

Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 17, Number 43

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

Thursday, Oct. 22, 2020

Town denies HCA water/sewer request

Despite pleas from Dr. Patti Wheeler, the Hehn family, and of course CEO/CNO of the hospital Tom Neal, commissioners voted 4 to 1 to deny water/sewer to HCA for proposed workforce

housing on its property alongside the entrance to the hospital.

Neal approached the board in August and again in September outlining the urgent need for affordable housing for healthcare

workers so he could fulfill the plan to grow hospital services.

"HCA would pay for all water/sewer costs; we are not asking the town to subsidize in any

• See DENIES page 7

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Don't feed the bears!

It will cost you \$250

As crazy as it sounds, people in town have been feeding bears that happen through their yards. So now there is an ordinance against intentionally doing so.

At last week's Town Board meeting, Mayor Taylor presented an ordinance against "feeding wild animals."

"I have been told that there are some owners of VRBO rentals who have encouraged their renters to throw leftover food into their yard so they can have a 'bear photo experience' while they are here, which means they are consciously feeding the bears in town," he said.

The town has gone to considerable expense over the past couple years to deter bears in town. Bearproof garbage cans and bear-resistant toters have been placed throughout the business district to stop bears from using town garbage cans and business dumpsters as their grocery store.

And it's worked.

• See BEARS page 14



Rescue crew use a drone to establish visual contact with two climbers who were reportedly trapped on the east face of Whiteside Mountain.

Rescue crews do welfare check on Whiteside Mtn.

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

Highlands Fire & Rescue received a call on Tuesday shortly af-

ter 5:30 p.m. reporting two climbers trapped on a rope on the east face of Whiteside Mountain.

• See RESCUE page 11

• ELECTION COUNTDOWN •

This is our 4th installment of our coverage of the candidates on the ballot: Macon County School Board

By Brittney Lofthouse

There are three seats up for election on the Macon County Board of Education. The Highlands seat, currently held by Stephanie McCall, the Nantahala seat, currently held by Melissa Evans, and the Franklin-Area seat, currently held by Chairman Jim Breedlove..

Incumbent Melissa Evans is running unopposed, meaning she will be automatically re-elected. McCall is not running for re-election, however, Hilary Wilkes received no challenges for the Highlands seat, so she will be elected in November.

Matt Mason and Emily Ritter are opposing him.

Breedlove has held his seat for 12 years.

"I feel compelled to continue

to serve as a board member and help make decisions that represent the best interest of all students and I hope to continue to serve for the coming four years. I believe our county and state will be facing uncertain and considerable challenges and obstacles due to the current pandemic and the economic impact it will undoubtedly have on education as a whole. I feel my experience and proven leadership will be invaluable in helping lead the school system through these coming turbulent times."

Breedlove is a Macon county native who started his education in Macon County Schools.

He is a graduate of UNC at Chapel Hill with a BS and MBA in Business Administration and

• See ELECTION page 8

Early voting continues thru October 31

There are two locations:

The Highlands Civic Center and the Macon County Robert Carpenter Community Building.

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

The Highlands Cashiers Hospital workforce housing water and sewer request was turned down in a 4 to 1 vote at last Thursday's town board meeting. I know some folks are disappointed and think it is a major setback for the hospital. Others, like four of the town commissioners, may think differently.

I had concerns from the beginning. My primary concern was that HCA was unwilling to fund the project. It seems they were willing to do a land lease to some other entity that would fund, build and operate the housing project designated for medical workers only. Frankly, I would have been more supportive if HCA had indicated that the project was critical to hospital operations, and they were funding the project.

Some would counter that HCA has invested 4 million dollars this year in hospital upgrades. HCA recently revealed they have made over a 200-million-dollar commitment to capital upgrades to the entire Mission system. They plan to build a 68-million-dollar new hospital in Franklin. If HCA had requested water and sewer for building additions to their existing apart-



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

ment complex, or for a new separate development, I would have been more supportive. For that matter, I am supportive of any business within the town that wants to build employee housing, provided zoning requirements are met.

I suspect the vote was driven in part by previous disappointments and setbacks. The Chestnut Hill development was originally provided water as part of the hospital agreement. Some commissioners saw the current Chestnut Hill situation as cautionary tale. If there were another hospital sale, or even a closure, this proposed project could become a repeat situation.

When I became mayor some 7 years ago, the new Mission Hospital signs were going up, along with the hope of improved access and service. Soon thereafter many people started thinking the opposite was happening, that services were being reduced and access meant going to Asheville. A few years later, Cashiers and Highlands folks were told that they needed to build a first-rate emergency department that would be consistent with other Mission facilities. Six million dollars in local donations made that emergency department a reality in 2017.

In March of 2018 it was announced that Mission Healthcare was being sold to HCA. We were assured that the sale would be great for Cashiers and Highlands. In all candor, the jury is still out concerning the sale of the hospital, as well as the Mission system. There have been some problematic situations in the transition where outlying communities feel that healthcare access continues to be centralized in Asheville.

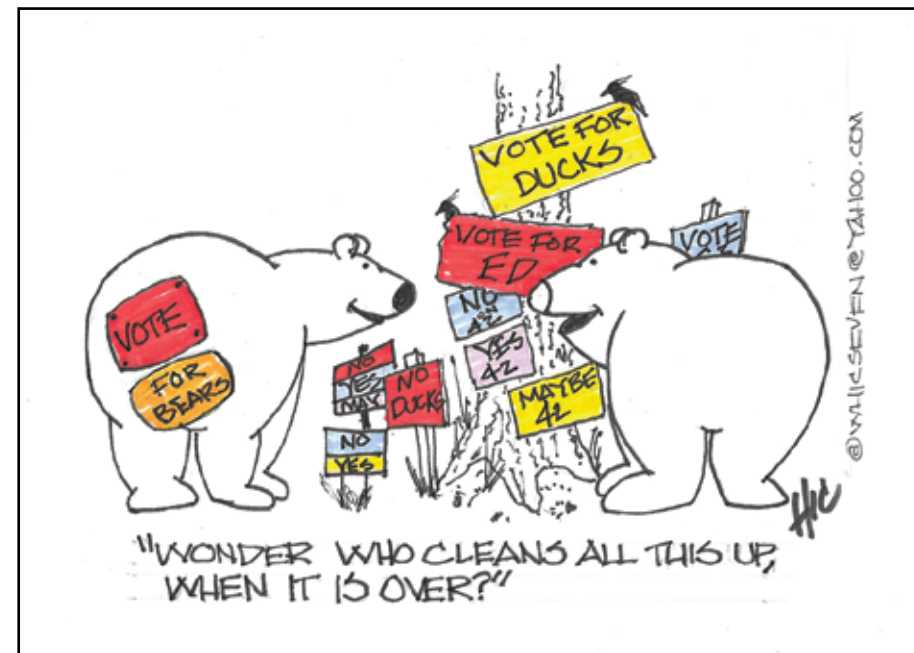
With that said, I suspect skepticism and unanswered questions drove Thursday's vote. There may be alternative solutions to hospital staffing and housing issues. I had a good conversation after the meeting with Tom Neal, the hospital CEO. He assured me that he and his staff will continue to serve and advance the medical needs of the community. I made the commitment to Tom that I would do everything I could to support their efforts. Everyone can support the hospital by using their current services whenever possible.

In today's paper and on the town website, there is information about meetings concerning the Highlands Community

Plan. I hope there is a strong turnout at these meetings. If you can't attend a meeting, please complete the survey on the town website. Click on the Highlands Community

Plan. Citizen involvement is key to the plan. I encourage everyone to make the time to participate.

• HIC'S VIEW •



• WEATHER •

Thu, 22-Oct	Fri, 23-Oct	Sat, 24-Oct	Sun, 25-Oct
68°F 55°F	69°F 52°F	70°F 53°F	70°F 56°F
Pleasant with periods of sun	Mostly cloudy	A couple o' soaking showers	Brie f showers
RealFeel® High: 73° Low: 55°	RealFeel® High: 71° Low: 57°	RealFeel® High: 73° Low: 54°	RealFeel® High: 71° Low: 55°

For Real-time Weather and the Extended Forecast, go to www.highlandsinfo.com and click on Weather

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• DINING •

• LETTERS •

Clarification

Dear Editor,

After receiving a note from a dear friend, and watching the confirmation hearings of Amy Coney Barrett, we realized our October 8th ad stating "On November 10th the Supreme Court Decides Whether the Affordable Care Act Lives or Dies" over-generalized the actual case resulting in a possible misunderstanding of the case. (Go to www.highlandinfo.com, click on Local News. Click on Oct. 8 edition. Go to page 7.)

highlandinfo.com, click on Local News. Click on Oct. 8 edition. Go to page 7.)

To clarify, the focus of the case being decided on November 10th only deals with the fate of the individual mandate and if it can be severed from the ACA, not the dissolution of the entire ACA itself. We believe, and it is being widely reported, that this decision opens the door to future legislation which would jeopardize the ACA.

Newsweek found at least 70 Republican-led attempts to repeal, modify or otherwise curb the ACA since its inception as law on March 23, 2010. John McCain's famous last-minute thumbs down is the only reason the ACA exists today.

The ACA is under attack, and if dismantled or repealed, an estimated 129 million Americans with pre-existing conditions could lose life-saving protection and an estimated 30 million could lose their health care entirely, and we are in a pandemic where many have lost their jobs and health care. The ACA may need some fixing, but to lose it at this time would have devastating consequences to millions of Americans. This is the essence of our ad, "Vote as if your health depends on it."

Ricky and Helene Siegel
Highlands

Swan Quarter, NC

Dear Editor,

A few years ago, I was invited to speak to "The Swan Quarter, North Carolina Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet." At first, I declined. I was in Orlando, Florida at

•See LETTERS page 6



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...LETTERS continued from page 5

the time and to get to Swan Quarter was an all-day trip. I had to fly to Charlotte, North Carolina,

spend 3 hours in the Charlotte airport and then fly to Greenville, North Carolina. I then had over

an hour's drive. However, it has been my most memorable trip.

Swan Quarter, North Carolina is a very small farming and fishing community located on the Pamlico Sound. The Pamlico Sound eventually goes out to the Atlantic Ocean to Nags Head and Cape Hatteras, which is known as "The Outer Banks of North Carolina." Swan Quarter is known as "The Inner Banks of North Carolina."

Swan Quarter is the county seat for Hyde County. Hyde County may be the largest county in North Carolina but may have the smallest population. There are only about 5000 people in Hyde County. They don't even have one traffic light in the entire county. However, Hyde County also has the largest natural lake in North Carolina - Lake Mattamukeet. Lake Mattamukeet is a wildlife preserve. At certain times of the year there so many ducks, geese and wild swans on the lake one can hardly see the water. Henceforth the name Swan Quarter.

Swan Quarter has survived 2 major hurricanes. The last one

• See LETTER page 7

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BIDEN/HARRIS

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...DENIES continued from page 1

way. Potential employees are declining jobs, and we are losing employees because the distance and roads they have to drive on to get here," said Neal. "Having workforce housing for our healthcare workers would help the hospital grow and create a path for sustainable long-term growth. As it is now, workers can't afford to live here."

He said he needs about 25 more employees to fill out the Eckerd Living Center as well as to staff incoming services like orthopedics and surgery.

Since the town was burned when the hospital sold Chestnut Hill to a private entity in 2002 and because the town has been adamant about not supplying water and sewer to residents or entities outside the town limits, Neal's quest was a difficult one.

Despite his assurances that a ground lease and contract could be written up to protect the town should HCA leave in 8 1/2 years and the property become something other than healthcare workforce housing, commissioners couldn't be convinced.

Mayor Pat Taylor appointed Commissioners John Dotson and Amy Patterson to discuss the issue with Neal prior to October's Town Board meeting to see if some common ground was possible.

Their report at last week's Town Board meeting indicated there was no common ground to be had.

"I understand the need for workforce housing. But workforce housing on the original conceptual plan was not something

we OK'd. We approved the sewer and then the hospital asked for water when it looked like their wells might go dry. We never signed off on a site plan for workforce housing so it's not an automatic thing now," said Commissioner Patterson. "It's true that healthcare is an important aspect of our community and for the future of our community, but I'm not sure not making people commute is a reason for us to subsidize building workforce housing."

She said a good portion of town staff comes up the mountain because "people live where they want to live."

"Plenty of people want to work here but not live here. So that's not a strong argument," she said.

Furthermore, she said the town giving a private for-profit corporation water and sewer increases that corporation's assets and that's a problem.

"This opens a can of worms for the Town of Highlands. Whether HCA stays or doesn't stay should not be determined by us giving water and sewer for workforce housing," she said.

Commissioner Dotson used census data to explain his view on the matter.

"Of 100 counties in North Carolina, Macon County is in the 10 shortest commute times of all 100 counties. I understand the need for employees to have affordable housing, but I am not in favor of granting the hospital the ability to improve its property value by building a residential commu-

nity at the expense of Highlands' citizens," he said.

But Commissioner Marc Hehn said the hospital and the town never had a funding source like it has now.

"The Dogwood Trust has \$25 million left and this is a priority for funding if it's requested by a nonprofit."

But Mayor Taylor said Dogwood funding may be affected because it is struggling with major changes in its operation right now.

"The Dogwood Trust wouldn't be able to fund anything with HCA because this would be an indirect subsidy for HCA which is a for-profit corporation," he said. "If HCA was willing to build the facility Dogwood might have a different view. If workforce housing is that critical, and if HCA is making one million dollars a quarter, yet they aren't willing to fund this ... I

have to wonder."

Commissioner Donnie Calloway reminded the board that Highlands has been strict about not putting water and sewer outside the city limits.

"I stood firm on that years ago when it was initially decided and I stand firm on it now," he said.

Mayor Taylor said even if this was completely a nonprofit venture, what's to prevent another nonprofit to ask for water and sewer?

"There already are people who want us to spread utilities outside the town limits," he said.

Commissioner Hehn said he would like to keep the conversation going and to enlist the help of Town Attorney Jay Coward to work up a contract to protect the town.

• See DENIES page 19

...LETTERS continued from page 6

was Hurricane Isabel in 2003. Many homes were completely destroyed and many businesses severely damaged. Swan Quarter has also survived a number of floods. Because of the floods many homes are built on stilts. Also, today, there is a dyke separating Swan Quarter from the Pamlico Sound.

Swan Quarter was settled in the early 1700s. In 1874 a group of Methodists decided they wanted to build a new church in downtown Swan Quarter. The property they wanted to buy had a beautiful view overlooking the Pamlico Sound. However, the property was owned by Mr. Sam Sadler and Mr. Sadler did not want to sell his property. The more the church tried to buy Mr. Sadler's property, the more determined Mr. Sadler was not to sell.

Finally, the church bought another property about 3 blocks from Mr. Sadler's. They built their new church. On September 16, 1876 they had a dedication of the new church and named the church "The Methodist Episcopal Church of Swan Quarter, North Carolina."

Three days later there is a flood. The flood waters pick up the church and start to float the church right down main street of Swan Quarter. Ms. Lelia Bren, who was born and raised in Swan Quarter was standing in her kitchen looking out her kitchen window. She saw the church floating right past her house. She watched it take a left, go about a block and sit right down on the property owned by Mr. Sam Sadler. Mr. Sadler was so in awe that he gave the property to the church. They changed the name of the church from "The Methodist Episcopal Church of Swan Quarter" to "The Providence Methodist Church of Swan Quarter."

I had the opportunity to visit "The Providence Church of Swan Quarter." It is still one of the most active churches in Swan Quarter today. When you walk in the entrance of the church, right above the door is a plaque that says, "The Church That Was Moved by The Hand OF God."

True Story

Kenny Youmans
Highlands




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On the corner of 3rd & Spring

...ELECTION continued from page 1

Finance. After UNC, he returned to Macon County where he began a long and sustained commitment to public service -- two terms as President of Iotla School PTO, three terms as President of Franklin Little League Baseball Board, Macon County Youth Soccer Organization board, Volunteer soccer and baseball coach and referee/umpire for over 20 years. His wife Kathy is a long-time school counselor and like his children did, his grandchildren attend Macon County Schools.

Matt Mason hopes to bring a fresh perspective to the school system.

"I am running for Macon County School Board to bring a fresh perspective to the issues facing the Macon County School system. Running for the School Board has been a part of my long-range plan for several years. Currently, I have two children, a niece and two nephews enrolled in our school system ranging from tenth grade down to first grade. I feel that it is imperative to work diligently for the children of Macon County and it is also important for me to begin 'giving back to our community.'

Mason and his wife Robin and have been married for 21 years and have two children who are 15 and 13 years old. Mason is a native of Macon County, graduated from FHS in 1995 and Clemson University with Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree

in 2000.

After moving back home to Franklin, Mason worked as the Sedimentation and Erosion Control Officer for the county and was later promoted to Macon County Planner. In 2014 left county employment to work as a design and sales manager for Tate Landscaping Services, Inc. He is also a former fire chief at Clarks Chapel Fire Department. Currently, he is the president of Macon County Boys Basketball and a board member for Franklin Little League Softball as well as an elected board member for Macon County's Soil and Water Conservation District

Like Mason, Emily Ritter hopes to bring a new voice to the board if elected.

"I am running for office to give young people a voice in Macon County," said Ritter. "As a proud graduate of Macon County Schools, I understand the challenges facing students as education is changing to adapt to incorporate more technology and prepare students for a modern workforce. I want to be an advocate for giving Macon County students the tools to be the best that they can be."

Ritter is a graduate of Macon Early College, Southwestern Community College and Western Carolina University with

• See ELECTION page 9

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

PRAYER

on

Sunday, Oct. 25 at 10:15 a.m.

Let's band together as God's people
and have a day of prayer for the
coronavirus, the upcoming elections,
the riots and unrest, and for **Revival**
in the United States.

2 Chronicles 7:14

...ELECTION continued from page 8

a degree in Public Health Science and Marketing, and is currently a Master's student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill earning her degree in Public Health Science with a concentration in Health Policy. A Franklin resident since 2000, she has participated in several charities in the community including Relay for Life, REACH, Rotary, and Angel Medical Center Auxiliary, totaling over 3,000 hours of local volunteer work.

She has worked in the healthcare industry since graduating with her Bachelors, but currently works for the Macon County Health Department as Community Health Promotions Supervisor/Public Information Officer. Ritter also served on the 2020 Think Tank for the American Journal of Public Health, where she writes original research and editorial, as well as works on on-line engagement.

s an elected official - how would you improve educational opportunities for Macon County?

Breedlove: "If elected, I pledge to work to provide continued resources and support to help further the educational opportunities for our students and to work with the Macon County Commissioners to improve and upgrade facilities. Short- and long-range plans will have to be done when it is financially feasible and responsible. Along with continuing to try to fully reinstate enrichment opportunities like art and music, I feel it is important to expand our early interventions programs. Our outstanding pre-kindergarten program has demonstrated great readiness and success for our youngest students."

Mason: "My goal is to assist educators in removing barriers to enable them to be strong leaders as they face current and future academic challenges.

Ritter: "I want to see Macon County Schools embrace technology and to emphasize the need to modernize our school system. We need solutions that work for all students, and I think that requires

a new and different perspective -- Specifically, from someone who has gone through the system more recently."

What is your stance on Macon County's current policies for returning to in-person instruction during COVID19?

Breedlove: "The school closures and re-openings are a result from having to adhere to the executive orders of the North Carolina Governor. My goal has and always will be to return our students to in-person instruction as soon as possible, while keeping in mind the safety of the students as the overriding concern. If re-elected, I will continue to push hard for the option for students to have as much in-person instruction as possible.

Mason: "While I understand that Macon County Schools must follow state mandates, I strongly believe that every K-12 student should return to in-person instruction 5 days per week immediately. I also feel that students are

• See ELECTION page 10



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...ELECTION continued from page 9

being significantly impacted in a negative way by the current interpretations of the protocol for classroom quarantines. My goal is to create a discussion with the leaders of the Macon County Public Health Department so we can limit the number of students within quarantine protocols.

By doing this we would allow a significant number of students to return or never miss in-person instruction.

Ritter: "Given my position, I do not feel it is appropriate to comment on this at this time."

What do you see as being the biggest issue facing

Macon County Schools?

Breedlove: "I believe the two biggest issues facing our schools are (1) the projected and probable funding cuts and shortfall of revenues on both the state level and local level due to the economic impact of Covid-19 and (2) the ongoing educational, social and mental health issues that have inevitably arose and will continue to impact students in Macon County Schools during this sustained pandemic crisis.

Mason: "Currently the biggest issue facing Macon County Schools would be navigating through the Covid-19 pandemic. Beyond that, I feel that the biggest issue facing Macon County Schools is a lack of long-range planning for current and future needs. Our duty should be to create a planning process that develops a needs assessment which outlines current and future infrastructure needs. The product of this process would be a 5-year Capital Outlay Plan that would include stronger internet infrastructure throughout Macon County while also creating a plan of attack for school renovation projects and/or the construction of new school campuses."

Ritter: "Macon County Schools need to embrace and prepare for the future. If anything, this COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that the future of education, careers, and even business is online. We need someone who will be dedicated to preparing young people to enter a new and modern world, and for students to have the tools to navi-

gate that world."

Anything else you would like for your voters to know.

Breedlove: "My fervent wish is that I will be able to continue to serve on the school board in what I believe is a continued calling, to help the students of Macon County Schools. My pledge to the citizens of Macon County is to vigorously pursue the absolute best for the students of Macon County Schools as they so richly deserve, ever keeping in mind that they are America's future."

Mason: "Over the next few years, I plan to create a positive working relationship between the Macon County School Board members and other elected leaders within Macon County. It is time for our generation to be actively involved within our communities because our children are our greatest assets for the future of Macon County."

Ritter: "I love Macon County and have been blessed to call this place home for much of my life, and I see this as an opportunity to give back to my community, but to also show students that Macon County Schools students are capable of truly great accomplishments. I had to fight to be heard and understood for much of my education; I want students, like myself, to have someone who has their back and will go to bat for them. I believe in making the right choice, not the easiest."

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...RESCUE continued from page 1

HFR Rescue Captain Eric Pierson said after making visual and verbal contact with the climbers, it was confirmed they were not in danger. However, making that confirmation took some effort.

Rescue crews from HFR, Glenville/Cashiers Rescue Squad, and Jackson County Sheriff's Office headed up the mountain to determine the climbers' status.

After locating the climber's ropes and anchors, GCRS Rope Team member Matt Chrestman rappelled down the sheer cliff face to try and make contact with the climbers, who could be anywhere between the top of the ridge and 800 feet down to the bottom of the cliff.

Crews used a drone to make visual contact with the climbers along the vast swath of sheer-vertical rock that makes up the east face, and then made verbal contact to confirm their safety.

"We used a drone to get a visual on

the situation and figure out if they were in distress or not," said Pierson. "Once they ascended a bit up the rope and we established verbal contact they informed us they were ok."

GCRS Captain Chip Sherrill said crews were short on manpower yesterday evening because of three emergency calls at once.

"We had three calls within five minutes so we were spread pretty thin in terms of manpower," said Sherrill. "But Matt went down and they told us they were good to go and no one got hurt, so it went well."

The two other calls included a couple of hikers who needed help hiking in Panthertown Valley due to exhaustion and a report of a woman getting separated from her group along the Chattooga River Trail. Sherrill said all hikers were successfully located by rescue crews and there were no reported injuries as of Tuesday evening.

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...BEARS continued from page 1

"We don't have bears strolling down Main Street tipping over garbage cans anymore," said the mayor.

Commissioner Patterson said the ordinance has to be on the books so people know it's illegal.

"We don't want bears around threatening people's animals, their house or them when they try to get into their cars," she said. "Without this ordinance on the books saying it's illegal to feed them, there is no enforcement or anything to complain about."

Commissioner John Dotson asked if the ordinance was enforceable.

Like most police ordinances, infractions will be complaint-driven and it will be the responsibility of the Highlands Police Department or NC Wildlife officers to enforce the ordinance within the corporate boundaries of the Town of Highlands. The penalty is \$250.

Commissioner Patterson said the key word in the ordinance is "intentional."

"Access to food is different than intentionally feeding the bears. Everyone needs to limit access regarding birdfeeders and grills, but that's different than intentionally feeding the bears," she said.

The ordinance reads:

- a) Intentional feeding of bears is prohibited within the town of Highlands.
- b) Leaving food, garbage or any other

substance in any manner that attracts or allows bears access is prohibited in the Town of Highlands.

Sec. 3-5. - Violations.

Violations of this subsection shall be punishable by a civil penalty of two-hundred and fifty dollars (\$250).

Sec. 3-6. - Enforcement.

Officers of the Highlands Police Department and/or North Carolina Wildlife Officers are responsible for enforcing this ordinance within the corporate boundaries of the Town of Highlands.

Commissioners unanimously agreed to adopt the ordinance as presented.

Bear resistant containers

Also, last week commissioners lifted the moratorium requiring residents to get a bear-resistant totter garbage can with lift a bar.

When bear-resistant totters were back-ordered in area hardware stores, commissioners agreed to sideline the requirement until stocks were replenished.

They have been replenished, so now they are required.

According to Public Works Director Lamar Nix, 70% to 80% of residents have complied with the order, but nearly 200 haven't people haven't.

He said the totters are heavy which is

• See BEARS page 19

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BlueValley Falls Pointe offering great layered mountain views. On a large 3.57 acre lot, soaring great room with wall of windows and long range layered mountain views. Two master suites. A large den, wet bar and fireplace complete the lower level. Four additional rooms and a reading loft provide extra space and privacy on the upper level. Open decks on two levels, two screened porches, a double car garage and yard space. \$895,000. mls #89825



Walkingstick Road. Looking for a small cabin with great view, this cabin lives large with 3 bedrooms and 3 baths, and is pleasant with a porch and a wall of glass in the living room to enjoy the view of Sagee and Blackrock mountains. This house is in good condition and is at a price that won't break the bank. Offered at \$339,900. mls #93206



5 Bedroom 5 bath home located at Highlands Country Club. Usable lot with lovely landscaping. Seller has golf membership. 45 KW Generator. Sophisticated irrigation system which allows full property irrigation and a 19 station window and deck flower box irrigation drip system. Do not miss seeing this one! Offered at \$1,495,000. mls #88512



Ready to move in with this 3 bedroom 2 bath on a gentle lot with a view of Satulah Mountain. This house has been totally renovated with quality craftsmanship and materials. Custom kitchen with new appliances, cathedral ceilings in the greatroom with stone fireplace, Wonderful Carolina room with fireplace. A great home with city water and a great setting. Offered at \$799,000. mls #94042



Located in the Mirror Lake area, this 3 bedroom 2 bath features a bright open plan with bamboo floors. the great room has cathedral ceilings, and opens onto a huge covered entertainment porch. Master on main with a deck and views. Guest suite in the lower level with sitting room and kitchen, laundry room and storage. Parking and a carport. Offered at \$650,000. mls #93727



2 Bedroom 1 Bath 1930's log cabin sits on 3.84+/- acres with great mountain views and ponds below. Adjoining properties are also for sale for a total of 35+ acres. Offered at \$239,000. mls #88529



Fabulous 6 bedroom 6-1/2 bath log cabin on historic Satulah Mountain. 3 large stone fireplaces including one in the master bedroom. This log home is a rare find in the town of Highlands on 2 acres of land. Old heart pine, wormy chestnut and charm throughout from the gourmet kitchen to the large great room with dinning area and adjoining sun room that all open out to the deck with a fabulous view to the west for those wonderful sunsets. The owners have added a large 2 car garage. Offered at \$2,900,000. mls #94319



This 3 bedroom, 2 bath plus a guest apartment over the garage is a great vacation size or can be expanded with a current owners plans for a full makeover to over 5,500 square feet of living area. This wonderful home is located on popular Big Bear Pen Mountain and has one of the most spectacular views in this area Bar None! Offered at \$798,000. mls #93319



This home is a must see sitting on over 3 acres of land with great panoramic views to the west. This all glass contemporary home is a one owner well built with 3 fireplaces, 2 levels of decks, walls of glass to see the views and lots of land for privacy or development. this home is convenient to the hospital, country clubs, highlands and cashiers. Offered at \$765,000. mls #87715



This 3 bedroom 4 1/2 bath is convenient to the clubhouse. The lower level has a living/playroom, and two huge bedrooms. Wood floors in the main areas carpeted bedrooms and great storage spaces. The master suite on main. Double porches are screened and pleasant in rain or sun. Great view from almost every room. 2 car garage for easy access. Offered at \$775,000. mls #93456



Lovely Old Orchard estate Over 9 acres with a spectacular mountain views, this house is move in condition, with 5 bedrooms, 4 1/2 baths. Fully renovated kitchen with dining area and cathedral living room with fireplace. Immaculate grounds and guest house is available listed separately. Do not miss this one if you want privacy and usable yard. Offered at \$1,875,000. mls #94043



2 BR 2BA Charming Highlands cabin features a view of Lake Sequoyah with boat access. Large covered porch. Very low maintenance. Some updates and ready for your personal touch. Fully furnished. Offered at \$350,000. mls #93186



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Beginning with the immaculate home, you will find granite counters and custom cabinets in the kitchen, updated tiled bathrooms, large sunroom, hot tub room with tub included, double garage, lots and lots of special touches throughout. A lush green lawn and landscaping with creeks, fences, fire pits and so much more, a 30X36 Morton barn complete with workshop. Offered at \$679,500 MLS # 93385

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Real Estate and Election Year

According to a Forbes.com article (Feb.2020) Presidential races breed uncertainty in the housing market, and quoted Chicago broker, Matt Laricy "Whenever people get nervous, they don't make rational decisions. They make emotional decisions."

Buying and selling real estate can be an emotional decision no matter if it is done during an election year or not. The real estate statistics for 2020 will be one for the history books. Nationwide has seen a boom this year. According to a Redfin.com, August 2020 survey, 22% of home buyers and sellers said the upcoming election impacted their decision to buy or sell real estate. That figure was down from a similar survey (November 2019) where 32% said the same. Redfin cited the Pandemic a likely cause for the drop. The Red-

fin site said, "While this year's election results may be up in the air for a few weeks, the delay could cause people to hold off awhile, the impact would likely be short-lived." Redfin is a Seattle, WA based real estate firm that operates in markets all over the nation, including Atlanta.

According to a report One House, Two House, Red House, Blue House by research and analysis company, BTIG, data from 1963 - 2019, non-presidential years showed a -9.8% decrease in home sales in November compared to October in Presidential years drops to -15% occurred. The drop is temporary. (side note from moi - I think we can all agree, between 1963-2019 there have been many, many non-Presidential years. I'm pretty sure they meant presidential/non-presidential election years.) BTIG also was quoted, "A



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Chambers Realty &
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change in administration might benefit trailing blue county housing dynamics. The re-election of President Donald Trump could continue to propel red county outperformers."

Another research group, Myers Research and Zonda goes further to state, not only is the drop temporary, but history also sug-

gests the year after a presidential election is the best of the previous four years. Well, that's something to look forward to, right?

According to Realtor.com, 15.9 million people have moved during the Pandemic. People are moving to more rural areas, and more and more working people, are conducting their business from their homes. We have seen this trend coming for quite some time, but the impetus of the Pandemic has proved to be the Black Friday of the real estate and vacation rental market. We haven't seen pushing and shoving yet, but there have been times when local Realtors have witnessed a panic buyer...or two.

I've been selling real estate during eight presidential elections, and every year but this year, I have heard buyers and even renters (considering the next year) tell

me they are "waiting on the election results before making any decisions." I never understood their reasoning past the general possibility of policy changes, interest rate fluctuation, etc. This year, it will be interesting to see if November has the usual 'presidential year drop' in sales and/or a surge in December or January, or if business will go on as usual. In our area, most business subside over the winter months, and real estate is no exception. While winter usually isn't considered the highest in sales volume, I've always said the serious buyers shop in the winter.

2020 has been good for Highlands and the surrounding mountain towns for essential businesses like real estate, vacation rentals, grocery stores, attorneys, and others. The year has

• See INVESTING page 22

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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



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Reflect on what you 'need'

Not very long ago, just after graduating from college, I packed up my bags and headed to a small village in the middle of the Dominican Republic. It was the adventure of a lifetime. I was sent as a missionary through the church and was given a year to live and work in a beautiful part of creation.

The village was located atop one of the largest mountains in the country - a place that, at times, required heavy jackets and knitted hats to keep warm. The dirt roads were busy with small motorcycles buzzing and bumping along the uneven terrain. Colorful homes painted in various shades of red, yellow, green and blue were topped with tired tin roofs out of which leaked the rhythmic sounds of salsa and bachata from family stereos. Most of the homes had cement floors though a few families were left with only dirt under their feet.

One of my responsibilities during that year was to host church groups from the United States who were eager to help the community for a few short days of their summer. An Episcopal school was under construction in the village and we always welcomed hands willing to mix cement or transport wheelbarrows full of concrete blocks.

I'm not sure if it was after the second or third day (I think it was the second) but inevitably our visitors would begin to walk away from the cement mixers and shovels into the community and streets surrounding us. It was in these moments when everything seemed to change. The mess of mortar and the exhaustion born from physical labor seemed insignificant held next to the complications and complexities of human lives.

One of the most common reflections visitors offered after this second day was something about how surprising it was that, despite the lack of resources, many people still exhibited a good deal of joy and hopefulness.

Usually I simply listened to the experiences of the group, but once and a while I found it necessary to point out that many in the village also experienced deep feelings of desperation and pain from the stresses and powerlessness of their particular situation.

What many of these wide-eyed visitors came to realize - if even just a bit - was how much their own lives depended on material possessions. The certitudes of what was required for a life of joy, wellbeing, and purpose collapsed. And yet this loss, paradoxically, opened their hearts up - a bit more - to the possibility of a life made complete by a greater and larger reality.

Our lives are much more fragile than most of us would like to admit. Things have a tendency to collapse, not just once, but over and over again. Very little in our world is permanent or secure: the foreclosure of a home, the death of a child, the loss of a loved-one, being let go from a job, the fracturing of a marriage, failing health, a global pandemic, etc. all point to a world which is anything but stable.

And in the middle of all of it, in the middle of change

•See SPIRITUALLY page 19

Proverbs 3:5

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Wednesday: Prayer Service, 6:30 p.

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Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am, Worship Service: 11 am

...SPIRITUALLY from page 18

and uncertainty, Jesus says to each of us: "not a hair of your head will perish." When all has fallen apart, when death has made its final stand, Jesus Christ, our morning star, continues to shine in the darkness - drawing each of us into a reality larger and deeper than we could purchase or manufacture on our own.

In a few weeks we will begin, once again, a new church year. During the season of Advent we are invited to think clearly and pray more deeply about the things in our lives that have fallen apart. And in the stillness of this prayer, in the midst of emptiness and loss we are called to make room for a reality and a life where true joy, wellbeing, and hope is to be found.

...BEARS from page 14

why the bar is important because the truck does the work. He said another problem is the corrals people have built to house their toters.

"If we can't roll them out, then they have to be picked up which defeats the purpose. So, they aren't being picked up if our workers can't roll them out of the corral," he said.

He said notices have been put on the toters so homeowners know what they need to do.

Commissioner Patterson suggested a \$50 fine and no garbage pickup if residents don't comply.

— Kim Lewicki

...INVESTING from page 17

also been bad for some businesses, and some have closed. The restaurants have been busier than ever, however for most of the year, they have had to work harder at 50% occupancy than during normal times. The bottom line is we will get through this. The upcoming election will come and go, and history has proven the real estate market will continue even though there may be ups and downs. Whether we have Black Friday rushes, or slow, (but hopefully steady) lines in the real estate market aisles, we can handle it.

...DENIES continued from page 7

"HCA is an asset and it is constantly striving to improve the hospital. I think they are trying to help us and at this point it isn't even making money," he said.

Commissioner Dotson said the municipality of Highlands is not in the business of ensuring the profitability of any business of any sort.

Commissioner Patterson said she consulted with a few lawyers who said they could see problems down the road regardless of what we have in writing.

"If HCA chooses to leave, the situation would be too hard to pin down," she said.

Commissioner Calloway made a motion to deny the request; Commissioner Dotson seconded it. All but Hehn agreed to deny the request.

Mayor Taylor said the town will try to work with HCA to ensure the institution is viable.

"We will still look at ways to support healthcare in Highlands and Cashiers," he said.

At September's committee meeting with Commissioners Patterson and Dotson, Neal said even if HCA's request isn't granted, they will figure out a way to hire more people so they can expand services at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital.

— Kim Lewicki

•POLICE & FIRE REPORTS•

Highlands Police entries from Sept. 16. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Sept. 16

• At 4 a.m., officers received a report of someone trespassing at a residence on Satulah Ridge Road.

Oct. 4

• At 4:08 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on US 64 east and Memorial Park Drive.

Oct. 9

• At 1:15 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on US 64 east and Crowe Drive.

Oct. 11

• At 7:47 a.m., officers received a report of damage to real property where someone tore up the shoulder of a road when getting a tractor trailer unstuck on Hiram's Cove Road.

• At 3:30 p.m., officers received a report of the theft of a motor vehicle from the on the verandah parking lot. It was returned.

Oct. 12

• At 9:15 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on US 64 west at N. Cobb Road.

• At 1 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident at Highlands Plaza and NC 106.

• At 5:30 p.m., officers received a report of people receiving threats at a residence on Hickory Street.

Oct. 13

• At 1:45 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle hit and run accident at Helens Barn Ave and S. 2nd Street.

• At 9 p.m., officers responded to a two-vehicle accident on US 64 east and Cottage lane.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Oct. 13

Oct. 13

• At 4:25 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Morewood Circle.

• At 8:02 p.m., the dept. was called to help search for a person at Whiteside. The hiker didn't have a flashlight but was found.

• At 8:59 p.m. the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 east.

• At 8:59 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Oak Road.

Oct. 14

• At 1:01 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Cherry Tree Lane.

• At 2:37 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 10:40 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on N. 1st. Street.

Oct. 15

• At 7:41 p.m., the dept. was first responders to Joe Pye Lane.

Oct. 16

• At 6:22 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of the smell of gas at a residence on Flat Mountain Estates.

• At 8:19 p.m. the dept. was called to help search for a person on Buck Creek Road.

• At 8:52 p.m., the dept. was first-responders at a residence on Walhalla Road.

Oct. 17

• At 8:09 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Rich Gap Road.

• At 11:59 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD on Friendship lane.

• At 5:51 p.m. the dept. was first-responders to a residence on US 64 west.



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