

# Highlands Newspaper

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 19, Number 8

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Thurs., Feb. 24, 2022

## Town hires attorney for 2nd opinion about PB's short-term rental take

After the Feb. 1 Town Board worksession on short-term rentals, the board came away thinking it needed another legal view con-

cerning the Planning Board's recommended changes to the UDO as they apply to STRs.

At the February 17 Town

Board meeting, Mayor Pat Taylor suggested hiring Chad Essick, a land use attorney with the firm

• See **OPINION** page 9

## Board puts Hehn's document requests to bed

At the February Town Board meeting, the Board of Commissioners again considered two items regarding document requests Commissioner Marc Hehn has made of the town.

His requests involved copies of the red-line version of the Hotwire contract and the expedition of printed copies of the Town Board agenda packets.

### Red-line Documents

The term "redlining" commonly refers to the editing and negotiation process during document and business contract management, where contributors mark text and track changes collaboratively.

At last month's meeting,

• See **REQUESTS** page 8



Highlands girls varsity basketball team won the Little Smoky Mountain Conference tournament championship against Hiwassee Dam with a final of 55-32 on Feb. 17. They went on to the first-round of the NCHSAA playoffs.

— Photo by Brian O'Shea, Plateau Daily News

## Highlands girls are LSMC champs; win 1st round of NCHSAA playoffs

By Brian O'Shea  
Plateau Daily News

Highlands varsity girls basketball team took the win against Hiwassee Dam at home on Tuesday in the first round of the North

Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) basketball playoffs with a final of 66-43.

Highlands plays Avery County tonight at home in the second

• See **CHAMPS** page 22

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## Hehn asks town to make Town Manager Ward pay him for lawyer fees

Before accepting the February Town Board agenda as written which was item #3 – Review and Approve the Agenda – Commissioner Marc Hehn asked to move item #15 – Request for Reimbursement for Attorney Fees – to executive session.

"It's a personnel matter and I don't want to embarrass anybody so I would like to discuss it in executive session. It's about personnel performance and that's what I want to discuss," he said.

Mayor Pat Taylor disagreed.

"I think it's a policy issue that can be discussed in open session," he said.

When asked how the board wanted to proceed, Commissioner Amy Patterson said she first needed to know if it was an executive session issue.

"This is not personnel issue, it's not a contract, it's not attorney/client privilege so I would not be confident to say this would be proper for a closed session," said Town Attorney Jay Coward.

The vote was 4-1 with Commissioner Hehn dissenting, to not consider #15 in executive session.

When it was time to address #15, Mayor Taylor gave Commissioner Hehn the floor.

"Mr. Hehn, I know you didn't want to address this in public but if you would like to make a comment you may at this time," he said.

"Mr. Mayor it's important that we look forward and not look backward, but there is a long history of me asking for documents. I ask politely and I either get them the night before or I write a letter and hire a lawyer who writes to threaten to sue Josh [Town Manager] personally. This has got to

• See **FEES** page 16

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### About tonight's public hearing and more

This afternoon the public hearing concerning the Highlands Planning Board STR recommendations will begin at 5 p.m. at the Highlands Community Building. A signup list will be at the door for folks wishing to speak. Speaking requests can also be emailed to our town clerk at: [Gibby.shahen@highlandsnrc.org](mailto:Gibby.shahen@highlandsnrc.org).

Instead of speaking, folks can send comments to the above email address. All written statements must be labeled as a statement for the hearing and post the name of the writer. Commissioners will have access to written statements after the hearing.

I request the written statements to be no more than 500 words. Hearing speakers will have 3 minutes to make their remarks to the board. Speakers can also submit written statements also.

I hope that speakers will focus on the planning board recommendations. These recommendations are the central purpose of the hearings. Also, this meeting is a listening session for the Highlands Board of Commissioners. There will be no final ac-



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

tions taken by the board during or at the end of the hearing.

The hearing will be available for remote viewing through YouTube TV. At the last board meeting there were problems with the audio of the YouTube broadcast. A microphone used for the broadcast had a mechanical defect. I have directed staff to make sure this problem has been corrected and will not happen again.

Information on how to access the hearing remotely is on the town website. The planning board recommendations and guidelines for the hearing are also located on the site.

Plans are being made for the Town of Highlands Annual Retreat. Normally we conclude the retreat around 3 pm. I think this coming retreat will go into the late afternoon.

During the retreat I, along with the commissioners, will share views on what the town should focus upon as we develop the new budget. I have two strategies that I believe staff and commissioners should follow in budget prioritization and development.

First, the town should seek ARPA funds to do several major water and sewer projects. At the last board meeting two resolutions were passed to apply for grants through the American Rescue Plan. If the town receives part or all of the multimillion-dollar funding for these projects, other town funds would be freed up to address impending water and sewer projects that were identified in the 2019 Water Assessment Management and Master Plans.





Second, Highlands currently has strong reserves in the general and enterprise funds. We have been in this robust reserve position in years past. Like in the past, this year's budget should generously use reserves to address major projects and town improvements. For instance, we need to continue to invest in road paving projects like we have in the last several years. There are also projects in stormwater management, recreation and in developing a smart cities grid that should receive full consideration. We also must continue to competitively compensate employees in order to recruit and retain a strong town workforce.

## • HIC'S VIEW •



"Well no one said controlling STRs was going to easy."

## • WEATHER •

Thu, 24-Feb	Fri, 25-Feb	Sat, 26-Feb	Sun, 27-Feb
			
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A passing morning shower	Rain and a thunderstorm	Cooler with a few showers	Rain
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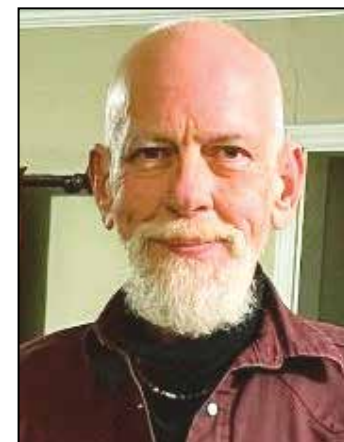


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## • OBITUARY •



### **Michael Eugene Dendy**

Michael Eugene Dendy, 64, of Highlands, went home to be with Jesus on Wednesday, February 16, 2022, after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer.

Born in Grundy, VA, he was the son of Ruth McCall Dendy and the late Rev. Alton Dendy. Mike was a true "Man of Faith," and a member of the Highlands First Baptist Church, and Trustee of Mt. Moriah Cemetery. He was a gifted rock mason and he loved working with his Christmas trees. Mike enjoyed collecting cowboy boots, cowboy hats, and music.

He is survived by his mother, Ruth McCall Dendy of Goldmine; son, Kelly and wife Cynthia of Clayton, GA; and two sisters, Darlene Dendy Miller (Bob) of Cary, NC, and Lisa Rhodarmer (Derek) of Waynesville, NC. Also surviving are his three grandchildren, who he adored, Trinity, Aiden, and Blaine, close friend, Jay Dendy, and numerous other family members and friends.

Graveside service was Sunday, February 20, at Mt. Moriah Cemetery. Rev. Steve Reeves will officiate.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to the Mt. Moriah Cemetery fund.

The family would like to thank all of Mike's friends, family, and caregivers, who gave him the best care throughout his illness.

Online condolences can be made at [www.maconfuneralhome.com](http://www.maconfuneralhome.com).

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

## • LETTERS •

### **Make it 'Destination Nature'**

Dear Editor,

I would like to applaud Alice Nelson's letter last week titled "Artificial Stimulation."

Its content speaks to the essence of what Highlands has become, a "Destination Extravaganza of Events."

This so-called "special moments music in the woods" is the latest disruption to what was Highlands. What happened to the pure appreciation of Mother Nature's treasures — birds, wildlife, forests, and jaw-dropping sunsets and sunrises. Are they passe? Do they not rejuvenate the

• See LETTERS page 7





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## ...LETTERS from page 4

soul? Give peace to us in such unprecedented turbulent times? Why manufacture an unnatural event to entice people to experience nature?

I have been a part-time resident of the Highlands Plateau for 18 years, and have seen drastic changes in Highlands. Its identity or image is in question today. Will it hold to its roots, its respect for nature, its ability to co-exist and live in harmony with the beauty of the surroundings? A place to seek peace and quiet, a refuge from the fast pace of city life? Or is it on the path toward a tourist town with endless attractions — something akin to Disney World or Pigeon Forge? As wonderful as those places may be, I don't think Highlands needs to emulate them.

Lastly, perhaps what is needed now is a "Chamber of Nature" — an organization that protects and promotes the appreciation of the natural beauty of the Highlands Plateau. Enjoy nature's music!

**Joe Nuzzaco**  
Atlanta/Highlands  
• See LETTERS page 8

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## ...LETTERS continued from page 7

Dear Editor

Thank you for publishing the feelings of citizens of Highlands. I realize that those of us who live in these mountains full time are in love with it just the way it

is. When we are bombarded by those who only USE Highlands for the sake of money it brings on a feeling of despair.

Why would a crowd of people want to play music on a quiet trail inhabited by

birds, squirrels, perhaps bears just out of hibernation and people trying to enjoy an afternoon of peace on their own porches?

Regular hikers really enjoy the kind of nature provided by the Brushy Face and Sunset Rock Trail. Are those hikers going to be displaced? I find myself wondering about privacy and parking issues aside from noise.

The letter from Alice Nelson published in last week's paper says it all—and quite eloquently, I just happen to agree with her for good reason. I do hope the hikers have a wonderful afternoon and the music goes to Winfield.

**Glenda Bell  
Highlands**

## Comment on Bear Shadow

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## ...REQUESTS continued from page 1

Town Attorney Jay Coward said the red-line version of contract negotiations aren't public documents because they aren't the final version of the contract.

According to Coward, these are transitory documents. In regard to the Hotwire contract, Coward said he has not retained them.

However, Commissioner Hehn was not satisfied.

"Jay, you said the red-line version is not a public document, I don't dispute that. But you got the email that says the town commissioners have the right to ask the Town Board to ask the Town Manager to share the red-line version," said Commissioner Hehn. "So, I make the motion that the board ask the Town Manager to see if he can find, through the attorneys in Washington or attorneys in Raleigh or on the server, the red-line version of the contract. All I'm trying to do is get prepared for our March meeting because I foresee another problem on the horizon, and I want to be prepared."

For clarification, Commissioner Amy Patterson asked for verification concerning the contract with Hotwire.

"We've already signed the contract with Hotwire, and it was not the red-lined version, right?" she asked.

Mayor Pat Taylor said "yes."

"Those are transient documents — drafts — and they do not have to be retained and we don't retain them, and we don't even know if the lawyers retained them," he said.

But Commissioner Hehn persisted.

"I have the right to ask for them," he said. "The red-line version is the negotiation between the lawyers. And I am trying to see what the conversation was because there are some things in the contract that I have questions about."

There wasn't a second to Hehn's motion to request Town Manager Josh Ward to track down the red-line version of the Hotwire negotiations which usually means a motion dies for lack of a second.

However, Mayor Taylor said the rules of North Carolina still allow a vote without a second if the board of commissioners is inclined to do so. So, he called the question anyway and the vote was 4-1 to not make that request of the Town Manager.

"So that's a no," said Taylor.

### Printing Documents for Hehn

More than a decade ago, the town went to paperless electronic communications, particularly for Town Board Agenda packets which can be more than 300 pages.

To that end, the town purchases iPads for commissioners. The mayor reiterated that position at the January meeting in an effort to stop the need for copies to be printed for Commissioner Hehn.

Commissioner Hehn said he had health issues that prevented him from comfortably reading an iPad so he requested that the agenda packet continue to be printed out for him. In January, the board voted unanimously to make that accommodation for him.

However, prior to the February meeting, Hehn complained that the other commissioners got the agenda packet many days before the upcoming meeting whereas he gets the printed copy a few days before.

At the end of February's meeting, the mayor offered a solution to Hehn getting the printed copy of the agenda at the same time as those who receive it electronically. He said his suggestion would alleviate the disconnect administration has right now of printing the packet at the office and Hehn having to come get it.

"The board is willing to make accommodations for you for printed documents and I am not trying to stop that, but we need to look at things creatively," he said. "My proposal is that the town purchase an Epson Eco printer for \$600 for high-volume printing where you can print thousands of color copies. Included would be a ream of paper, or a box of paper. We could

• See REQUESTS page 16

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## ...OPINION continued from page 1

Poyner Spruill out of Charlotte, NC.

Mayor Taylor said the scope of work will be limited, not inclusive and it does not include any pending litigation.

"He will look at the recommendations from the Planning Board and will look at our ordinances and will provide a second opinion [to that of Attorney Craig Justus]."

Town Attorney Jay Coward said he thought eliciting a second opinion regarding STRs was a good idea and Poyner Spruill is a great old firm.

"This is a very complicated situation and there are lots of views on it and if the board chooses to make a decision at least they have as much information as it possibly can. This guy is very qualified to give a second opinion. I am sure he is going to look at everything that has come up since last fall, [August 24 when the board voted, at Coward's suggestion to disallow STRs in the R1 zone effective Jan. 3], not just grandfathering. He is going to zero in on some specific things, but he is going to look at all of it – not the entire UDO – just in regard to STRs," he said.

Mayor Taylor said once the Thursday, Feb. 24 public hearing is completed and the board starts looking at the final issues, Essick's opinion will be there.

Commissioner Marc Hehn suggested the town had already spent close to \$50,000 in attorney fees, though neither Coward nor the board confirmed that, and the town didn't need another opinion.

"We have Jay's opinion, we have Craig Justus's opinion, and we have the opinion of Rebecca Padgett from the School of Government," he said.

But Commissioner Amy Patterson, who was part of the initial working group formed to consider STRs said she has a lot of questions yet to be answered and so wanted another opinion.

"During the working group that Brian [Commissioner Stiehler] and I were on with Jay, Craig, and Josh [Town Manager

Ward], we had a lot of questions, and we weren't totally satisfied with Justus's answers. Having done a little research of my own, I am less satisfied with his answers. I am not a land use lawyer, so I am not going to make recommendations, but I think it is legitimate to ask someone else for a second opinion.

"Mr. Justus was very up front with us telling us he was a private property rights guy, and we know that having dealt with him over the years on the other side. For instance, we brought up amortization and he completely ignored that yet it's a very legitimate thing to do, also nonconforming uses as opposed to vested rights is a very legitimate thing to do. I think we need a second opinion about what's best for Highlands and what direction we need to go.

"This guy will look at our needs specifically, unlike the School of Government woman who has not looked at us specifically. So, I would make a motion for him to look at the proposed changes – maybe not to say yay or nay – but to give us other suggestions and allow us to try to figure out what is best for Highlands and which direction to go," she said.

Commissioner Brian Stiehler agreed.

"Absolutely. I think I have more questions now than when we started. I can't – in good faith for the constituents of Highlands – make a decision. I need more information," he said.

Attorney Coward said Essick is a good candidate for a second opinion because he understands Attorney Justus's opinion.

"He understands Craig Justus's point of view. He knows him and has talked to him. So, I think he will give us a good opinion not only about the issues but also about Craig Justus's position. Which is certainly what you are doing by requesting a second opinion," he said.

Mayor Taylor said regardless of the decision the board makes concerning STRs, it needs a second opinion that is grounded in legal analysis.

Commissioner Hehn said that is exactly why he asked for an attorney who is an expert in land use.

"I questioned Jay's initial opinion. I have a degree in Planning, and I have to agree with Mr. Justus," he said.

The board voted 4-1 to hire Chad Essick with Poyner Spruill to review and provide advice concerning the town's regulation of STRs and certain amendments to the UDO that the town is considering regarding STRs.

Commissioner Hehn voted "nay."

According to their letter regarding "engagement of legal services," Poyner Spruill's attorney fees range from \$250 to \$500 an hour. Their paralegal fees range from \$185 to \$250 an hour.

However, the three attorneys likely to be involved – Chad Essick, Bob Hagemann and Sam Morris – charge a discounted hourly fee for governments of \$395, \$395 and \$275, respectively.

– Kim Lewicki

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## Things that Buyers and Sellers Should Prepare for in 2022

The real estate market on the Plateau continues to evolve and brokers, buyers and sellers are having to adapt. Here are some items that will impact business in 2022 to be aware of:

- Continued low inventory, high de-

mand and multiple offers. This will continue to keep prices for good properties high. Buyers must be pre-approved if they are getting a loan or have a statement of funds availability if paying in cash. Sight unseen offers won't be accepted and buyers must

be ready to come see in person. Many properties are now advertised as offers accepted until a certain date, usually less than a week of becoming active.

- Creative offers from buyers offering flexibility on the closing date and the seller's possession, as well as increased due diligence fees and amounts of earnest money. We are seeing large sums of additional earnest money due at the time due diligence ends, which is then non-refundable.

- Some of the "covid buyers" are deciding to sell in order to take advantage of big gains in a short period of time. Some of the sellers are getting greedy, and if so, the property doesn't go under contract immediately. Buyers will see what the property sold for within the past 12-24 months and are reluctant to pay the premium in fear that they won't get their investment back. It can be difficult to justify to a buyer why a property is worth several hundreds of thousands more than the property sold for last year when there have not been any improvements to it.

- Properties that are dated usually do not receive multiple offers and won't receive top dollar. Making obvious repairs and updating some features can well be worth the expense. However, buyers can easily tell when you put "lipstick on a pig."

- Investor opportunities will be limited to the properties described above or to rental and commercial properties. The uncertain future of rentals within the town limits has held some investors back from purchasing, but there are many areas that are not under any restrictions. We are starting to see these properties sell based on the income or return produced which is usually above the comparison market value. It will be interesting to see if there are listings of homes that are currently rentals after final decisions have been made by the town.

- Appraisals continue to take a longer



**Carl Romberg, BIC**  
Landmark Realty Group  
Highlands office  
678-936-9309

time to be completed and are leading to a shorter due diligence period regarding inspections and an extended period regarding the appraisal or final loan approval. Lenders are now offering a close and refinance package where the buyer closes with cash but can refinance within a certain number of weeks of purchasing. Prior to the current market this was not allowed.

- Many buyers are becoming increasingly frustrated. Some do not respond quick enough, some make multiple offers but are unsuccessful and some have been priced out of the market. At some point they will decide to rent, stay at a hotel or look in a different location.

• Office Exclusive listings are becoming more common. Many firms push this on a seller so that they are able to have listings to show their firm's buyers and ultimately have both sides of the transaction. This usually won't result in multiple offers and a sales price above the asking price, but sometimes works well for sellers due to extenuating circumstances. Talking with multiple firms before listing will help determine the best course of action for each seller.

These are all personal observations of what has already transpired or is beginning to. The market is extremely low on good listings and it isn't quite evident if this spring/summer season will return to a market prior to Covid or if we will continue on this strange trajectory that we have been in. At any rate, there are still properties for buyers and we are in need of listings. Using a knowledgeable professional broker will help guide you through the changes.

- Carl Romberg is the Broker-in-Charge of Landmark Realty Group's Highlands Office. Stop by his office on Main Street to say hello or reach him at 678-936-9309 or carl@landmarkrg.com.



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Volume**

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Transactions**

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Price**

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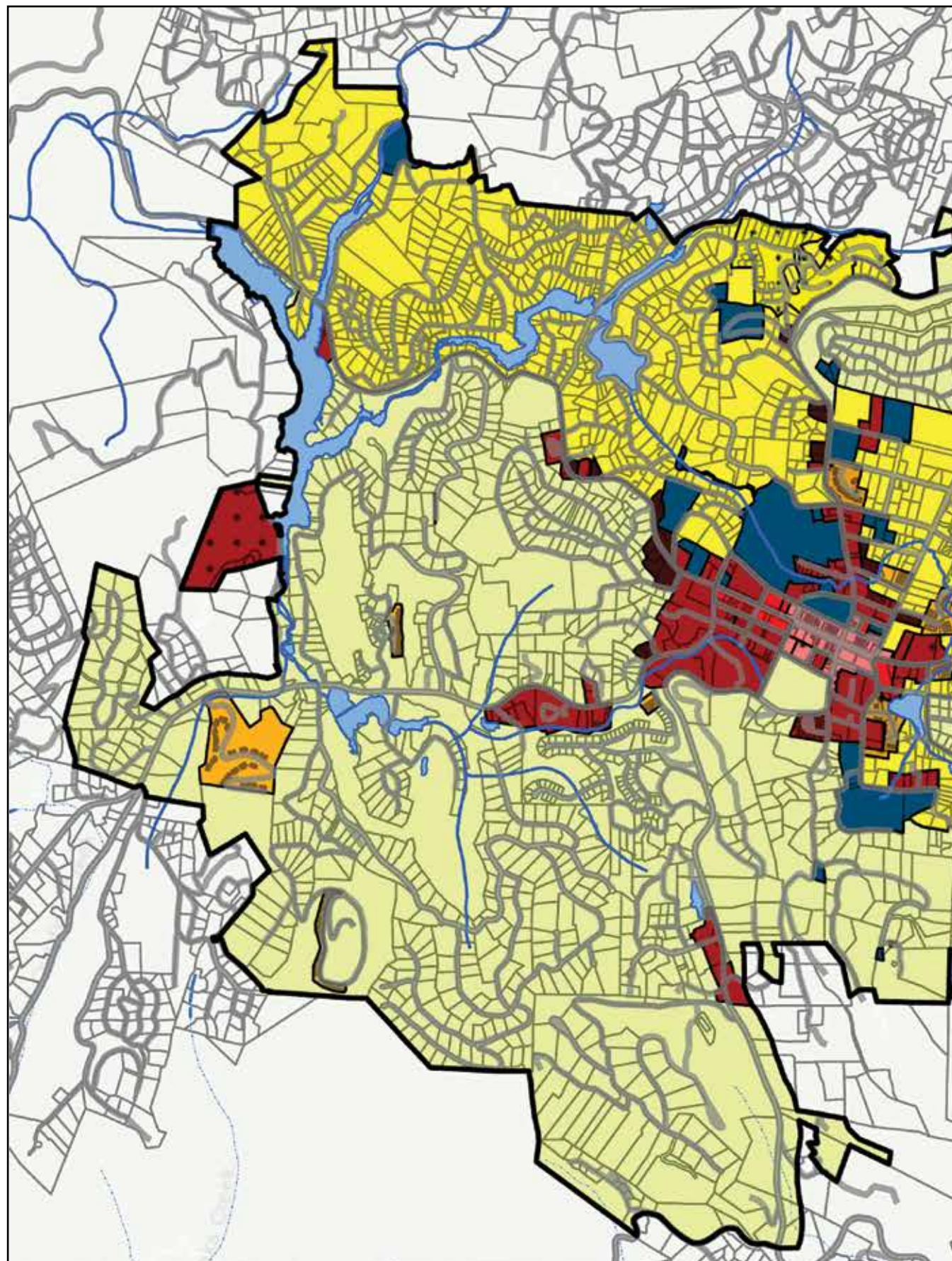
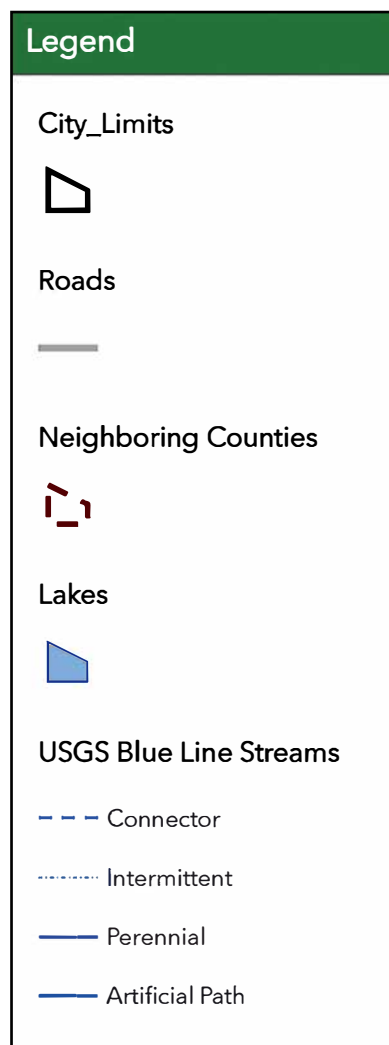
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Per Highlands/Cashiers MLS and County Recordings.

**Cullasaja Office**  
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(828) 526.4104

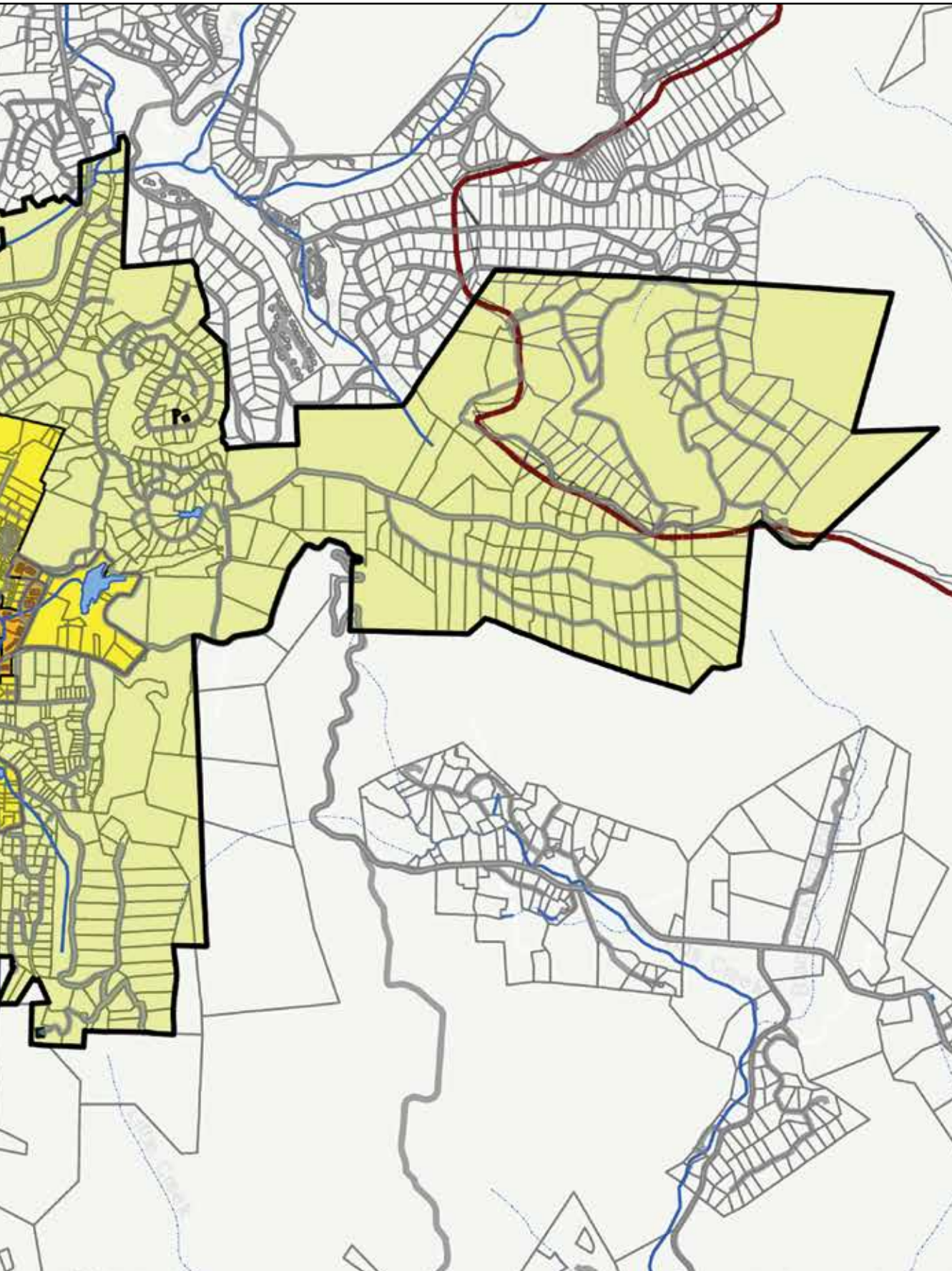


# Town of Highlands





# s Zoning Districts



## Zoning



B-1



B-1 CZ



B-2



B-2 CZ



B-3



B-3 CZ



B-4



G1



G1 CZ



R-1



R-2



R-2 CZ



R3



R-3 CZ



## A selection of 2021 Significant Sales.

Highlands  
Sotheby's  
INTERNATIONAL REALTY



StillPoint Lane  
Lake Glenville  
\$5.7M



Cullasaja Club Drive  
Cullasaja Club  
\$3.45M



Satulah Road  
In-Town Highlands  
\$3.4M



Big Sheepcliff  
Cashiers  
\$2.8M

## *Are you on my list?*



### Jody Lovell #1 Broker in N.C. per Real Trends

Broker/Owner

Highlands Sotheby's International Realty  
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Highlands, NC  
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Jody Lovell closed over **\$139M**, per the HCMLS and county recordings, representing over 77 happy clients in 2021.

More of Jody's listings sold than any other broker on the HCMLS. Let her market, negotiate and close your property in 2022.

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Per Highlands/Cashiers MLS and County Recordings.



# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

## Ice Rink Schedule thru Sunday, March 6

• Thursdays 1-8pm, Fridays and Saturdays 1-10pm and Sundays 1-5pm. Cost is \$5 per skater.

### Rec Pool Schedule:

• Lap Swim Monday-Friday 6am-10am, Monday and Thursday 11:15am-7pm and Tuesday and Wednesday 11:15am-3:30pm 6 lanes AND 3:30-7 (shared Pool) and Saturday 10-11am 6 lanes. Adult Swim Monday-Thursday 11:15am-7pm.

Call ahead for Public Swim Weekend schedule due to staff shortages. 828-526-1595.

• Tickets for Bear Shadow Music Festival are on sale now. For more information, visit <https://bearshadownc.com/information/>.

### Mondays

• ESL classes are held at the Presbyterian Church in Highlands from 5:30-6:30pm. No registration required – just

show up and participate. Questions? Visit [www.maconncliteracy.org](http://www.maconncliteracy.org), call 828-526 – 0863 or email [info@maconncliteracy.org](mailto:info@maconncliteracy.org)

### Second Mondays

• The local chapter of PEO, an off-campus sorority founded in the 1800s that provides grants and loans to women who want to return to school or further their education and have a financial need, meets at 10 a.m. If interested, please call president Paula McDonald at 706-372-3004 for meeting places.

### Mon-Fri

• Water Aerobics 18 years plus 10:15-11am.

### Mon., Tues., Thurs.

• The Food Pantry behind the Methodist Church on Spring Street is open from 10a to 6p,

### Mon. & Wed.

• Cardio Kickboxing with Crystal Corbin 5:30-6:30 p.m. A full body workout that engages every muscle in the body.

• New Mobility Class with Anna Norton It's all about movement. 5:30-6:30pm and Wednesday 6:45-7:45. For more information, call Anna 267-825-0716.

### Mon, & Thurs,

• Drive-thru flu clinics at the Public Health Center at 1830 Lakeside Dr. in Franklin from 1-4 pm \$36 for the regular dose and the \$73 for the high dose (recommended for those 65+). Insurances will be filed; please bring your insurance card with you. Questions? Call 828.349.2081.

### Mon, Wed, Thurs

• Indoor and outdoor Pickle Ball 10:30 am-1 pm.

### Mon, Wed, Fri

• Heart Healthy Exercise Class 8:30-9:30am. \$25 a month. The class is led by Cathy Hodgson. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• Aerobics with Tina Rogers 8-9 am.

### Tues. & Thurs.

• Pilates-Strength and Stretch with Autumn Lucas

• New Zumba class with Gay Chalpin from 4:30-5:30p.

• Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at 5:30. A combina-

tion class with many different types of exercise.

### 1st Tuesdays

• Indivisible Highlands from 5-6:30 pm at the Hudson Library.

### Tuesdays

• Strength Training 8:15-9:15am. Aim for strong, lean muscles using light weights, body weight, and high repetition to shape and tone.

### First Wednesdays

• Highlands-Cashiers Hospital is featuring "Walk-in Wednesdays" Hiring Event. Interviewing for RNs, CNAs, Allied Health Professionals and Support Services Professionals, 1-3:30 pm. 190 Hospital Drive, front entrance. On the spot offers, Sign-on bonuses offered for select positions, Bring updated resume. Casual wear.

### Thursdays

• Kickboxing 8:15-9:15am. An exhilarating and fun mix of martial arts for a calorie-burning workout.

• Free Covid vaccination clinics – 9 am to 5pm at the Rec Park. (Closed for a half-hour lunch break) Location subject to change. please check <https://myspot.nc.gov/> for the latest location information. Walk-ins are accepted, however we encourage residents to pre-register and schedule an appointment at <https://myoptumserve.com/covid19> or by calling (877) 505-6723 if you do not have internet.

### 3rd Thursdays

• The American Legion Post 370 meets on the 3rd Saturday of every month at the First Methodist Church at 315 Main Street in their Community Room/ 909 Chapel. We serve breakfast at 9AM and hold our monthly meeting at 10AM We invite ALL Veterans to attend. Contact Ed McCloskey, Commander for any information @828-787-1660

### Fri.-Mon., Feb. 18-21

• Great Backyard Bird Count from 9 to 10 am Participants will meet at the North Campus of the Highlands Biological Station (111 Lower Lake Road) for an introduction to the Great

• See EVENTS page 16

## Procedures for the February 24 Public Hearing at 5 p.m. Highlands Community Building

The following protocols for the February 24 public hearing are intended to provide an orderly process for soliciting public feedback concerning the Highlands Planning Board's recommendations concerning changes to the town ordinances related to short-term rentals. The mayor will preside over the hearing and will adhere to the following procedures.

1. Speakers will be encouraged to respond to the recommendations of the planning board and limit personal experiences.
2. People wishing to speak at the hearing must sign up as they enter the Community Building.
3. A town staff member will be at the Community Building at 4:30 p.m. to begin developing the list of speakers.
4. Email requests to speak can be made by emailing [gibby.shaheen@highlandsnc.org](mailto:gibby.shaheen@highlandsnc.org)
5. The mayor will call on speakers in the order they appeared on the list.
6. Each speaker will be allowed 3 minutes to make a statement. Given that time frame, there will be approximately 20 speakers per hour.
7. A time-keeper will maintain a clock and will notify a speaker when their time has ended.
8. Speakers who have signed up can yield or defer their time to a group representative speaker. The designated group representative speaker will have to identify the group he or she represents. The designated group speaker will have 15 minutes to speak.
9. The public hearing will begin at 5 pm. The speakers list will be closed at 5:30 p.m.
10. For those people not able to attend the hearing, the town will accept written statements that are no longer than 500 words. These statements will become a part of the hearing record.
11. People making an oral statement can also submit a written statement.
12. Written statements will be accepted for 24 hours after the hearing concludes and entered into the record.
13. Statements can also be submitted prior to the hearing. All hearing statements should have a heading at the top identifying it as a statement for the February 24, 2022, Highlands Town Board Public Hearing. The statement should also identify the writer and their mailing and or email address.
14. Anonymous statements will not be accepted.
15. The town clerk will receive and process all written statements. Board members will be given a copy of all written statements.
16. Statements can be a printed copy or can be emailed to [gibby.shaheen@highlandsnc.org](mailto:gibby.shaheen@highlandsnc.org)
17. Oral statements will be recorded and will become a part of the hearing record, as will written comments.
18. The Town Board of Commissioners will take no final action on amending ordinances at this hearing.
19. Barring any unanticipated technical problems, the hearing will be broadcasted on Youtube.

## Spring Sports Registration

**Macon County Youth Soccer Registration** is underway for ages 5-15 year olds.

Last day to register is Friday, Feb. 25. Practice will begin in mid-march and games will start April 2nd. Register online at [maconsoccer.net](http://maconsoccer.net)

**Franklin Little League Baseball** registration is underway for ages 4-14 year old. Registration Open Now through March 7, 2022. Register online at [www.fllbaseball.com](http://www.fllbaseball.com).

**Franklin Little League Softball** registration is underway for ages 4-14 year old. Registration Open Now through March 7, 2022. Register online at [www.franklin-littleleaguesoftball.com](http://www.franklin-littleleaguesoftball.com).



## ...EVENTS continued from page 15

Backyard Bird Count before taking a walk around the campus to find our feathered friends. On Saturday, guest leaders from the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society will take part in the count as well. These walks are weather dependent and masks are encouraged. Binoculars will be available if you need them. Register for one or both strolls at [highlandsbiological.org](http://highlandsbiological.org).

### Sat., Feb. 19

- Birding Bonanza from 1-4 p.m. at the Nature Center. Join us for a bonfire, hot drinks, a scavenger hunt, & bird-themed fun for all as we celebrate the 25th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count.

### Mon. Feb. 21

- Jackson County Republican Party Meeting Monday at 6 PM at the Cashier Recreation Center located at 355 Frank Allen Road in Cashiers.

### Thurs., Feb. 24

- STR public hearing at the Community Building at 5 p.m. See page 15 for details.
- At the Highlander Moun-

tain House & The Ruffed Grouse Tavern, an evening of song with Andrew Combs at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$25. For more information call 828-526-2590.

### Fri., Feb. 25

- Comedian James Gregory at PAC at 7:30 p.m. For ticket information go to [www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com](http://www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com)

### Sat., Feb. 26

- At PAC Live from the Met, Tony Award - Rigoletto with winning director Bartlett Sher creates a bold new take on Verdi's timeless tragedy, resetting the opera's action in 1920s Europe, with Art Deco sets by Michael Yeagan and elegant costumes by Catherine Zuber. At 7:30 p.m. For ticket information go to [www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com](http://www.HighlandsPerformingArts.com)

### Sun., Feb 27

- Chefs Dinner at the Farm with Hugh Acheson & Christopher Hathcock. Book online at [OldEdwardsHospitality.com/AchesonandHathcock](http://OldEdwardsHospitality.com/AchesonandHathcock)

### Thurs. March 10

- Winter stories will be held at the High Dive from 2-4

, a casual gathering of story swapping. Come, Tell, Listen.

### Tues. March 15

- Highlands School Kindergarten Registration is on. Children who reach the age of 5 on or before August 31, 2022 are eligible for admission into the Class of 2035 Call 828-526-2147 for more information.

### Thurs. April 14

## ...REQUESTS continued from page 8

provide this for you and then you can have that set up at your office at your home so when you do get the electronic version emailed you can automatically print those documents. You can print them right then and there."

Mayor Taylor asked Hehn if he would be willing to accept that offer. But Hehn said no.

"We have a good system now. Print it and I will pick it up," he

said. "But actually, some of the type is so small I was going to talk to Josh about that and you have to comply with the law."

Mayor Taylor said the board was complying with the law and was offering a reasonable accommodation to Hehn.

### Thurs., May 12

- Winter stories will be held at the High Dive from 2-4 , a casual gathering of story swap-

ping. Come, Tell, Listen.

Attorney Coward agreed. "That is a reasonable accommodation," he said.

The board agreed in theory,

ally to reimburse me. That's his decision. I am not asking the town to do it. This has got to stop," said Hehn.

The \$1,500 is for professional services rendered by Attorney Richard Essex of Charlotte, NC including telephone calls, the production of letters and emails.

Mayor Taylor said both Town Manager Josh Ward and Finance Director Rebecca Shuler were prepared to challenge Hehn's contention that they haven't been providing documents - documents that are very extensive and require more time than immediate action.

Mayor Taylor made his feelings on the matter crystal clear. "What bothers me Commissioner Hehn is this idea, first that our Town Manager, who is a fine person who works within the confines of what we are doing in the town, that he would be sued personally over something like this is unacceptable to me. And the other thing that bothers me very much, is that you would want a personal financial transaction between you and him. We are going down a slippery slope when we start allow-

ing that kind of business here in Highlands. We have never done it and I am not about to condone that type of behavior as mayor.

"When I first heard this, I thought you were asking the board to reimburse you. But that's not the case. You wanted him to personally do it. I was shocked. I was absolutely shocked when I heard this. That's why I wanted to put this out to the public tonight because this just isn't acceptable in my estimation. That's not how we operate here.

"And, if Josh had given you that money, it would be tantamount to him declaring that he has done something wrong and he has done nothing wrong. He might not work on your schedule, but our people have good faith. And you have asked them for document after document after document and they have jobs to do. And I am just going to tell you right now, we don't operate this way. As elected officials in this town we don't exchange personal checks in reimbursements; it all comes before the board," he said.

• See FEES page 17



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## ...FEES continued from page 1

stop. but I predicted problems we were going to have and if I can't be prepared, if I can't get the documents everyone else has seen before I got here, I can't do my job. I am just asking that Josh be asked to comply with the NC Public Records Act. That's all I am asking," said Hehn.

In a letter written to Ward, Hehn said: "On three occasions I have requested public documents that you refused to provide until I had a lawyer present a demand letter. Enclosed please find invoices totaling \$1,500. Please forward your personal check to reimburse me for these expenses. I would like to resolve this matter without embarrassment to the Town or any employee. My hope is that I will not be forced to incur such expenses going forward. If you choose to reimburse me, I request you place this on our February agenda."

Hehn went on to say his wife was an elementary school counselor and there have to be consequences if you aren't going to do what you are supposed to do.

"So, I have asked him person-

ally to reimburse me. That's his decision. I am not asking the town to do it. This has got to stop," said Hehn.

Mayor Taylor said both Town Manager Josh Ward and Finance Director Rebecca Shuler were prepared to challenge Hehn's contention that they haven't been providing documents - documents that are very extensive and require more time than immediate action.

Mayor Taylor made his feelings on the matter crystal clear. "What bothers me Commissioner Hehn is this idea, first that our Town Manager, who is a fine person who works within the confines of what we are doing in the town, that he would be sued personally over something like this is unacceptable to me. And the other thing that bothers me very much, is that you would want a personal financial transaction between you and him. We are going down a slippery slope when we start allow-



## ...FEES continued from page 16

What followed was a discussion instigated by Hehn to justify his need to request and see documents – in this case over the fiber project regarding Wide Open Networks and Hotwire – completely different lease models which would net the town different amounts of money.

Even now Hehn is disputing the Hotwire contract despite the fact that a contract has been signed and the town is set to receive a profit of \$10,200,000 over 25 years – far more than the town's 15-year \$4.6 million loan with interest it took out with BB&T to build the fiber highway.

Over two years, each time various aspects of the project were voted upon by the Town Board – Feb. 27, 2020, March 3, 2020, Dec. 17, 2020, Jan. 21, 2021 – Commissioner Hehn logged the one and only dissenting vote.

However, with the contract hammered out by Highlands' and Hotwire's attorneys, when presented at the Oct. 21, 2021 Town Board meeting, Hehn voted with his fellow board members to unanimously make Hotwire in charge of Highlands broadband highway.

Prior to going with Hotwire, the town had Wide Open Networks in its sights. However, negotiations for a 10-year contract with far less profit for the town – about \$2,820,000 – fell apart when Wide Open realized there would be more providers on the highway.

At last Thursday's meeting, Hehn suggested it was his probing that caused the town to go with Hotwire and not Wide Open Networks.

"I did not feel comfortable voting for that contract [Wide Open]. But by the good graces of God, they wrote us and said they were not aware there was another provider, and they were not going to be able to proceed," said Hehn. "That was our lucky day, because I advocated that we should take proposals and we ended up with Hotwire."

The mayor and other commissioners were quick to remind Hehn that the comparison is apples to oranges with two completely different models.

Nonetheless, Hehn pursued trying to outline the times he requested documents concerning the fiber highway and according to him didn't receive them.

"I asked to see the file and it took from March to November just to read the files," he said.

Mayor Taylor said that he had signed a non-disclosure agreement for the board while formulating the Hotwire contract for

good reason and therefore those documents weren't available until after the contract was signed.

"You know why I signed that agreement? Because if we shared with you documents for which we had non-disclosure agreements, we were very concerned there would be a breach of that non-disclosure agreement and to be quite frank, since we had had a breach of confidentiality between a lawyer involved with previous negotiations – and I think I know and you know who breached it – I was justified with having those concerns," said the mayor.

Hehn continued to state his case.

"I am just trying to get Josh to comply with my requests. I ask for records and I just don't get them. I want to be prepared," he said. "When I asked him for the construction contract early in 2021, I didn't get it until September. When I asked to see the last payment request, I didn't get it and I know about contracts. That's what I did, administration of construction contracts, so I have some knowledge about it, and I didn't agree with them," he said.

Mayor Taylor said he knew all about his dealings in Monks Corner in Berkley County.

At that point, Town Manager Ward requested the floor.

"Commissioner Hehn comes to us pretty regularly. No other board member does this. He requests stuff constantly. We try to do the best to our ability to give him what he needs, and it is everything. And at the last board meeting the board agreed to make him prints. Well, since then he came in five times. He went to Gibby – 'I want this printed I want these minutes; I want this printed.' He didn't want to leave until he got them. We got what he wanted.

"This fiber issue started with Wide Open. There was an issue with the agreement we signed with Wide Open. They said they didn't want their financials given out so that had to be redacted [from the documents]. So finally, we got a document together, including Jay, Jay has been involved with all of this. Marc signed the nondisclosure, he met in the Mayor's office; the Mayor let him see it, he reviewed it and that was that.

"Then let's fast forward. Then he starts in with other documentation. Covid had just started so he didn't want to come into the building. We took the file that Matt [IT Director] had and went outside. Mr. Hehn wanted to review it. He opened the file; he goes through the whole file. 45 minutes later I go out there and I asked, 'is everything there?' He said he looked through it and said, 'I'm fine.'

"A while later, he said, 'I want to see this. I want to see that.' So, he went back in and sat down with Matt for over an hour and half. Questioned Matt over the same file. He went through the file. Questioned Matt back and forth; he reviewed all of it. Matt asked him if he wanted copies and he said no.

"He left. Then we get another letter. He wanted all this stuff from the Hotwire contract. OK. Well half of it we don't have because we were going through a third-

party administrator with the work not paid through the town of Highlands. This involved the construction of the fiber line. The third party is paid through our engineering firm. There was a bunch of financials he wanted so we turned it over to Rebecca [Financial Director]. Rebecca had to get everything out of the file, everything we had done, since the time this thing started. She got it out. She had a meeting with Marc. Marc came in. He reviewed ev-

• See FEES page 19



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— Hebrews 10:23

Oh, you who have a heart filled with doubts and fear? You stand observing the waves as they roll at your feet and fear that they will overwhelm you. You cry out “Will the Lord cast off forever?” (Psalm 77:7). Will He no longer show me favor. Is His mercy forever lost? Does His promise fail forever? Has He decided to never to be gracious again? Has He, in His anger, shut up His tender mercies?

My friends, look now at the face of Jesus Christ and see the glory of God shining from it and let doubt be removed from your heart. Understand, that as long as Jesus Christ lives, He is your Advocate, your High Priest, your Intercessor in Heaven, all that is yours which the covenant promises, and which His mediation secures.

“The promises of God are all yes and Amen in Christ Jesus” (II Corinthians 1:20). You can count on Him to never break His vow, or lie, or change anything that has gone out of His mouth. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall never pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

What we must do as believers is recognize that God says it and we must let faith believe it because He says it. This is essential to your comfort. It is essential to your trust.

You must never allow yourself to look at the things God has done on your behalf and worship the event and its results. We do not follow the grace of the promise or the thing promised as precious as both can be. We are always to be focused on the God in the promise. The promise is always the heart of your Father speaking; it is the faithfulness of your Father performing. Rest not in what is promised.

You must place your trust and hope in God and in His only begotten Son. Look to the strength of Him who promises and keep your focus on your faith and the confidence you have in God. It is in God and Christ alone that our trust is centered.

## Fake \$20s are circulating

Highlands Police Chief Holland warns business owners that a local business recently received fake twenty-dollar bills. Be aware and contact the police with questions at 828-526-9431.

## Proverbs 3:5

## • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

## John 3:16

### BLUEVALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

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

Sunday night services every 2nd & 4th Sunday at 7

Wednesdays: Mid-week prayer meeting: 7 p.m.

### BUCK CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

828-269-3546 • Rev. Jamie Passmore. Pastor

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

### CASHIERS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Aryn Williams-Reubel. Pastor 828-743-5298

Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

### CHAPEL OF THE SKY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999

Sundays: 10 a.m. Worship

Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

### CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

828-743-1701 • 464 Hwy 64E. Cashiers, NC 28717

[www.christanglicancashiers.com](http://www.christanglicancashiers.com)

Sun. - 9:30am Worship (no music); 10:30am Sunday

School; 10:30am Worship Service.

Mon. Night Bible Study & Dinner: 6pm. call for details.

### CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY. CASHIERS

Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470

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

Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.

### CLEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Jim Kinard

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

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

Wednesdays - Supper at 6 p.m.

### COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH

[www.cbchighlands.com](http://www.cbchighlands.com) • 526-4685

3645 Cashiers Rd. Highlands, NC • Sr. Pastor Gary Hewins

Sun.: 9:30am - Adult Sunday School; Worship Service 10:45am;

10:45am Children's Program. Youth-12:15 - 2:30pm Tues:

Women's Bible Study 10am-noon

Thurs: Men's Bible Study 7:30-8:30 a.m.

### COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

706. 746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447

Pastor Steve Kerhoulas

Worship: Sun. 10:30 a.m. Holy Communion 2nd Sunday

### EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

Rev. W. Bentley Manning, Rector • 526-2968

5th and Main streets • [www.incarnationwnc.org](http://www.incarnationwnc.org)

Sunday Services in the Chapel: 8 am Rite I spoken, 10:30 Rite II

with Choir; Morning Prayer Mon-Thurs 8:30 am in the Chapel

Ash Wed. services March 2, 12 p.m., & 5 p.m.

### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

828-526-4153 • [www.fbchighlands.org](http://www.fbchighlands.org)

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

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

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

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

828-526-3175 • [fpchighlands.org](http://fpchighlands.org)

Sun.: Adult Ed.: 10 a.m.; Worship 11 a.m.

Tues: Men's Group 10 a.m. Wed: Bell Choir 4 p.m.. Choir: 6p

### GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

### GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS

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

[www.gracecashiers.com](http://www.gracecashiers.com) • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814

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

### HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Hwy 107N. • Glenville, NC • 743-2729 • Nathan Johnson

Sunday: School 9:45a. Worship 11a & 7p. Bible Study 6p

Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

### HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Randy Reed. Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street

Wed. Bible Study: 6 p.m.; Sundays: Worship: 11

### HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road

The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily

sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.

Sunday Worship is at 9a. Wednesday Worship is 6:30p

### HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376

In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services

909 Bluegrass and 10:50 Traditional

[www.highlandsmethodist.org](http://www.highlandsmethodist.org)

### HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

Rev. Angie Ballard • 2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741

Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

We wear masks and social distance.

### MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

### MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

Franklin • 828-634-1312

Services 2x/month May-Sept.; 1x/month Oct. -April

[mountainsynagoguewnc.com](http://mountainsynagoguewnc.com).

### MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church

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

4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

### OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS

### CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone - 526-2418

Mass: Wed. noon (Latin); Thurs. noon; Sun. 11a

### SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

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

Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

### SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

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

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

### SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer

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

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

### ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mass: Tues. noon (Latin). Thurs. 9a.; Fri.. noon;

Sat. 5:30p; Sun. 9a

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85 Sierra Drive. Franklin • [uufranklin.org](http://uufranklin.org)

Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

### WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am



# • POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

**Highlands Police entries from Jan. 18. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.**

**Jan. 18**

• At noon, officers received a report of someone obtaining property by false pretenses at Gold n Clipper on Main Street involving a \$3,200 transaction for a Rolex.

**Jan. 31**

• At 6:32 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident at US 64 east and Cullasaja Drive.

**Feb. 7**

• At 7:10 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on US 64 east between Riverwalk Drive and Sherwood Forest Road.

• At 3 p.m., officers received a report of a man at a residence on Cullasaja Drive losing about \$40,000 via cyberspace when someone obtained property by false pretenses through extortion.

**Feb. 14**

• At 1:33 a.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on Wilson Road.

**Feb. 17**

• At 2:30 p.m., officers responded to a call for service at Highlands School involving a 12-year-old boy.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Feb. 15**

**Feb. 15**

• At 9:55 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of an illegal burn at a location on Upper Lake Road.

• At 3:13 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a power line down at Highland Meadows Road.

**Feb. 16**

• At 7:21 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Moonlight Lane.

• At 9:12 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on Main Street.

**Feb. 18**

• At 9:07 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Jackson County.

• At 12:15 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Hickory Drive.

• At 12:38 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Sassafrass Court.

• At 1:07 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on BigView Drive.

• At 2:29 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at the hospital.

• At 8:19 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Bowery Road.

• At 8:28 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a possible structure fire at a residence on BlueValley Road.

**Feb. 19**

• At 7:20 p.m., the dept. at a residence on Flat Mountain Estates. It was engulfed upon arrival and was a total loss. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

**Feb. 20**

• At 8:46 a.m., the dept. returned to

the residence on Flat Mountain Estates to check on the site.

• At 4:54 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

**Feb. 21**

• At 11:07 a.m., the dept. investigated the cause of smoke at in an area on Dillard Road.

• At 11:48 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to Dry Falls where a man had slipped and hit his head but he was already walking out when 9-1-1 was called.

• At 5:39 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Cullasaja Club Drive.

• At 8:28 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at Skyline Lodge.

• At 8:49 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at Skyline Lodge.

**Feb. 22**

• A little past midnight, the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Cullasaja Club Drive.

## ...FEES continued from page 17

everything. She had some copies for him, but he said he didn't want them. So, he left.

"A few weeks later we get another request. A month or so later we get another request. 'I want to see these documents.' Some different stuff. Rebecca went through and had to pull that stuff and it takes a while. We are trying to do our day-to-day jobs and accomplish that job while Mr. Hehn is requesting things. And I get emails, and calls. Rebecca got everything together. She had another meeting with him. He reviewed everything. She asked if he wanted copies. 'No, I don't want copies.'

"A month later he says, 'I want these copies, or I want to review this, or I want to inspect or obtain.' So, he came in and inspected everything and said he didn't want copies and left. Then I get a letter from an attorney saying that he wants copies of all this — all the stuff he had already reviewed three times [and said he didn't want copies]. But he wants it, and he wants it electronically and he wants it sent to him because he doesn't want to come into town because of Covid. Rebecca and Matt put everything together that they could to send to him electronically, including a thumb drive because some of the documents were so large. It was set out front and Marc came and got it.

"So, for him to sit here and say that

staff has sat on their hind-end and ignored everything he requested is wrong.

"And the thing is, I don't know what you are looking for. I work for this town, and I work for the whole board, and I try to do the best to my ability. If you have a question and you want to question the decisions this board makes — because you haven't agreed with the fiber contract from the word "go," which is OK. You don't have to agree with it — but why don't you question them about the decisions they made before you came on the board and ask them about the documents that they approved, some of which you approved after you came on the board. Why do you always come through us? These people right here are who you need to talk to."

Commissioner John Dotson put an end to the discussion.

"I certainly appreciate the fact that all this is being brought to light in a public forum, but the Town Board has no authority to compel our Town Manager to write a [personal] check to anybody for anything and I make a motion that we move on," he said.

The vote was 4-1 to not request Town Manager Ward to write Commissioner Hehn a check for \$1,500.

— Kim Lewicki

## Jackson County jail Christmas overdose leads to arrest of former detention officer and 15 others

An overdose at the Jackson County Detention Center on December 25, 2021 initiated an investigation and resulted in the arrest of Former Detention Officer Patty Stillwell and the investigation

The inmate was transported to Harris Hospital where he made a full recovery.

During the course of the investigation, conducted by deputies and the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, 16 individuals have been charged in connection with bringing, or conspiring to bring, drugs into the Detention Center.

Former Detention Officer Patty Stillwell is among the individuals charged. Stillwell was placed on investigatory leave without pay on December 26, 2021 and resigned from her position on December 27, 2021. Stillwell is a former Detention Sergeant for Haywood County Detention Center and was employed at Macon County Animal Control at the time of her arrest.

The individuals charged are as follows:

- Whitfield Jordan Anderson, 32, Sylva
- Amber Carrol-Leigh Bradley, 31, (incarcerated in NC Dept. of Corrections)
- Rashonda Lashae Bradley, 34, Bryson City (arrest pending).
- Lori Jane Cantrell, 49, Cherokee.
- Jessica Myraah McCoy, 27, (incarcerated in NC Dept. of Corrections) Brooke.

• Tiffani Clonch, 29, Sylva (arrest pending).

• Dustin James Kirkland, 36, Bryson City.

• Natasha Belle Kirkland, 34, Bryson City.

• Brittany Danielle McCall, 34, Sylva

• Carol Dale Mintz, 32, incarcerated in NC Dept. of Corrections.

• William Garrett Pannell, 22, Sylva, arrested.

• Colby Taylor Price, 30, Cherokee, arrested.

• Kaitlyn Brooke Price, 29, Cherokee, arrested.

• Patty Danielle Stillwell, 30, Sylva, arrested.

• Shayla Faye Trull, 23, Sylva, arrested.

• Charles William Duncan, 51, Sylva, arrested

"The men and women employed in our detention center work hard each and every day. It is disappointing the actions of a single employee overshadows the great work our detention staff performs daily," said Sheriff Chip Hall. "As Sheriff of Jackson County, I will continue to have high standards in the area of employee conduct and will take swift action when these standards are not met."






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**HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL** has an immediate opening for a part time administrative assistant for their 41st season in their Highlands office. Music knowledge is not required. Email hcc-mfnc@gmail.com or call 828-200-3882 for an appointment. (2/24-3/10)

**LAKESIDE RESTAURANT** in Highlands, NC is looking to hire a full time dishwasher for the upcoming season. Hours are dinner only, Tuesday-Saturday. Starting pay is \$15 per hour. Please call or text Laura Huerta at 803-617-8484. (st. 2/17)

**WOLFGANGS RESTAURANT** 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. 2/17)

**HIGHLANDER MOUNTAIN HOUSE DINING ROOM SUPERVISOR** – HMH is seeking a full time shift supervisor to coordinate reservations and oversee all aspects of service in the front of the house at TRG. This role will act as Maitre' D to the dining room, work service for lunch, dinner and brunch and be responsible for the proper execution of each service period. This position will begin as an hourly position and has the potential to grow into a salaried position based upon performance. This candidate should be positive, reliable, hard working, have a love of people, service and have aspirations to lead and grow with the company. (st. 12/16)

**CHESTNUT HILL OF HIGHLANDS** is an Upscale, Small Assisted Living Facility looking for Med Aides, CNA's, Housekeeper and Dietary Staff. You may apply in person at 24 Clubhouse Trail, by Phone at 828-526-5251 or by email to ce.chestnuthill@yahoo.com or lind-abtiff@aol.com.

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hiking/construction and outdoors is good also. Email mrpaulkrk@yahoo.com. (st. 2/11)

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## ...CHAMPS continued from page 1

round of the playoffs beginning at 6 p.m.

The Lady Highlanders' win on Tuesday comes shortly after they defeated Hiwassee Dam in the Little Smoky Mountain Conference tournament championship last Thursday on the road with a final of 55-32.

Highlands won the first round of the LSMC tournament, also in Hiwassee Dam, after defeating Nantahala on Feb. 15.

### HS Boys

Highlands varsity boys lose tough LSMC tournament championship

Highlands varsity boys basketball team didn't fare as well as the girls in the LSMC tournament championship last Thursday and ended up losing to the HD Eagles 88-44.

It was the second time the Highlanders travelled to Hiwassee Dam last week after winning the first round against Blue Ridge Early College on Feb. 15.



Highlands Mac Woods sets up to shoot a free throw during the first round of the state playoffs.

Photos by Brian O'Shea  
Plateau Daily News



During last Thursday's LSMC game, Highlands Reese Schmitt takes off on a fast break.



Highlands Hayley Borino breaks to the hoop against Hiwassee Dam at Tuesday's game.



Highlands James Earp looks for an open man under the hoop at Thursday's LSMC game.



Highlands Julia May Schmitt picks off Hiwassee pass and breaks for the hoop at last Thursday's LSMC game.



Highlands Aislynn Luck sets a pick for B Bryson against Hiwassee Dam during Tuesday's first-round at NCHSAA.



Highlands Win Dyleski moves along the perimeter looking for an opening to the hoop at last Thursday's LSMC game.



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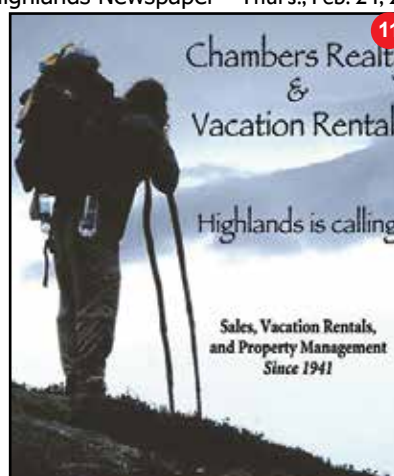
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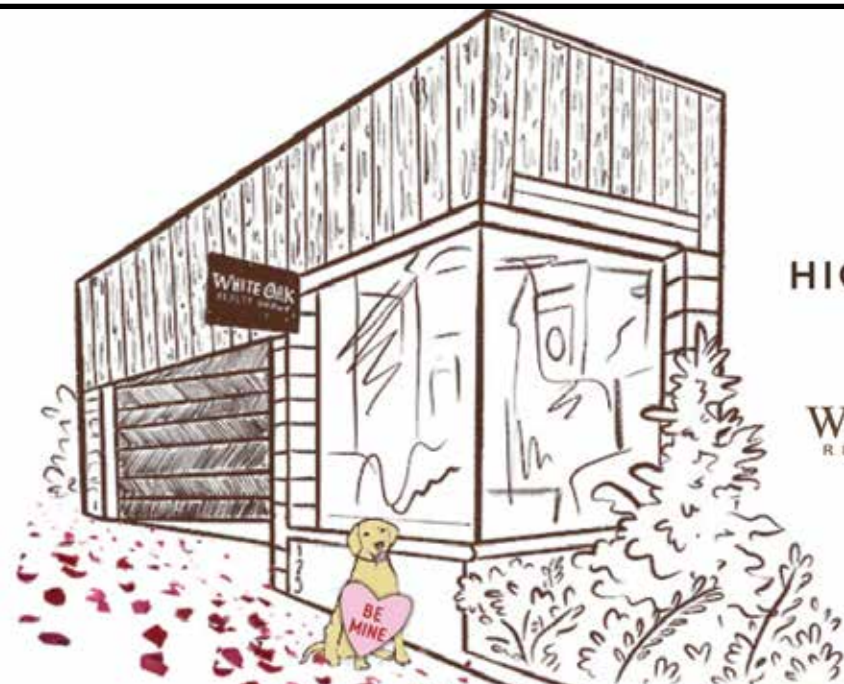
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