

Highlands Newspaper

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Planning Board OK's Bryson subdivision

At the February Planning Board meeting, a preliminary plat for a subdivision on 5th Street and changes to the Performing Arts Center Conditional Zone were reviewed and recommended.

For the Walter Neville Bryson Trust Cluster Subdivision, two parcels at 555 N. 5th Street will be combined into a 4.79-acre plot. The subdivision will house eight cluster homes each on about

a quarter acre situated around a park-like green area.

The subdivision is zoned R2 which normally requires 1/2-acre lots, but when clustered, that sce-

•See BRYSON page 9

CNA school to help fill positions in Mission Health

By Brittney Lofthouse

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital and Mission Hospital are two Mission Health System locations selected for a special program to help train the next generation of CNAs.

The HC-Hospital class starts Monday, March 8 with 9 people in it and the Mission class starts March 15, with 10 people.

The Mission Health System will be hiring students as Patient Safety Attendants (PSA) and will pay them a salary to go through six weeks of training to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA).

"I am very excited about our new CNA program, it is a creative and helpful addition to our other programs," said CEO/CNO of H-C Hospital Tom Neal. "When

• See CNA page 7

Highlands School recognizes its senior basketball and cheerleader athletes



From left are Highlands School seniors Gig Chalker, Collin Stoltzfus, Ethan Tate, Hadley Templeton, Lane Tingen, and Jordan Carrier during Senior Night on Feb. 16.

— photo by Brian O'Shea

Groups sue to stop timber project exemptions

By Jack Igelman

Carolina Public Press

Nine environmental groups have filed suit against the U.S. Forest Service to halt changes to

the way the agency reviews timber projects, arguing the new process bypasses scientific analysis and public feedback vital to creating

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Bear Shadow moves to Winfield Farm in Scaly

HIGHLANDS, N.C. — The "Base Camp" main stage portion of the Bear Shadow spring music festival in Highlands (April 23-25) will be held at Winfield Farm, a 50-acre farm located a short drive from downtown Highlands, to provide an enhanced fan experience. The new location provides easy drivability and shuttle routes from downtown Highlands, as well as additional space for parking and viewing areas for the live shows.

"We could not be more pleased to be partnering with Winfield Farm for the Base Camp main stage for Bear Shadow. This farmland provides a beautiful backdrop for the event as well as the extra space we wanted to enhance the experience everyone who attends — from transportation and parking to safely enjoying the shows," said Casey Reid, Bear Shadow Festival Director. "In addition, the new location

• See BEAR SHADOW page 14

'Hillside' developer withdraws application for SUP; starts over

By Brian O'Shea

Plateau Daily News

New plans with reduced density are expected to be submitted in early April

Developer Macauley Investments withdrew its application for a Special Use Permit from the Cashiers Area Community Planning

Council on Feb. 9 for Cashiers Hillside, a proposed 57-acre multi-use development planned at the southeastern corner of the Crossroads.

This ends a months-long series of meetings and quasi-judicial hearings between the Cashiers

• See HILLSIDE page 8

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Plans for development are and always have been 'open'

I'm aware of a recent flurry of talk about how the town has permitted subdivisions without citizens knowing what was happening. Similar talk has centered around the new fire station. For seven years I have advocated for open communication in town government, so when I hear these rumblings about secrecy, I feel compelled to respond.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

There has been a small subdivision in the Mirror Lake area that was recently approved by the Town Board. Another small subdivision is in process on 5th Street. Both projects have been required to go through a multi layered review. There has been no hidden agenda kept from public knowledge.

The subdivision approval process begins with a developer submitting the forms and documents for the proposed subdivision to the town planning department. A preliminary subdivision plat/map developed by a private engineer is required. The town engineer reviews the plans and determines if they meet the subdivision ordinance requirements for water, sewer, electrical, and road specifications. The town engineer

writes a letter of verification to the town planner and the planning board. The planning board reviews the plan and makes their recommendations for the proposed subdivision to the Town Board.

The Town Board completes a review of the preliminary plan based on the planning board and town engineer's recommendations. Once preliminary approval is given by the board, the developer can then proceed to build the subdivision infrastructure following the approved plans. Upon completion of the infrastructure, the town engineer inspects the completed work to ensure all specifications have been met. The Town Board reviews the completed, final subdivision plan which includes a recommendation of the town engineer before giving final approval. At this point, and not before, construction of houses can proceed. If a developer meets all subdivision ordinance requirements, there is no basis for denying the final subdivision plan. It is not an arbitrary process.

I stress that this is an open, public process. Sometimes residents notice a development as construction gets underway and suspect it was a hidden process.

I encourage folks to sign up for the Town Sunshine List. When I last checked 148 people were on the list. Those folks on the list receive every document Town Board members receive prior to monthly meetings, including preliminary subdivision plans. They also receive information concerning meetings such as the zoning board of adjustment and the planning board.

Signing up is simple. Call town hall at 526-2118 and ask to speak to our Town Clerk, Gibby Shaheen. She will put your name and email address on the list.

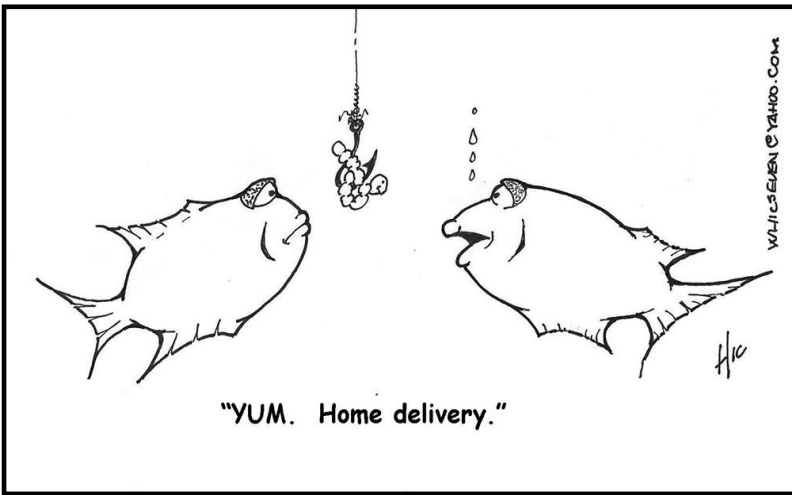
Those on the list, including the press, were informed about the public meetings, and hearings concerning the development of the new fire station. All the state statutes for approving the construction of the fire station were followed, including a public vote by the Highlands Town Board and the Macon County Board of Commissioners.

By the way, if the large files that the Sunshine List receives is not appealing, reading the local newspapers is a good alternative.





Our local journalists review all items in every agenda packet, attend all town meetings and disseminates the information to their readers. Or, one can listen to the

WHLC radio program, Ask the Mayor. The Community Coffee with the Mayor will resume with in-person meetings once the COVID situation improves.

• HIC'S VIEW •



• WEATHER •

Thu, 4-Mar	Fri, 5-Mar	Sat, 6-Mar	Sun, 7-Mar
 55°F 27°F	 51°F 24°F	 47°F 26°F	 53°F 31°F
Plenty of sunshine	Partly sunny	Periods of sun	Plenty of sun
RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®	RealFeel®
High: 58° Low: 28°	High: 59° Low: 25°	High: 50° Low: 24°	High: 53° Low: 25°

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• OBITUARY •

Curtis Alan Rich, Sr

Curtis Alan Rich, Sr., died February 15, 2021. He was born in Pell City, Alabama, to Oscar and Mary Neighbors Rich on October 18, 1928.

Curtis developed an interest in photography at a early age which lasted throughout his lifetime. As a member of the United States Navy, Curtis attended the Navy School of Photography and was assigned to the Aerial Photography Unit. A highlight of his time in service was working in conjunction with 20th Century Fox filming the movie, "The Frogmen". Curtis also had the honor of being assigned to accompany President Harry Truman, recording his activities, when he visited the base at Key West.

Upon discharge from the Navy, Curtis returned to Birmingham, Alabama, and opened a full fledged photography studio. He missed the south Florida he had loved during



his Navy days, so he returned to Miami where he worked for Eastman Kodak. During this time he became involved in the Florida mining and rock blasting industry where he saw the opportunity to market specialized tools, thus founding and operating Curtis Tool Company.

Later, Curtis moved to Citrus County, near Crystal River. He became active in Rotary International and was instrumental in forming the Economic Development Committee of Citrus County. Curtis served as Mayor of Crystal River for five terms, from 1990 to 2000. He also organized a community bank, Nature Coast Bank, now Drummond Bank. Curtis served as Chairman of the Board initially and later as a member of the Board of Directors until about three years after moving to Highlands.

Curtis and his wife, Vangie, were very active in local theater and starred in many productions. They retired to Highlands, North Carolina, where they continued to be interested in photography and involved in community events, including theater.

Curtis's family was always most dear to him. His survivors include his devoted wife of 36 years, Vangie Caruthers Rich of Highlands; his daughter, Alana Franccal Rich, of Cullman, Alabama; his son, Curtis A. Rich, II, and fiancé, Kimberly Porter of Crystal River, Florida. He is also survived by two stepsons, William T. Swigert, Jr., (Shane W. Wilson) of Oklahoma, OK and Brett L. Swigert (Nancy Massey Swigert) of Ocala, FL; his niece, Audryn Kay Swigert of Culver City, California; his grandchildren, Rebecca Crowder Demarco (Justin) of Illinois, and Taylor G. Rich of Crystal River; along with his great-grandchildren, Addison, Cannon and Cora Demarco of Illinois.

A memorial service will be held after gathering restrictions are lifted. Memorials made to Four Seasons Hospice, Care Partners, or Highlands-Cashiers Hospital are greatly appreciated.

Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve the Rich family.

Online condolences may be made at www.moffittfamilyfuneralcare.com

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• CORRECTION •

In the Feb. 25 edition in the article entitled "Sanctions for commissioners' 'code of ethics' violations discussed; adopted," we erroneously reported that Attorney Jay Coward's sanction recommendation concerning illegally divulging closed session discussions to the public was adopted. It was not. Though it was the only specific sanction put in writing at the meeting, Mayor Taylor said it and other sanctions for code of ethics violations will be reviewed at the March Town Board meeting.

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



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...SUE continued from page 1

environmentally sustainable large-scale timber projects.

The Southern Environmental Law Center, the lead plaintiff, and eight other regional organizations, including Asheville-based Mountain True, sued to invalidate National Environmental Policy Act rule changes that took effect Nov. 19.

The NEPA requires the Forest Service to study the environmental impacts of proposed actions before it makes a decision on projects that include forest restoration, timber harvesting, recreational improvements, infrastructure projects and pipelines.

The November changes created and revised categorical exclusions, or CEs, a list of activities that the Forest Service determined do not have an environmental impact and therefore do not require additional environmental analysis.

Among the approved categorical exclusions are exemptions from environmental analysis for timber projects smaller than 2,800 acres, known as the "Restoration CE," said attorney Sam Evans of the SELC. Exempting a project from the typical scrutiny the law requires is designed to serve forest restoration objectives but may include commercial timber harvesting.

For example, the exemption would have applied to the controversial Southside Project in Nantahala National Forest, approved in February 2019, which includes 317 acres of forest slated for harvest within the 18,944-acre Southside project area in southwestern North Carolina.

While the project area is greater than 2,800 acres, what matters is the number of harvested acres. According to Evans, the approved categorical exclusion will apply to most, if not all, future timber projects in Pisgah and Nantahala National forests.

"The Forest Service has found the ceiling on the size of projects tends to be about 500 acres of total harvest," he said. "That's a fifth the size of this loophole."

Evans argued that the requirements of NEPA are important for continued environmental

protection.

"The procedural safeguards of public input and scientific analysis are the reason that small projects avoid harm to things that people care about," he said, such as recreational assets, old-growth tree stands and rare species.

The process

The law works like a flow chart: Its central question is whether a proposed action, such as a timber project, will have significant harmful impacts, Evans said.

If the answer is "yes," then the law requires that government agencies engage in a review process.

While extensive projects may require an environmental impact statement, most actions with meaningful impacts require an environmental assessment, a less comprehensive analysis that is intended to identify ways to revise an action to reduce environmental and social impacts.

The environmental assessment provides the "public a meaningful opportunity for input and a concrete description of the impacts," Evans said.

Sharon Friedman, a former assistant director for NEPA for the Forest Service and editor of the blog Smokey Wire: National Forest News and Views, told Carolina Public Press that using a categorical exclusion still requires a "scoping" process. Scoping is used to provide notice of a future action, identify possible issues and give the public an opportunity to weigh in.

Limiting scoping only to projects that require an environmental impact statement was rejected in the final rule and will continue to be used.

The revised categorical exclusions were proposed in 2019, followed by a public input period that generated thousands of comments.

A Department of Agriculture press release said the new rules allowed the agency to "tackle critical land management challenges" and be better equipped to accomplish its mission, but the SELC lawsuit said the new process reduces public input and transparency.

"These changes will ensure we do the appropriate level of environmental analysis to fit the work, locations and conditions," then-

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said in the press release.

"The new categorical exclusions will ultimately improve our ability to maintain and repair the infrastructure (that) people depend on to use and enjoy their national forests — such as roads, trails, campgrounds and other facilities."

Evans said his clients are concerned about the detrimental effects of the exclusions.

"When the Forest Service conducts analysis and the public offers feedback, these projects get better," he said. "If you take the projects and move them into the loopholes, you lose all of those improvements."

Not a new procedure

"CEs are a legitimate part of NEPA that agencies are supposed to develop when they have found through experience and review that those projects have no significant environmental effects either individually or cumulatively," Friedman said.

"The Forest Service will check for 'extraordinary circumstances,' or conditions that make the project need more analysis."

She also said that "evidence suggests" Forest Service managers are "really conservative" and will seek public input even if they apply for a categorical exclusion.

In fact, the Forest Service used categorical exclusions for North Carolina timber projects before the rule change, including the 2017 Crawley Branch Southern Yellow Pine Restoration Project in the Grandfather Ranger District in Caldwell County.

The purpose of the project was to reduce the risk of Southern pine beetle infestation, and, using a categorical exclusion created to expedite threats caused by invasive pests and the rising risk of catastrophic wildfire, the Forest Service bypassed an environmental assessment.

"It's a good project and it's having good results on the ground," Evans said. "The reason for that, however, is because you have a very capable district ranger who relied on a well-es-

• See SUE page 10

• INK PENN •
Books Galore

This is the season to hunker down with good books, right? Once again, I'm sharing the reviews I posted on BookBub and Goodreads. Perhaps one or more will wind up on your TBR list.

Circe

This is the favorite from my recent reads. It was not only a nice change from my usual fare of mysteries, it's a book I continue to think about.



Kathy Manos Penn

I must admit I've read excerpts of Homer's "The Odyssey" but not the whole epic. The author brings to life the tale of Circe, the sorceress who is the daughter of the sun god Helios and the ocean nymph Perse. She creates a detailed back story for Circe, including how she came to live on the island of Aeaea, and the tale is alternately tragic and uplifting as Circe's isolation and introspection lead her to know herself.

As in Homer's tale, Odysseus visits the island of Aeaea and Circe has a son by him. The comings and goings of various gods and goddesses to Circe's island have been imagined and skillfully interwoven with other well-known tales from Greek mythology like that of the Minotaur and Daedalus and more. The story has stayed with me, the mark of a good book in my opinion.

Stoker's Manuscript

Having recently read "The Sherlockian," a book that brings to life the friendship between Bram Stoker and Arthur Conan Doyle, I was intrigued by the title of this book. It's set in modern times, and its back story is a real-life event in which Stoker's original manuscript was destroyed.

It has all the markings of your typical vampire tale, not anything I've read since "The Historian." Much like that tale, it imagines that Vlad the Impaler's legacy lives on.

While the book kept my interest, it didn't stay with me like "The Historian" did. But then, not many books are as exceptional as that one. "Stoker's Manuscript" is a good and entertaining read, and I enjoyed the several nights I spent reading it.

Murder in the Crypt

I thoroughly enjoyed this book set in Victorian England after America's Civil War. The main character is a Union Captain and surgeon who has come to England to settle the estate of his father.

There he becomes involved in a murder case in the village and assists the local constable in solving the crime. This is the first in the Redmond and Haze mystery series, and I look forward to reading the subsequent books.

The characters are well-defined with hints of more background to come. As an Anglophile through and through, I'm always delighted to find another well-written English village mystery that leaves me wanting more.

And there you have it, three very different books. Enjoy!

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

...CNA continued from page 1

students complete this program, they will be able to join our team which will allow us to grow and care for more of our community on the Plateau. This program is also an excellent entry point for anyone who has a desire to work in healthcare, but has had difficulty with funding for their education or has been working another job and did not have the time. This program both pays the student as an employee and their 6-week education is free."

The 6-weeks-long program is comprised of 156 hours: 40 classroom hours; 60 hours in the simulations lab and 56 hours in clinical inpatient units with supervision.

During time on the inpatient unit, students will be able to perform tasks that they have completed in the simulation lab.

To do this, Mission Hospital and Highlands-Cashiers Hospital had also been approved by the state to become a state testing site.

Once the 6-week course is completed, state CNA examiners will come to Mission Hospital to facilitate the test. There are limited testing sites across North Carolina, so this is a huge convenience.

"The goal of the program is to offer those who have an interest in healthcare who might not be able to afford the expense of this education or might not have the time because they are working at another job, to instead make a fulltime paycheck while being trained on state-approved curriculum and then be put directly into that role as soon as they pass the test. They pay nothing out of pocket," said Nancy Lindell Director Public and Media Relations for HCA.

After passing the test, they also receive a \$1,000 sign-on bonus.

Additionally, CNAs and PSAs are eligible for tuition reimbursement if they want to continue their education toward becoming an LPN, NP, RN, etc.

Many of the local community colleges require that students become a CNA before being eligible to be accepted to an RN pro-

gram, so this new program at Mission gives candidates what they need to be able to apply for an RN program.

Currently there are openings for Mission Main in Asheville, CarePartners, Angel Medical Center, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, Transylvania Regional Hospital and Asheville Specialty Hospital for the summer programs

Those interested in attending the program should go to the [Missionhealth.org/careers](https://missionhealth.org/careers) and apply for the Patient Safety Attendant/CNA Training Program position.

New Grad RN Program:

Mission Health's paid nurse residency is a 10-22 week intensive RN training program designed to bridge the gap between nursing school and launching your nursing career while providing you the opportunity to obtain acute-care nursing experience.

The StaRN program is a 12-22 week new grad RN training program that helps new grad nurses make the adjustment from being in a classroom to being a bedside nurse. The program consist of classroom learning, simulations and modules for the didactic training and then followed by a proctorship on the unit in which they would be working. Once they get signed off on by the preceptor and the manager they transition from being in training to being an RN on the floor. All of our hospitals in the NC division participate in this program.

Mission Health Systems and its parent company Hospital Corporation of America believe this is one way to help alleviate the shortage of nurses and nursing support personnel across the country. This is one way to

"HCA Healthcare is very supportive of career advancement and I hope many of the students will want to advance their education to become registered nurses or other healthcare professionals utilizing some of the tuition and RN program benefits we are offering," said Neal.

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• ON THE SUNNY SIDE •

The Fabulous Five



Kenny Youmans

March 3, 2017, the Kansas City adoption agency put on their website, "AdoptKSKids.Org," five Kansas City siblings looking for an adoptive family. Three brothers and two sisters ages 2 to 11. They were all in different foster homes and wanted to be adopted in one family together.

The Kansas City Star weekly newspaper featured an article, "Family Wanted." The article triggered a nationwide response that filled the voice mailbox with over 1500 inquiries – more than the mailbox could hold. The article went viral and had over seven million hits as far away as Ireland and New Zealand. The kids became known as the "Fab Five."

The State of Kansas Adoption Agency interviewed hundreds and hundreds of couples. Fourteen months later, May 30, 2018,

Toni and Jeff Whaley became the parents of "The Fab Five." Toni and Jeff were a childless couple that lived just outside Kansas City. Today the kids are doing great. They have each other, two loving parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and two sets of grandparents. Toni and Jeff Whaley have never been happier.

A few famous people who were adopted you may recognize

- Babe Ruth - World's most famous baseball player

- Steve Jobs – Founder of Apple
- Eleanor Roosevelt – Longest serving First Lady of the United States
- Nelson Mandela – President of South Africa 1994-1999
- Michael Oher – Remember the movie "Blind Side?"
- John Hancock – signed the Declaration of Independence
- Dave Thomas – Founder of Wendy's
- Edgar Allan Poe – American writer known for poetry and short stories

Famous adoptive parents

- Barbara Walters
- Deloris and Bob Hope
- Burt Reynolds
- Diane Keaton
- Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt

Jane and I are adoptive parents. We have one boy and one girl. We adopted each when they were three months old three years apart. They both graduated from college and are married. Today we have three wonderful grandchildren. We are truly blessed.

...HILLSIDE continued from page 1

Area Community Planning Council, SUP applicant Macauley Investments, and a group of property owners and organizations with strong concerns over the impact a project of this size would have on the area and who are represented by Attorney John Noor.

Macauley Investments Principal Stephen Macauley said they decided to withdraw their application after hearing concerns from the community.

"We are very aware of the community concerns regarding density and have offered a 20% reduction in density," said Macauley. "We are going to revise the plan to address that as well as other concerns we have heard from the community. Because we are reducing the density and revising the plans, we had to withdraw to adhere to Jackson County's zoning ordinances and will be reapplying with the reduced density plan."

Jackson County Planning Director Mike Poston said applications are withdrawn from time to time.

"Since the developer has withdrawn their application, this hearing will be closed," said Poston. "A new application will require a new hearing and process."

Macauley said he expects to submit a reduced-density plan in early April and that working with the Planning Council throughout the application process has been extremely fair.

"I am appreciative of the world-class team that continues to be committed to bringing the vision for Cashiers Hillside to life," he said. "Our goal is to find a common win for everyone through partnership with the community while bringing a high-quality development to Cashiers. We are in this for the long haul and look forward to not only introducing the new plan, but to sharing more exciting announcements in the coming months."

Poston said JC Planning Staff will evaluate any revised plans that are submitted and treat them as a new SUP application.

"Staff review the new plans and materials and prepare a new Staff Report for the new hearing," said Poston.

Poston added that holding ongoing hearings during a pandemic is challenging and commended the efforts of those involved.

"I will say that holding a quasi-judicial hearing in the middle of a pandemic takes a great deal of time and effort from so many people," he said. "The Planning Staff, County Attorney (Heather Baker), and Cashiers Planning Council did a great job in a challenging time. That was only possible due to the tremendous generosity of (TVG Executive Director) Ann Self and The Village Green for offering to host the hearings."

• INVESTING AT 4,118 FT. •

Navigating the Current Real Estate Market as a Buyer

In most of my 30+ years in real estate in Highlands it has been a Buyer's market. Only twice in my career have I experienced a Seller's market. The first time was around 1999; the second time is now.

Inventory is low, prices are higher, and a backlog of Buyers are looking for property that doesn't exist. The market is moving fast and there are often multiple offers on desirable properties. It's a great time for Sellers and a frustrating time for Buyers. And we, as realtors, are happy for our Sellers having such success but genuinely feel for the hardship the current market places on Buyers.

So here are some tips for Buyers trying to buy property in the current market.

1. Find a Realtor you can trust and get along with because they are one of the important keys in this process. They will get to know your taste and notify you when the perfect house for you comes on the market and tell you to get here quick. They can preview it, take pictures or a video, and know if it's right for you. There have been many sigh t- unseen offers in the last few months, and some Sellers are getting cold feet about accepting them. They do not always work out.

2. Although it's important to do your research and familiarize yourself with the market, both online and in person, when you feel you have a handle on what you want, be prepared to make an offer.

This is not the time to look and look and look some more, hoping for the perfect house.

If you are seeking financing, this means having a pre-approval letter from a lender. These are easily obtained online from places like Quicken loans. If you are making a cash offer, you could be required to show proof of funds.

3. Be aware that even if you act quickly you could still get in competition with another offer. If you have cash, you are in a good position. If you ask for time to get financing, you must at least have the pre-approval letter in hand. Doing a quick due diligence and quick closing, whenever possible, will win over longer requests unless the Seller has a reason to move more slowly.



Betty Holt
828-526-4218
Berkshire Hathaway
Home Services
Meadows Mountain Realty

ly. Try to find out as much as you can about the Seller's position before making an offer. Very few people really like bidding wars, but if you really want the property, you will have to give it your best shot and that sometimes means going above the asking price.

4. Be willing to adjust your priorities. In this limited market there may be little chance of finding all your "must haves." If you really want a place here to escape the summer heat or have a weekend retreat for yourself, you may need to look at the "big picture" and not get caught up in the details.

By getting a place here and spending time learning about the community, you may make another choice later on when more options are available.

5. Many Buyers like to find out all they can about the property before making an offer. Because of the time crunch we have now, it isn't possible. The property could be gone before you investigate it fully. It's more important to get the property under contract and investigate further during due diligence. Buyers have the unique ability to get out of a contract during the investigative due diligence for any reason.

6. If at first you don't succeed, don't give up. Sometimes it takes several attempts before you find the right house. Once you get something under contract, there could be more problems to solve.

The inspection may show problems you didn't anticipate. You could have difficulty with the loan process. Estimates on what you plan to change may come in too high. Keep the faith - it will eventually work out and you'll get the house meant for you.

7. My advice to Sellers: Enjoy your time in the catbird seat. It won't last forever.

• *Betty Holt is a native Highlander with over 30 years' experience in this market. She enjoys working with both Buyers and Sellers and sees herself more as an advocate and ally than a salesperson. She can be reached at Berkshire Hathaway Meadows Mountain Realty's Main Street office or at 828-526-4218 or Betty@bbbsmmr.com.*

...BRYSON continued from page 1

nario changes as long as 50% of the plot is left green - in this case 2.40 acres.

The eight homes must be 10 feet apart and the gated subdivision will be accessed from 5th Street with each home's driveway linking to the road meandering through the subdivision.

Chairman Brad Armstrong questioned the need for the subdivision to be gated.

Jim Bryson said he felt based on the way Highlands is these days a gated community was necessary.

When asked what he meant by that, he said that there are now so many people coming and going in Highlands.

New Planning Board member Nick McCall agreed with Bryson saying that given all the events and activities going on at Pine Street Park the chance of people wandering on people's property was a concern, so he felt a gated community was warranted also.

Armstrong also asked if the public would be allowed to access the park-like area planned for the subdivision, but Bryson said no because allowing people to access the property would be a liability.

According to Town Manager Josh

Ward, gated communities are discouraged in Highlands, but they are allowed.

The Planning Board OK'd the preliminary subdivision plan but asked that a sidewalk be added along the property that fronts 5th Street.

However, since that side of 5th Street isn't included in the town's Master Sidewalk Plan, neither the Planning Board nor the Town Board can require a sidewalk be constructed.

Asst. Planning Director Michael Mathis said reviewing the Master Sidewalk Plan may be something that will be recommended in the upcoming Comprehensive Plan.

Next, the Town Board must OK the subdivision preliminary plan based on the planning board and Town Engineer Lamar Nix's recommendations. Once that is approved, the developer can build the subdivision infrastructure following the approved plans. Once the infrastructure is completed and inspected, the Town Board reviews the final subdivision plan and if OK'd, construction of the homes can begin.

• See BRYSON page 14



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The Dry Sink Main St. Highlands, NC

...SUE continued from page 6

tablished, formally convened collaborative process.”

Although the categorical exclusion used for the Crawley Branch restoration has a limit of 3,000 project acres, it’s more limited than the recent restoration categorical exclusion, since it addresses very specific needs, such as wildfire suppression and pest infestations.

“(The categorical exclusion) also has important strings attached,” Evans said. “They don’t allow harvest of old-growth or large trees, for example. Congress gave the Forest Service the authority to take action for high priorities with limitations to prevent abuse so it could move ahead without consulting the public.”

However, the new categorical exclusion rules allow the Forest Service to reject the limits imposed by Congress, he said.

“The Forest Service wants to be able to move forward even with low-priority, high-controversy projects without consulting the public,” he said.

The burdens and benefits of the law

The agency spends more than \$1 million per day on environmental analysis, and 40%-80% of project costs go to planning, according to a September 2017 Forest Service presentation.

Some politicians, particularly among the Congressional Western Caucus, have a dim view of the environmental regulations that make action more burdensome.

Caucus member Rep. Scott Daines, R-Montana, applauded the Forest Service “for cutting red tape to protect our communities from catastrophic wildfires, expand recreation and create jobs” in a June 2019 press release.

Although politicians have portrayed NEPA as enforcing rigid and redundant rules that prevent action, within the agency, said Friedman, the view of NEPA is “based on how (its) tasks and practices affect them and their work.”

For example, she said, a public affairs specialist may appreciate the public input aspect of the law.

Friedman said that when she joined the agency in 1979, “a strong bias that the real work was in the woods and not chained to a desk” existed.

But the culture within the agency has changed, and some

now see the law as a means to “getting involved in decision-making and influencing what the project does,” she said.

Still, within the agency, there are plenty of concerns about NEPA.

An October 2018 roundtable discussion hosted by the National Forest Foundation — the non-profit arm of the Forest Service created by Congress — identified several concerns within the agency and its partners.

They included fear of litigation, the lack of capacity within the workforce, varying knowledge of NEPA among staff, and concerns that resources reallocated to fire suppression have dried up budgets, among many others.

Evans thinks an internal perspective exists among some bureaucrats within the Forest Service who “feel NEPA is a red tape obstacle they want to get rid of — that NEPA is the problem.”

“NEPA gets the blame but is a critical safeguard to make sure that the work the Forest Service does is good” and a counterweight to politicians who see the legislation as excessive bureaucratic regulation, he said.

“There is also a perspective in the agency that NEPA is the only counterweight of the extreme pressure on staff to cut more time-

ber,” Evans said.

“(NEPA) is the yin and yang of Forest Service decision-making, and the current reforms fundamentally shift the balance of power in agency decisions.”

What may be slowing the progress of NEPA reviews aren’t the rules or regulations. A 2015 Forest Service report on the rising costs of forest fires acknowledged that shifting resources to fight wildfires may burden the pace of project reviews.

“As more and more of the agency’s resources are spent each year to provide assets to protect lives, property and natural resources from catastrophic wildfire, fewer and fewer funds and resources are available to support other agency work — including the very programs and restoration projects that reduce the fire threat,” the report said.

Evans pointed out that the Forest Service has also bowed to political pressure to slash budgets each year.

“The only way to speed up decisions with its funding capacity is to get corners,” he said. “The most consequential decision they make. It is not whether they log, it is where they do it. That is where public input needs to happen.”

Highlands School Kindergarten Registration is Friday, March 12

On March 12, Kindergarten registration for the 2021-2022 school year will begin, for parents only, at 10 am in the school’s cafeteria. Children who reach the age of 5 on or before August 31, 2021 are eligible for admission into the Class of 2024. No children should attend the registration.

Registration packets can be picked up at Highlands School or at Highlands Community Child Development Center. All forms in the registration packet (except the Health Assessment Transmittal Form), need to be completed and returned on March 12th. The Health Assessment Transmittal Form should be completed and turned in to the school by Aug. 1.

In addition to the registration documents, the following items should be presented at registration on March 12th for photocopying:

1. Certificate of Immunizations (School must have within 30 days from the start of school). Students without a complete Certificate of Immunizations presented within 30 days from the start of school will be placed on administrative suspension until in compliance.

2. Certified Birth Certificate (must present original, certified birth certificate. No copies or “uncertified” birth certificates will be accepted.

3. Proof of Residency.

4. If you are not the biological parent of the child enrolling, and/or there is a custody agreement in place, please provide any legal documents you have giving you authority to enroll the child (i.e., custody papers, name change documentation, adoption papers or educational domicile affidavits).

The faculty and staff look forward

to meeting you. Please feel free to call us at 526-2147 should you have any questions.

Please allow about an hour for Kindergarten Registration.

Due to COVID restrictions in place, potential students will not be attending registration this year. Please disregard mentions of bus pickup of students and interaction with teachers and the cafeteria on any paperwork included in the registration paperwork. There will be a sign-in sheet in the lobby of the school at registration for contact information, so we can notify you of any possible additional times for your child to interact with their teacher prior to the start of school in August.

Parents uncomfortable coming in Registration day, can call the school at 828-526-2147 to make an appointment to register.



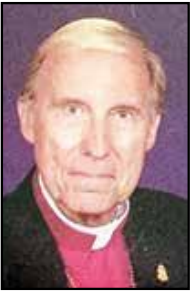
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Archbishop
John Erbelding

Be Still and Know

In today's busy world there rarely seems to be any time for a quiet moment alone. And, when we do find it, many of us seem frightened at the sound -- or lack of sound -- and seek to change it. When we walk into an empty room often the first thing we reach for is the TV control. We tend to choke our solitude with music, or talk, or sounds to which we don't even listen. It's there simply to fill a vacuum; and, when it's gone, we become nervous at its absence.

It may be time to learn again to be alone, to re-experience the quality of solitude, to allow life with all its fullness to rush back into our consciousness. To be alone and to think deeply about one's own life is important to our personal sense of well-being. It's part of the process of developing a well-defined personal philosophy of life.

Most of us would probably agree that we would like a few undisturbed minutes but somehow just can't find the time. Perhaps the trick is to schedule some time alone each day, even if it's just for a quarter of an hour. And it doesn't have to be in some dark corner. You can be alone with your thoughts in a park, in a museum, in a house of worship, or in a library. You can be alone while soaking in the tub, knitting a sweater, or working in the woodshop or in the garden. The important thing is to share a moment with yourself undisturbed by the rush of other's demands and interests, the unending stream of emails that clutter our lives. Our first duty in our silence should be to listen and follow the command of Psalm 46:10: "Be still and know that I am God."

Lives built around a daily moment of solitude seem to have a greater comfort zone in dealing with daily challenges. They have an eternal perspective to help meet daily pressures in subtle ways. It helps keep life in balance so no single element becomes the only important part of life. There's a reserve provided by this spiritual center of solitude -- a balance that permits individuals to tolerate stress more than would be possible if there were nothing else.

Perhaps the most important reward of solitude is that it keeps us in touch with spiritual values. When we lose the light of Christ, we lose the purpose of life; and when the purpose of living is forgotten, the universe becomes meaningless.

If we are serious about understanding ourselves and our purpose in this existence, then we need to find time to think about it. We should not be afraid of the quiet in our lives, but cherish it and use it as a tool in assessing where we are along life's eternal road.

I would like to be able to reach out to you through this page and ask you to walk once again with me in the Cloisters retreat on a Sunday afternoon of dappled sunlight or sit in the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, the faint sound of distant men's voices singing Gregorian chants and now in our new-joined souls repeat, "Be still and know that I am."

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

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HELP WANTED

CASTING CALL! The Highlands Playhouse is reopening and we are look-

ing 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 clients. 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)

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)

CNA/EMT Dependable, knowledgeable, dedicated to my clients. Stop paying agency prices and call me. Franklin, NC 407-325-0920. (st. 1/28)

DON AND RON MAINTENANCE

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ing issues, fix anything. Property monitoring, hauling. Free quotes. 252-933-0499 & 828-349-4703. (st. 12/10)

INSTALL TILE! Eco-Friendly & Non-Toxic. Specializing in Shower/Bathroom, Kitchen/ Backsplash, Entrance Ways/ Patios/Flooring. 25yrs experience. Also offer grout cleaning. Licensed & Insured. Mike Bertone/Owner of Bertone Tile Design & Flooring LLC. Home: 828-526-4943 or Text: 321-303-7560. (2/28)

GUTTER CLEANING, METAL ROOF & FABRICATON 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)

...BEAR SHADOW continued from page 1

provides the space for us to offer additional options for fans, including the addition of 4-person COVE ticket options."

Bear Shadow, produced by Highlands Festivals, Inc., is a weekend-long event that will feature a variety of live musical acts at the Base Camp main stage, with something for nearly any musical taste, from bluegrass and blues to folk and soul, including Devon Gilfillian, Drew Holcomb & The Neighbors, Jamestown Revival, Mandolin Orange, Shelly Colvin, St. Paul & The Broken Bones, The War And Treaty, and more.

Winfield Farm is located about 7 miles from Main Street in Highlands, in Scaly Mountain, and organizers plan to provide continuous, complimentary shuttles from the Town of Highlands from April 23-25. Ample parking for over 300 cars will also be

available on site, and organizers are working on partnerships with additional car services.

Base Camp will host a maximum of 1,000 guests per day at the farm, and guests will be seated in 4-, 6- or 8-person COVES (Contained Open-Air Viewing Environments). Each cove will be at least six feet in distance from all other coves and separated by barriers. Additional protocols, such as mask requirements, temperature pre-screening and increased hand sanitizer stations, have also been implemented for the Bear Shadow event. For more information, visit <https://bearshadownc.com/information/>.

Tickets for Base Camp and the festival's additional excursions and musical activities, including an intimate Earth Day evening with Chuck Leavell, are available at <https://bearshadownc.com/>.

...BRYSON continued from page 9

Performing Arts Center

Since plans for the Center have changed, the Conditional Zone application to be zoned G1 CZ previously approved had to be treated as a new application.

This also involved OKing an encroachment variance because the permit to begin construction had not been obtained within six months after the previous variance had

been approved.

With the changes, Mathis said the new design will actually encroach less than the original design and since the conditional zone was already OK'd, he expects that the Town Board will grant the variance and the Center will retain the G1 CZ zoning designation as well.

- Kim Lewicki

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Feb. 27. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Feb. 27

• At 3:40 p.m., Michael Trevor Reese, 28, of Highlands, was arrested for misdemeanor larceny and possession of stolen goods. He was issued a \$3,000 secured bond.

Feb. 22

• At 9:10 a.m., a patron at Old Edwards Inn reported a Chanel Bag valued at \$3,266.25 missing from her room.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Feb. 23

Feb. 23

• At 2:52 p.m., the dept. was called to investigate the smell of gas at a residence on Big Bear Pen.

Feb. 24

• At 6:18 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Forest Trail.

March 1

responders to a residence on Big View Dr.

Feb. 25

• At 11:39 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a brush fire on Wyanoak Rd.

• At 1:56 p.m., the dept. investigated smoke off the Walhalla Road.

• At 5:47 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Forest Trail.

• At 11:34 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm on Main Street.

Feb. 27

• At 7:35 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Buck Creek Road.

• At 10:21 a.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on US 64 west.

Feb. 28

• At 5:28 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Upper Lake Road.

March 1

• At 11:09 a.m., the dept. investigated smoke at the Highlands Mountain Club.

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