

Highlands Newspaper

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Sanctions for commissioners' 'code of ethics' violations discussed; adopted

At the January Town Board meeting, Commissioner Marc Hehn, after alluding to a verbal run-in with another commission-

er, asked for information about the town's Code of Ethics, indeed if the town had such a code.

After learning that the town

did have a Code of Ethics which was adopted Dec. 1, 2010, he requested a copy so he could read it

•See **SANCTIONS** page 8

NC DOT outlines biz district paving plan

Work to begin mid-March

At Thursday night's Town Board meeting, Mayor Pat Taylor summarized NC DOT's plan for milling, paving and striping Main and north and south 4th streets with work to begin mid-March.

Taylor said meetings with DOT have gone very well and they are trying to accommodate Highlands' needs, but "they made it very clear that Main and 4th streets are state roads and will be done to their standards their way."

A few years ago when paving Main Street first came up, the plan was to do one side of the street at a time so traffic could travel on one side while work was done on the other side.

But by closing down segments of Main block to block and working Monday-Friday for 24-hour periods on each section the



NC DOT paving diagram for the business district. West Main is at the bottom and East Main is at the top of the graphic

job will be exponentially sped up, said DOT.

So, throughout the month-long process, milling will be done at night and paving will be done during the day with traffic rerouted as needed to Oak and Maple and to 5th and Spring streets.

Beginning mid-March all the intersections will be milled and will

stay that way, unpaved, until that area is paved as scheduled.

Phase 1 will begin with the milling of both sides of Main from 1st to 2nd street at night, which will be "very loud and noisy," said the Mayor.

The next day, with detours still in place, that same area will be

• See **PAVING** page 9

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Charter Communications bringing broadband to underserved areas in Highlands and Cashiers

By Brittney Lofthouse

The COVID19 pandemic catapulted the issue of broadband into the forefront of everyone's minds over the last year — and with the help of NC State Senator Kevin Corbin, (R-Macon) broadband in Macon County and across WNC will be getting a significant boost in the coming years.

Senator Corbin began working on getting internet grant money to WNC as soon as he was elected to the state legislature.

"One of the very first things I campaigned on was getting internet to the folks of WNC and I am so proud to be delivering on that promise," said Senator Corbin.

Four years ago, as a member of the NC House, Corbin and fellow House member Josh Dobson wrote the HB431, also known as The FIBER Act. The FIBER Act would have allowed cities and counties to invest in the internet

infrastructure and then lease to providers. Large internet providers fought the bill but out of those discussions, NC's GREAT Grant program was formed. Those GREAT grants have amounted to a total of \$99 million over the past four years with a significant portion of that money coming to WNC.

Senator Corbin announced additional resources for rural broadband last week when he confirmed that millions of dollars had been approved for broadband for Macon County and surrounding counties.

Corbin, along with many other members of the legislature began to lobby the federal government to get involved and fund rural grants.

The grants were finally announced this week and are called the Rural Digital Opportunity

• See **CHARTER** page 10

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

It takes a village

At last week's Town Board meeting I thanked all who have made the Highlands Cashiers Vaccination Clinic possible. I want to take the time to again recognize this outstanding service to the community again. The clinic served not just Highlands and Cashiers, but an entire two county region.

Over 22 nonprofit and government agencies have been involved in this astounding effort. Around 200 people have volunteered including doctors, nurses and other medical personnel. Regular and not so regular citizens have also stepped forward to help. For example, Reverend Ford of First Baptist Church stepped down from his pulpit to become an outstanding traffic and parking lot manager. Retired doctors and nurses have played critical roles as health screeners and vaccinators.

There have been many personnel from the Highlands Cashiers Hospital who have volunteered their time and expertise following the leadership of their CEO, Tom Neal. The public health departments of both Macon and Jackson Counties have assumed leading roles in making the clinic possible.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

Macon County Emergency Management Services personnel have been on site for each clinic to make sure bad reactions to the vaccine can be addressed immediately. The Highlands Police Department and the Macon and Jackson County Sheriff Departments have backed the program.

The Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation has provided key backing. If any unforeseen need occurred they stepped up to take care of it. The Highlands Cashiers Art League trans-

formed their display panels into injection privacy screens.

The Rotary clubs from both Cashiers and Highlands have produced a critical cadre of volunteers. If there is ever a task that requires community involvement, Rotarians are some of the first to step forward. The chambers of commerce from both Highlands and Cashiers also supported the clinic. The Neighbors Helping Neighbors, an off shoot of the Highlands Chamber, has been involved. The Blue Ridge Free Dental Clinic has provided their support.

The Highlands and Blue Ridge pharmacies, along with hospital pharmacists, have played critical roles in insuring the vaccines are prepared and ready for use. Other groups like the Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad and Vision Cashiers are also clinic supporters, as well as Harris Hospital.

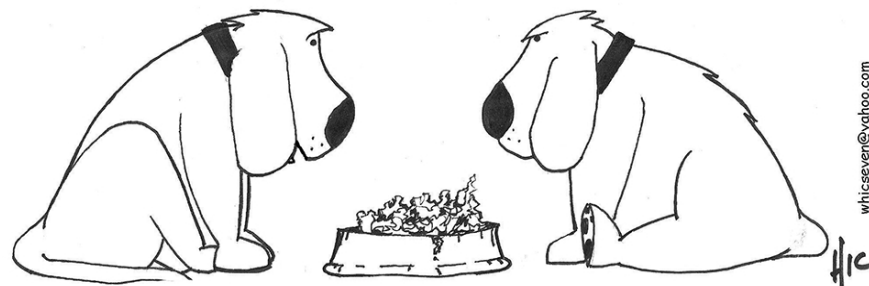
What has been so impressive is the outreach to the underserved in our community. The Community Care Clinic, the International Friendship Center, Pisgah Legal Services and the Vecinos Farmworkers Health Program are all instrumental in addressing this critical need. They will continue to make sure no one is left behind.

I also want to thank some people that were behind the scene organizers. Robin Neal worked tirelessly in setting up many of the technical procedures that were essential to scheduling appointments. I know Mike Murphy, Jerry Moore and Marc Hehn played key roles in setting up the necessary computer system that make the clinic operations work so smooth. Lester Norris, Director of the Highlands Recreation Department, has been at all the clinics to make sure the facility functions smoothly.

Many people have expressed their appreciation to these volunteers and organi-

• See MAYOR page 14

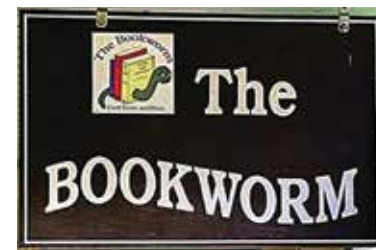
• HIC'S VIEW •



"Head count at 7. Lights out at 8. The escape committee meets at the tunnel at 11. Don't tell the cat."





The Book Worm is open for business

The Bookworm will now be open Saturday, February 27 from 11a-3p, and through March on Friday and Saturday from 11a-3p. The days and hours of operation will expand as the season expands. Everything is clean, organized and shelved. Please come see us!



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Phone: (828) 200-1371

Email:

HighlandsEditor@aol.com

Publisher/Editor: Kim Lewicki

Reporters: Brittney Lofthouse

Brian O'Shea

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• LETTERS •

We are at the tipping point. To survive Highlands needs LESS of everything....not MORE.

Dear Editor,

I WHOLEHEARTILY support this petition to block the move of this Music Festival from the properly zoned venue at Founders Park to the pastures and the residential and farming area of Horse Cove.

This ONLY benefits the organizers, the shopkeepers, the illegal short-term rental industry and the other charlatans who are using our little town for commercial enterprises. We've worked HARD over the years to maintain what is so attractive about living here...the quiet small town feel and minimal traffic. This summer showed what problems are caused by TOO much popularity due to Covid 19.

If you think standing in line 45 minutes for an ice

cream cone at Kilwins with your visiting 2-year-old granddaughter is a positive, then I really can't have an intelligent discussion with you.

The idea that the shopkeepers and restaurants and hospitality industries in Highlands need a "shot in the arm" (as stated by one of the letters-to-the-editor penned by one organizer) is insulting to those of us who have lived here for years or had second homes that we have been visiting for many, many years during the summers.

We are at the tipping point. To survive Highlands needs LESS of everything....not MORE.

**Bob McEver
Highlands**

Who is in charge of what and why?

Dear Editor,

Like Mr. Haney on "Green Acres," Highlands notables wear many hats. The Bear Shadow Music Festival fracas is an instance. There have been dueling press releases and letters-to-the-editor. Two of the letters were signed by board members of Highlands Festivals, Inc., which is the entity behind Bear Shadow. Both letters lauded the bonafides of Eleven Events, which is claimed to be in charge of the as-yet-to-be shindig, but that Greenville marketing firm surely answers to Highlands Festivals.

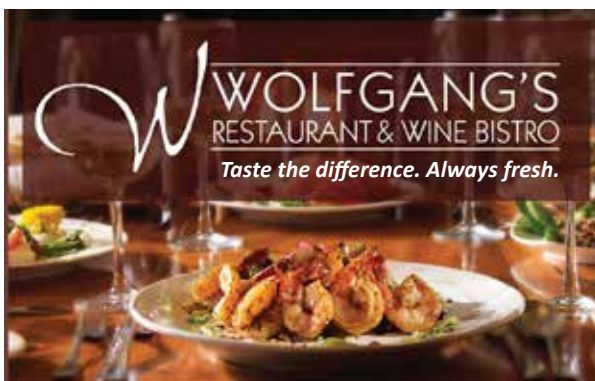
If you search for "Highlands Festivals Inc." on the internet you get the well-known, successful, Highlands Wine and Food Festival — which it seems, to me, is all "Highlands Festivals" really did until Covid forced its cancellation in the fall of 2020. That's when "Bear Shadow" made its appearance—but now as an experiential event featuring "revelry" and not just the old-fashioned, seasonal, White-side shadow! It must have been cobbled together to bring the Highlands tourist season forward in spring as the wine and food event was meant to push the season beyond leaf-peeping in the fall. (Or why else would you have a large-scale outdoor gathering — wherever it's held — in April, when it's possible to die of hypothermia up here?).

There is no separate web page I could find listing the 501 (c) (3) organization that is Highlands Festivals Inc. But according to an interview with then-Highlands Chamber of Commerce director Bob Kielyka that ran in the March 14, 2019, issue of The Highlander Newspaper:

"...the Food and Wine festival was to be an annual boost for all of Highlands businesses. 'That was our intent when this began,' he [Kielyka] said. 'Food and Wine has had a positive impact on Highlands, ever since it began as a chamber event 12-13 years ago. Beginning as a chamber event, the intent was to benefit all Highlands businesses.' The event has grown over the years, Kielyka said, to the point that the Chamber of Commerce had to pass the torch to an independent governing entity — Highlands Festivals Inc. 'It became too big for us to handle,' he said."

• See LETTERS page 7

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• PAST & PRESENT •

Good vs. Bad Development in the Mountains

We live in interesting times, so the old Chinese saying goes, and recent local events have made them even more so. Here in Highlands and Cashiers and many smaller communities, a seemingly inevitable Hillside development in Cashiers and a proposed Bear Shadow Festival, aka the Woodstock for Boomers, in the pristine, “isolated” Horse Cove community perfectly illustrate what is happening in the mountains in terms of growth and development.

Hillside and the Bear Shadow Festival provide a valuable lesson for many mountaineers who now will be only too intimately acquainted with the consequences of their political actions.

In his weekly column of February 4th, Highlands Mayor Patrick Taylor adroitly pointed this out when addressing Horse Cove’s rejection of the town’s inclusion of extra territorial jurisdiction (EJT). No, said its citizens, they had no worries about zoning and development in such an isolated area like Horse Cove.

Developers pray for and prey on that economic freedom mindset. They see only two signs here in the mountains. One says “Everything’s for Sale” and the other, “So Long, Suckers.”

For promoters and developers, boomers and sooners, county commissioners and taxing agencies, it means more money, an increased tax base, and the promotion of a feel-good concept called progress. Yet they perhaps too eagerly embrace almost all chances for development without critically evaluating its impact beyond that called for by state and federal agencies.

While most arguments against developments like Hillside focus on the environment, ecosystems, the integrity of neighborhoods and communities, traffic problems and safety concerns, other harmful effects, frequently more damaging and long-term, commonly are ignored.

In western North Carolina, for example, the ways in which we use to measure new growth, i.e.,



Milton Ready

the number of new homes, tax revenues, hotels, jobs, businesses, and increased consumerism seldom take into account or even properly register the destructive effects of what economists call externalities, namely those things that lie outside the normal process of decision making and are longer-term in their consequences. True growth takes both into account.

Externalities could be things like the using up of scarce resources such as water, land, and forests, the impact upon lifestyles and smaller communities, the insidious poisoning of the habitat in which all of us live and breathe as well as the additional costs in social services by government agencies, especially schools and medical support systems.

Additionally, an entire way of life will be threatened if not ended and patterns of everyday life will be forever transformed. Increased property values likely will make it difficult if not impossible for many locals to continue to hold on to their land and to pass it to their sons and daughters as a form of intergenerational equity.

Much of what has been planned will destroy the sustainability of local and family economies, especially small businesses. Local farmer’s markets and produce stands inevitably will have even more tasteless fruits and vegetables grown from outside the region if they continue to exist at all.

Moreover, continued development in its present form might reproduce even more blatant class

inequalities that have only increased on the plateau in the last 50 years. Don’t believe me? Just look around you. How many restricted, gated, and country club communities can be found on the plateau? Resorts? Indeed, it takes more money than most would ever see in a lifetime to buy a “second” or “vacation” home like those dotting the plateau. Then, too, who can afford to live in Highlands or Cashiers? Or a country club membership?

What about all those jobs, jobs, and more jobs that supposedly come with development? The kind of growth now taking place on the plateau depends largely upon construction and cheap, seasonal labor. Any economy heavily dependent upon construction often tends to be short-lived, seasonal, inconstant, and impermanent. Like prior ones centered on logging and mills, it could end as quickly as tobacco subsidies. Construction largely brings temporary jobs, many of a day labor sort, generally without attendant benefits like health care and pensions. In an odd collusion of interests, that suits many.

What about the labor force? Almost all post-industrial capitalistic societies largely depend upon a modern form of wage slavery that incorporates and exploits a “foreign” labor force.

In the case of Highlands and Cashiers, that means Latinos to do manual labor, everything from construction to landscaping, and, in resorts, upscale restaurants, and country clubs, whites from eastern European countries on parsimonious “educational” internships and young college students from throughout the region. Few permanently will settle in the region. Want to know where they are housed? Or paid?

What’s the lasting effect of continued, largely second-home development in the mountains? Most of the Highlands plateau likely will become

• See READY page 7

...LETTERS continued from page 4

I'm not a lawyer, but marketing for business must be a legal reason to register as a charity as one of Highlands Festivals Inc.'s board members — at least as of 2019 (there is a list of board members on page 52 of that year's Wine and Food festival's pamphlet) was a local accountant who signed off on the entity's 2018 Federal Tax filing, which can be found online at Guidestar.org's directory of nonprofits. On that year's return (the most recent I've been able to access), Highlands Festivals Inc. says, all in caps:

Our mission is to produce festivals and events that showcases, inspires and supports Western North Carolina's rich culinary, visual and performing arts community and to contribute financially to organizations or persons that directly benefit our local initiatives and strengthen our local community.

That's a pretty wide remit even with the shaky grammar. I do not question the probity of the organization or its directors, but its priorities and what those of us who don't own restaurants or hotels and are not part of the ever growing wedding-industrial complex in Highlands should put up with as supposed beneficiaries.

A front-page article in the November 14, 2019, Highlands Newspaper, interviewed Jack Austin, General Manager of the Old Edwards Inn who was there identified as a board member of the Highlands Food and Wine Festival rather than Highlands Festivals Inc. but listed as a director of the latter in press materials (again, are they or are they not the same thing?):

"Austin announced a collaboration with the Culinary Institute of America and HFW to set up the Louis Osteen Legacy Scholarship, a \$100K endowment fund to exist in perpetuity for aspiring culinary students in the Highlands and Cashiers area. 'Highlands Food and Wine has always had a charitable component, and this festival is not just about Highlands, but the whole

southeast,' said Austin. 'Louis Osteen was a guiding force of southern cuisine and was the standard bearer for the legitimacy of southern cooking.'" OK, the event itself can be about whatever it wants, but the charitable component should be about our area.

When the Highlands Chamber of Commerce officially controlled the wine and food festival, at least some proceeds were donated to the Highlands Food Pantry, according to press coverage. Is this CIA scholarship now the only charitable donation of Highlands Festivals Inc. or are there others?

Both of the letters from Highlands Festivals directors mention that Eleven Events "diverted" 15,000 pounds of waste? What does that mean? Waste from the festivals in Highlands or somewhere else? Good for you if it's your own trash, but unless its purpose has been legally changed, I don't see how this greenwashing really fulfills the stated charitable goals on the tax filing. I recycle at the Buck Creek Road transfer station but don't get a tax write-off.

The Highlands Cashiers Land Trust was supposed to be a beneficiary of Bear Shadow Music Festival. But over the past month the Land Trust has washed its hands of Bear Shadow's proffered cash more times than Pontius Pilot during a pandemic.

It was the proposed choice of event venue Oak Leaf Farm in Horse Cove as the site for Bear Shadow that really started the controversy. But more lives have been ruined by weddings than by music festivals, and why come to our beautiful area if you're just going to spend all your time downtown.

So, I'm not opposed to the concept in general, and the pleasures of rehashing (in a warm, dry place) our very own Woodstock or Fyre if things go horribly wrong — but without fatalities -- is considerable.

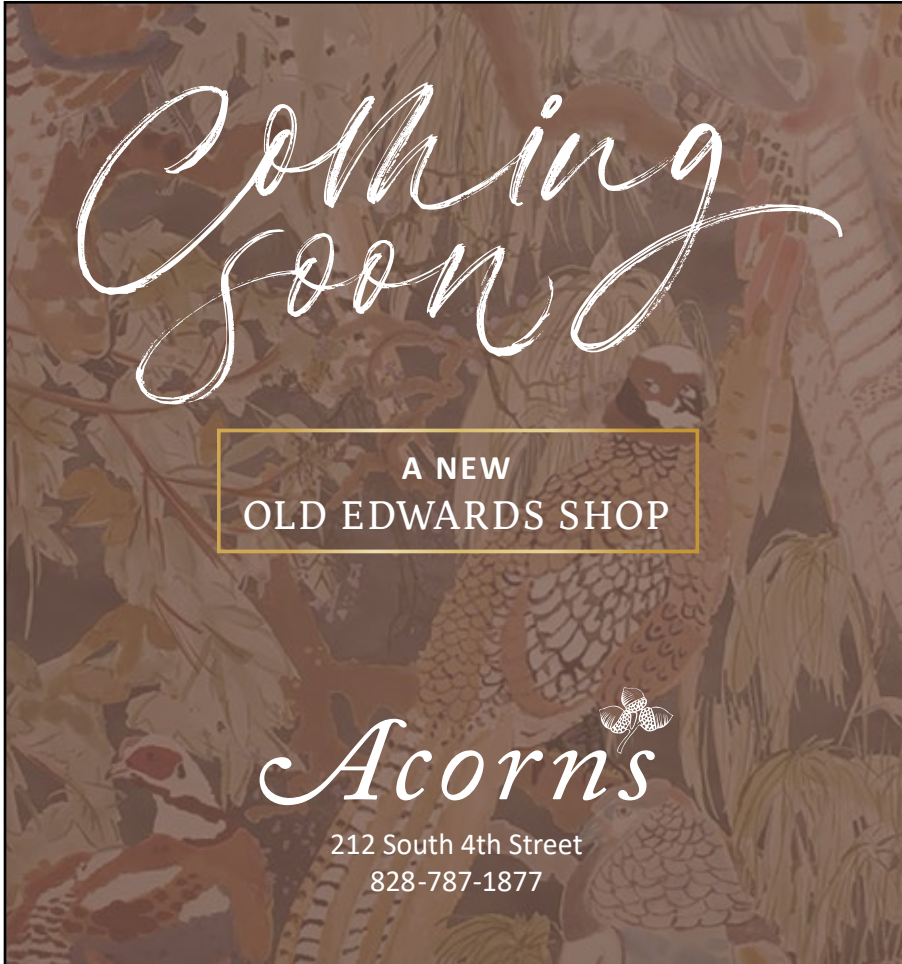
**Stuart Ferguson
Highlands**

...READY continued from page 6

a vacation destination and playground for the rich. Highlands plateau's primary economic assets, its scenic natural beauty, forested mountains, and smaller communities peopled through generations will either be going, gone, or set aside for the enjoyment of others.

Has the Highlands plateau been developed enough? Or must it grow or die? Only two considerations should guide mountaineers in terms of development. First, what

do those who live here really want to protect? What matters to them the most? As you look around and consider your future; what do you want to safeguard and keep? Its rural nature? Small communities? What excites and invigorates your love and passion so much that you would be moved to action? What do you really want? Sadly, conflicted and unsure, most people really don't know.



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...SANCTIONS continued from page 1

and decide if a violation had transpired during the interaction. He also asked to discuss

the matter with the police chief.

Since he wouldn't disclose the commissioner, Mayor Pat Taylor did as Donnie Calloway, saying everyone knew, and there were different views as to what transpired. In addition he said, "An intense discussion doesn't rise to a criminal act requiring police involvement."

Nothing else has been said about the issue, but at the February Town Board meeting, the town's Code of Ethics was presented in the agenda packet.

Regarding the code, Town Attorney J.K. Coward suggested that sanctions be attached to it because he said, "as in the jurisprudential arena, laws without sanctions are just suggestions."

He also addressed the recent incident where information discussed during the December Town Board closed session meeting concerning the town's Request for Proposal (RFP) for its broadband highway was released and misrepresented to NC Broadband Group. It was one of three

entities originally interested in running the "highway" but who withdrew its RFP in November prior to the town's ultimate decision to enter contract negotiations with Hometown Communications.

The information from the closed session, which was described erroneously and discussed with NC Broadband Group, was then the subject of a letter sent to the town by NC Broadband alleging illegal practices.

As he said in a January letter to the board and reiterated Thursday night, "nothing in a closed session is supposed to be made public, otherwise why have a closed session?"

Previously, Coward said as per the definition of a closed session and the purpose thereof, a board member who is privy to closed session information is not at liberty to divulge it to the public.

Commissioner Calloway said he wanted to discuss repercussions concerning the compromise of December's closed session, "instead of it just floating out there."

Meanwhile, to comply with NC Open Meetings Laws and NC General Statutes, several closed session minutes from previous meetings were reviewed and approved in the February closed session which had been added to the agenda.

After the closed session, Mayor Taylor said the board adopted Attorney Coward's suggestion concerning sanctions for illegally divulging closed session discussions to the public. It reads as follows:

"Town Board members shall not disclose the content of things discussed in a legally called closed session to any person not in attendance at that session, unless authorized by the Board or ordered by court to do so. Failure by the member to abide by this provision shall subject the member to censure."

Censure is a formal, and public, group condemnation of an individual, often a group member, whose actions run counter to the group's acceptable standards for individual behavior. Like a reprimand, a censure does not remove a member from their office, so they retain their title, stature, and power to vote.

Concerning Coward's suggestion of also adding sanctions for other code of ethics violations, the mayor said sanctions will be outlined concerning those, but he wanted staff to look at other codes from other towns and he wanted to make sure the ensuing statement covered actions other than just closed session violations.

The town's Code of Ethics follows:

As outlined, the purpose of a code of ethics is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for board members and to provide guidance in determining what conduct is appropriate in particular cases. It should not be considered a substitute for the law or for a board member's best judgment.

Section 1. Board members should take care to

obey all laws that apply to their official actions as board members. Board members should be guided by the spirit as well as the letter of the law.

At the same time, board members should feel free to assert policy positions and opinions without fear of reprisal from fellow board members or citizens. To assert that a board member is behaving unethically based upon a disagreement with that board member based on a question of policy (and not on the board member's ethical behavior) is unfair, dishonest, irresponsible; and itself unethical.

The board shall endeavor to keep itself up to date, through its attorney or other sources, of new or on-going legal or ethical quandaries or difficulties that they may face in their official positions.

Section 2. Board members should act with Integrity and with independence from Improper Influence as they exercise the functions of their offices.

Board members should use their best Independent judgment to pursue the common good as they see it, presenting their opinions to all in a reasonable, forthright, consistent manner. They should be self-governing and not subject to improper influence, while at the same time being able to consider the opinions and ideas of others.

At the same time, however, board members should recognize that they are part of a larger group and should act accordingly. They should respect their office and not behave in ways that reflect badly on it. They should treat other board members and the public with respect and should honor the opinions of others even when they disagree. They should recognize that they are not generally authorized to act on behalf of the board, since the board must take official action as a body.

Section 3. Board members should avoid impropriety in the exercise of their official duties. Their official actions should be above reproach. A board member is considered to be acting with impropriety if a reasonable person who was made aware of the totality of the circumstances surrounding the board member's action would conclude that it was more likely than not that the behavior did not befit someone in the board member's position.

If a board member concludes that his or her actions, while legal and ethical, may be misunderstood, he or she may seek the advice of the board's attorney. He or she may also state on the record the facts of the situation and the steps taken to resolve it.

Section 4. Board members of local governing boards should be faithful in the performance of the duties of their offices. They should act as the especially responsible citizens whom others can trust and respect.

Board members should be faithful in their attendance at meetings and in their preparation for those meetings. They should carefully analyze all credible information that is provided to them. As a group of citizens to whom much has been entrusted, the board should demand full accountability from those over whom it has authority. The board should set a good example for others in the community, keeping in mind that trust and respect must continually be earned.

Board members should be willing to bear their fair share of the board's workload. To the extent


•See SANCTIONS page 10

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Boots on the Ground

Boots on the ground denotes military interaction, or at least the threat of military action, but the term has also been used to signify a local presence.

This article is related to short term rentals (STR). I know what you're probably saying. "Can't this girl write about anything else?" As a writer, we are taught to write what you know, and know what you write, and (horn toot), after being in the business of STR for almost 30 years, and in an office where STR have been the mainstay since the mid-'70s, yes, I CAN (and do) write about other things, but this column is about real estate investing in our area, and STR are a huge part of that. (That may have been one of my longest run-on sentences, ever. Apologies to my high school English teacher.)

You know the old saying spoken by mothers everywhere, "It's all fun and games until someone gets hurt?" Well, it seems short-term rentals have fallen off the school-yard merry-go-round. It was not their fault; it was the Big Negligent Bully that came onto the scene and started making the merry-go-round go faster and faster. An accident was inevitable.

A brief history of Airbnb: The concept started in 2007 to offer living quarters for executives and business travelers who couldn't find hotel lodging. In 2008, Brian Chesky, Joe Gebbia and Nathan Biecharczyk started AIR BED & BREAKFAST. To raise seed money, they sold cereal boxes for Barack Obama and John McCain (who knew THAT was a thing?). Their largest single donor was the DNC in 2008. In 2009 AIRBNB.com was launched. In 2010, they received 7.2 million from Sequoia Capital and by 2011, Airbnb had gone international and had over one million bookings under their belt. (It wasn't until 2015 that Airbnb started collecting 'tourist tax,' and that was in Paris.)

In North Carolina, one can rent their own home, possibly tax free IF they only rent their home for up to 14 nights per year. You can rent any home you own by yourself, and since the act of renting is a business, you may be subject to getting and maintaining a business license and paying self-employment tax. Maybe to help defray some of those costs, you offer to rent some neighbors or friend's homes. <enter buzzer



**Jeannie Chambers
Chambers Realty
& Vacation Rentals
828-526-3717**

sound> No, you cannot rent someone else's home unless you are licensed to do so. The next thing to consider is to hire a property manager or list your home with Airbnb, VRBO, or one of the many wannabees. Large municipalities have somewhat of an advantage here because they can hire resources like cleaning services, concierge companies, etc. It's still doable in smaller communities, but much harder, and usually best to go with a property management company. Why? It's the whole boots-on-the-ground concept.

Let me back up just a minute by saying North Carolina was way ahead of the game of short-term rentals. In 1998, committees were formally formed to consider a state-wide ruling that would encompass the short-term rental industry. For years, real estate brokers who dealt with rentals knew something different had to be done to separate long-term rentals and short-term rentals, both of which are very different. I was on one of the first committees, along with several other brokers from across the state. After at least a year of teleconference meetings, overseen by Will Martin, legal counsel of the NC Real Estate Commission, the NC Vacation Rental Act of 1999 was passed into law (GS 42A-The Vacation Rental Act.)

Now, let's get back to that playground. In my opinion, the Big Negligent Bully was at fault. Oh heck, let's just call him BNB for short. We all know bullies are full of AIR, right? Bed and breakfast my foot.

The reason most people hire a property manager to handle their homes for vacation rentals is to have local people standing by to handle maintenance, problems and to make sure local rules and regulations are being carried out, such as occupancy limits. Have you ever searched for a rental online (anywhere) for a small get-together or reunion for 10-15 people, and found one, only to realize it's a two-bedroom home?

Our community is in a quandary over what to do about short-term rentals, but hopefully sensible and well-thought-out plans will be involved in the solution. The property owners our company represents are a varied sort of magnificent people. Some we have known and have done business with for over 30 years. Most own their Highlands home as an investment and plan to retire here one day, or at least spend six

months of the year here. They chose us not only because we have boots on the ground, but because our boots are mired deep in the

mud of the real estate and vacation rental industry.

...PAVING continued from page 1

paved. When that's done, the street will be lined except for the parking spaces.

This process for all five phases will be repeated each 24-hour period for 2nd to 3rd streets (phase 2); then 3rd to 4th streets (phase 3); 4th to 5th streets (phase 4) and finally 5th street to the end of the Main Street past Mountain Fresh and the library (phase 5).

The entire Main Street operation – phases 1-5 - is expected to run March 15-23.

Mayor Taylor said DOT intends to stripe the parking spaces on Main from 1st – 5th to their standards which will include current ADA requirements for not only the number of handicap spaces but the size of the spaces.

He said the number of parking spaces may be impacted but if so, minimally, and Highlands has no choice in the matter.

Phase 6 – 4th Street from Main to Ma-

ple streets is set for March 23-24 with milling to be done at night; paving during the day as on Main Street with traffic detoured.

Phase 7 – 4th Street from Main to the NC 28 intersection, which DOT is also redesigning, will be done the following week with the entire downtown business district expected to be done early April.

More than a decade ago, Old Edwards Hospitality Group contracted with Pesterfield Engineering to redesign the 4th Street/NC 28 intersection. DOT opted not to pursue the issue at that time, but Mayor Taylor said DOT now plans on using that plan and has begun work in that area.

DOT plans to mill, pave and stripe NC 28 to Clear Creek Road and 4th Street from Maple Street to Buck Creek Road during the summer.

For those phases, one lane will be done at a time so traffic can flow unimpeded.

– Kim Lewicki



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...SANCTIONS continued from 8

appropriate, they should be willing to put the board's interests ahead of their own.

Section 5. Board members of local governing boards should conduct the affairs of their boards in an open and public manner. They should comply with all applicable laws governing open meetings and public records, recognizing that doing so is an important way to be worthy of the public's trust. This recognition includes sensitivity to those matters recognized by law. The board should remember when meeting that they are conducting the public's business. They should also remember that the records of their local government belong to the public and not to them or their employees. They should make clear that a climate of openness is to be maintained at all times in their governmental units.

To ensure strict compliance with the laws governing openness, governing board members should strive to be open. They should prohibit unjustified delay in fulfilling public records requests. They should take deliberate steps before they go into dosed session for any reason, to ensure that the closed session will be lawfully conducted and that such sessions do not stray from the purpose which they are called.

- Kim Lewicki

...CHARTER continued from page 1

Fund. The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund is the Commission's next step in bridging the digital divide.

On Aug. 1, 2019, the Commission adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) proposing to establish the \$20.4 billion Rural Digital Opportunity Fund to bring high speed fixed broadband service to rural homes and small businesses that lack it.

The grants have now been allocated and the "auction results" have just been released and it's good news for WNC.

"The federal grants coming to N.C. amount to a total of \$166 million; \$45 million is going to Haywood and west," Corbin said. "A total of 155,000 customers will be hooked up to high-speed internet in N.C. and we are getting 35,000 hookups in the seven western counties."

The bid process is referred to as a "reverse bid." A dollar figure is given to the bidders and they bid by saying how many customers they can hook up for the money. In addition, the providers have to deliver some matching funds for infrastructure which makes the fund go even further.

The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund will ensure that networks stand the test of time by prioritizing higher network speeds and lower latency, so that those benefiting from these networks will be able to use tomorrow's Internet applications as well as today's.

The funds were allocated through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) who conducted the bid process. By the way the grants are written, this first

phase has to go to Census Clusters, or a densely settled area, that is unserved by high-speed internet. Phase II will be bid later this year and goes to the next group that has some, but very limited, internet connectivity.

Corbin said he and other WNC legislators will be working closely with the State IT Department and the providers to make sure the work gets done in a timely manner.

"The grants allow up to six years for the customers to be hooked up," Corbin said, "but that is too long." Work should begin within a few weeks and customers will begin receiving their service shortly."

Charter Communications won a bid for \$9,09,136 to provide broadband for 8,191 customers across Macon County. The proposal serves residents of the Highlands community and according to the maps provided by the Cooperative Network Services on the RDOF Winners, underserved portions of Highlands such as the Clear Creek and Blue Valley communities are slated to receive service under the proposal.

Huge swaths of areas bordered by NC 28, NC 106, Rich Gap Road, Clear Creek Road and more will be getting much needed service, as will areas in Cashiers.

Along NC 106 that includes Scaly Mountain and areas down to the Georgia line.

Charter also won the bid for \$16,994,261 to provide 11,128 customers in Jackson County with service.

Senator Corbin said he plans

to meet with Charter executives in Raleigh this week and will have a better idea of a timeframe in the coming days.

According to Charter Communications, the expansion into WNC is part of a larger company-wide expansion beginning this year. Charter expects to invest approximately \$5 billion to support its buildout initiative - offset by \$1.2 billion in support won from the RDOF auction - expanding Charter's network to lower-density, mostly rural communities that do not have access to broadband service of at least 25/3 Mbps.

The network Charter will build in these rural areas will offer 1 Gbps high-speed broadband access to all newly served customer locations with starting speeds of 200 Mbps, enabling consumers to engage in remote learning, work, telemedicine and other applications that require high-bandwidth, low-latency connectivity.

These new customer locations also will benefit from Charter's high-value Spectrum pricing and packaging structure, including its Spectrum Mobile™, Spectrum TV and Spectrum Voice offerings. The Company will continue to apply its customer-friendly policies in newly served regions, including no data caps, modem fees or annual contracts, combined with high-quality service provided by U.S.-based, insured employees.

In addition to the federal grants, N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper signed Senate Bill 36 into law last week, which approved another \$30 million for the state's GREAT Grant program which provides funding grants for rural broadband expansion across the state.

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The green swaths are the areas along NC 106, NC 28, Clear Creek, Rich Gap that will be getting broadband service

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



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The History of Lent

The word *Lent* is derived not from Latin, but from the Teutonic word *lenten* meaning the season of “spring,” the time during which the season of Lent generally occurs. The Latin word for Lent is *Quadragesima*, literally meaning “fortieth,” reflecting the fortieth day before Easter and so representing more broadly the forty days of Lent.

The number forty appears numerous times throughout Scripture: God purified a sinful Earth with forty days and forty nights of rain; Moses prepared to receive God’s revelation for forty days. For Christians, the Lord Himself fasted and prayed in the desert the same forty days.

The idea of memorializing significant events in salvation history is also deeply embedded in God’s Word. God commanded the Jews to observe the Passover as a perpetual and annual memorial by which subsequent generations could participate in God’s saving action in Egypt. Immediately, the Apostles and disciples adopted such a memorialization by celebrating annually (and weekly-Sundays) the Lord’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection in the New Passover or Easter.

As appears to be driven by human nature, rituals develop over time. The Passover itself, for instance, developed over the centuries between the time of Moses and Christ. Not surprisingly, then, Christians slowly developed the liturgical year eventually giving liturgical expression to the entirety of the Lord’s life, including His forty days in the desert as a period of preparation for Easter.

The origins of Lent are a bit obscure in part due to the length of time of 2,000 years and in part due to Christianity’s prohibition for its first 280 years, preventing the religion from operating openly and uniformly. Nonetheless, we know some preparation for Easter goes back to the apostolic period. St. Leo the Great (d.461), for instance, claimed that the practice of Lent was of apostolic origin. However, the precise practice differed greatly. Eusebius chronicles a letter from St. Irenaeus (d.202) to Pope Victor (d.199) in which he complains about the various observances of the pre-Easter fast. The Council of Nicea (325AD) mentions Lent in passing without any detail. St. Athanasius of Alexandria (d.373) makes reference to forty days of fasting prior to Holy Week. It is clear by the time of St. Ambrose (d.397) that a forty-day Lent was established in the West.

How Christians calculated forty days of fasting differed between East and West. Eastern Christians fasted Monday through Friday, thus requiring eight weeks. Western Christians fasted Monday through Saturday, so they settled for six. To this day Eastern Christians begin their Lenten observances two Sundays prior to Ash Wednesday, Meatfare

• See SPIRITUALLY page 14

Proverbs 3:5

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WANTED

At Don Leon's. Various duties. Call 828-200-0388.

AT ELEVATIONS — part or full time sales associate. Great pay, retail experience preferred, friendliest store in town. Please call 828-371-2582 (st. 2/18)

FULL HOUSE GALLERY in Highlands Plaza is accepting CONSIGNMENT FURNITURE. Please call or text Susan at 828-526-6004. (st. 3/19)

HELP WANTED

CASTING CALL! The Highlands Playhouse is reopening and we are looking for talented and committed team members in a variety of roles. Leadership and box office staff positions are available (both full and part-time). Experience in business management/customer service and an interest in the arts is a must! The Highlands Playhouse is an 83 year old institution offering movies year-round and live entertainment in the Summer and Fall. Please send resumes and inquiries to HighlandsPlayhouse@gmail.com (st. 2/18)

THE SUMMER HOUSE BY REEVES FURNITURE STORE IN HIGHLANDS

is looking for full and part time sales and administrative positions. Sales — must be professional appearing, friendly, self-motivated, and enthusiastic. Previous sales and customer service experience preferred. Design Assistant — must be attentive to detail, have computer and organizational skills. Duties include placing and following up on Purchase Orders, managing accounts, and working closely with our in-house Designer and design cli-

ents. Apply in person at 2089 Dillard Road, Highlands, NC 2874. (2/25)

LUXURY LODGE MANAGER NEEDED FOR LIVE IN POSITION.

-- Prefer a local couple/individual to entertain and maintain facility while enjoying living in an exceptional facility. Strong people/communication skills needed. Must be flexible and have impeccable references and experience in hospitality/facility maintenance. Background/knowledge in wine and bar beverages a plus. Interest/knowledge in hiking/construction and outdoors is good also. Email mrpaulkrk@yahoo.com. (st. 2/11)

WOLFGANGS RESTAURANT

Now open for the season. Looking for full-time hostess (great pay) dishwasher, prep cook, pantry and waitstaff. PM shift only. Call Jacque at 828.526.3807 or email wom2@me.com. (st. 2/4)

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS needed for a private country club located in Highlands, NC. The ideal candidate will coordinate the development and production of the club's newsletter, member promotions and other internal and external written/digital communications. Assist Controller with various accounting tasks related to accounts payable. Be a partner with CEO/GM in providing the Club's overall communication services and those tasks related to such. The position is full-time, year-round with an attractive benefits package and salary. Please send resume and cover letter to gm@wildcatccc.com. (2/18)

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Manager. Benefits offered after 90 days employment. Apply online: www.oldedwardsinn.com/careers.

SALES ASSOCIATE HIGH END RETAIL CLOTHING STORE IN HIGHLANDS AND CASHIERS, NC. Full time, part time and seasonal. Inquire to 828-200-0928. (st. 3/38)

SERVICES

HIGHLANDS HANDI-MAN — Can fix anything inside or out. carpentry, interior and exterior painting, pressure washing, lawn care, hauling. Will also monitor house during winter. Free Estimates. References. Call Tony. 828-200-5770 or 828-526-5984. (5/27)

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GUTTER CLEANING, METAL ROOF & FABRICATION roof repairs, chimney flashing, debris removal, pressure washing. Call 371-1103. (st. 9/17/20)

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

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

1 ACRE LOT in three forks 7 miles from Highlands 706-584-0406. (st. 1/28)

HIGHLANDS CONDO — 1 bed plus bonus room with 2 bathrooms, activity room, one-car garage. 239-597-2959. (st. 7/16)

...MAYOR continued from page 2

zations. I believe the best way to show our appreciation is to continue following the basic protocols of wearing a mask, washing hands and socially distancing. We are at a critical time where everyone should follow these basic protocols until a large part of the population are vaccinated and infection

rates drastically fall. Everyone has a role to play. We all can make a difference.

Thankfully, we live in a caring community of volunteers who have made this clinic a reality. The clinic and volunteers will setup and operate out of the Cashiers Recreation Center for this Sunday's session.

...SPIRITUALLY continued from page 11

and Cheesefare Sundays, after which they abstain from meat and dairy respectively as they prepare for a vegan diet the remaining six weeks. In the West, though, fasting six days per week for six weeks only adds up to thirty-six. While there was a beautiful significance in that number, namely one-tenth of the year or a way of tithing spiritually, Western Christians eventually added four days to achieve the symbolically-rich number of forty; hence, Ash Wednesday, four days prior to the first Sunday of Lent, came to introduce the season.

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Feb. 10. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Feb. 10

• At 8 a.m., officers responded to a report of a breaking and entering and larceny from a construction trailer parked in a driveway on Billy Cabin Road. Various deWalt tools were taken.

Feb. 13

• At 4 p.m., officers responded to a report of damage to personal property to two vehicles parked at the Sunset

Rock parking lot where two windows were smashed and four credit cards taken. The estimated damage is \$1,200.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Feb. 16

Feb. 16

At 7:51 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Lost Trail.

At 7:52 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 106.

Feb. 17

• At 10:59 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Church Street.

• At 10 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Holt Road.

Feb. 18

• At 6:18 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Scaly FD.

Feb. 19

• At 4:54 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Clubhouse Trail.

• At 11:22 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Sassafras Gap Road.

Feb. 20

• At 3:14 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire on S. 4th Street.

Feb. 21

• At 4:26 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Big View Dr.

• At 5:57 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Half-mile Dr.

• At 7:10 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a brush fire on Clear Creek Road.

• At 7:59 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on West View Way.

• At 9:42 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Clubhouse Trail.

Feb. 22

• At 12:18 p.m., the dept. was called to investigate on Carolina Way.

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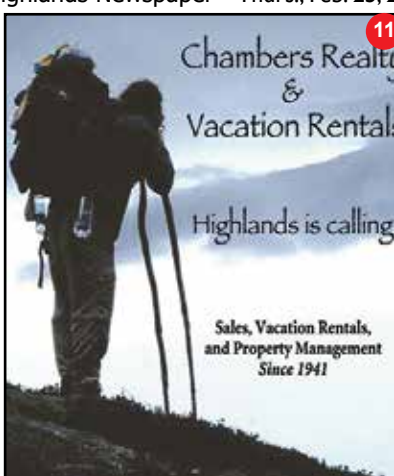


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