

# Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Dec. 24, 2020

## Last 2020 TB meeting was diverse

For those who love to fish local waters but believe in "catch and release," the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission is asking that you "catch and eat."

At the December Town Board meeting, Mayor Pat Taylor outlined the program.

The Commission is expanding seasonal angling opportunities

through its Winter Pond Stocking Program.

It is releasing hatcheries' surplus trout in select private im-

•See MEETING page 5

## County's improved economy could mean less funding

By Brittney Lofthouse

Logic would dictate that an uptick in the economy would be a good thing but under North Carolina's Tier system that's not always the case.

North Carolina has used a three-level system for designating county development tiers since 2007. The designations, which are mandated by state law, determine a variety of state funding opportunities to assist in economic development. The North Carolina Department of Commerce annually ranks the state's 100 counties based on economic well-being and assigns each a Tier designation.

Macon County's Tier Designation improved from Tier 2 to

• See ECONOMY page 7

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## Residents and staff at ELC are first to get COVID vaccine



Eckerd Living Center Administrator Ava Ammons administered Pfizer's COVID vaccine to 47 residents on Saturday, Dec. 18. The necessary second dose will be given in about three weeks. Pictured is resident Linda James with Ammons.

— Photo by MDS Coordinator Elizabeth Queen, RN.

Merry Christmas!

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### At time of hope and reflection

This is the Advent Season in the Christian calendar, a time of hope, joy and anticipation. I share that hope, joy and anticipation for our town as we move into the new year. I anticipate a better year than the past one.

I have faith in the resiliency of our residents and their determination to make Highlands even better in the future. The huge response to the Highlands Community Plan Survey gives me hope. The folks guiding our comprehensive plan are excited that almost 900 people have taken the survey.

If you have not done so, please go to the town website and spend a few minutes to take the survey while maybe sipping a festive glass of eggnog. It is vital that we get input from a cross section of residents, whether they are full time or seasonal residents. Folks living in and around the town are also encouraged to respond. We all have a stake in the future of Highlands. Taking the survey is similar to voting. If someone fails to respond, then it is hard to be critical of the outcome.



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

In the early part of this year the results of the survey will be made public, even before the final comprehensive plan is completed toward the end of 2021. I look forward to the survey results and anticipate the Planning Board members to begin dissecting and analyzing the data. I will support this process because I suspect there will be important data that needs review as soon as possible.

I also have the hope that our business community will return to some level of normalcy this coming year. The food and entertainment sectors have taken a big hit in 2020 and a recovery is very much needed.

With the economic recovery, I hope the Town Board and staff will be able to develop a budget that meets the community's critical needs. Paving of roads should continue as a priority, and other infrastructure needs have to be addressed next year and into the future. One of my favorite projects that was delayed because of restraints of this past year was the conversion of street lights from halogen to LED lights. LED street light units can be dimmed or increased to meet the needs of the space, especially in neighborhoods. I also like the idea of the town embracing green technologies when possible and if productive.

Other hopeful items on the horizon will be the completion of the Highlands Smart Cities fiber network and a review of short-term rental policies. I know there are differing points of view concerning STRs, but I believe the town is long overdue in addressing this issue.

Finally, I am hopeful with the advent of the COVID-19 vaccines. I use the word advent because the rollout of these lifesaving vaccines is a hopeful sign and taking place as I write this piece. Having a large part of the population vaccinated could help us get back to a normal lifestyle. When my time comes as a member of the 65 and older group, I will take the vaccine.

I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. While this has been an infamous year in many ways, we all have hope and a lot to look forward to this coming year.

## • HIC'S VIEW •



whicseven@yahoo.com

## • WEATHER •

Thu, 24-Dec	Fri, 25-Dec	Sat, 26-Dec	Sun, 27-Dec
47°F 16°F	27°F 13°F	46°F 22°F	53°F 26°F
Heavy rain and a thunderstorm	Mostly sunny and very cold	Milder with plenty of sun	Partly sunny and mild
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High 42° Low: 15°	High 22° Low: 8°	High 49° Low: 11°	High 58° Low: 23°

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### Highlands Newspaper

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by Old Edwards

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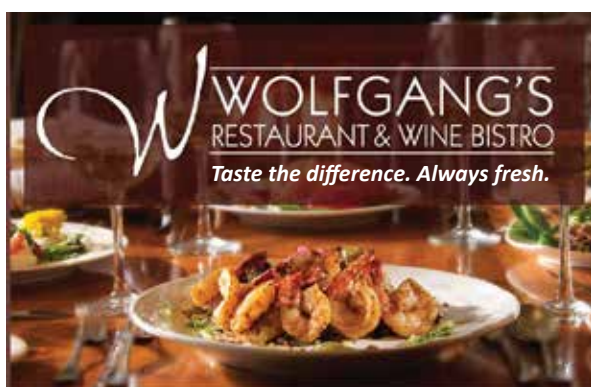
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## ...MEETING from page 1

poundments with public access across central and Western North Carolina this winter.

Locally those waters are the Cashiers Public Pond and Harris Lake in Highlands, owned by Terry Potts where 900 trout will soon be released.

Some regulations regarding the "catch" apply.

There is a seven trout per day creel limit but there is no minimum length limit, nor bait restrictions. The trout may be fished year-round and the state's basic fishing license is required.

### Rec Park Playground

Also, at the meeting the board learned that a unanimous donor wants to donate \$50,000 to revamp the playground at the Rec Park. Though the work won't start until sometime in 2021, the donor wanted to make the donation by the end of the year. The board voted unanimously to

• See MEETING page 14

# • OBITUARIES •

## Richard Irving (Dick) Bullis

Buck Creek, NC - Richard Irving Bullis, known by his family and friends as Dick, was born on September 21, 1930, to James J. and Adelaide McKewen Bullis and passed from this life on December 13, 2020.

Dick was known for being genuine and totally without pretense. He loved his country and did his patriotic duty by serving in the United States Navy during the Korean War aboard the USS Bon Homme Richard. He was a visionary who lived his motto: "You can't steal second base with one foot still planted on first." With a reputation built on honesty and integrity, he made his living as an advertising executive for the St Pete Times and had many successful ventures as a land developer.

Music and wood carving were two of his passions. Dick's musical talents included his ability to play piano, guitar, and drums. He loved and lived music, especially Big Band and Jazz, and never missed an opportunity to tune in to The Lawrence Welk Show. His ability to make something beautiful out of a block of wood was amazing. He was an award-winning wood carver. He was of the Episcopal faith.

Dick is survived by the love of his life, Jayne Carmody



Bullis. Together, they celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary this year, a true testament to their love and devoted partnership in all things. Their daughter, Suzanne B. Main (Glenn); two grandchildren, Natasha L. Main and Brittney Main; three great grandchildren, Seth Wilson, Malia Helton, and Khyalee Dixon; his sister, Virginia Nelson, and several nieces and nephews also survive. Dick was predeceased by his parents and his brother, J. Peter Bullis.

A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date in Buck Creek community. Burial and military rites will be at the Western Carolina State Veterans Cemetery in Black Mountain, NC.

And in keeping with Dick's favorite cause, Memorials may be made to, Shriners Hospitals for Children, Greenville, 950 W. Faris Road, Greenville, SC, 29605.

Moffitt Family Funeral care is honored to serve Dick's family.

Online condolences may be made at [www.moffitt-familyfuneralcare.com](http://www.moffitt-familyfuneralcare.com)

## Rev. George Thomas Fisher

The Rev. George Thomas Fisher went home to his Lord Friday, December 11, 2020. He cherished his wife, Kathryn, (deceased May, 2020) and his children, extended family, friends, and congregations.

A Renaissance Man, classics scholar, composer, collector, poet and teacher/mentor, Tom lived an exuberant life full of integrity and infectious joy. There are no words to express how deeply he is loved and will be missed.

George Thomas Fisher was born in Bayonne, NJ, June 25, 1929. He was the youngest of three children born to Herbert George Fisher and Mable Lenore (Nye) Fisher. Early in life it was discovered that Tom had a passion for insects, music, and inspiring others through the art of teaching.

He received his undergraduate degree in Biology from the University of Iowa at Ames while studying voice with Oscar Laztiner at nearby Parsons College. He received his Ph.D. from Rutgers University, specializing in Entomology. In mid-life, Tom was called into the ministry. He received his Master's in Divinity from Andover-Newton Seminary, Andover, MA. He was ordained in the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC) and led several congregations throughout New England. If asked, Tom would say his calling to the ministry was his greatest vocation.

A man of diverse talents, Tom Fisher, at the age of 26, debuted at New York City Hall to rave reviews and joined the prestigious Metropolitan Opera as one of their solo artists (Basso). At age 31 he held a solo recital at Carnegie Hall with the New York Philharmonic (April 16, 1960). He was vocal coach to Kenny Rogers; a co-producer of the Broadway hit "The Fantastiks" and an accomplished pianist and a



solo flutist. He is known for his musical compositions, i.e. he wrote the Alma Mater for Johnson State College and he has been known to write a Swiss waltz or two! Tom also soloed with several choral societies, conducted orchestras and award-winning youth choirs, and founded The Johnson State College Men's Glee Club. More recently, he founded the men's chorale "Men Macon Music" in Franklin, NC (2010 Silver Olympics Gold Medalists).

Tom was an executive with Libby, McNeill and Libby until he moved into the world of academia. He was a professor in the sciences at Johnson State Teacher's College, Johnson, VT, and finished his distinguished academic career as chairman of the Entomology Department at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH.

In addition, he worked for the New Hampshire State Extension Service as an entomologist, was an expert court witness for many companies, trained pest control operators for recertification throughout New England, and founded his own company, Fisher Seminars.

A curator at heart, Tom collected, over a span of 50 years, one of the finest complete Classic Comics and Classics Illustrated Collections on the market. He is the author of the Classic Comics Illustration Index which is used by collectors around the world.

George Thomas Fisher is survived by his daughters, Emily Weingarth (Villa Park, CA), Amy Evans (Franklin, NC); son, Forrest Fisher and his wife, Charlotte Fisher (Beaufort, SC); eight grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and the family's newest member, Skip Jack.



# A petition opposed to Cashiers Hillside project is circulating

Since November 16 when the proposed 57-acre Cashiers Hillside development was unveiled, citizens have rallied to either keep the development from happening or to at least keep it from happening until a myriad of questions are answered.

The Cashiers Hillside project was presented to the Cashiers Planning Council and there are a lot of unknowns involved in the proposed development planned at the southeast corner of the intersection of Highways 64 and 107, better known as the Crossroads.

The project went before the Cashiers Community Planning Council at a quasi-judicial hearing on Nov. 16 where it could have been approved, but Council members voted unanimously to grant a continuance until Jan. 6.

The decision to table the project was made after attorney John Noor filed a motion to grant

a continuance to give people affected by the proposed development, time to hire experts to gauge what kind of impact a project of this magnitude would have on the area.

Noor represents multiple clients in the motion, many concerned about the project's impact on traffic, public safety, property values, land stability issues, and stormwater/sewer management, to name a few. Noor said experts in these areas could not be retained within the approximate two-weeks notice he had of the Council's meeting to discuss the Cashiers Hillside proposal.

"These and other issues generally require expert testimony be provided," Noor told the Council. "My clients have the right to be able to produce that evidence through expert witnesses and they could not retain those experts with the amount of time they were giv-

en by notice of this meeting."

Principal of Macauley Investments, Stephen Macauley, said after the Council's vote to grant a continuance, that issues raised by Noor and his clients are important concerns for a project of this size and its effect on the community.

"The plans for this project were guided by a two-year effort that the community created with Jackson County, which entailed what the residents wanted and envisioned Cashiers to be in the future," said Macauley. "A big part of that includes infrastructure, including walkability, traffic, and sewer. We will be creating our own Cashiers Hillside water system and onsite sewage treatment facility, not just for the project, but for other businesses and homes in Cashiers. The plan includes spending millions to upgrade the traffic infrastructure in Cashiers. There will be gardens and thoughtfully planned landscaping surrounding pedestrian pathways."

There are several businesses located within the proposed development site and Macauley said they will be torn down to make room for the project.

"The existing structures will be demo'd, but we have been meeting with those business owners and some have chosen to relocate within the new community," said Macauley.

With so many unknowns involved in such a large-scale development that would change the face of Cashiers forever, many in the community are undecided in terms of their support for the project.

The Village Green is a 13-acre public park located on the southeast corner of the Crossroads, directly across the street from the proposed development site. TVG Executive Director Ann Self said it's too early to tell how this project could impact the area.

"What this recent proposal has demonstrated to me is that development is coming to Cashiers," said Self. "That's not necessarily a negative thing, but it needs to be planned and managed. The Council made a wise decision to

give people a chance to give their input."

That input started with a demonstration of people against the project, which was picked up by TV stations and now there is a petition against the project circulating. As of Sunday, Dec. 20, 7,770 people have signed the petition available at <https://www.change.org/p/stop-cashiers-village-development>. The goal is 10,000 signers to be presented to the Cashiers Planning Council Jan. 6, 2021.

Jaret Bessette started this petition.

"This petition seeks community support from the greater Cashiers community to express our disapproval of a new planned development that would destroy our quaint town including the south duck pond, hill, and trees. This petition seeks community support from the greater Cashiers community to express our disapproval of a new planned development that would destroy our quaint town. The project includes 1,473 total parking spaces utilizing a 500-space parking deck; 726 residential units -- 414 units (Phase 1), 312 units (Phase 2); 188 hotel rooms. Please help us protect our community," he wrote.

Some citizens who have signed the petition have also commented.

"I moved to Jackson county from northern Pennsylvania, a beautiful super remote wilderness. I've loved these mountains my whole life and have visited every year. Now that I'm a local resident I have been appalled at the parasitic overpopulation and over development that is destroying our wilderness and small mountain towns," writes Rebecca Bailey. "In my travels, and experience, I have never experienced the amount of people and trash that is ruining this beautiful environment. There must be change, and part of that change is slowing development, not adding more to and already overexposed wilderness."

And from Mary Connor:

"I have a business in town, but this is a crazy idea. We already

don't have public restrooms and our roads are not going to withstand this amount of traffic. The feel of a quaint village will be gone."

In addition, to the petition against the development that is circulating, authors of letters-to-the-editor have expressed concern.

"I am one of the signers of the petition to keep the mammoth multiuse development out of Cashiers. I know it will bring jobs — mostly temporary — but is it worth it to trade peace for chaos? I cannot even imagine where all the residents' and shoppers' cars are going to be day after day. Probably all the curves on US 64 will have to be straightened; those who have houses sitting back off the road will now be looking at traffic of all kinds 24/7," wrote Glenda Bell in the Dec. 17 edition of Highlands Newspaper. "And another thought — the developer — what is his history? Can we look at some of his previous projects to see his track record? Maybe I am not giving this project the credit it deserves. What are the upsides of a finished multi-use project? I really want to know how something of that magnitude fits into our plateau community."

About Macauley Investments

*• For more than three decades, Macauley Investments, LLC, led by Stephen Macauley, has redefined mixed-use development through its pillars, an approach that intertwines the livability of yesteryear with modern design sensibilities. These pillars provide the foundation for developments that are resilient and capable of withstanding the test of time. Experience has proven that this approach is most successful when balanced with a combination of marketplace dynamics and public-private partnerships. Macauley has a track record of being one of the most successful developers in Atlanta for more than 30 years, receiving countless local, regional and national awards and recognition for his work.*

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# ...ECONOMY continued from page 1

Tier 3 — meaning Macon County's economy is among the top in the state. The county's economic distress rank is #84 (it was #72 in 2019). Compared to last year, the county's population growth rank, median household income rank, and unemployment rate rank all improved.

There are only 20 Tier 3 counties in the state. Macon County is the only county in the Westernmost portions of the state to be recognized as a Tier 3 county. Further east, the next Tier 3 counties are Transylvania, Henderson, and Polk with the remaining counties in the Eastern portion of the state.

The tier rankings use four factors for the designations: average unemployment rate, median household income, percentage growth by population and adjusted property tax base per capita, according to the state. Beginning with the 2019 rankings, only these four factors determine final Tier rank. In previous years, additional 'adjustment factors' such as overall poverty rates were also considered in the calculations. In 2018, the North Carolina General Assembly eliminated these adjustment factors from the Tier ranking methodology. According to Macon County Commissioner Ronnie Beale, the change in the ranking system is a contributing factor to Macon County's rank improving.

Macon County Economic Development Director Tommy Jenkins explained to commissioners that the change in ranking is positive, as it indicates that the county's economy is improving over the previous years, however, it can present challenges as some funding opportunities will no longer be available. Certain state programs and funding opportunities are only available to tier 1 and 2 counties, meaning Macon County's shift to Tier 3 could affect its participation in some current or future programs.

rent or future programs.

"Funding opportunities like the building reuse grants which we have seen make a big difference in Macon will no longer be available," said Jenkins. "So, while it is good to be considered amongst the top economically well-off counties, it presents some challenges as well."

The North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) distributes the Building Reuse Program, which has funneled significant capital into Macon County over the past few years. The funding is issued based on county rank, with funds being allocated for the more economically distressed counties in Tier 1 and Tier 2. Businesses in Macon County will no longer be able to apply for the funding, when historically the funding has been very beneficial in Macon County. Just this August, a \$70,000 grant was allocated to the Hospice House of Franklin for the reuse of a vacant, 3,300-square-foot building in Franklin.

The Community Development Block Grant program is a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program administered in part by N.C. Commerce. CDBG's economic development funds provide grants to local governments for creating and retaining jobs. Project funding is based on the number of jobs to be created and the level of economic distress of applicant communities, meaning Macon County will be less likely to receive funding as a Tier 3 county.

The Industrial Development Fund — Utility Account provides grants to local governments located in the 80 most economically distressed counties of the state, which are classified as either Tier 1 or Tier 2. Funds may be used for publicly-owned infrastructure projects that are reasonably expected to result in new job creation—and while Macon County has been eligible

in the past, they no longer will be eligible. The Industrial Development Fund would have been especially beneficial this coming year as Macon County is working RFPs for rural broadband expansion.

The county's tier ranking also affects its ability to access funds for capital projects for the school system. The majority of local education funding is based on student population, but when there are special grant applications and funds out there, such as technology grants and needs-based

funds, the tier ranking also plays a factor.

A total of 22 counties in North Carolina will see a change in tier designation in 2021. Along with Macon County, Beaufort, Camden, Carteret, Chowan, Jones, Onslow, Perquimans, Pitt, Polk, and Transylvania improved their tier designation. Alexander, Brunswick, Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Davie, Haywood, Hoke, New Hanover, Randolph, and Rowan counties saw their tier designation change to a more distressed tier.



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## ALL ABOUT BOOKS

# • INK PENN •

## Cozy Christmas Memories

*In my Christmas cozy mystery — Whiskers, Wreaths & Murder — my main character is spending her first holiday in the Cotswolds where she moved after her husband died. She's been tree shopping and has come home with a six-foot tree, a smaller four-foot one, and more. May this glimpse of her Christmas memories make you smile.*

...

I busied myself hanging the wreaths and moving the four-foot tree to different spots in my office. I finally settled on a place in front of the floor-to-ceiling bookcase on the left side. As I looked out the

picture window to the garden, I thought of getting several boxes of net lights for the bushes and the potted spruce I'd put by the front door. I've caught the Christmas spirit, I thought. The Christmas after Henry died, I'd barely managed to put out a few snow globes and candles, much less get a tree. I knew I'd still have some tearful moments, but I hoped today's spurt of enthusiasm was a sign I was healing.

I'd been hesitating to pull out my boxes and boxes of Christmas decorations, worried I'd have a meltdown, but since I'd made it through tree shopping without tears, I decided to chance it. After all, I thought, even if I have a good cry, tonight's party will cheer me up.

By the time I carried all the boxes from the garage to the sitting room, I was thinking I should have asked Peter or Gavin for help. What on earth was I thinking when I shipped all this? At least the containers were clearly labeled. In the summer, when I'd moved into my fairytale cottage and begun sorting boxes, it was apparent I'd swung back and forth from haphazard to highly organized when I was packing in Atlanta. Thank goodness the Christmas decorations were in the organized category.

Dickens and Christie watched as I opened the box of teddy bears and other animals, many of which I'd acquired pre-Henry. There was my treasured Richie Bear from the now-defunct Rich's department store in Atlanta. He was a white bear with a red sweater and red knit cap. Two brown Lord & Taylor bears from different years were wearing knit scarves and hats. The Lord & Taylor locations in Atlanta had long since closed, and I still couldn't believe the flagship store on Fifth Avenue had closed after over one hundred years in business.

Christie wandered over to climb into the box. “What's with all the bears? I thought we had cats too . . . Wait, here's one.” She'd found a black and white cat with a Santa hat. She sniffed everything as I pulled out several more cats, a moose, and a mouse. Each one made me smile and Christie purr.

Dickens was more interested in lounging in front of the fire and content to watch from afar. Next was the box holding the



Kathy Manos Penn

small red, white, and green quilted tree skirt my mother-in-law had handed down to Henry, perfect for the smaller tree. Tucked in with it were the larger green velvet tree skirt trimmed in rich burgundy and the delicate crocheted angel tree topper. I considered these items heirlooms, as Henry's mom had made them all.

“You know, Christie, I have a picture of you as a kit-

ten, curled up with the packages beneath the tree—after you'd chewed ribbons and clawed wrapping paper. You played so hard, you conked out.”

“I've learned better now. I prefer to play with the paper after you've unwrapped the packages. I still think the ornaments are fair game, though.”

“Yes, dear. That's why I never place fragile ornaments on the lower branches where you can reach them.” Thank goodness, she confined her antics to the bottom of the tree. I'd had a kitten named Mocher, another black cat, who'd climbed up the trunk of the Christmas tree one year. I was lucky I'd been there and been able to reach in and grab him without breaking a single ornament or worse, toppling the tree.

I was saving the several boxes of ornaments until last, so I turned to the box labeled China. I knew it wasn't china, but I hadn't known what else to call the plethora of candle holders, decorative plates, and Christmas knickknacks I'd collected. I had a handblown glass tree with tiny glass balls hanging on the branches, a wooden sleigh, and several snow globes.

Christie meowed, “I remember the big snow globe, the one on the gold base that played music. That thing scared me to death.”

That got Dickens's attention. “It only scared you after you knocked it to the floor and it burst into pieces! We didn't see you for hours after the crash.”

Christie turned her nose up before she replied, “Excuse me, I believe it jumped off the shelf. I had nothing to do with it.”

Jumped off the shelf? That's a creative explanation. I looked around the sitting room and considered my collection.

• See PENN page 9

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## ...PENN continued from page 8

Garland, I need garland. I'd go out Sunday afternoon to get some, and then I could arrange candles and snowglobes in the greenery and hang the three Christmas stockings with the names Christie, Dickens, and Leta.

There, I thought. I've made it through without tears. I'll tackle the ornaments another day. Maybe I'll just open the boxes and set them by the tree and leave it to my friends to pull them out one by one — all

except the box of cat ornaments. I moved it to the office with the idea of decorating the cat tree on my own before the tree trimming party next week.

\*\*\*

• *Award-winning author Kathy Manos Penn is a Georgia resident. Find her cozy mysteries locally at Books Unlimited in Franklin and on Amazon. Contact her at [inkpenn119@gmail.com](mailto:inkpenn119@gmail.com), and follow her on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/](https://www.facebook.com/KathyManosPennAuthor/).*

## Laurel Garden Club announces deadline for grant applications

The deadline for grant applications to Laurel Garden Club is January 31, 2021. Organizations wishing to apply for a grant from the club should consult the club's web site [www.laurelgardenclubhighlands.com/community](http://www.laurelgardenclubhighlands.com/community) for guidelines. The grant application is available on the site as well.

Laurel Garden Club is dedicated to community beautification, protection, and conservation of the natural heritage and scenic mountain landscapes. The club's purpose is charitable and educational. Proceeds from fundraising efforts will benefit projects that comply with the club's stated purpose.



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## • ON THE SUNNY SIDE •

### 'Twas The Night Before Christmas

"'Twas the night before  
Christmas, when all thro' the  
house,

Not a creature was stirring,  
not even a mouse;

The stockings were hung by  
the chimney with care,

In hopes that St. Nicholas  
soon would be there;

The children were nestled all  
snug in their beds,

While visions of sugar  
plums danc'd in their heads,

And mama in her 'kerchief,  
and I in my cap,

Had just settled our brains for a long  
winter nap,

When out on the lawn there arose such  
a clatter,

I sprang from the bed to see what was  
the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters, and threw up  
the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new  
fallen snow,

Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects  
below;

When, what to my wondering eyes  
should appear,

But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny  
raindeer,

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,  
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.

More rapid than eagles his coursers  
they came:

And he whistled, and shouted, and call'd  
them by name:

'Now Dasher, now Dancer, now Prancer,  
and Vixen,

On Comet, on Cupid, on Dunder and  
Blixem;

To the top of the porch, to the top of  
the wall,

Now dash away! dash away! dash away  
all!

So up to the house-top the courses  
they flew,

With the sleigh full of toys and St.  
Nicholas too,

And then in a twinkling, I heard on the  
roof

The prancing and pawing of each little  
hoof.

As I drew my head, and was turning  
around,

Down the chimney St. Nicholas came  
with a bound:



**Kenny Youmans**

He was dress'd all in fur,  
from his head to his foot,

And his clothes were all  
tarnish'd with ashes and soot;

A bundle of toys was flung  
on his back,

And he looked like a  
peddler just opening his pack:

His eyes – how they  
twinkled! His dimples how  
merry,

His cheeks were like roses,  
his nose like a cherry;

His droll little mouth was

drawn up like a bow,

And the beard of his chin was white  
as the snow;

He had a broad face, and a little round  
belly

That shook when he laugh'd, like a bowl  
full of jelly:

A wink of his eyes and a twist of his  
head

Soon gave me to know I had nothing  
to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight  
to his work,

And fill'd all the stockings; then turn'd  
with a jerk.

And laying his finger aside his nose  
And giving a nod, up the chimney he  
rose.

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team  
gave a whistle,

And away they all flew, like the down  
of a thistle:

But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove  
out of sight-

Happy Christmas to all, and to all a  
good night."

– First published December 23, 1823.

We celebrate Christmas to honor the  
birth of the Baby Jesus.

The first recorded date of Christmas  
being celebrated on December 25 was in  
Rome 336 AD. Constantine was emperor  
of Rome (he was the first Christian Roman  
Emperor). Germany is credited with starting  
the Christmas tree as we know it today  
sometime in the 1500's.

The #1 popular Christmas movie is  
"Miracle on 34th Street. It was released in  
1947. It won three Academy Awards.

It stars Maureen O'Hara, John Payne  
and Natalie Wood. Natalie Wood was 8  
years old.

Merry Christmas to all.



# • BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NEWS •

## Merry Christmas! TL&LC delivers books to students throughout Highlands

By Brian O'Shea  
Plateau Daily News

Staff from The Literacy & Learning Center (TL&LC), formerly The Literacy Council, spent Monday afternoon visiting schools throughout Highlands dropping off gift bags and wrapped presents full of books for students.

Books were age-appropriate, ranging from pre-school to 5th grade and were delivered to all the elementary students at Highlands School (kindergarten through 5th) – approximately 130 books, 60 books for all the students at the Highlands Community Child Development Center (HCCDC), and 32 books for all the students at the Gordon School.

“The Literacy & Learning Center purchases books to distribute at the Highlands Christmas parade every year,” said TL&LC Executive Director Bonnie Potts.

“Because the parade was cancelled, we took a creative approach to distribute the books and decided to take them to the students at the local schools.”

TL&LC gives away approximately 5,000 books each year through various festivals, parades, and scheduled events. With most of these events being cancelled because of the pandemic, TL&LC's book distribution process has been disrupted.

“Due to COVID, we have had to figure out how to get the books into the hands of children in other ways,” said Potts. “For Halloween, we hosted a drive-by event so children could get a bag of books and candy. We decided to deliver the Christmas parade books directly to the students at school. Highlands Mountaintop Rotary helped sponsor this book giveaway event.

“Reading not only improves vocabulary and language skills, but helps children



Jenni Edwards, Bonnie Potts, and Anna Norton delivering books to students at Highlands School on Monday.

improve concentration and develop their imagination,” said Potts. “We’re very grateful to the schools for working with us, to Mountaintop Rotary for sponsoring this

program, and for the incredible children in this community that have a love of reading.”



Varsity Ava Schmitt at the net.



JV Olivia Cole at the net.

– Photos by Brian O'Shea, Plateau Daily News

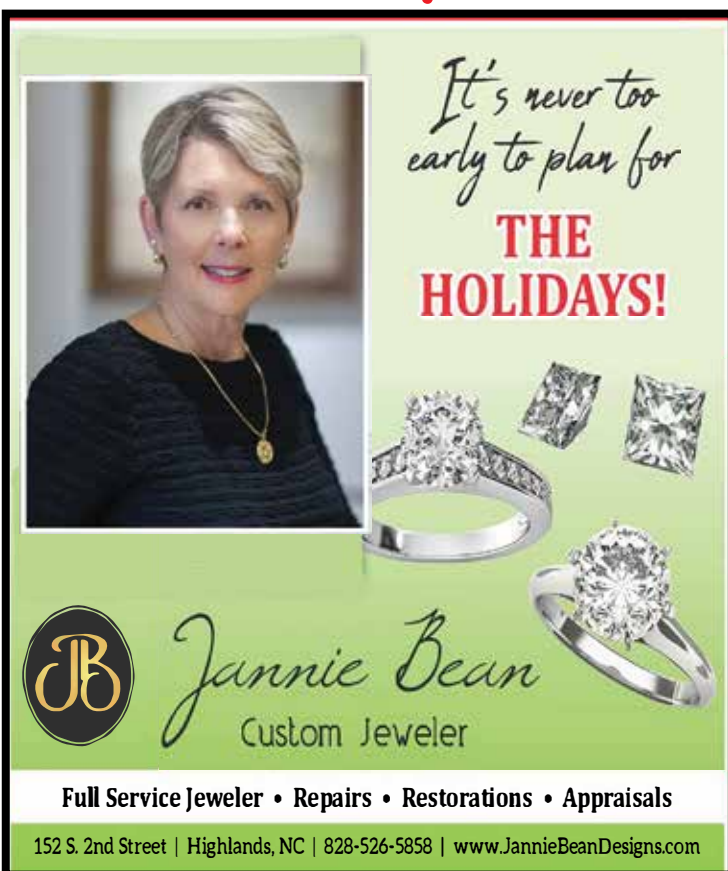
## Lady Highlanders lose to Franklin on the road

Highlands varsity and JV volleyball teams hopped a bus to Franklin on Monday to take on the Lady Panthers, but a combination of powerful hitting by Franklin and miscommunication by Highlands plagued both squads and JV ended with a final 2-0; varsity didn't fare any better losing 3-0.

Highlands Assistant Coach Kaitlin Bishop said the Lady Highlanders have the talent to get the job done, but need more time playing together on the court to get in sync. A shortened season due to the pandemic doesn't help, but Bishop said the girls are working hard and doing their best with the time they have.



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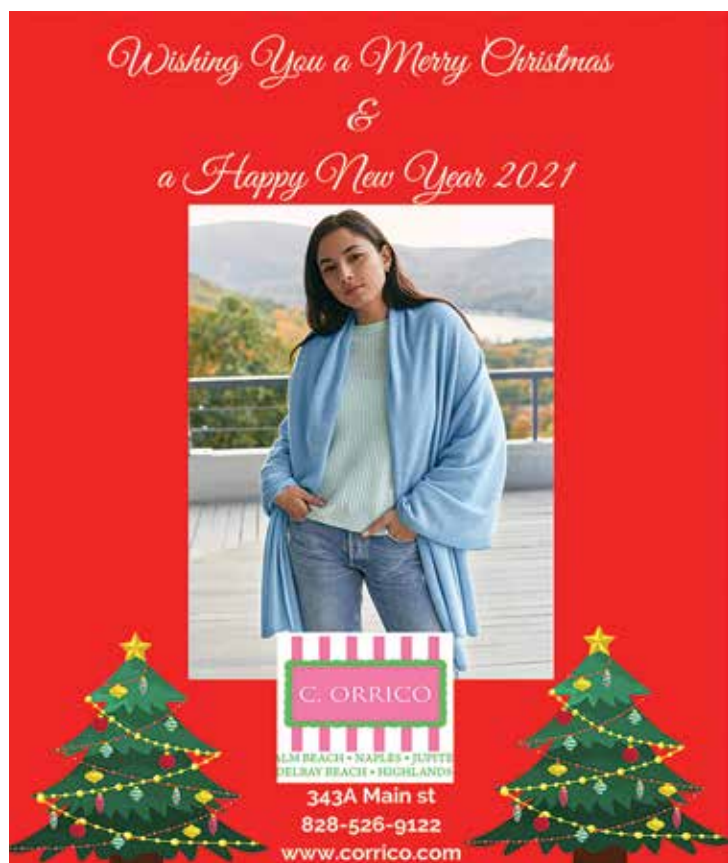
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# Christmas Eve Service at Community Bible Church

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Dec 27th service is online only at 10:45a  
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## • INVESTING AT 4,118 FT. •

### Farewell Roaring 2020

Looking back to my first article in January 2020, I wrote: “By all accounts, the real estate market in 2020 is off to a roaring start with dollar volume up 44% already in January and unit sales up 13%. Is there any reason that the momentum in real estate on the Highlands/Cashiers/Lake Toxaway Plateau so far this year will slow down? I don’t think so for the following reasons....”

There was a reason that we didn’t know about then but one that could have stopped real estate in its track: COVID 19 and lockdowns.

In March and April, we real estate brokers had to adapt. We worried that sales for the year were over. We jumped into overdrive calling sellers and buyers convincing them not to lose confidence in this market. We took out ads in Barron’s and The Wall Street Journal titled: “Looking for PPP: Pandemic Protected Properties? Come to Western North Carolina.”

We started virtual open houses with the invitation line: “Don’t you dare show up!” We face-timed with clients, we zoomed with clients and colleagues across the country on a daily basis. Americans stuck at home practiced the national pastime: looking at real estate but this time it was on-line. On-line views were off the charts. Homes were being sold sight unseen. I sold two 3.2-million-dollar homes over the phone.

When the dam broke in June and people could travel to comfort zones, the Highlands /Cashiers Plateau was discovered as one of these coveted areas. Traffic from feeder markets that we had never seen before such as San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, New York were calling, visiting and buying. The market continues to be hot on the Plateau and throughout the country. Nationally, home sales are up 27% from a year ago. In



**Jody Lovel**  
Highlands Sotheby's  
828.226.6303

this market, volume is up 102% and unit sales 73% over this time last year. 772 additional sales occurred in 2020 versus 2019!

How long will this hot market continue? My prediction is that it will remain hot for the next couple of years due to limited inventory, record low mortgage rates, and the work from home trend.

The Urban Land Institute refers to the current real estate boom as “The Great American Move.”

The exodus from cities to high-quality, sparsely populated small towns paints the picture of our beloved Plateau. 8.9 million Americans have moved since the pandemic began. The South has been the biggest beneficiary of this relocation trend. Half of Americans who used to work in an office are still working from home which can be anywhere. Why not be in a resort area versus a crowded city? Thus, we will continue to see a steady stream of buyers throughout the winter.

Many people are suffering from the current situation. We are so grateful to be part of this wonderful community that coped well with a national pandemic. We are extremely grateful to the health care workers, emergency services and our leaders for providing calm during the storm.

May you enjoy a “stay at home holiday,” and start 2021 healthy with a positive view that normalcy will return in the New Year. Happy Holidays, dear friends!!

• Jody and Wood Lovell own Highlands Sotheby's International Realty, the top producing firm in Highlands for the last six years including 2020 and ending the year with over a quarter of a billion dollars in sales per the Highlands/Cashiers Multiple Listing Service. Their team of thirty brokers are closers! Call them for all of your real estate needs at 828.526.4104.

### ...MEETING continued from page 5

accept the donation.

Mayor Taylor said the Rec Committee will begin discussions with Rec Director Lester Norris.

#### Fire Department

The Local Government Commission, which must OK the town’s financing for the new fire department, left the item off its

December agenda but said it will be on its January 5th agenda.

Town Manager Josh Ward said therefore BB&T extended the loan terms until Jan. 15 and the closing date is now Jan. 8.

He said the Army Corps of Engineers OK’d the town’s wetland impact plan for



## HCHF sponsoring FREE drive-thru COVID-19 testing on Jan. 4 & 11

The Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation (HCHF) is sponsoring local COVID-19 testing initiatives on the plateau January 4 and January 11. The format will be drive-through at the Village Green in Cashiers from 11am-1pm and the Highlands Recreation Center from 2:30-4:30pm.

To ensure adequate testing supplies on the day of, participants are encouraged to notify Mountain Park Urgent Care of your interest to participate at [info@mtnparkuc.com](mailto:info@mtnparkuc.com).

"This post-holiday timeframe is a critical time to be tested because CDC and science tells us positive cases will likely increase after travel and gatherings with family and friends. Identifying people with the virus helps to avoid a sudden spike, slow the rate of new infections, lower the overall number of cases, ease the pressure on health services, keep our schools open, workforce employed and community activity flowing." Dr. Richard Ellin, Board member and leader of the HCHF testing project.

Participants will be asked to present a photo ID and insurance information on

site. Uninsured participants are eligible to participate without cost, however a photo I.D. is required. Confidential results will be provided directly to participants by phone.

The tests will be administered by Mountain Park Urgent Care (MPUC), Sylva, NC in full compliance with CDC, FDA, and NCDHHS guidelines. The County Health Departments are provided COVID-19 test reports as required by NCDHHS.

Please note a COVID-19 test is a one-time indicator. Frequent hand washing, covering your face, and social distancing at least six feet apart are also important to protect yourself and others and to slow the spread of COVID-19. For questions and further information please call the Foundation office: 828-482-6510.

• The Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation was established on February 1, 2019 as a 501 (c) 3 public charity with a purpose to improve the health and wellbeing of Highlands, Cashiers, and surrounding communities. For more information, please visit the website: [www.hchealthfund.org](http://www.hchealthfund.org) or call 828-482-6510.



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## • BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION NEWS •

### Envisioning a dog park in Cashiers

Vision Cashiers, a not-for-profit organization led by volunteers and devoted to improving the Cashiers community, announces today it has received an endorsement by Jackson County to move forward with a public dog park – a first for the valley of Cashiers. The Vision Cashiers Dog Park initiative — envisioned by volunteer Rand Kramer — will be located next to the Jackson County Recreation Center and will be a clean, beautiful, and safe recreational area for families and their four-legged friends.

“Our goal for the Cashiers Dog Park is to establish a fenced-in, off-leash dog park where canine citizens and their owners can exercise and socialize in a clean and safe environment while respecting people, property, and wildlife,” explains Kramer. “This is an important community need that is

currently missing in our beloved Cashiers.”

Kramer, who approached Vision Cashiers in the spring of 2020 about his dream of a dedicated and safe place for dogs to play, received good news from Jackson County recently regarding the dog park initiative. If Vision Cashiers raises the funds to build the dog park—approximately \$50,000—the county will dedicate land for the park next to the recreation center, as well as maintain the space.

“The Cashiers Dog Park has been very well received by the Jackson County Parks and Recreation department,” explains Paul Robshaw, co-founder of Vision Cashiers. “Thanks to Rand’s hard work and design, the county quickly embraced our concept and is very supportive. If we can raise the initial costs to build the park, Jackson County will donate and main-

tain the land. This is a win-win collaboration between Cashiers and the county. We are excited to turn this dream into a reality for the residents of Cashiers and their four-legged friends.”

The total cost of the Cashiers Dog Park is \$50,000 and Vision Cashiers is soliciting donations from \$100 to \$1,000. To date, fundraising efforts have already raised \$30,000 and Vision Cashiers has a goal to meet the \$50,000 by December 31. For anyone donating \$100 and above, their tax-deductible contribution will be permanently recognized at the dog park entrance on a sign showcasing their name and dog(s) name.

“When you donate, you are improving the quality of life in Cashiers by bringing a dog park to our town for the enjoyment of our citizens and their dog companions. Donations of any amount, big or small, are gratefully accepted,” explains Kramer.

Rusty Ellis, director of the Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department, shares “The Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department is pleased to partner with Vision Cashiers to develop an off-leash dog park where dogs and their owners have a safe, enjoyable, and well-maintained area for recreation and socialization. Given the leash laws in Jackson County, there aren’t many places for dog owners to let their dogs run freely. The dog park will allow your dogs to roam freely without the constant tugging from their leashes, as well as provide dog owners with the ability to safely throw a Frisbee or ball without worrying about where their dog will wander off to next. We looked forward to making this Dog Park a reality for the Cashiers residents.”

Dog lovers of Cashiers are encouraged to donate by visiting [www.visioncashiers.com](http://www.visioncashiers.com) or by mailing a donation to P.O. Box 2302, Cashiers, NC, 28717.



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# • BIZ/ORG NEWS •



It is the time of year when Highlands Motoring Festival normally presents a "big" donation check to the three local human needs charities that it supports. But in a pandemic year the presentation ceremony, surrounded by organization representatives and children, is out of the question. Instead, the decision was made to let the US Post Office deliver the donation. On Tuesday, Dec. 22, Steve Mehder went to the Post Office to insert the "check" in the mailbox.

— Photo by Brian O'Shea

## Highlands Motoring Festival 2021 plans

Despite that the traditional motoring festival was cancelled this year, more than 100 people safely participated in two days of "One Lap of the Mountains" driving tours. The net proceeds amounted to \$15,000, a sum that will be shared among HMF charity partners; The Literacy and Learning Center, R.E.A.C.H. of Macon County, and the Community Care Clinic of Highlands/Cashiers.

Planning is well underway for the 14th annual Highlands Motoring Festival which will be staged on June 10-13, 2021, with seven different events spanning the four-day festival.

From May 11 through August 21, HMF is collaborating with The Bascom Center of Visual Arts with a special exhibition, "FreeWheeling – the Allure of the Automobile in Contemporary Art" that features the work of top automotive artists including paper, canvas, and sculpture. Additionally, there will be a rotating display of extremely rare and special automobiles in the Gallery. "FreeWheeling" is a cornerstone of the collaboration CELEBRATE ART + AUTOMOBILE, a unique series of events for the 2021 season.

Details about the festival can be found at [www.HighlandsMotoringFestival.com](http://www.HighlandsMotoringFestival.com)

## Wreaths Across America

Christine Murphy was one of 60 drive-thru volunteers who laid 525 wreaths on veterans' gravesites in Memorial Park and other cemeteries in the area during Saturday's Covid-proper ceremony. Ten veterans who were cremated were also honored this year.

— Photo by Brian O'Shea



## It was 'Polar Express Day' at Highlands School Thursday, Dec. 17



To celebrate 'Polar Express Day' elementary students and their teachers attended their last day of school prior to Christmas break in their PJs. Normally students would gather to watch the movie or be read the story, but COVID restrictions meant separate activities in each classroom in PJs. Pictured is one of Highlands School's first-grade classes.

— Photo by Kim Lewicki

The Pastor  
of Walnut Creek Baptist Church  
in Franklin, NC  
is calling for everyone  
to unite in a universal mission of

# PRAYER

on

Sunday, Dec. 27 at 10:15 a.m.

Let's band together as God's people  
and have a day of prayer for the  
coronavirus, for our elected officials,  
and for **Revival**  
in the United States.

*2 Chronicles 7:14*



# • SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



**Rev. Steve Ridenhour**  
Lutheran Church  
of the Holy Family, Highlands

## How to honor and celebrate the birth of the Christ child

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

— Micah 4: 8

In some ways, this verse may seem a bit out of place just before Christmas. Yet these words from the prophet Micah are especially applicable for the Judeo-Christian Community.

Hanukkah is celebrated from Thursday December 10 to Friday, December 18 at nightfall. The word Hanukkah literally means to dedicate. This eight-day festival of lights recalls when God made it possible for Israel to regain control of Jerusalem and to rededicate the Temple as their central place to worship God. These words from Micha reminded Israel that that God's holy purpose will be accomplished through their worship and as they walk with God, to treat others with justice, love, and kindness.

As the Christian community celebrates Christmas. These words point us to Jesus. From his humble birth in a stable, Jesus grew up to teach others how to demonstrate radical love and kindness and to practice justice for the least of these among us. The Christmas story reminds us that as we humbly walk with Jesus, who is “the Word made flesh,” we are walking with God.

With these words from Micah, we join with all people of faith to walk with God, to practice justice, radical love, and kindness. With these words from Michah, we seek opportunities to welcome the stranger and the refugee. We seek ways to lift up the downtrodden, the homeless, the hungry and those who are oppressed. We stand against racism and oppression wherever it surfaces. We seek to fulfill Jesus great commandment, to love one another as God has first loved us.

This season of holy days (holidays) remind us, “to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.” In so doing, we will honor and celebrate the birth of the Christ child and the legacy we share with all who call on the name of the Lord.

God Bless each of you this holy season.  
Merry Christmas!

## Proverbs 3:5

### BLUEVALLEY 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

### CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Wes Sharpe, Pastor 828-743-5298

Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

### CHAPEL OF THE SKY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999

Sundays: 10 a.m.: Worship

Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

### CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

Rector: Jim Murphy, 252-671-4011

464 US Hwy 64 east, Cashiers

9:30am Sunday School; 11:30am Worship Service; 6pm Mon.

### CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Brent Metcalf • 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 a.m.

1st & 3rd Sunday night Service: 7 p.m.

Wednesdays – Supper at 6 p.m.

### COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

www.cbchighlands.com • 526-4685

3645 Cashiers Rd, Highlands, NC

Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins

Sundays: 9:30am - Adult Sunday School; 9:45am (masks required) Early Worship Service; 11:15am (masks optional)

Worship Service; Sundays 10:45am-Children's Program,

Sunday Youth-4:30pm – 6:30pm Dinner

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706.746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447,

Pastor Gary Hewins

Worship: Sun. 9 a.m., with Holy Communion the 1st & 3rd Sun.; Tues: Community Supper 5:30 followed by Bible Study.

### EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. W. Bentley Manning • 526-2968

Sunday Services Live-Stream at 10:30 a.m.,

Morning Prayer Weekdays on Facebook live at 8:30 a.m.

Holy Eucharist at noon in the garden on Mon and Wed

### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org

Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 220 Main Street, Highlands

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

Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Choir 5p; Prayer Mtg 6:15p

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

526-3175 • fpchighlands.org

Sun.: Worship 8:30a Adult Ed.: 9:30a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.

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

Wed: Choir: 6p

### GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

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## John 3:16

# • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

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### HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

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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 10:45a., Evening Worship, 6p.

Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

### HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Pastor Randy Lucas 526-3376

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Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

### MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

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### 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.

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### CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone – 526-2418

Mass: Thurs. 12:10; Fri. 9am; Sun: 11 a.m.

### SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11 a.m. & 7

Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

### SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212

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

### SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer

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

Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.

### ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mass: Thurs. 9am, Fri., 11am; Sun. 9am

### THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

1448 Highway 107 S., Office: 743-2359 • Rev. Rob Wood

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

Nursery available for Rite II services

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Thursday: Noon Healing Service with Eucharist.

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Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

### WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am



# • BIZ/ORG NEWS •

...MEETING continued from page 14

## Rotary Scholarship recipient Blakely Moore recounts her entry into the working world through the pandemic



Blakely Moore

Blakely Moore, 2016 Rotary Club of Highlands Scholarship winner, recounted her entry into the working world, despite the pandemic, when she addressed Rotary Club Members on Dec. 8.

Entry into the working world is always an adjustment, but Blakely Moore's entry was delayed in unexpected and often frightening ways because of Covid

19. The Lee University graduate majored in History and Education and was excited about being chosen to participate in the Peace Corps and expected to teach in Cambodia, beginning in July of 2020.

First Moore planned to do her student teaching in Bolivia and embarked on her career in early March of 2020 when Covid 19 was just a blip on the radar screen in the US. Within days of her arrival, Bolivia implemented a strict Covid 19 quarantine and she couldn't leave her host family's home. With the military enforcing the quarantine and all international travel blocked weeks went by and her future was uncertain. Finally booking a "repatriation flight" home at the end of March, she celebrated her return to the United States with joy, although practically alone, in the Miami Airport. Moore's homecoming in Highlands was equally lonely as she endured another two weeks quarantining in a neighbor's empty home.

The daughter of Kay and Jerry Moore of Highlands, Blakely soon found that her dream of working in the Peace Corps would be delayed several times; it has now been rescheduled to July 2021. Cambodia's loss has been Highlands' gain, however, since she secured her first teaching gig at Highlands School, where she began teaching Spanish and coaching cross country

this fall. "I never expected to be back at my own school, working side-by-side with teachers I'd been learning from just a few years ago!"

Her ultimate goal? To earn a graduate degree in international development which will allow her to focus on education on a world stage. Moore's desire to travel still burns brightly. However, she acknowledges she'd feel much safer traveling with a group such as the Peace Corps with lots of back up infrastructure.

"I realized my perspective on the world had changed. Having grown up in a small town like Highlands, where everyone was watching out for me, even my government, I realized everyone is not so lucky. We don't all have the same safety net the world over. It was a true reality check to realize I'm not invincible, but I still want to travel and make change through education. I'd just do it differently the next time."

the bottom portion of the property along US 64 west.

"We had to pay an impact fee to the state mitigation fund of \$11,027 which we sent out so we will be ready to go as soon as we get the approval from the LGC on the loan," he said.

The new fire department is being built on the property on US 64 west and Oak Street.

### Mayor Pro Tem

The board voted unanimously to vote for the Mayor Pro Tem beginning in 2022 for a two-year term rather than continuing its process of rotating commissioners to the position each year.

Mayor Taylor said he discussed this with the NC Mayors' Association and voting for the Mayor Pro Tem for a two-year appointment is the way it's done most other places.

"The vast majority said the term starts on the year when there is a municipal election and extends until the next municipal election.

The idea being that there may be new board members and even a new mayor elected at those municipal elections.

So, Commissioner Amy Patterson will serve Mayor Pro Tem for 2021 but from then on the Mayor Pro Tem will be elected by the board every two years.

### Annexation

Property owner Betsy Bird at 555 Arnold Road has requested to be annexed by the Town of Highlands.

According to Ward, the property is contiguous to the town – a necessary stipulation to annexation.

For instance, a property owner on US 64 east requested to be annexed so that they might hook on to town water, but since the property isn't contiguous to town property the request was denied.

The properties on Arnold Road are along the shoreline of Lake Sequoyah and touch part of the Old Edwards The Farm property which had been previously annexed as well.

Mayor Taylor said he wasn't for piecemeal annexation saying it should be broader and Commissioner John Dotson agreed.

Commissioner Donnie Calloway suggested tabling the request until the Comprehensive Plan was completed, but Commissioner Brian Stiehler said the board should move ahead with the request.

"This is an opportunity to get one more piece of property off Lake Sequoyah and get it on our sewer system," he said.

Commissioner Patterson and Commissioner Marc Hehn agreed.

"That particular piece of property is

•See MEETING page 22

## • FIRE REPORTS •

### The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Dec. 15

#### Dec. 15

• At 2:01 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on S. 4th Street.

#### Dec. 17

• At 6:37 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a fire at a location on US 64 west.

• At 2:13 p.m., the dept. was first responders to Glen Falls.

#### Dec. 18

• At 11:43 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Crescent Trail.

• At 12:14 p.m., the dept. investigated a call of "smoke" on Brushy Face Road.

• At 3:30 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Cullasaja Drive.

• At 6:56 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a downed powerline on Wyanoak Road.

#### Dec. 20

• At 12:51 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Clear Creek road.

• 2:40 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Brookside Lane.

• At 2:56 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Brookside Lane.

#### Dec. 21

• 3:57 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Chestnut Ridge Road.

• At 8:57 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 west.

#### Dec. 22

• At 6:24 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on N. 4th Street.

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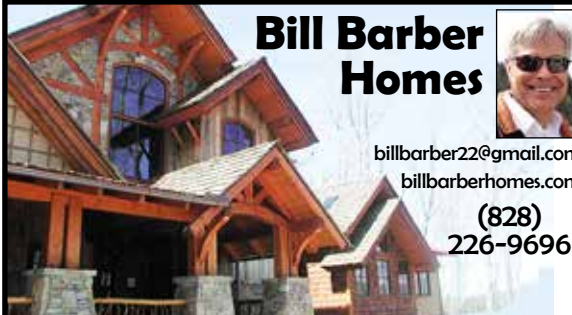


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## ...MEETING continued from page 19

along our drinking supply, regardless of how many others we get along there. Every piece will then fall under our impervious ordinance.”

She made a motion to set a public hearing for annexation and to change the zoning at the regular January board meeting.

Commissioners Dotson and Calloway said they were OK with scheduling a public hearing but that’s all they would agree to at this time.

“I agree with Commissioner Calloway and the mayor about piecemealing this out. If the adjoining property owners would come to us too, I would be more in favor rather than having “piano keys” of property that are in the city limits and subject to city ordinances when our city employees will almost have to have a map to know which properties fall under town jurisdiction,” he said. “I am not in favor of the piecemeal approach but in favor of the public hearing to see what the public has to say about it.”

Bird’s property is one of five properties in the same physical position, so Ward suggested the owner contact the other property owners to see if they, too, would like to be annexed. It’s possible the board may know more about those properties by

the January meeting.

### **Laurel Street Alley**

At the November Town Board meeting Public Works Director Lamar Nix notified the board that the end of the town-owned Laurel Street Alley near Spruce Street was on private property – that of the old funeral home – and its location could affect the sale of that property. He suggested the town move the street over.

The Public Works Committee met to discuss it and agreed unanimously to move the street.

At the December Town Board meeting, Nix requested permission to move the street and for \$50,000 to be allocated for the project.

“It could be January, or February or March before the state issues permits like this across the state, but we want to be prepared to move forward after the state permits it,” he said.

The board voted 4-1 to relocate the alley and allocate the money to do so from the fund balance.

Commissioner Hehn voted no and asked to be recused from voting for personal reasons.

“This is setting a policy that we only do work on our rights-of-way. We are off the rights-of-way and moving on to the rights-

of-way,” he said. “I would like to be excused from voting because I have a personal conflict.”

Attorney JK Coward said recusals are more complicated than people might imagine.

“First you have to ask the board to vote on whether you have a conflict because there is a statutory duty to vote in North Carolina on anything that’s on the table and if you want to be excused the board has to vote on whether you are allowed to be excused,” he said. “If they vote yes, you are allowed to be excused. If they vote that you have to vote, then you have to vote.”

Commissioner Hehn said he had wanted to discuss the issue with Coward prior to the meeting so he could tell the board he had a valid reason to be excused. But they never connected.

“That’s for the board to decide if you have a valid reason,” said Coward. “Not me.”

Commissioner Hehn said his attorney said he shouldn’t discuss his reasons in public. The board made no motion to excuse Commissioner Hehn from voting.

Therefore, the question was called. The vote was 4-1; Hehn opposed.

If the board had voted to allow Hehn to recuse himself, his vote would have been tallied as a “yes.”

### **Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence**

Mayor Taylor said that Commissioner Hehn had requested that the board begin saying the Pledge of Allegiance and having a moment of silence before each meeting.

“I am a man of faith and I think it’s important to take a moment of silence and reflect on the day and on what we hope to do and to be kind to each other,” he said.

Commissioner Patterson was against the idea.

“I feel like I don’t have to say who I am or what I am; I show who I am and what I am and whether reflective, or respectful or kind, you can tell that by how I act,” she said. “I took an oath to uphold the Constitution when I became a member of this board. I think it’s eye candy, frankly, to do the pledge and those kinds of things. You know who you are, your citizens know who you are, and I don’t think you have to reaffirm that every time you have a meeting rather than by doing the good work.”

The board voted 3-2 to say the Pledge and have a moment of silence beginning with the first in-person meeting in 2021.

Commissioners Patterson and Stiehler voted no.

– Kim Lewicki



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