

Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., Feb. 3, 2022

Town Board workshop on STRs raises more questions; short on answers

There were two parts to Tuesday night's special called Town Board meeting – dubbed workshop.

The first part was a closed

session where the board was briefed on the lawsuit leveled at the town by Save Highlands.

A statement issued by the mayor Wednesday morning in-

dicates no one except the board and attorneys Craig Justice and Jay Coward know what the next step is regarding the lawsuit or what was

• See STRs page 19

Swimmer Garner heads to NC Swimming Regionals

By Steve Hott
HS Swim Coach

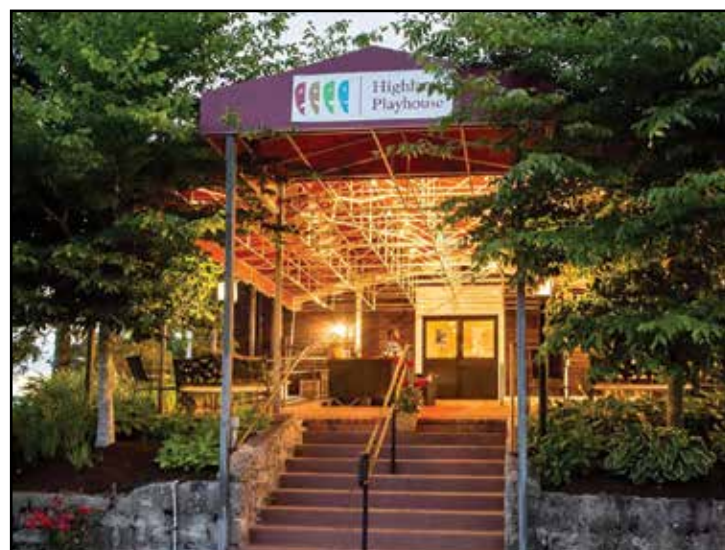
On Tuesday, January 25, Highlands School Varsity Swim Team traveled to Rabun Gap Nagoochee School (RGNS) for a 4-way swim meet with Carolina Day School, Tri-County Early College, and host RGNS.

Represented only by freshman Finneas Garner, who won the 50m Freestyle and the 100m Freestyle, the team finished 3rd.

Garner set two Personal Records (PRs) and qualified for 1A & 2A West NC High School Regional Championships in both events -- quite an accomplishment for a freshman.

Regionals will be at the Mecklenburg Aquatics Center, this Friday, February 4.

• See GARNER page 16



The Highlands Playhouse launches the Mountain Theatre Company

First-run movies returning mid-March

Submitted

Theater or Theatre? Simply put, A theater is a venue you visit to enjoy entertainment. The theatre is the performance-driven art

form.

Highlands Community Theatre Inc., the resident theatre company at The Highlands Playhouse,

• See PLAYHOUSE page 17

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COVID forces Mission to halt elective surgeries until peak passes

*Elective surgeries unaffected at H-C Hospital
Mission representatives urge people to get vaccinated.*

By Peter H. Lewis
Asheville Watchdog

Staggered by COVID-19 infections, both among incoming patients and its own healthcare staff, Mission Hospital in Asheville is postponing all scheduled surgeries at the main hospital and will admit emergency and critically ill patients only after a case-by-case review, hospital administrators said last week.

"Mission operating room and other procedural areas in the hospital (Endoscopy, cath lab, IR, and others) will only proceed with urgent and emergent cases," Chad Patrick, chief executive of Mission Hospital, wrote in a confidential memo to staff.

"We will continue to evaluate daily on a case-by-case sce-

nario," the staff memo, obtained by Asheville Watchdog, continued. "Any urgent/emergent case where the patient has not already been admitted, but will require a hospital bed, needs approval by multidisciplinary hospital leadership."

"The ASC will remain open at this time, but we will continue to closely monitor and may need to adjust depending on patient needs," the memo said, referring to the Asheville Surgery Center, a separate HCA-owned outpatient surgery facility off Sweeten Creek Road.

Asked by Asheville Watchdog to clarify the staff memo, Nancy Lindell, director of public and media relations for HCA

• See MISSION page 16

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Work on FY 2022-'23 budget to begin

As of this past Tuesday, the Highlands Town Board began a review of STR ordinance recommendations from the Highlands Planning Board. The members of the Highlands Planning Board met a number of times to review proposed changes to town ordinances which town attorneys had drafted. I again want to thank the Highlands Planning Board for their good work.



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

Going into that meeting on Tuesday, the staff, board and I planned on reviewing the Planning Board recommendations, making edits and changes that the commissioners agreed to. After that process, a draft document would have been presented for a public hearing at the March 17 Town Board meeting. Meetings can change plans.

Craig Justice, the attorney the town retained to review town ordinances related to STRs, informed the board at the end of the meeting that a hearing should be called for public response to the planning board recommendations. The Town Board voted to hold that hearing on Thursday, February

24th at 5 pm. After that public hearing the town board will review the recommendations and consider public comment.

I want to update everyone concerning the replacement of the Middle Creek bridge between Scaly and the Georgia state line. I'm a member to the Transportation Advisory Committee of the Southwestern Regional Planning Organization. The committee has been following the issues and problems

facing NCDOT including scheduled bridge replacements.

The aging Middle Creek bridge is very narrow and needs to be replaced given the increase truck traffic using NC 106 to access the Highlands and Cashiers area. The good news is that bridge replacement contract is scheduled to be let in mid-March. The bad news is that the US Forest Service is supposed to do a consultation analysis before construction begins. That analysis has not been done, and as a result the entire project may be delayed.

We are in the process of developing items for the town retreat scheduled for March 10. While the primary focus of the retreat is developing budget priorities for the coming fiscal year, I also want us to review longer term issues.

I have asked the Mirror Lake Homeowners Association to make a presentation concerning their plans to dredge and restore Mirror Lake. They have developed a specific plan for addressing the siltation problem.

I also want to review the town policy and plans for residents wanting to install solar energy units at their homes. There are emerging issues about designs that would safely interface with our electrical grid and how to meter solar systems. We need to ensure that the town does not impede efforts to transition to green energy systems. A discussion needs to be had concerning how the proliferation of these solar units will, or will not, impact the existing contract that the town has with Duke Energy. It is a very complex issue.





Folks with requests for items to be included in next year's budget, please let me or your commissioners know. By the June board meeting, budget priorities will be set.

• HIC'S VIEW •



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• WEATHER •

Thu, 3-Feb	Fri, 4-Feb	Sat, 5-Feb	Sun, 6-Feb
			
51°F 47°F	50°F 27°F	48°F 28°F	42°F 26°F
Cloudy, showers; not as cool	A little morning rain; cloudy	Mostly sunny	Snow possible in the morning
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Phone: (828) 200-1371

Email:

HighlandsEditor@aol.com

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Reporters: Brittney Lofthouse

Brian O'Shea

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Sunday, February 27, 2022



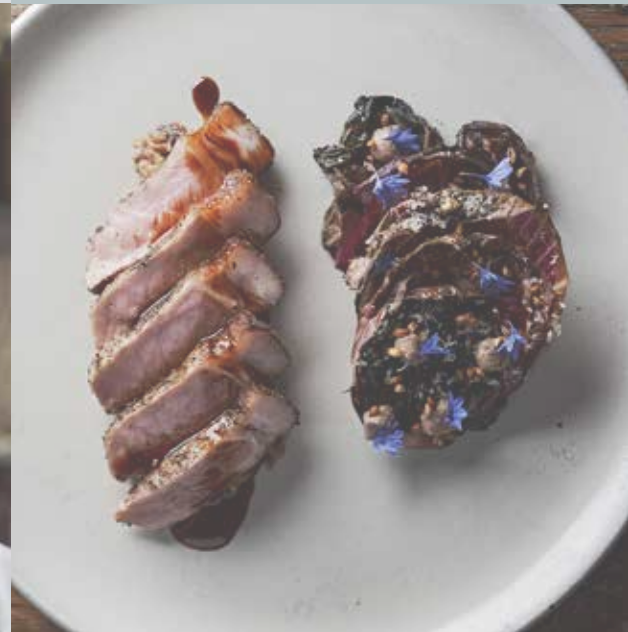
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& The National

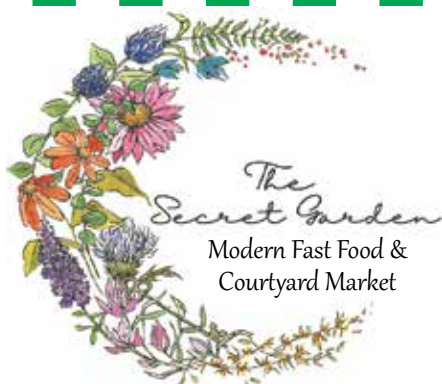


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The Hudson – Turkey, Provolone cheese (Have it your way - cucumber, lettuce, onion, banana peppers, black olives, DJs pickles). \$13



SPECIALS

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• LETTERS •

Kill the proposition, not the bears!

Dear Editor

The NC Wild "Life" Commission needs to change its name to the wild "Death" Commission for even considering the hunting and slaughter of our bear population that now live peacefully in Panthertown.

The bloodlust of its proponents to kill these bears is as cruel as it is totally unnecessarily. The bears in Panthertown have lived in peaceful coexistence with their human neighbors for decades. In fact, the Panthertown residents have taken additional measures, with their bear-proof containers, to further reduce and minimize any human-bear interaction.

The black bears in our area are, by nature, avoidant of humans unlike the more aggressive brown bear.

Cynthia Strain, chair of the B-E-A-R Task Force, has intelligently outlined the case for prohibiting any consideration of bear hunting and noted that in the past year there have been "zero" human-bear encounters.

The Wild "Death" commission is being bullied by those that consider killing bears a "sport" and want to add to the cruelty by adding dogs to their bullets.

We need to send a strong message to the commission that says "NO - NO - NO to killing the Panthertown bears! Instead we need to "KILL" the proposition, not the bears.

Mike Davidson
Sapphire

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



From left: Marc Chmar, Bob Kieltyka, President Tom Graham

Our speaker this week at The Rotary Club of Highlands was Bob Kieltyka, introduced by Marc Chmar. Bob, former Director of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce told the history of the Christmas Tree store which was started by Isabel Chambers and Ruth Farnald in 1975. The store, originally on South 4th St., was purchased from Del Roberts by Bob and his wife Trish in 2003 and moved to its current location on Main St. in 2011. Bob shared many stories of multiple generations of patrons that he and Trish had the pleasure to serve.



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• HOSPITAL NEWS •

As we usher in 2022, let's get serious about self-care

We've now officially entered 2022, and after a two-year span we'll never forget, we are in a place of looking forward. Because of all we've been through with the pandemic, the way we used to think about New Year's resolutions seems quaint. Maybe we would intend to lose weight, give our smartphones a rest, or quit a harmful habit, like smoking.

Now, it seems life has taken on deeper meaning as our psyches and bodies have been tested — through social isolation, experiencing many types of losses, and more. Even though resolving to live more healthfully may still be a popular intention, I encourage you to think about it just a bit differently.

We now know that supporting our health in multiple ways strengthens us, and so does considering our doctor as a per-

sonal health coach of sorts. I've talked in past columns about the fact that our physical, mental, and spiritual health are undoubtedly intertwined. To that end, we should look at 2022 as a grand opportunity to reconnect with our primary care physicians if we haven't had a wellness visit lately — something that became common as the pandemic grinded on.

Many of us admit to putting off routine screenings over the course of the pandemic, simply because we didn't want to put ourselves at risk for getting sick with the virus, but as I've said in this column previously, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital (HCH) is actually the cleanest, safest place you could have received care over the last two years. I'm proud of how every member of our hospital family has pivoted whenever protocols changed, which was often.

It's time now though, to get



**Tom Neal, CEO/CNO
Highlands Cashiers
Hospital**

back on track for 2022 with your preventive screenings and wellness visits. They are as important as seeing a specialist or having an urgent health need addressed.

Since patients are considered partners with their physicians now, there is important information for you to know that not only helps you keep up with caring for

yourself between visits to your doctor, this health data serves as a barometer that you and your doctor can review and discuss when it comes to your care going forward.

We call it "knowing your numbers." There are five critical pieces of health information you should be familiar with that paint an accurate wellness portrait and serve to alert you to conditions that need treatment or risk factors you can pay attention to and work to lower.

These measurable pieces of data are your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood glucose level, weight, and BMI, or body mass index. Having a healthy blood pressure is important in terms of lowering your risk for heart attack, stroke, and other serious health problems, while keeping your cholesterol in check also reduces the chance of these same health crises. As you've likely learned, there is "good" and "bad" cholesterol, and talking to your doctor about these numbers allows you to determine whether you should increase your exercise, tweak your diet, or manage your stress more effectively, among other things.

Your weight and BMI also play into your overall health greatly. Talk to your doctor about whether you're in a normal weight range for your height and build, and what you can do about it if you're not. Your BMI is a calculation that's based on height and weight — this tool also helps your doctor understand whether you're in the proper weight range for your age and body type.

Since rates of type 2 diabetes are soaring, knowing your blood glucose level is critical, not just if you live with diabetes, but to learn if you may be one of the 88 million American adults who have prediabetes (more than 1 in 3 people). Many of those with prediabetes have no idea they have it, so this is a prime example of knowledge

being power.

Your 2022 plan for good health should also include scheduling your mammogram and Pap test if you're a woman (talk to your provider about when and how often you should get screened, depending on your age and other factors), and a prostate exam if you're a man. Both men and women should discuss when they are due for a colonoscopy with their doctors.

Remember, you're not alone in keeping on top of all of this. Your primary care physician is a valuable asset here and is ready to counsel you about your health, discuss your family and individual health history, and answer all of your health-related questions and concerns. Preventive care is an indispensable pillar when it comes to preserving your good health.

My wish for everyone in our community is a 2022 that sees you enjoying the best of health, taking great care of yourself, and enjoying all that this special place we call home offers. Everyone at HCH is ready to care for you not just this year, but always.

• *Tom Neal, RN, MBA, MHA, is the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) of Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. Neal is a proven leader with more than 30 years of progressive healthcare experience. Prior to his role at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, he held the position of Chief Executive Officer of Community Health Systems (CHS) and served as Chief Executive Officer of both Berwick Hospital Center in Berwick, Pennsylvania, and Greenbrier Valley Medical Center, Ronceverte, West Virginia. Tom has an MBA from the University of Louisville, MHA from the California College of Health Sciences, BSN from Regents College of New York and an ADN from Jefferson Community College.*

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What does your Realtor do all day?

I have a former client who seems astonished that I go to the office every day. She must think that Realtors only work on occasion, and I bet she knows some bored housewives who do just that! "But what do you do all day?" she asks. She must think our only activity is riding people around in the car and showing them houses. I've threatened so many times to just write down every single real estate related thing I do during the day (and night and weekends and holidays) and present her with a list. I haven't done it yet, but I'm going to try to describe a typical day in the life of a realtor during the busy summer season and hope she reads this column.

Since I'm an early riser, I'm usually at the computer between 5:00 and 6:00. The first thing I do is check emails. If there are real estate emails, I answer those. Then I check MLS and usually send new listings to several people who are looking for that type property. I may need to answer a Zillow inquiry, or follow up on a lead from some other company, or respond to a question someone sent through KV Core.

Sometimes there are Zillow calls before I get to the office at 9:00, so I take those, while simultaneously trying to get my lunch together and eat breakfast. Perhaps an inspector has waited until the last minute for me to issue a one-day code to a property he's going to inspect, so I have to look that up and get back with him. A client calls from Florida to ask how the weather is and when the attorney's office is going to send wiring instructions for their sale.

I arrive at the office and have some friendly banter with my co-workers, before I begin the tasks for the day. An inspection report is waiting in my inbox for me to look over. Soon I have a conversation with my Buyer client about the problems in the inspection. Next I try to line up people to take a look and give estimates on the repairs. I may need to call plumbers, electricians, handymen, or in some cases an engineer. I schedule all those appointments and let the Seller's agent know before I meet my client at 10:00 to look at three proper-



Betty Holt

ties in Sapphire. I come back to the office to find out additional information about two of the properties I just showed, and after contacting the agents, email that information to my client.

I eat lunch, then figure out a route to schedule showings for the following day that range from Scaly to Glenville to Sapphire. In the meantime, one of them has gone under contract and I have to find another, if I can, to take its place. It means more calls and changes to the route I've set up, which no longer works.

I get a call from the Buyer's agent on a sale that is closing that day, telling me that my clients have taken more than they said they would on the furniture addendum. They have taken pictures on the wall, the coffee maker, the toaster, and other small things the Buyer was expecting to have. I call my Sellers, who say, frankly, they don't give a damn, because these people are getting almost brand new mattresses they could have kept for themselves! The Buyers are threatening to walk from the sale, and the Sellers are saying "Go ahead—we'll sell it for more money!" The other agent and I go back and forth several times until the matter is resolved, but not until both of us have barely avoided nervous breakdowns!

I've answered the phone three times and spoken to recordings about my car's extended warranty and you can ask my office-mates what I say to those recordings!

The attorney's office calls to say that somehow a \$10,000 credit to the Buyer (not mine, thankfully) has been left off the closing statement and I should notify my Seller they signed an incorrect statement. More paperwork and phone calls ensue.

Then there is the meeting with the inspector who has been back to the same property four times, each time finding some of the items fixed and then finding new problems! There are still a few more things and I must tell the Buyer, after nearly nine months of waiting, we still aren't done.

There's a call-in at the end of the day wanting information on lots, so I stop and do a property search and send them the results, as well as sign them up to receive listings from our MLS.

I get home, sit down and read the mail, then start thinking about dinner. The phone rings and it's Zillow calling with someone on the line asking about a condo in Lake Tox-away. I take the call, which lasts 30 minutes, and I'm pretty much up on the history of their life, sit down right then and send what I

have. Then I eat dinner and go to the computer one last time for the day to answer emails. One of them has decided to go forward with an Offer, so I spend an hour and a half typing that up and sending to them to sign. Now it's 9:30 and time to think about

• See **INVESTING** page 10



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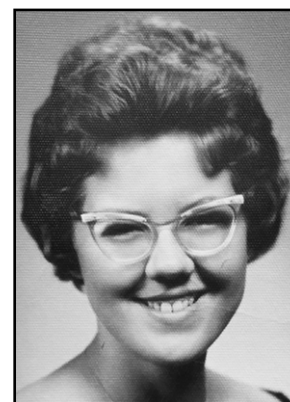
Cynthia Louise Salsbury

Cynthia Louise Salsbury, age 77, passed away early Christmas morning of 2021.

Born on a farm in Clinton County Ohio in 1944, she married Jon Garlow Salsbury, who preceded her in death on November 7, 1982.

Cynthia lived in the Clear Creek Community since the late 1960s, though she worked in Highlands for many years.

Cindee, a people person with a magnetic personality, loved helping others, and relished her role as a loving mother. An avid reader, music lover, and great cook, Cindee's drive and strong will helped her raise two sons nearly single-handedly.



Cindee, survived by her sister and brother-in-law, Sue and Larry Mackert of Largo, FL, also leaves behind a nephew and niece, Jeff Mackert, of Tampa, FL, and Molly Mackert, of St. Petersburg, FL,

along with her niece's sons Logan and Grayson. Her sons Mark and Nate live in Merritt Island, FL and Angier, NC.

Cindee suffered many health setbacks in her later years but kept an upbeat attitude despite the challenges. The family does not plan a public service and asks that you donate to the Highlands Emergency Council and/or an animal shelter in her memory.

The family believes that living on in the heart of those left behind equates to never dying. In that spirit, Cynthia Salsbury's sons ask that her friends and loved ones remember her fondly, and to keep the family in prayer.

James George (Jim) Petrone

James George (Jim) Petrone, 92, of Highlands, NC passed away on Tuesday, January 25, 2022. Born in Huntington, Long Island, New York on September 21, 1929, Jim was the son of the late James Vincent Petrone and Adelina (Lena) Fusaro Petrone.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife of 71 years, Thelma Allmon Petrone and his son, Kevin Michael Petrone.

Jim was a Navy Veteran. He enjoyed spending time in Carabelle, FL and maintaining his property in Highlands, NC.

He is survived by his daughters, Lee Ann Pearse of Chattanooga, TN; Susanna Murray, Anna Wilson (Roger Lee) and



Lisbeth Petrone Leschen of Highlands, NC. Eight grandchildren Jimmy Petrone (Jessica), Vince Petrone (Jackie), Leslie Pearse Lyons (Mat), Lindsey Pearse Greiner (Jamie), Ryan Bryson (Kayla), Matthew Wilson (Ashley), Alana Wilson Fisher (Chris), and Jacob

Leschen, and 18 beautiful great grandchildren. He is also survived by several nieces and nephews, and special friends Chris and Donna Alley.

Jim will be remembered as a loving husband, dad, "Papa" and "Great Papa". Funeral services will be held on February 5, 2022 at 11 am at Our Lady of The Mountains Catholic Church in Highlands. The service will be followed by a reception at Wilson Barn, Wilson Gap Road, Highlands, NC, and the family would love to invite everyone to attend. Moffitt Family Funeral Care is honored to serve Mr. Petrone's family

...INVESTING continued from page 9

bed.

What I haven't included here are other things that happen on other days, like sales meetings, conventions, continuing education, listing presentations and appointments, walking lots with surveyors and septic people, doing research at the courthouse, running comps for people before

they make offers, or navigating the competition in this town with any other realtor to try to find your client a house! Or the fact that there's no such thing as a whole day off or vacation because of all the electronic means for contact. I've been sitting on the beach in Florida and received a text from good clients who knew I was on vacation, but

had to know about this property this instant, only to forget about it the next! Or the texts from clients at 7:00 on Sunday mornings (usually my only day off) because they also had to know about this house right then, even though they were not in a position to buy it!

But, really, nah, I guess we don't do much.

• BIZ/ORG NEWS •

• FINANCIAL MATTERS •

2021 Year in Review



Michael P Henderson, CFP® CKA®
Founder/Wealth Advisor
Crossover Point Advisors

It's been said "the more things change, the more they stay the same." 2021 is in the rear-view mirror and it's 2022, but many of the things that seemed a bit out of alignment last year still are.

While I was writing another article last year on January 6th, thousands of people were storming the Capital. A year later, some are still questioning the results of a very contentious election, with many on both sides wondering whether the former President will run again - or at least try to disrupt the 2024 election.

We've had a major piece of bi-partisan infrastructure legislation pass, but a massive spending package that includes substantial tax hikes and a much larger social safety net may or may not be in our future. We still have a pandemic raging around the world, and while most people in developed countries have been vaccinated, it appears Omicron didn't get the memo.

Our leaders, and their approach to the virus, seem to be in disarray. Countries are still shutting down while others like U.S. (and especially Florida), are making every attempt to keep things open while trying to hold the virus at bay.

Inflation

We did have something new last year that looks like it will be with us a bit longer than first expected - inflation.

Just last week, the January Consumer Price Index (CPI) revealed a 7% increase in prices for 2021 which is the highest level since 1982. Most of this is due to supply disruptions and the amount of money the Fed has pumped into this economy. To put it simply, there is too much money chasing too few goods. Sprinkle in a little pent-up demand from the pandemic, and voila, prices go up. The only question is - will the Fed run the economy into the ditch trying to tamp down inflation?

They've announced they will begin tapering (or slowing) the purchase of fixed income securities (bonds) and then allow the ones they own to roll off their balance sheet as they mature (in case you haven't heard, their balance sheet is \$8 trillion). They will also mostly likely begin to raise interest rates by the end of the year. We'll see.

Investor results

The good news is, we had a decent investing year, but so far in January, it doesn't look like a repeat. The market rally of 2021, as measured by the S&P 500, was not "broad based." In other words, the market gains were driven primarily by 5 or 6 very large tech companies. Small company stocks and International markets underperformed the US Large Cap universe by double digits.

So far in 2022, it looks like a rotation is occurring between the high-flying tech names of 2021, into more value-oriented parts of the market, which tend to perform better in rising interest rate environments. I believe we're in the middle innings of this business cycle and companies will likely experience another year of increased earnings. This should translate into higher stock prices. On the other hand, "as January goes, so go the year," so we'll see. Either way, if we do experience increased growth in profits, we may still have a good year. Stay safe.

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From left: Assistant District Governor Bill Swift and President

The Rotary Club of Highlands had the pleasure of a visit from Bill Swift, member of the Franklin Noonday Rotary Club and the Assistant District Governor for District 7670.



Acorns

FEBRUARY 1-14

10-30%

OFF

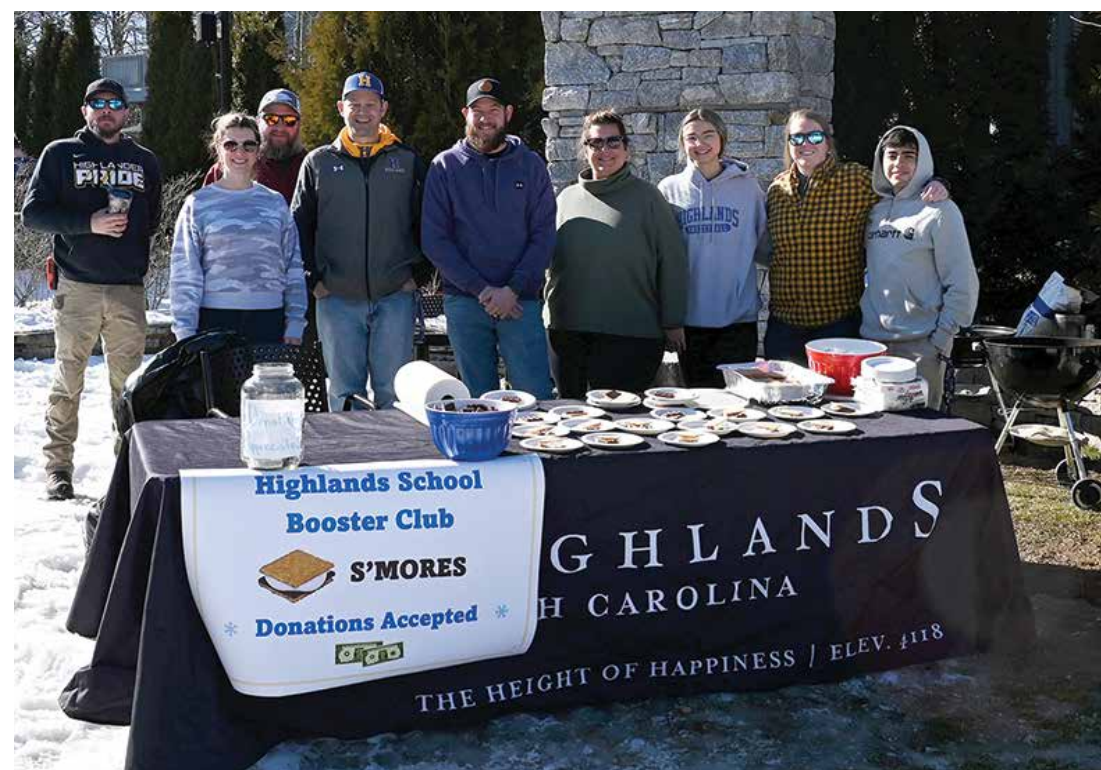
JEWELRY

on select items

10 AM - 5 PM, DAILY

212 S 4th Street
Highlands, NC

Frigid temps, snowfall and Snowfest last weekend



Photos by Kim Lewicki and Brian O'Shea

at Founders Park



A drone shot of frozen Lindenwood Lake.

— by Brian O'Shea

Stretch of cold temps freezes Lindenwood Lake

By Brian O'Shea
Plateau Daily News

It doesn't happen often, but several consecutive days of below freezing temperatures following Winter Storm Izzy has frozen Lindenwood Lake on the North Campus of the Highlands Biological Station.

"Happens 1-3 times a year," said HBS Associate Director Jason Love. "I've heard that it happened more often in the past and would stay iced over for a longer duration, and the ice would be

thick enough to walk on."

Lindenwood Lake is a few acres in size and relatively shallow, only approx. 8-feet deep at its lowest point.

Love said animals that use the Lake as a source of food will find a spot that is not frozen over or will seek out another lake entirely.

Harris Lake is located near Lindenwood Lake and also in Highlands. Harris Lake did not completely freeze, leaving just enough unfrozen area for the

ducks that call the lake their home access to food.

"They used to ice skate on Harris Lake, but I've been told it hasn't frozen over like it used to in the past, warmer winters," said Love.

It's been several years since skaters were seen on Harris Lake.

Love added that Lindenwood Lake was created in the early 1900s and is well over 100 years old.

About seven or eight years ago, Harris Lake froze long enough to be solid enough for folks to don skates and remember days of old when skating area ponds was common place.



Photo by Brian O'Shea

• HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

Ice Rink Schedule

• 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/>.

Sun. - Sat.

• Open in person meetings are held in Cashiers @ the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library, 249 Frank Allen Rd. on Sunday at 5:00 pm, on Tuesday @ 7 pm, on Friday at 5:00 pm and on Saturday at 9 am. Cashiers Open ZOOM Meetings are held on Monday @ Noon and 7 pm and on Wednesday @ 7 pm and on Saturday @ 9 am. ZOOM ROOM 921 817 2966 PASSWORD CVG2020. For more information please visit our website www.aawnc80.org or to speak with a member of A.A. 24/7 call our HELP Line 828 349-4357.

Mondays



Backyard Bird Count

Great Backyard Bird Count is Feb. 18-21 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 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. Stop by the Valentine Meadow (888 Horse Cove Road) on Saturday, Feb. 19 from 1 to 4 PM, there will be a bonfire, hot drinks, and bird-themed fun for all. For more information about the Great Backyard Bird Count and ways you can participate, visit www.birdcount.org.

• 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, call 828-526 – 0863 or email info@maconncliteracy.org

• **American Legion** meets Mondays at 9 AM Highlands United Methodist Church. All veterans invited

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.

Mon., Wed., Fri.

• Highlands/ Cashiers Alcoholics Anonymous Open Meetings are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. recovery program. Open meetings are held in Highlands @ the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 p.m. and on Wednesday & Fridays @ 12:00 noon.

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 combination class with many different types of exercise.

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.

Thurs. & Sat.

• The AL-ANON Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope in order to solve their common problems. An In Person Meeting with Covid 19 Preventive Measures is held each Thurs Noon at the 1st Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., Highlands. An AL-ANON Zoom Meeting is held each Saturday @ 10:15am ID:889-3772-7928 Password: EasyDoesit or to speak with a member of AL-ANON call 828-342-6866.

2nd Thurs. thru - May

• Story Telling & Listening at Shakespeare & Co. in Village Square from 2-4 p.m.

Sat., Feb 5

The Nantahala Hiking Club will take a 2 mile out and back easy hike on the Cove Forest and Anselm's trails on Saturday. There are several gentle ups and downs. We will meet Saturday morning, February 5, in the Piggly Wiggly parking lot in Dillard, Georgia, at 10 AM and carpool to Patterson Gap out of Dillard, Georgia on Betty Creek Road. After the hike we will drive a short distance up Betty Creek Road to Barker's Creek Mill to see the mill operate and have lunch. Visitors and well behaved dogs are welcome. Bring food and fluids as needed. There is no charge. Reservations are not needed. Current Covid protocols will be observed. For more information or in case of foul weather, call hike leader David Stearns at 828-349-7361.

• Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cashiers & Highlands Ice Skating Party 4-6 p.m. at the ice

rink in Highlands at 440 Oak Street. Skates and hot chocolate available at the rink. Children will receive a free ticket when they bring their adult to the BBBS Information Table. For more information call Danielle Hernandez at 828-599-9133.

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 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.

Sun., Feb 27

• Chefs Dinner at the Farm with Hugh Acheson & Christopher Hathcock. Book online at OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ AchesonandHathcock



COVID vaccinations & testing updates

Optum will continue Covid-19 testing and vaccination services on the Plateau through the end of February. Please assist us in getting the word out.

Covid-19 testing and vaccination will be offered on the following schedule:

• Covid-19 Testing at Village Green in Cashiers every Tuesday from 9-5. Walk-ins accepted, but you can schedule an appointment by calling (877) 562-4850 or going on line at lhi.care/covidtesting.

• Covid-19 Testing at Highlands Community Building every Wednesday from 9-5. Walk-ins accepted, but you can schedule an appointment by calling (877) 562-4850 or going on line at lhi.care/covidtesting.

• Covid-19 Vaccination at Highlands Rec Center every Thursday from 9-5. They will limit vaccines offered to adult and pediatric Pfizer. No appointments necessary or accepted.

A romantic prelude to Valentine's Day in Key West, FL ... with a few hiccups along the way (part 1)

Brittney Lofthouse

My husband and I spent the weekend in Key West for a surprise getaway. I am due to have ACL surgery next week, which will wreck any Valentine's Day plans we could have had but honestly, he and I just needed some "us" time.

So I booked the trip, didn't tell him anything other than to pack a bag, and he learned where we were going as we walked on the airplane in Asheville.

We love flying out of Asheville. The convenience is unmatched. We parked, walked into the airport, through security, and onto the plane AFTER arriving at the airport after the plane was set to board. I just don't think that would happen anywhere else. We usually expect some hiccups — it is never as smooth as larger airports and airlines — but for the most part, flying Allegiant out of Asheville is perfect.

I have been eyeing the direct flight to Key West since it was first announced and after Kim, my editor for the Highlands Newspaper took a trip last month ending in rave reviews, I booked our flights.

While I am sure this comes as little to no surprise to most of you, I am slightly impulsive. I booked the flights with little to no research on the actual island. I visited one time, maybe when I was 16 or so on a cruise with a friend, but other than that, embarrassingly enough I knew very little else.

As you can imagine, after my very inexpensive flights were booked, I think \$300 total round trip for the both of us, there was a little sticker shock when it came to lodging options. There are very few hotel chains in Key West and the ones that are there seem to operate more like timeshares. So needless to say, I booked the cheapest accommodations I could find on some third-party travel website — and for our three-night stay lodging ended up being about four times more



Brittney and Nick Lofthouse in Key West at the Southernmost Point.

than our flights. Regardless, I was excited for the adventure.

After we walk onto our flight in Asheville Thursday morning — with plans to land in Key West by 9:45, we were looking forward to breakfast on the beach — however, those plans were quickly derailed.

First, the pilot informed us that a spark plug was giving them trouble so we would be delayed taking off. Still not a problem. We would be in Key West by lunch with a tropical drink in our hands. And after taking off 30 minutes later than expected ... we thought we were well on our ... but again ... nope.

The pilot even instructed the flight attendants to prepare the cabin for arrival. We put away our electronic devices and buckled up preparing for our descent into Key West which abruptly ended as the pilot noticeably abandoned the landing and pulled the airplane back up.

Shortly thereafter he came over the speaker to inform us that the cloud ceiling was too low to land but they expected it to clear in about 20 minutes and that we had plenty of fuel to circle and wait... and wait... and wait... until an hour later when he informed us that we were going to run out of fuel and would be making an emergency stop in Ft. Lauderdale.

About 11:30 we touched down in Ft Lauderdale with hopeful flight attendants telling us they would update us as soon as they knew more and we would likely just be refueling and then back in the air heading toward our tropical paradise.

Right about the time the airplane doors opened and a gate attendant came onto the plane so we knew that was no longer going to be the case. After a 30-minute wait in a crowded, stuffy airplane full of passengers who, like us, probably skipped breakfast with plans to get something once they landed and were hungry and tired, we were informed that the airplane would not be going to Key West. We were given to options ... return to Asheville or get off the plane in Ft. Lauderdale.

A quick call to our Key West accommodations discovered we were not able to cancel our reservation so if we returned to home, we would be out all of that money.

Another quick check for a rental car showed that for \$60 we could rent a car and make the 3.5-hour drive to Key West ourselves. So, the adventure continued by car.

If you know anything about my husband Nick, you may know that first, he was already extremely anxious to be taking a surprise trip that he couldn't control and now with plans overwhelmingly de-

railed he was LESS than pleased. However, I give him all the credit in the world for holding his tongue and trying to make the most of a less-than-ideal situation.

I will say, the drive to Key West was incredible. I do not regret that one bit and am actually extremely grateful we got to have that experience. It's essentially 100 miles of coastal views and beautiful blue waters. Beaches on both sides, minimal traffic, picture-perfect weather — really incredible. The first few times Nick and I hung out we would just go on drives. It is our favorite thing to do, so that opportunity quickly became a welcomed disruption.

What we had hoped would be breakfast in paradise turned into being a very late check-in at our accommodations, the Simonton Court Historic Inn and Cottages.

Nick and I are night and day in just about everything. Had he been in charge of booking a hotel, he would have agonized over it for days. Read every review on every travel site, google mapped the property and its location in relation to possible activities. I, however, clicked book and didn't even remember the name of the place when we got there. I did absolutely no research. All I knew was it was the least expensive place with the exception of a hostel which I knew Nick would DIE over.

I also feel that at this point I need to be fully transparent that Nick's reluctance and obsessive nature when booking our vacations is probably greatly exasperated by the fact that the first time I was responsible for booking our hotel, we ended up with bed bugs that cost us \$10,000 to get rid of. This was followed by a couple of years later when I finally convinced him to trust me to book somewhere again which ended up in him not even pulling into the hotel parking lot because the area of town it was in was horrendous.

Obviously, I do not have a good track record. But since he didn't know about the trip it was up to me.

To our absolute astonishment, I knocked it out of the PARK with Simonton Court. I think I have officially fully redeemed myself and my past hotel blunders with this one. The property was incredible. An old cigar factory, it was easiest the most luxurious place I have ever stayed. I say it was the least expensive place I could find, but that doesn't mean it was cheap. It was still several hundred dollars a night but worth every single penny. It honestly was its own paradise. Four heated pools, cottage kitties roaming the brick pathways that were sheltered by dripping palm trees, and a continental breakfast that would have had a line down the block had it been open to the public. It was an absolute dream.

It was at that moment Nick and I realized that this was more than a vacation. This was the honeymoon we never had.

With absolutely no research into Key West or where we were staying, imagine our surprise when we found out that we were staying on the backside of the middle of Duval Street... THE street in Key West.

Just a few short steps outside of our garden oasis was every restaurant, bar, club, shop, you could imagine. We could not have been in a better location. Such a beautiful accident.

I am a sucker for the preservation of history. But not just the preservation of history the art of preserving the foundation of something while repurposing it to serve a modern function. I am sure there is some fancy name for that but whatever that is, I LOVE it. That is one of the many reasons why I love the Southern Porch in Canton so much. Anyway, Key West is all of that — they have masterfully kept the rich history of the island and found the perfect balance to incorporate modern progress while allowing the two to exist together simultaneously. Whatever it is called... it is art.

• To be continued Feb. 10

...MISSION continued from page 1

Healthcare's North Carolina division, issued a statement that read, "We are delaying only those surgeries that our team feels can safely be delayed. As always, we continue to take all emergencies including heart attack, stroke,

or trauma patients and our ER [emergency room] doors are always open."

Lindell said the surgery schedule at Highlands-Cashiers Hospital is unchanged.

"Mission Health is honored to have

such dedicated team members to care for our community during these challenging times. We continue to encourage vaccination for everyone as it is extremely effective in keeping people from having to be hospitalized," she said.

In the memo it was explained that the hospital staffing has been challenged due to the number of employees on quarantine; however, Mission anticipate this to improve significantly over the next two weeks.

The memo was also signed by Dr. Anthony Spensieri, Mission Hospital's chief medical officer; Dr. Matthew Young, assistant chief medical officer; Dr. Ansley Miller, the hospital's chief of staff; and Dr. Gordon Groh, a surgeon.

As the highly transmissible omicron variant of the COVID virus spreads — mostly among people who have not been vaccinated — hospitals in other COVID hotspots have taken similar steps to keep emergency beds open and available, including postponing scheduled surgeries. In some cities the omicron surge is already declining.

In a confidential briefing to Mission staff earlier this month, Dr. William Hathaway, the chief medical officer for the six-hospital Mission Health system, said the peak omicron surge was expected to reach western North Carolina at the end of January or beginning of February. But he also noted that in other cities the number of cases dropped sharply after the peak.

HCA administrators at first refused to make vaccinations mandatory for hospital staff, arguing that some essential workers might quit rather than submit to the mandate, causing staffing shortages that could result in curtailed services. But by not re-

quiring vaccinations, which have been proven to reduce the number and severity of COVID infections, the policy risked a rapid spread of COVID among healthcare workers, with the same result.

After federal courts upheld the mandates, HCA gave workers until Jan. 27 either to receive their first vaccination or to apply for an exemption on religious or other grounds.

The flagship Mission Hospital has 10,500 employees and is licensed for 815 beds, according to its website. Lindell, the Mission spokesperson, said the "vast majority" of workers had been vaccinated, but she declined to give a number or percentage, or to say how many have requested exemptions.

A chart used by Dr. Hathaway in his Jan. 10 briefing suggested that infections among Mission healthcare workers were already soaring before the omicron peak, appearing to top 190 new cases in the first week of the new year.

"If staff test positive, they can receive quarantine pay and cannot return to work until their symptoms have passed," Lindell said Tuesday.

However, as reported earlier, in his Jan. 10 briefing, Dr. Hathaway said Mission had reverted to "contingency" staffing, which under HCA guidelines means that workers can return after five days, with or without testing negative, even if they are "mildly symptomatic."

• *Asheville Watchdog* is a nonprofit news team producing stories that matter to Asheville and Buncombe County. Peter H. Lewis is a former senior writer and editor at *The New York Times*. He can be reached at plewis@avlwatchdog.org

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...GARNER continued from page 1



Garner is seated 14th in the 50 and 21st in the 100.

Twenty-four swimmers will be selected in each event to go to the 1A & 2A NC High School State Championships the following weekend -- six from each of the three regions and the six fastest swimmers at large who did not finish in the top six of their regions.

So, to have a chance to go to States, Garner must finish in the top 12 or higher in the West Regionals in one or both of his events.

...PLAYHOUSE continued from page 1

has gone through many phases in its 83-year history. Founded as the Highlands Little Theatre in the late 1930's, renamed Highlands Community Theatre in 1949, and later incorporated, receiving 501(c)(3) status, as Highlands Community Theatre Inc., in 1972.

As the organization grew over the next several decades, so did the number of shows produced, along with the number of talented actors, designers and technicians needed for each season. In the early 1980s, Highlands Community Theatre Inc. started hiring professional actors and technicians to share their talents on the plateau. No longer a community theatre, the identity of the organization became that of the building it has occupied for nearly a century, The Highlands Playhouse.

"At The Highlands Playhouse, we are proud of our legacy and are excited to have emerged from an unfortunate COVID hibernation to provide an escape for our mountain community. The Playhouse has been a fixture of our community for almost a century - first used as a school auditorium and then as a venue for performing arts for over

80 years. After 18 months of closure, we are thrilled to have not only re-opened, but also reimagined the possibilities for our future," said Clif Gottwals, Treasurer, Mountain Theatre Company at The Highlands Playhouse. "2022 is an exciting year for us - as we celebrate not only what we do but where we do it. Mountain Theatre Company is the new name we will be using for our expanded year-round programming... bringing live theatre and cinematic entertainment to our community. The Highlands Playhouse is our home, but the Mountain Theatre Company is who we are. Welcome Home!"

Scott Daniel, now dubbed Mountain Theatre Company Executive Artistic Director said the change isn't about rebranding or renaming the Playhouse but giving

an identity to the theatre organization within the Playhouse.

"The historical Highlands Playhouse name will always refer to the building at 362 Oak Street," said Daniel. "With Mountain Theatre Company, we are simply distinguishing between the name of the theatre company (who) and the name of the building (where). With our expanded programming and full-time artistic leadership, we now have the ability to perform in a variety of venues which we will begin doing this year."

Along with a new name for the resident organization, Mountain Theatre Company (MTC) at The Highlands

Playhouse announces their 2022 season. The four Mainstage productions are Jersey Boys, Sentimental Journey, Brooklyn: The Musical, and a new annual tradition; Home for The Holidays.

In addition to these Mainstage productions, there will be first-run Feature Films, the wildly popular Curated Cinema Series, and the inaugural presentation of Corked! A Musical Wine Tasting playing in tandem with the Highlands Food & Wine Festival which will take place in one of the beautiful non-traditional performance venues on the plateau.

MTC also introduces new ticket bundles for their 84th season. Patrons can now purchase Ticket Bundles to use as they choose for both the Mainstage productions and Feature Films. Sponsors and Ticket Bundle holders receive early access to Mainstage tickets and seating reservations on March 15, with tickets available to the public on March 30.

"The mountains are where we gather to escape and embrace the wonders of nature. The theatre is where we escape and embrace the gifts and stories shared by passionate artists. This spectacular selection of shows celebrates the gifts we have to give, the journey we take to share them, and the hands that guide us along the way. I hope that you will join us on that journey and support the exciting future of live theatre and entertain-

ment in our community," said Scott Daniel, Mountain Theatre Company Executive Artistic Director.

Mountain Theatre Company at The Highlands Playhouse will present Feature Films and Curated Cinema starting March

18 with showings Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.

To learn more, become a Sponsor, purchase tickets, and sign up for updates at MountainTheatre.com

— Contributed to by Kim Lewicki



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QUESTIONS?

**CALL PROGRAM COORDINATOR,
DANIELLE HERNANDEZ, AT (828) 399-9133.**



...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING from page 18

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan's Purse. These two ministries are working together to resettle some 50 thousand-plus Afghan families already in the United States and currently living on military bases across our nation. Our goal is to help them get settled into our church-

es, schools and communities. If you're interested please let me know.

God bless you and God bless America. I pray that many thousands of churches will be His Hands and Feet in rendering encouragement and aid to our persecuted brothers and sisters.

• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •

Afghanistan is number one



Pastor Dan Robinson
Highlands Central Baptist Church

Open Doors is an international ministry which deals particularly with the persecution of Christians world wide.

This should be a concern for every American from a humanitarian standpoint. And for every Christian from a spiritual standpoint.

The following excerpt is from Open Doors:

Today 16 of our Christian brothers and sisters will be murdered; They might be attacked by an extremist group bent on crippling the Church; They could die by the hands of their tribe because they're seen as traitors; Or they might perish from starvation denied access to food and water by the community; Whatever the means, they will ALL die because at one point in their lives, they made the decision to follow Jesus.

This news should strike all of us deeply within our souls. Open Doors goes on to report that in 2021: "5,110 churches or Christian buildings were attacked; 4,765 Christians were unjustly arrested or detained; And; 3829 Christians were abducted for their faith or faith related reasons."

Some 5,900 lost their lives in 2021 because of their commitment to Jesus Christ.

Now at the top of the list of the 50 countries in the world with the highest rate of persecution of Christians is Afghanistan. It has replaced North Korea which held that spot for more than 20 years.

These sobering statistics remind me of several truths:

- To whom much is given, much is required. The blessing of God on America should spur us into prayer and action. Some however, take the blessing for granted. And in this very materialistic culture of ours they only want more.

- Persecution of the Church has always resulted in Church growth. Persecution doesn't stop the Church. It seems rather to strengthen, and deepen her.

- Prosperity on the other hand has always seemed to slow the Church down. A prosperous Church is frequently an independent Church with no significant need of/for the help and strength of God. This was the case of the Church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:17-18).

- We are all accountable and will give an account of our lives to Jesus Christ one day. He spoke about the inseparability between Himself and His followers. We read in Matthew 25:40: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'"

We may paraphrase our Lord's words in this way: "The way I treat my brother or sister in Christ is the way I treat Christ in my brother or sister. Frankly convicting.

I hope that you will pray about these things. You can contact Open Doors and they will supply you with timely information.

Likewise, I would be delighted to help or encourage you along these lines as well. I serve as a volunteer with the

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 17

Proverbs 3:5

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

John 3:16

BLUE VALLEY 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. Arlyn Williams-Reubel. Pastor 828-743-5298

Sundays: School at 9:30 Worship 10:30

Wednesday night Dinner and Service 5:30

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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

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 • 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 • 526-8152

5th and Main streets • 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

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HIGHLANDS

828-526-4153 • www.fbchighlands.org

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

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

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

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Curtis Fussell & Emily Wilmarth, pastors

828-526-3175 • 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

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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

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909 Bluegrass and 10:50 Traditional

www.highlandsmethodist.org

HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

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

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We wear masks and social distance.

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Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

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mountainsynagoguewnc.com.

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4224 Big Ridge Road (4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

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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

THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Dec. 23. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or public officials have been used.

Dec. 23

• At noon, officers responded to a call of damaged property at K-H Founders Park where homemade candy cane decorations were vandalized.

Jan. 12

• At 8:41 p.m., Still Hunter, Jr., 82, was arrested for DUI when pulled over on Oak Street. He was issued a \$1,000 unsecured bond. His trial date is March 9.

Jan. 14

• At 11:06 p.m., officers responded to a medial call at a residence on Cullasaja Drive.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Jan. 26

Jan. 26

• At 10:03 a.m., the dept. re-

sponded to a fire alarm at a residence on Garnet Rock Trail.

• At 7:08 p.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to the Cashiers FD.

Jan. 27

• At 5:39 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cottage Row.

• At 8:19 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Wahoo Trail.

Jan. 28

• At 2:11 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Queen Mountain Road.

Jan. 29

• At 12:17 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Turtle Pond Road.

• At 4:14 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at the hospital.

Jan. 30

• At 1:05 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Smallwood Ave.

4 Chaplains Recognition Ceremony was held Feb. 3 at the Veteran's Plaza at the Town Hall complex on Oak St.

Sunday, Feb. 2, will mark the 77th anniversary of the sinking of the United States Army Transport Dorchester and the selfless acts of four Army chaplains aboard. The Dorchester tragically sunk on Feb. 3, 1943, while crossing the North Atlantic, transporting troops to an American base in Greenland. A German U-boat fired a torpedo that struck the Dorchester, killing 672 of the 902 officers and enlisted men, merchant seamen and civilian workers aboard. Many of those survivors owe their lives to the courage and leadership exhibited by four chaplains of different faiths, who, in sacrificing their lives, created a unique legacy of brotherhood.

As soldiers rushed to lifeboats, Reverend George Fox (Methodist), Jewish Rabbi Alexander Goode, Reverend Clark Poling (Dutch Reformed) and Father John Washington (Roman Catholic) comforted the



wounded and directed others to safety. One survivor watched the chaplains distribute life jackets, and when they ran out, they removed theirs and gave them to four young men.

As the Dorchester sank, the chaplains were seen linked arm in arm, praying.

American Legion posts nationwide remember Four Chaplains Day with memorial services that pay tribute to the courageous chaplains and the brave young men who lost their lives on that fateful night.

...STRs continued from page 1

said in that meeting.

"In closed session attorneys Craig Justice and Jay Coward briefed the Town Board concerning the status of the Huff Lawsuit including the town's motion to dismiss. No formal action or directives were made by the board," reads the statement. "We made a motion to dismiss but the court has not ruled on that motion at this time."

The second part was a voyage through the weeds as commissioners offered their suggestions about the Planning Board's recommendations for amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) regarding Short-term Rentals (STRs) – mostly parsing verbiage, parcels versus structures, etc.

Though the 40 citizens who attended were hoping for some new information or closure of some kind, Attorney Justice made it clear that everything said was just talk and nothing else.

"Any type of discussion like this is merely ideas and concepts and questions the board has and nothing anyone says is binding on the town or its amendments to

the ordinance; these are just comments being made so anyone taking notes about exactly what is being said needs to know these are just comments and not binding on the town," he said.

In addition, Justice informed the board that Tuesday night's proceedings were premature.

A Public Hearing should have taken place after the Planning Board submitted its ordinance recommendations to the Town Board; work on the ordinance should have started with comments made by the public.

As it stands now, a Public Hearing will be held Thursday, Feb. 24 at 5 p.m. at the Community Building. Another Town Board workshop will be held soon after during which commissioners will take the public's comments into consideration while adding its own recommendations to the Planning Board's draft ordinance.

Assistant Planning Director Michael Mathis presented two reports – one a summary of the Planning Board's recommendations which have been reported on numerous times with nothing new, and the other was staff recommendations.

Staff suggested the category of Transient Dwelling Lodging – which is renting a house less than seven days – be nixed.

"We recommend that the term Transient Dwelling Lodging be removed and the term Whole House Short Term Rental be changed to describe STRs of 30 days or less," he said reading from his report. "Then, the board could elect to place a minimum length of stay in the notes section based on the underlying zoning district."

The initial proposed definition for Whole House STRs was less than 30 consecutive days but no less than a minimum duration of seven days.

Mathis said having two definitions confused matters for the Planning Board.

However, no comment regarding the nixing of the Transient Dwelling definition or the Whole House STR definition was mentioned again during the meeting.

Another issue brought up was the Planning Board's recommendation to allow Transient Dwelling Lodging in districts R3-B4 and on a limited basis in R2 based on location and adjacent land use.

In other words, if a home in the R2

zone is near a highway or other commercial businesses in that zone then the owner could rent it out less than seven days. But, if a home in R2 is in a more residential area – like Mirror Lake – then renting less than seven days wouldn't be allowed.

Town Manager Josh Ward said if that tack was taken, then a whole new zone would have to be formed which Commissioner John Dotson, Attorney Justice and other commissioners agreed wasn't a good idea.

Justice reminded the board that R2 is a buffer zone between R1 and business districts and was set up for a reason.

Certain uses such as soft businesses are allowed anywhere in R2 regardless of where they are located in the district and so allowances, whatever they are, need to cover the entire district.

Much was discussed about whether STRs or habitation should be allowed in accessory buildings in any zone even though the definition of accessory buildings is pretty clear in the draft ordinance.

Customary Accessory Outbuildings

• See STRs page 22



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• CLASSIFIEDS •

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MASON & HAMLIN UPRIGHT PIANO AND BENCH, mahogany, fully restored by Ward Piano Co. three years ago. \$2500. Call 828-506-7025, Highlands. (st. Jan 6)

HELP WANTED



GIFTED AND SPIRIT-FILLED MUSICAL-WORSHIP DIRECTOR to lead First Baptist Church Highlands, NC in authentic praise and worship. We at First Baptist love Jesus and each other. After COVID we have enjoyed musical worship with our wonderful interim director, but it is time to find God's choice for a permanent experienced music director who plays at least one musical instrument, can promote song direction in a gracious and effervescent way, and lead us into a very deep and authentic worship. You will plan a mix of contemporary praise and hymns, work with our incredible Pastor Mark, both adults and children and join with a congregation completely devoted to Jesus Christ and the absolute truth of His Word. Please send an abbreviated resume to diann at dscat@bellsouth.net, or query by phone to diann at 904-5346115. Or call the church at 828-5264153. Salary to be based on qualifications and your fit for our needs. (st. 2/3)

CASHIERS COLOR CENTER is looking to hire a full-time individual to assist in the paint department. Duties will include mixing paint, assisting customers with color selections and sundry items, stocking shelves and daily cleaning. Must be able to lift 50 pounds. This individual must be dependable, self-motivated, have great customer service skills and be willing to learn. We will offer on-the-job training, so experience is not necessary. For more information, call Derek Taylor @ 828-200-9226, or stop by Cashiers Color Center to fill out an application. (Jan 20-Feb 10)

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 lindabtiff@aol.com.

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)

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

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• HIGHLANDS SCHOOL BASKETBALL •



Photos by Brian O'Shea, Plateau Daily News



Lady Highlanders defend home turf against BREC

Highlands girls varsity basketball team hosted Blue Ridge Early College on Tuesday and won solidly with a 79-45 final.

Left: Highlands Hayley Borino takes the ball coast to coast with BREC Peyton Bryson on her heels.

Highlands varsity boys beat BREC at home

Highlands boys varsity basketball team took on Blue Ridge Early College at home on Tuesday and won with a final score of 54-35.

Bottom left: Highlands Jeffrey Olvera takes an off-balance jump shot with BREC Tyler Green in

...STRs continued from page 19

appurtenant to single-family dwellings are private garages, noncommercial buildings such as greenhouses and workshops and no residential lodging of any kind is allowed.

Attorney Justice said that for an accessory building to be habitable it would have to meet the county building code so habitation in an accessory building that doesn't meet the building code is a nonissue.

Commissioner Marc Hehn wondered if kitchens should be allowed in habitable accessory buildings and if a rule concerning the number of kitchens on a parcel should be discussed – which presumably could curtail STRs in general.

Commissioner John Dotson said a lot of homes in all Highlands' residential districts have more than one kitchen so that would not be fair or doable.

Regarding violations cited by a code enforcement officer, much was discussed about who would be responsible -- the owner or the manager of the property, even if it's a real estate company – or both.

The Planning Board suggested three strikes and you are out for six months if cited for violations regarding noise, garbage or parking.

Police Chief Andrea suggested making the owner the citable and responsible party whose records and contact information would be readily available versus a manager.

"We need one person who owns the home to be responsible. Trying to hold a company or the person who just happens to be holding a job at the time responsible, would be difficult," she said. "We need to stick to one person."

Justice said for sure the owner who is the permit holder will be held accountable but when someone other than the owner – like a manager is in charge – the manager could be cited, too.

Finally, Commissioner Amy Patterson brought up the elephant in the room – vested interests and grandfathering.

She contended that a non-conforming

use – a use allowed because it was started prior to ordinances prohibiting such – is not the same as a vested right.

But Justice said the two are synonymous.

"Non-conforming is a local government term and vesting is a court term and they are one in the same," he said. "I suggest you look at Godfrey vs. Zoning Board of Adjustment. The terms are synonymous."

In that case, the Zoning Board of Adjustment held that the owners' use of the property was a nonconforming use and was entitled to continuation under the zoning ordinance.

However, regarding that, if accepted, an amended part of the UDO was discussed. It would read: a nonconforming use shall not be changed, enlarged or expanded, including expanding use into any part of a building or property not previously occupied or in use as the date when the legal nonconformity was established.

But that, too, raises questions, as the town has long held that if a non-conforming structure is demolished or burned to the ground, it can be rebuilt on the same footprint as long as it doesn't become more non-conforming. Obviously, the structure will change when rebuilt, so the word "change" in that statment is confusing.

From the beginning, Justice has said that STRs in existence today in any zone would be allowed to continue by the current owner or a new owner unless renting stopped for 24 months. He said the vested right goes with the land not the owner, whether old or new.

Since the issue of vested interests is a hot topic, Justice suggested that part be tackled separately so the board can move forward at a fair pace.

The required Public Hearing is Thursday, Feb. 24 at 5 p.m. at the Community Building.

– Kim Lewicki

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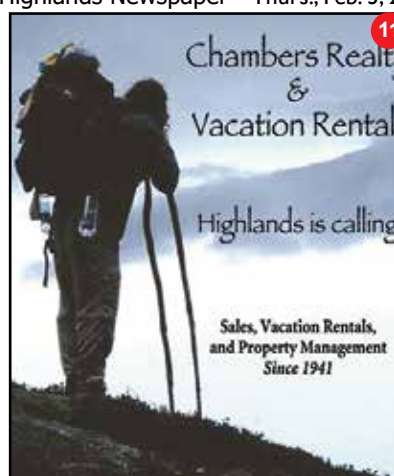
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pat@patallenrealtygroup.co
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Julie Osborn

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