee in the appropriate salary grade, at the minimum or current salary, whichever is higher, and develop a methodology for the future advancement of employees both horizontally and vertically within the Pay Plan.

The cost to bring the five positions up to the minimum scale as compared to other municipalities is \$16,348.20, excluding Retirement and F.I.C.A.

The five positions are Street Maintenance Equipment Opera-

• See TB MEETING page 14

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LOTS/LAND FOR SALE

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FOR SALE BY OWNER - 3 building lots in the gated community of Rustic Falls. Macon County tax records value at \$51,000 each. Must sell due to health reasons. Asking \$15,000 each. Call owner at 803-640-6004. (St. 5/1)

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...TB MEETING continued from page 13

tor, Assistant Fire Chief, Fire Chief, Lead Tree Trimmer, and Finance Director.

Commissioners adopted the study and its findings but opted to discuss implementation specifics at its worksession set for Feb. 12.

School Resource Officer

Mayor Taylor explained ongoing discussions he has been having with the county concerning the Highlands School Resource Officer (SRO)

Some years ago, the town decided to staff and pay for the SRO at Highlands

School which is a member of the Highlands Police Department.

Since Sandy Hook, the county and the sheriff's office have been striving to install SROs in all the schools. These are paid with county funds and Mayor Taylor has been in discussion with the county about it paying for the Highlands School SRO as well.

Ideally, the officer would be hired and housed by the Highlands PD, but the position would be funded by the county.

- Kim Lewicki

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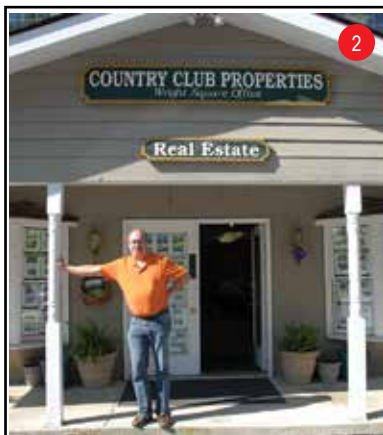
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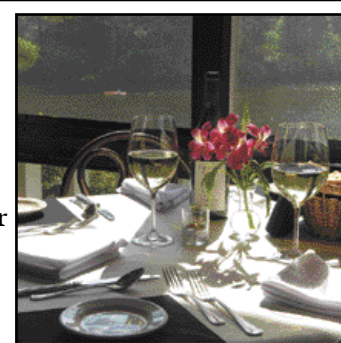
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