

# Highlands Newspaper

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

FREE Every Thursday

Volume 20, Number 11      Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com      Thurs., March 16, 2023

## New STR act - SB290 shores up NC's Vacation Rental Act

It's not clear if a new act moving through the NC legislature is the Short-term Rental legislation Highlands Town Board has been waiting on before making changes to or expanding its STR regulations. The litigation between the

town and Save Highlands has been stayed, as well, while both sides wait to hear if new legislation will

• See STR page 8



Highlands Addie Westendorf makes her way to the Lady Eagles' goal on the road last week. See story and photos on page 17.  
- Photo by Brian O'Shea, Plateau Daily News

## Commissioners consider ending agreement with Fontana Library System

By Kim Lewicki & Brittney Lofthouse  
The Fontana Library System bi-monthly meeting held at the Hudson Library in High-

lands Tuesday, was commandeered by attendees from Franklin and Highlands who were there to speak against the library's policies regard-

• See LIBRARY page 10

## HF&R, HHS, ABC Store and MLIA get air time at retreat

Fiscally, all is more than well in Highlands. At the town's annual budget retreat last Thursday, Treasurer Rebecca Shuler presented her mid-year review and if figures continue to rise, by the close of FY '22-'23 the town will be better off financially than ever before.

Property tax collections are at 99.28% with an increase in revenue compared to Feb. 2022 of \$92,992.09; Sales Tax revenue is already at \$836,906.94 and have increased approximately \$44,923.05 from February 2022;

Franchise Tax is at \$83,267.87 and has increased by \$18,773.26 from February 2022;

And the General Fund rev-

• See RETREAT page 14

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### Wreck leaves driver safe

According to reports, around 4 p.m., on Saturday, March 11, a 27-year-old Franklin woman avoided serious injury after she flipped her car on her way out of Highlands and veered off NC 64 near Oak Street. HF&R Assistant Chief Robbie Forrester said the driver was traveling towards Franklin and did not follow the curve of the road. She crossed into the opposing lane of traffic and continued on to the bank along the roadside. Forrester said the car slid along the steep bank for an estimated 50 feet before coming to a stop upside down. HPD Chief Andrea Holland estimated the driver was traveling over 45 mph.

- Kim Lewicki and Brian O'Shea

### Highlands PD asks for help

On October 13, 2023, over \$1500 worth of tools were stolen from a construction site at or near 1st Street in Highlands. Between March 9, 2023, and March 13, 2023, over \$1,000 were stolen from a construction site at 110

• See HPD page 19

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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### How the FY '23-'24 budget relates to taxes

Last Thursday, the Town Board and staff conducted an all-day budget workshop, aka the Highlands Town Retreat. This event signaled the start of the budget process for the coming year. It will be followed up by a number of afternoon budget workshops this spring.

The retreat started with a midyear report by our Town Manager and our Financial Director. The budget always appears to be huge due to enterprise funds related to the operation of our electricity, water, sewer, and sanitation utilities.

The 7.3-million-dollar general fund is not that big. The general fund comes from 3 million dollars in town property taxes, \$1.5 million in sales taxes, state franchise taxes, and town zoning and building fees. We also have a fire tax that brings in \$1.2 million.

The general fund keeps basic government functions operative, such as administrative services, maintaining town properties, paving streets, zoning/planning,



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

mapping/GIS, recreation, and police operations.

Residents within the town receive a tax bill from the county. A third of the bill is a town tax bill, and the other two-thirds is a county tax bill. Yes, Highlanders are also county residents, too. So, when a town resident gets a property tax bill, say \$3,600, about \$1,000 is in town taxes, and \$2,600 are county taxes. For folks on the Highlands Plateau residing outside the town, their bill would be only

\$2,600 in county taxes for a property of the same valuation.

I hope our Macon County friends and elected colleagues continue to appreciate these facts. Highlands residents and the residents of the extended township of the plateau currently pay about 46% of the total taxes of Macon County. Or put another way, about 6,000 residents of the Highlands Plateau pay almost half the taxes of the entire 38,000 Macon County population. The property tax rate for Highlands is currently 15.6 cents per \$100 of property, and the county rate is 40 cents per \$100 of property.

Our Public Works Director always has a retreat report full of big-ticket infrastructure needs.

The report includes paving roads, replacing and upgrading equipment in our water and sewer plants, as well as upgrades to the electrical department.

The budget needs for the coming fiscal year, like always, will require using reserve funds for critical projects and equipment. The town relies on reserves to avoid carrying high debt loads. For instance, we will pay cash for the proposed \$275,000 garbage truck. This vehicle is not a boondoggle expense but rather essential for garbage service.

Highlands has always had a conservative fiscal policy of prioritizing needs and funding them following a phased plan. Using this strategy, the town has made significant improvements to critical programs in recreation and upgrades to our water and sewer systems, plus instituting vigorous

• See MAYOR page 7

## • HIC'S VIEW •



## • WEATHER •

Thu, 16-Mar	Fri, 17-Mar	Sat, 18-Mar	Sun, 19-Mar
55°F 39°F	51°F 28°F	43°F 21°F	42°F 23°F
Partly sunny	Rain in the afternoon	Breezy in the afternoon	Mostly sunny and chilly
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### Highlands Newspaper

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

Phone: (828) 200-1371

Email:

[HighlandsEditor@aol.com](mailto:HighlandsEditor@aol.com)

Publisher/Editor: Kim Lewicki

Reporters: Brittney Lofthouse

Brian O'Shea

Digital Media/Circulation - Jim Lewicki

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# • INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft •

## Celtic Times in Highlands

Hopefully you're either headed here to celebrate St. Patrick's Day in Highlands, or you're already in town. Perhaps you were kissed by a leprechaun last night during a dream and you're feeling it's time to consider residing here either full- or part-time. You should know that Scotch-Irish laborers and craftsman helped found Highlands, NC. in the late 1800's and their descendants are now local Real Estate Brokers, (sounds like blarney, but I'm not kidding). Celtic heritage abounds in Highlands. Heck, our High School mascot is a Bagpiper for crying out loud. To reference a song written in 1959 by Johnny Cash while vacationing in Ireland, Highlands is "40 Shades of Green!"

To help you navigate St. Patrick's Day in Highlands, I thought it might be helpful to familiarize you with a few "Celtic Sayings" that you and the locals can exchange while you're here. That way you can respond accordingly and not get weird looks. So here goes:

"May the Road Rise Up to Meet You" A Celtic Christian phrase often toasted at weddings or needlepointed on pillows; it literally means "may God remove all obstacles from your life." The Irish often use images of nature to show God's interaction with man. Like, "May the wind always be at your back," "May the sun shine warm upon your face," and so on.

"Sl'aint!" (Pronounced "sloan-sha"). Head for the Ugly Dog Pub or Highlands Tavern. As soon as you walk to the bar, look at the person seated next to you and proclaim "Sl'aint!" You'll be saying "I drink to your health." It may even get you a free drink! The Irish word "slan" in Gaelic means "safe." If you're here from Atlanta... you're pretty safe (even from the bears)!

"What's the craic?" Other versions are "Any craic" and "How's the craic." These



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often give rise to an awkward misunderstanding from tourists because it's pronounced "crack," which may mean something different where they're from. It's really a straightforward saying in Ireland for fun or enjoyment and is a substitute for "How are you?" If nobody's run away at this point, a typical response is "divil a bit," which means "not much."

"Two People Shorten the Road" From Celtic folklore, the essence of this one is that company makes a journey fly by. According to lore, a father asks his son to shorten their journey to see the King, but the son doesn't know what his father means, so they stop for the night and the son asks

his mother for clarity. She quickly explains that "everyone knows that storytelling is the way to shorten the road." The next morning, the son weaves a tall tale, all the way to Highlands! There's a message here for all of us. As we travel together the trip gets shorter, especially when storytelling, conversation, good jokes, and road games (remember those) take the place of headphones, video games, texts, and cell phone calls.

Along with my wife (Bee) and myself, there are 312 Real Estate Brokers ready to help you buy, sell, show, and talk real estate, and today we're all Irish. We'll even buy you a Guinness this weekend if you ask! I leave you with my favorite Irish toast... "May you escape the gallows, avoid the stress, and be as healthy as a trout!"

• Pat Gleeson, Bee Gleeson, Christal Green and Gemma are proud to be a team of "Helpers" and Real Estate Brokers at Highlands-Sotheby's International Realty in downtown Highlands (Kitty Corner from Old Edwards Inn). You can reach all of us at 828.526.8300. Please stop by for coffee and conversation.



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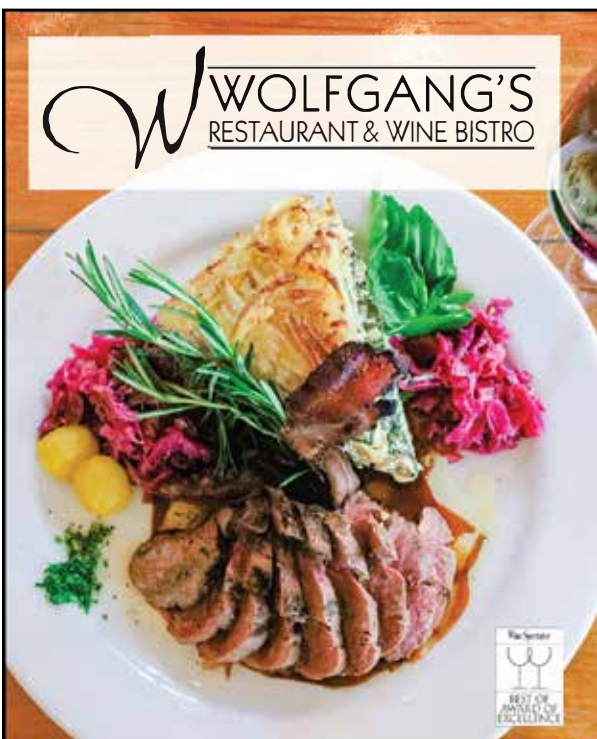
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# • OBITUARY •

## Thomas Earlin Barnes

Thomas Earlin Barnes, 76, of Franklin, went home to be with the Lord on Sunday, March 12, 2023.

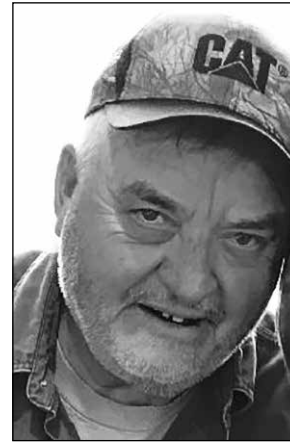
Born in Highlands, NC, he was the son of the late Rev. Harvey Rondal and Charlotte Tilson Barnes. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two sisters, Helen Bertilee Pendergrass, and Eloise Bryson; and one brother, Charles Barnes; also, a much loved brother-in-law Homer Bryson.

Earlin was of the Baptist faith. He loved hunting, wood working, and most of all spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren and great grandchildren. He will be remembered for his stone masonry craftsmanship with Barnes Masonry and his wood crafting with Barnes Hand Crafted Wood Working.

He is survived by his wife, Janice Snow Barnes of Franklin, NC; two sons, James Lester Barnes of Barkers Creek, NC, and Thomas Kyle Barnes (Cindy) of Sylva, NC; two daughters, Bridgett Barnes of Franklin, NC, and Rebecca Guthrie (Jon) of Gulf Shores, AL; and two sisters, Edith Victorine of Thomasville, GA, and Ella Rebecca Suter of Alexandria, VA. Also surviving are his eleven grandchildren, Amanda Brooks, Campbell Barnes, Luke Barnes, Austin Queen, Meghan Partain, Alyssa Chandler, Hannah Guthrie, Sarah Guthrie, Noah Guthrie, Leah Guthrie, and Emmah Guthrie; six great grandchildren, Maya, Noam, Nora, Adam, Thomas, and John; and numerous nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be at 3pm on Sunday, March 19, in the chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Rev. Roy Lowe will officiate. The family will receive friends, from 2pm to 3pm, one hour prior to the service at the funeral home.

While we will dearly miss Thomas, also known as Paw, his favorite most cherished role. We will remember him as the Godly, wise, and courageous man who never failed



to show us his ever-faithful love. Thomas trusted in the Lord with all his heart and led his family with that faith and love. His life was a testimony of his faith in his loving Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 4:7-8

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the Hospice House Foundation of WNC, PO Box 815, Frank-

lin, NC 28744.

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

Macon Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

## ...MAYOR continued from page 2

road and sidewalk projects. I anticipate the board following the same strategy for this new budget. With the feds driving interest rates up and with an inflationary environment, the town needs to avoid borrowing this year for infrastructure projects. A wait-and-see position is advisable.

Finally, I anticipate the town, as well as the county, to apply a revenue-neutral formula to counter those recent sky-high property revaluations. Applying this formula means the town will take in no more revenue than in past years. The tax rate will be adjusted down from 15.6 cents to around 9.5 cents. The county rates could go from 40 cents to around 25 cents. After those revenue-neutral adjustments are made, elected officials could increase the millage rates as a tax increase. I don't see the Town of Highlands doing so, but not necessarily for the county. If the new high school is built, and I hope it is, county taxes will have to increase. I look at that prospect as an investment for all residents.

The Town Board meeting is Thursday, March 16, at 7 pm.

# • CORRECTION •

The original version of our press release "Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation Names New Board Leadership for 2023" that ran in the March 9 edition, incorrectly stated in the first paragraph that "the Executive Committee of its Board of Directors has elected Dr. Barbara Blumer Corcoran as Board Chair." It should have stated that "its Board of Directors has elected Dr. Barbara Blumer Corcoran as Board Chair." The correct election process has been amended. We apologize for the error.

**Josh Bryson**

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## ...STR continued from page 1

help either of their cases.

So far, from the looks of it, SB 290 – introduced March 9 by NC Senator Vickie Sawyer, who represents Iredale and Yadkin counties, which was sent on to the Rules and Operation of Senate committee on March 13, is the only STR-related legislation in the pipeline.

Also, from the looks of it, it doesn't address the town's amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance regarding STRs – specifically that homeowners can't rent homes as STRs unless in existence as such prior to Sept. 15, 2022, nor does it address amortization of STRs – which the Town Board wants to invoke to rid Highlands of STRs forever more.

Instead, according to the act's summary, the purpose of the act is to simply improve the safe rental of certain properties by requiring compliance with local ordinances and codes and by establishing a maximum occupancy limitation.

The verbiage in the act makes it clear that all parties are subject to making sure "safe rental" is a reality – the owner of the property, the tenant, and the governing body.

The Vacation Rental Act – 42A – stands as the foundation of the new act.

In the bill summary SB 290 amends GS 160D-1207 (pertaining to periodic inspections under minimum housing codes) to clarify that nothing in that law will be deemed to prevent a local government from enforcing ordinances related to maximum

occupancy, as that term is defined in the Vacation Rental Act (GS 42A-4) [VRA], for a vacation rental property that is subject to the provisions of the VRA.

The new act also adds maximum occupancy as a definition in the VRA, defined as the maximum number of persons allowed in a vacation rental, measure as an amount not exceeding four persons per bedroom. This is a departure from what has been allowed, which was two per bedroom.

It also amends GS 42A-31 (pertaining to the landlord's obligation to provide fit premises for a vacation rental) to require the landlord to (1) comply with all current applicable local ordinances and codes; and (2) accurately represent the number of bedrooms and bathrooms on the property and prohibit the rental of the property to a tenant if the maximum occupancy of four per bedroom will be exceeded. It also sets forth specifications on how to determine number of bedrooms and bathrooms on the property using tax records.

It also makes conforming changes to GS 42A-32 (tenant's obligation to maintain dwelling unit under the VRA) and GS 42A-33 (responsibilities and liability of real estate broker under the VRA).

The act reiterates that in no event may a local government do any of the following: (i) adopt or enforce any ordinance that would require any owner or manager of rental property to obtain any permit or permission under Article 11 or Article 12 of this Chapter from the local government to lease or rent residential real property or to register rental property with the local government.

According to Town Planner Michael Mathis, the town doesn't require Special Use Permits for STRs accept for Tourist Homes, which has always been a requirement.

According to SB290, the only time a

local government can require an owner to obtain a permit or permission to operate a STR is for properties that have more than four verified violations in a rolling 12-month, or two or more verified violations in a rolling 30-day period, or upon the property being identified within the top ten percent (10%) of properties with crime or disorder problems as set forth in a local ordinance.

A local government may require periodic inspections as part of a targeted effort to respond to blighted or potentially blighted conditions within a geographic area that has been designated by the governing board.

However, the total aggregate of targeted areas in the local government jurisdiction at any one time shall not be greater than 1 square mile or five percent (5%) of the area within the local government jurisdiction, whichever is greater.

Basically, the owner of the property must make sure it is habitable and safe; the tenant must not do anything destructible to the property and must adhere to local garbage, noise and parking ordinances; and the rental agency must be on point concerning the property.

"It sounds like this would define maximum occupancy and how to specifically determine it. Also, it clarifies what the owner's, tenant's and the real estate broker's responsibilities are," said Town Manager Josh Ward.

The act has just started moving through the legislative process.

"Our attorneys will monitor the proposed STR legislation. As for SB 290, that is a proposed bill that could be amended as it goes through the legislative process in this long session," said Mayor Pat Taylor.

- Kim Lewicki



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## Play Bingo tonight for Highlands School students and teachers!

Bingo is set for Friday, March 17 at the Highlands Community Building from 6:30-8:30 pm. Each game card can be purchased for \$1. This is a cash only event. We will also have food, popcorn, a candy table, and 50/50 raffles. The 50/50 raffles are experiences around town including golf at private country clubs, gift cards at local restaurants/stores and many more.

Don't miss out this St. Patrick's day for a chance to win cash and raise money for Highlands School students & teachers! This event is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Highlands and is licensed by the State of North Carolina.



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## ...LIBRARY continued from page 1

ing books they consider hyper-sexual – specifically, those about homosexuality and transgender persons.

When they learned that public comment would not be allowed that day or in the future at the bi-monthly library system meetings, attendees became outraged – yelling their concerns at the board members.

Board members tried to explain over the discourse, that due to past disruptive behavior at their meetings by attendees who deemed certain offerings at the libraries inappropriate, the board has been unable to conduct its business. As such, their counsel advised them to no longer have a public comment period at meetings.

The board further cited NC GS 143-318.1 - Open Meetings Law, that states that open public meetings can include public comment, but it is not required.

Furthermore, the library system's counsel has said that since allowing public comment isn't in the system's by-laws, by allowing it, the system isn't in compliance with its own by-laws.

The reaction was explosive and loud.

"They have never done this before, this is intentional to censor us;" "Your policies have been crafted to intentionally censor us;" "I'm a school teacher, are you telling me I can't express my opinion?;" "This is a public forum and we have rights;" "If you love children you will let us speak;" "You have been advised by MC Commissioners to stop sexualizing children. And you have ignored the suggestion from County Commissioners;" "This is our library not yours. Our tax dollars pay for this library, why can't we speak?;" "How dare you not let us speak. This is America!;" "You continue to ignore us. That's why we keep showing up. This would be all over if you would just show a little common sense in your policies instead of continuing to censor us and continuing to try to promote your agenda from the American Library Association instead of Western NC."

The discourse continued for more than 15 minutes at which point attendees were invited to stay and listen to the meeting which had been called to order but was halted -- or leave.

"The meeting has been called to order. If you can't be quiet, we will have to ask you to leave the room," said the president of the board. "We are not going to be able to conduct the business we have today – the budget, the different grants we are getting, the update on the library buildings, the update on the Nantahala library building ..."

"We don't care about that," yelled one attendee.

Commissioner Danny Antoine also attended the meeting and when he learned that public comment would no longer be allowed at Fontana Library System board meetings, he said the MC Commission would get involved.

"If they are not allowing public speaking from this point on, we will take action on that," he said.

He invited everyone in the room to go down the mountain to the MC Commission meeting scheduled for that night at 6 p.m.

Many of the same attendees at the meeting in Highlands, spoke before the Board of Commissioners Tuesday night regarding the Macon County Public Library, with resident Jim Gaston specifically requesting Macon County not to renew its contract with the Fontana Regional Library System.

Gaston suggested that if Macon County were to pull out of the library system, they would have access to resources through the North Carolina Cardinal System, the statewide resource sharing system.

However, if Macon County were to pull out of the Fontana Regional Library System, the county would retain the library buildings, but all books, computers, and other resources within the libraries would remain the property of the library system and would not stay in Macon County.

Gaston also said that the county should consider pulling out of the library system to ensure that Macon County funds stay in Macon County.

However, since the current libraries are part of a three-county regional system of Macon, Jackson, and Swain counties, all three counties provide funding for the library system, which operates as a system – while also having individual budgets for each library.

The Macon County Public Library, as well as the Nantahala Library and the Hudson Library in Highlands, operates under a regional agreement with the Board of County Commissioners from Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties for the non-profit organization referred to the Fontana Regional Library System to provide public library services.

The last agreement, signed in 2013, states: "the Boards of County Commissioners of Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties recognize that collaboration provides the most effective and efficient means to pro-

• See LIBRARY page 22

**THURSDAY, APRIL 20**

*Orchard Session*

with **Mike Kinnebrew**

*purchase tickets*



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## GSM 'Park it Forward' program is now in effect

By Kristin Fox

On March 1, the Great Smoky Mountain National Park's new Park it Forward Program goes into effect, which will require paid parking permits along the parkway. Although the new program begins today, the Swain County Board of County Commissioners is continuing to express their opposition to the program, taking a step last week to look at legal options to address the issue.

In a closed session meeting following their final February regular session meeting, the board decided to take the next step, directing County Manager Kevin King to look into hiring an attorney to address the GSMNP Park It Forward Program on behalf of Swain County.

During the regular session meeting, the board also voted unanimously to submit the resolution they adopted on April 7, 2022 again under the new board leadership with Kevin Seagle as Chairman. Although several board members voiced that the language in the resolution should be stronger, they decided to resubmit the same resolution and possibly submit a revised, stronger resolution later.

"I think this is really weak, it is like asking a kid to stay out of the cookie jar," said Commissioner David Loftis. "I believe stronger language is needed."

"I wish it had a little more bite to it, to show them our feelings," agreed Commissioner Kenneth Parton.

Recently National Park Service Superintendent Cassius Cash attended a board meeting to give commissioners an update on the GSMNP parking fee program. Prior to the presentation, commissioners openly expressed their opposition to the program to Cash.

"I think Cash felt like he had been thrown to the wolves, but that was the only opportunity we have had to speak to him about the parking fees," said Parton. "We have not had the opportunity to speak."

Chairman Seagle agreed stating that was the first time he had ever meet the park superintendent.

Prior to Cash's presentation on the GSMNP parking fees program at the prior board meeting, each commissioner was given the opportunity to voice their concerns. The entire board is against the program and specifically wants an exemption to the required parking pass for all



Swain County residents.

The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians (EBCI) are exempt from paying the parking fees if their visit to the park is for traditional reasons. While the commissioners agree that the EBCI should be given this exemption, they feel the same privilege should be extended to all Swain County residents.

According to Cash in all parks all native indigenous tribes get entrance free passes to go into national parks for traditional purposes. He pointed out that if these same citizens are visiting the park for recreations purposes, they would be required to purchase a parking pass.

"If you can exclude one group because of practices in the past why can't you exclude everyone that considers it their sanctuary," Commissioners Phillip Carson told Cash. "If you are going to exempt them, you should give that same exemption to all the residents of Swain County."

The park will issue special use permits at no cost for Decoration Days, family reunions for descendants across the park and cemetery visits. Decoration Day permit holders will be exempt from the parking tag requirement for the duration of the permit. Each cemetery visit is unique, and park staff will work directly with descendants to coordinate special access.

As stated in the resolution, Swain County is home to upwards of 42 percent of the total park acreage. The history and culture of the GSMNP is an integral and important part of the history and culture of Swain County, and its residents have a deep connection with the history and culture of the GSMNP.

Many Swain County residents are descendants of the original inhabitants of the land, and many people of Swain County have ancestors buried within the boundaries of

the park. In the Swain County area of the park there are 1,100 grave sites, including 27 graves of veterans, in 21 cemeteries.

"The Swain County Commission has a genuine concern that the imposition of the parking fees may hinder the use of the park access by Swain County families joining together in the GSMNP to strengthen familial bonds, reflect on the history and culture of their ancestors, fish, and enjoy nature," states the resolution.

The park was established as a fee-free park, and it was understood by those that gave up their lands to create the park that there would never be a charge to enter the park. Commissioners believe that the proposed parking fee represents "a clear attempt to circumvent the historical understanding and agreements for a fee-free park and would be a significant blow to the public's trust."

Parking tags will be required for back-country campers, hikers, picnic pavilion reservation holders and concession customers. Three duration parking tags will be available for purchase for all vehicle sizes and types – daily \$5.00, weekly \$15.00 or annual \$40.00.

Parking tags will not be required for motorists passing through the area or who park for less than 15 minutes or while parked at their designated campsite in a park campground. Vehicles with a handicap license plate or placard do not need a parking tag.

The GSMNP is annually one of the most visited national parks ranking as the second most visited park in the country with 14.1 million visitors. Over the last decade, GSMNP visitation has skyrocketed by over 57 percent. In 2021, the GSMNP set a new visitation record for the park.

However, the Smokies' operational budget hasn't seen similar growth, and the increase in park visitors has begun to take its toll with wear and tear on aging facilities and undue strain on the park's limited staff. The parking fees are expected to generate around \$14 million in revenue to help with the many needs of the GSMNP.

One hundred percent of the money generated from the new Park It Forward Program will stay in the Smokies. The money will directly support operational costs for managing and improving services for visitors including trail maintenance, custodial services, and trash removal. The program will also support more education programs, emergency responders and law enforcement staff across the park.

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# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

## THE POOL IS OPEN

### Rec Pool Hours EXTENDED

• Public Swim: Mon.-Wed. 3:30-7p; Sat. 11a-6p; Sun. 1-6p.  
• Adult Swim: Mon.-Wed. 11a-3:30p and Thurs. and Fri., 11a-2p.  
• Lap Swim: Mon-Fri 6a-9:45a and Sat. 10-11a.  
• Water Aerobics: Mon.-Fri. 10-11a. 828-526-1595.

### Second Mondays

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

### 1st Tuesdays

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

### 2nd Tuesdays

• Highlands Writers Group meets on alternate Tuesday afternoons at 3pm. Writers still uncomfortable with in-person

gatherings may participate via Zoom meetings held on the second or third Tuesday of each month at 3pm. Members receive weekly notification regarding when and how the group will assemble. For more information contact Bud Katz at either 828-526-3190 or at budandlynn@me.com

### Tuesdays

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

### Mon-Fri

• Water Aerobics 18 years plus 10-11am. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• Pickle Ball inside and outside. 10am-1pm, everyone is welcome so come out and enjoy a game of Pickle Ball.

### Mon., Tues., Thurs.

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

### Mon. & Wed.

• 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, 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 w/Tina Rogers 8-9a. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more info.

### Tues. & Thurs.

• New Zumba class with Gay Chalpin from 4:30-5:30p. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• Exercise Class with Michelle Lane at 5:30. A combination class with different types of exercise. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information

### First Wednesdays

Hudson Library, in partnership with VAYA Health, is hosting an educational series on adult mental health, at 11:00 AM. This series is aimed particularly at older adults and will focus on mental health issues of particular interest to them. The February 1 program is PTSD: Healing the Emotional Wound.

### Wednesdays

• 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)

### Thursdays

• Kickboxing 8:15-9:15am. An exhilarating and fun mix of martial arts for a calorie-burning workout. Contact the Recreation Department at 828-526-3556 for more information.

• At Hudson Library, Kids Zone at 3:30 pm with a wide variety of STEAM, nature, and craft activities. For more information about any of these summer ac-

tivities, contact Hudson Library at 828-526-3031.

### 2nd Saturdays

• The Western North Carolina Woodturners Club meets in Highlands at The Bascom at 10 a.m. March thru November.

### 3rd Saturdays

• The American Legion Post 370 meets 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.

• At the Rec Park, Senior Lunches noon in the meeting room. For any other information call Lester Norris or Maxine Ramey at 828-526-3556.

### Through May 31

• The Fontana Regional Library system, including Hudson Library in Highlands, is starting an Active Audio Challenge that will run from March 1st through May 31st. Participants who listen to 25 hours of audiobooks, while being active, will receive a prize. Some examples of activity include walking, running, gardening, cooking, cleaning, and much more. Participants will be feeding both the body and mind with this Challenge. To register for the Challenge, come by Hudson Library and pick up the logbook used to record entries. For more information or to request an accommodation, please call the library at 828-526-3031.

### Fri.-Sat., March 17 - 18

• Celebrate St. Paddy's Day, including Irish dishes in Madison's Restaurant and Irish pints & cocktails in Hummingbird Lounge. Complimentary Irish festivities in Hummingbird Lounge for guests and the public include: • The "Battle of the Barrels" Scotch, Bourbon, and Japanese and Irish Whiskey Tasting Friday and Saturday from 4 - 5 pm • Irish Hors D'oeuvres Friday and Saturday Evenings from 5:30 - 7 pm • Irish After-Dinner Sweets Friday and Saturday Eve-

nings from 10 - 11 pm. Overnight Guests at Old Edwards Inn: let the shenanigans begin and chase your pot o' gold at the Irish Coffee Making Experience Saturday at 11 am. Book overnight stays at <https://www.oldedwardshospitality.com/old-edwards-inn-spa#/booking/step-1>

### Fri., March 17

• The 2023 Macon County Republican Party Convention and Precinct Meetings will be held Friday, at the Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts in Franklin. All Macon County voters registered Republican as of January 31, 2023, are invited to participate. There will be a reception for Century Club members at 5 p.m., delegate registration opens at 5:30 and closes at 6:30 when the convention opens. The business of the convention includes the election of officers for precincts and for the county GOP, and voting for the Plan of Organization, which is posted on [macongop.com](http://macongop.com). There will be a merchandise clearance sale and opportunity to meet candidates. [maconrepublicans@gmail.com](mailto:maconrepublicans@gmail.com).

• BINGO at the Highlands Community Building from 6:30-8:30 pm Each game card can be purchased for \$1. This is a cash only event. Highlands PTO will also have food, popcorn, a candy table, and 50/50 raffles. The 50/50 raffles are experiences around town including golf at private country clubs, gift cards at local restaurants/stores and many more. Don't miss out this St. Patrick's day for a chance to win cash and raise money for Highlands School students & teachers! This event is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Highlands and is licensed by the State of North Carolina.

### Sat., March 18

• The Met Live at PAC at noon. Discussion at 11:30a for Lohengri. Sopranos Tamara Wilson and Elena Stikhina, as the virtuous duchess Elsa, falsely accused of murder, go head-to-



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# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

head with soprano Christine Goerke as the cunning sorceress Ortrud, who seeks to lay her low. Bass-baritone Evgeny Nikitin is Ortrud's power-hungry husband, Telramund, and bass Gunther Groissbock is King Heinrich.

## **Sat.-Sun., March 18-19**

• Julia Tatum Banner of Delta Grind Grits and Half-Mile Farm Chef Jason Tardo will present a Shrimp & Grits experience with a special tasting and hosted Social Hour including complimentary hors d'oeuvres. Breakfast each day will feature Delta Grind's delicious products. Social Hour Saturday from 5-6 pm featuring grits from Julia's Delta Grind, in Water Valley, Mississippi, with complimentary hors d'oeuvres and live music from 5 - 8 pm. Craft beverages available from the J. Henry Farmhouse Tavern. Breakfast Saturday & Sunday from 8-10:30 am prepared by Half-Mile Farm Chef Jason Tardo, featuring Delta Grind's delicious, 100% natural, stone ground grits with Julia on hand to mingle. Grits Tasting and Presentation Saturday from 4-5 pm Julia's famous Shrimp & Grits in the Woodland View Room. Vegetarian options are available. Hosted events are for Half-Mile Farm guests only. Book your stay at <https://www.oldedwardshospitality.com/half-mile-farm#/booking/step-1>

## **Fri., March 24**

• At PAC, Rhythm of the Dance. For tickets, email [highlandspacnc@gmail.com](mailto:highlandspacnc@gmail.com)

• Join us at HMH on Friday, 8:30-10:30 pm for a Salon Series featuring Daniel Tashian, arguably one of the most dynamic singer-songwriters in the world. A native of Nashville, he has spent his career in Music City honing his craft with the best of the best, writing and producing for a long list of impressive artists. Tickets are \$25.

## **Sun., March 26**

• Bowl for Kid's Sake from either 11a-1p or 1-3p local churches and civic groups can have fun while also supporting Big Brothers Big Sisters. The event for Jackson, Macon and Swain counties is at the Galaxy Lanes in Sylva.

## **Wed., March 29**

• To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam war the local American Legion Post will hold an event recognizing this milestone on March 29 in Highlands. Details will be published in the local newspapers, the Post 370 Facebook and webpage <http://www.amerlegionpost370nc.org/>. Area Vietnam

veterans and veteran's families interested in adding their names to the list of other local Vietnam veterans can email their service information to [ncpost370@gmail.com](mailto:ncpost370@gmail.com) or mail that information to American Legion Post 370, PO Box 406, Highlands.

## **Fri., March 31**

• Community Coffee with the Mayor at Hudson Library at 11a in the Hudson Library Meeting Room. Mayor Taylor will be joined by Macon County Commissioner Gary Shields and County Manager Derek Roland, to discuss the proposed new Franklin high school and other county issues.

## **Fri.-Sun., April 7-9**

• At Half-Mile Farm an Easter Celebration and Hosted Weekend at Half-Mile Farm with Chef Craig Richards. Stay at Half-Mile Farm for a grown-up Easter weekend. The Weekends Events: Friday, Fresh Pasta demo and tasting with Executive Chef Craig Richards in the Woodland View Room from 5-6 pm during Social Hour with additional complimentary hors d'oeuvres and live music until 8 pm. Craft beverages are available from the J. Henry Farmhouse Tavern. Saturday, Special Breakfast Creations from 8-10:30 am. Social Hour from 5-6 pm will feature complimentary hors d'oeuvres, and live music from 5-8 pm. Craft beverages are available from the J. Henry Farmhouse Tavern. Grown-up Easter Egg Hunt (outside weather permitting) from 4-6 pm with prizes including J. Henry Farmhouse Tavern cocktails Half-Mile Farm merchandise, an overnight stay, and more! Hosted events are for Half-Mile Farm guests only. To book your stay <https://www.oldedwardshospitality.com/half-mile-farm#/booking/step-1>

## **Thurs., April 20**

• OEI's Orchard Series. 6 - 8 pm Celebrate the beauty of springtime in Highlands with the return of the live concert series - Orchard Sessions. Settle into comfortable seating and relax under heirloom apple trees as a stellar lineup of musicians fill the mountain air. In the magical surroundings of The Orchard, enjoy light bites, a cash bar, and an enchanting evening. The sessions kick off Thursday with the return of Atlanta native Mike Kinnebrew. The Orchard Sessions are held at The Farm at Old Edwards at 336 Arnold Road in Highlands. Tickets are \$40. Book Online: <https://www.simplivetix.com/e/mike-kinnebrew-orchard-sessions-at-the-farm-tickets-124433>

## **Fri. - Sun., May 5 - 7**

• At Half-Mile Farm, live fire cooking with Old Edwards Executive Chef Chris Huerta & Half-Mile Farm Chef Jason Tardo featuring locally grown Providence Farmstead protein. Social Hour Friday and Saturday evenings from 5-6 pm with complimentary hors d'oeuvres and live music from 5-8 pm. Craft beverages also are available from the J. Henry Farmhouse Tavern. years in California, raising their family, and developing a nationally recognized Jersey Dairy, the couple has turned their compass back East towards the Blue Ridge Mountains. Hosted events are for Half-Mile Farm guests only. To attend these complimentary events at Half-Mile Farm from May 5-7, book your stay today. Book Online: <https://www.oldedwardshospitality.com/half-mile-farm#/booking/step-1>

## **Sun., May 14**

• At PAC, Steep Canyon Rangers. For tickets, email [highlandspacnc@gmail.com](mailto:highlandspacnc@gmail.com).

## **Wed., May 17**

• At Acorn's a book signing from 2-4 pm, with Chef Steven Satterfield of Miller Union in Atlanta who will be signing copies of his book, "Root to Leaf: A Southern Chef Cooks Through the Seasons."

## **Thurs., May 18**

• At OEI's The Farm from 6-9 PM James Beard Foundation award-winning Chef Steven Satterfield of Miller Union in Atlanta. Indulge in a multi-course menu of the season's most delicious flavors from Old Edwards gardens and greenhouses, accompanied by delectable wine pairings, during this enchanting evening at The Farm with a cocktail reception in The Orchard. You'll love these special recipes from Satterfield's wildly successful first cookbook "Root to Leaf: A Southern Chef Cooks Through the Seasons" (featured on CBS This Morning). \$185 per person, plus tax and gratuity. Book Online: <https://www.simplivetix.com/e/chef-steven-satterfield-dinner-tickets-123309>

## Cuisine delights at OEI's Half-Mile Farm



Fri.-Sun., May 5-7, At Half-Mile Farm, live fire cooking with Old Edwards Executive Chef Chris Huerta & Half-Mile Farm Chef Jason Tardo featuring locally grown Providence Farmstead protein. Social Hour Friday and Saturday evenings from 5 - 6 pm with complimentary hors d'oeuvres and live music from 5 - 8 pm. Craft beverages also are available from the J. Henry Farmhouse Tavern. years in California, raising their family, and developing a nationally recognized Jersey Dairy, the couple has turned their compass back East towards the Blue Ridge Mountains. Hosted events are for Half-Mile Farm guests only. To attend these complimentary events at Half-Mile Farm from May 5 - 7, book your stay today. Book Online: <https://www.oldedwardshospitality.com/half-mile-farm#/booking/step-1>



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## ...RETREAT continued from page 1

enue is at \$4,573,622.90 which is \$133,499.10 more than compared to February 2022.

Town Manager Josh Ward opened by discussing the capital projects completed so far FY '22-'23, projects in the pipeline and projects slated for FY '23-'24.

Each department head presented a list of needs including "must haves" and "would love to haves."

All of this will be discussed over the next several months until it is whittled down and the budget for '23-'24 is finalized.

Meanwhile, there were four requests for action as soon as possible from Highlands Fire & Rescue, the Highlands Historical Society, the ABC Store and the Mirror Lake Improvement (Restoration) Association.

### Highlands Fire & Rescue

HF&R Chief Ryan Gearhart said the department is ready to hire six full-time, paid employees.

"This is the next step for us," said Gearhart. "We would like to hire three firefighter officers and three firefighters. It will cost just shy of \$600,000 to fund six paid guys."

According to Town Manager Josh Ward, after funding the new firehouse and equipment there is still enough left to start the full-time, paid firefighter program.

"We actually have two years worth of monies to cover this while fire tax comes in," he said. "At this point we can start this program with just the money we have in the bank. At year two, we will see if we need a fire tax increase."

All over the state, full-time firefighters, work shifts – a certain amount of time on and a certain amount of time off.

Ward said they researched a number of surrounding towns to see what works best, and decided to copy what Cashiers has been doing.

"With our call volume, I feel like we can do 48 hours on and 96 hours off – two days on and four days off. Cashiers runs more calls



Steve Mehder of the ABC Board and Kevin Vinson ABC Store manager explain changes to proposed ABC Store plan at the old fire station.



To save money, plans to enclose the "courtyard" area between the two sides of the building have been nixed.

than we do and they are operating that way and said the love it," said Gearhart.

Gearhart said offering that kind of shift will open up the pool of candidates to beyond Macon County and working two days leaves four days to do something else.

Three full-time firefighters would get \$41,340 per year based on \$15 per hour and three officer firefighters would get \$48,500 per year based on \$17.60 per hour.

There will always be a shift officer firefighter teamed with a firefighter. The shift officer is responsible for everything that happens on that shift whether in the firehouse or at a fire – operations, maintenance, etc.

Officers have to have a minimum of five years experience plus

various certifications. A firefighter has to have 2-3 years experience.

Highlands Fire & Rescue volunteers will continue as they are – responding and training – getting \$15 per call.

"With full-time paid firefighters on the force, the volunteers won't be responsible for cleaning and maintaining and we won't have to have a 'maintenance night' like we do now," said Gearhart. "The paid firefighters will take all that over."

The board agreed to start the hiring process immediately instead of waiting until the next fiscal year which begins July 1.

"We have the money; we just need a budget amendment to start the hiring process. If they are ready to go, let's go," said Ward.

• See RETREAT page 15



## ...RETREAT continued from page 14

The budget amendment will be made at the March 16 Town Board meeting and the hiring process will begin.

### Highlands Historical Society

President of the Highlands Historical Society Harry McDonald came to the meeting in hopes of getting the HHS in the budget for FY 23-'24.

The interior of the HHS exhibit building on N. 4th Street next to the Rec Park grounds, has undergone huge changes while making room for extensive exhibits about the people and buildings in Highlands since its inception.

Maintenance and repairs are made with monies raised through fundraisers like the Dahlia Festival and donations. The only paid person is the docent/bookkeeper.

"A significant percentage of our budget is for new exhibits and maintenance of the facilities," said McDonald.

However, the roof and the ceiling is now sagging and engineers working in-kind, have determined that more than temporary steps need to be taken to make sure the building is stable and the exhibits and archives stored within are safe.

"An early estimate is \$20,000 for the project but we are asking for a \$10,000 grant to cover half the expense for the repairs," said McDonald. "We are not asking for this grant for operations or entertainment. This is a one-time grant for a capital expenditure to house the town of Highlands historical archives."

McDonald didn't get an OK from the board but Commissioner Brian Stielher suggested requesting funding from the Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center since it has millions in room tax proceeds at its disposal – some of which it gives to area nonprofits.

### ABC Store

Steve Mehder, president of the ABC Board and Kevin Vinson, manager of the store,

returned to the Town Board to discuss their plans to move the ABC Store to the old fire station on Oak Street.

At the February Town Board meeting they presented plans for the move. They returned to discuss changes and to get permission to move ahead.

Taking over the old fire station would mean about twice the square footage they have now in Highlands Plaza and not paying rent would mean at least \$400,000 a year to the town.

Mehder said over the years, with the permission from the town, the ABC Board has been saving money to accommodate future needs and the future is now.

With their rent set to double this summer, and no extra space for inventory or storage, the board is anxious to get the go-ahead from the town.

"We are hoping to exit in a timely basis," said Mehder.

At the February meeting, Mehder presented plans which included enclosing the "courtyard" space between the two sides of the existing building. However, to cut costs, the board has decided to keep that as it is now – knowing that it could be enclosed later if necessary.

"We have backed off on enclosing the courtyard as part of the building which will save us \$300,000-\$500,000 because it will reduce our costs in terms of the roof structure."

The initial estimate to renovate the fire station to accommodate the ABC Store is about \$1 million much of which Mehder said they have been able to "squirrel away" over the years.

"We have \$830,000 squirreled away in our building fund," said Vinson.

"Within two years we will be able to generate \$400,000 a year or greater back to the town. Instead of us reserving the profits like in the recent past, we will be able to turn over money to the town to use," he said.

More distributable income to the town's scholarship fund, gen-

eral fund and recreation dept. fund. Other disbursements mandated by the state are to law enforcement and drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

"Those are set in stone by the state, and they come off the net profits," said Vinson. "But now there will be more to give to the town."

Commissioners asked them to return to the March 16 Town Board meeting with revised plans now that they don't intend to enclose the "courtyard" area.

### Mirror Lake Restoration Project

Pat Gleeson, president of the Mirror Lake Improvement Association spoke to the board about the Mirror Lake Restoration Project which involves dredging the 70-year-old lake in phases -- not to return it to its former glory, but to keep it from becoming a marsh.

In just a year, donations from the Highlands community and the residents of Mirror Lake, Mirror-mont, Cullasaja Heights, Dobson

• See RETREAT page 16

## A 'Diva' wearing Diva's!



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## ...RETREAT continued from page 15

Ridge, River Lakes and more, enough has been raised to complete Phase 1 of a three-phase plan which will cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000.

“Our three-phase dredging plan starts with phase one which is 250 yards upstream from the bridge and 250 yards downstream from the bridge and deepening those sections of water 8-10 feet,” said Gleeson.

Phase 2 widens and deepens the two channels that flow out of Mill Creek around the large island that has formed over the years due to sediment for a cost of \$2-\$2.5 million.

Phase 3 picks up upstream of the Phase 1 all the way to Big Pine Acres and downstream around the bend down toward the dam.

“So, if you add all those numbers together that’s \$4 or \$5 million to complete all three phases,” said Gleeson.

The importance to save Mirror Lake has been a 3 ½ year commitment.

“I actually believe our collective efforts to save Mirror Lake is really more about preserving and protecting the Highlands watershed and the quality of drinking water that has become synonymous with living in Highlands,” Gleeson said, “Not to mention the recreation and natural resource assets of saving the lake.”

With close to a half a million dollars in hand, the Mirror Lake Restoration Project has hired Riversand as its dredging partner. Within 60-90 days Riversand will have secured the dredging permit and work on Phase 1 can begin, said Gleeson. Bryson Dredging will haul the material to wherever it can be deposited, which is being investigated now.

“The Phase 1 goal has been reached, but the overall goal is much larger than Phase 1,” he



Phase one which is 250 yards upstream from the bridge and 250 yards downstream from the bridge and deepening those sections of water 8-10 feet.



Phase 3 picks up upstream of the Phase 1 all the way to Big Pine Acres and downstream around the bend down toward the dam

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said.

According to Mayor Pat Taylor and Gleeson, after meeting with them, Senator Kevin Corbin and Representative Karl Gillespie have indicated there is some momentum with the state to participate financially.

State monies would be given to the town and the town would pay the bills associated with the Mirror Lake Restoration Project.

“I am optimistic that the state is going to come through with some contribution to this project,” said Mayor Taylor. “They did

dredge Lake Junaluska – so that’s a model we are following.”

Gleeson asked that the town at to consider putting a line item in its budget for Mirror Lake because maintenance – cleaning out of sediment traps – will be needed annually which he thinks can be done for \$50,000-\$75,000 a year.

Meanwhile to reach the \$5 million goal to complete all three phases, Gleeson suggested a \$250,000 line item in the town’s budget for Mirror Lake restoration.

Mayor Taylor said he believes

the town needs to be a significant partner in the restoration of Mirror Lake.

“We have talked about this for years, but no one came up with the money. I think we are making progress in preserving Mirror Lake and not letting it turn into a marsh,” he said.

Last Thursday was the first of several upcoming FY ’23-’24 budget meetings and everyone’s wish list will be considered in the process.

- Kim Lewicki



# • HIGHLANDS SCHOOL SOCCER •

## Highlands loses season opener to Rabun Gap

By Brian O'Shea  
Plateau Daily News

Highlands varsity girls soccer team kicked off their season last week on the road and lost a tough game to Rabun Gap Nacoochee with a final of 2-1. Highlands Gabby Diaz scored midway through the first half, but the Lady Eagles responded by scoring two goals of their own that remained unanswered. Highlands game on Tuesday against Hayesville was postponed and will be rescheduled.



Highlands Caroline sends the ball with a free kick on the road against Rabun Gap on March 8.



Highlands Abbie Doerter maintains control of the ball under pressure by Rabun Gap.



Highlands Claire Worley tracks the ball before heading it down the field.



Highlands Gabby Diaz battles Rabun Gap's defense near the Lady Eagles' goal.



Highlands Goalie Oliva Cole makes one of many saves against Rabun Gap on March 8.

Right: Highlands Nicole Taylor works for position against Rabun Gap.



Photos by Brian O'Shea  
Plateau Daily News



# • SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



## All we need is love

Pastor, Emily Wilmarth  
First Presbyterian Church

Jesus gives us the Great Commandment: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.

All we need is love, right? What the world needs now – what the world has always needed – is love. Here's the good news! We don't need to go in search of it. We don't need to produce it out of thin air. We have it eternally, now and forever, given without limit by our Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. If love is from God, then love is the most powerful force in the world...in the universe!

At the end of 2022, I got to thinking: what if our congregation spent a year thinking about, praying about, talking about, living in love? What could happen if we spent a year focused on love? Would we start to notice more evidence of love all around us? Would we begin to listen for messages of love more closely? Would we get more and more used to spreading love through acts of charity and generosity? Would we experience love more deeply? More readily? If we spent our time together immersed in the subject of love, would we find ourselves less disenchanted with life's irritations, less stressed, and less prone to bicker or complain? If we focused on love, would we find our lives filled with less hate?

I decided it was worth a try.

So 2023 is the year of love at First Presbyterian in Highlands. We've started by working on our spiritual disciplines: the ways we put our faith, and thus our love, in practice. For example, we worship, pray, study, serve, live generously, fast, and break bread together. In each of these practices, we grow in and show our love of God, our neighbors, and ourselves. During this season of Lent, we are focusing on the practice of forgiveness. It's a challenging Christian practice, to be sure. But forgiveness and love go hand in hand. Forgiveness of our sins is one of the most profound and humbling ways God shows love for us. We are called to do the same.

In the months to come, we will study the characteristics of love, also known as the fruits of the Spirit: peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. We'll learn from some of the great lovers in the Bible (Jesus, of course, but also Mary and Paul and Peter, too). We'll talk together about those times when love is hard – when love comes at a cost, when we disagree with the ones we love, when love stretches us out of our comfort zones.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:9-12)

I have so much hope for this year as we seek to abide in love. So much joy, too. I can't think of anything the world needs more!

## Proverbs 3:5

## • PLACES TO WORSHIP •

## John 3:16

### BLUE VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Oliver Rice, Pastor (828) 421-1315

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 CASHIERS

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

www.christanglicancashiers.com

9:30am 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

www.cashiers.church

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

Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.

### CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

283 Spring Street - Sunday Service: 10:30 a.m.

Testimony meeting: 3rd Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.

### 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

Sundays: Service 10:45am, Children's 10:30am

Wednesdays: Youth 5:30-7pm; Women's Bible Study: Mondays

4:30pm, Tuesdays 10am; Men's Bible Study: Wednesdays &

Thursdays 7am @ Zookeeper Bistro

### 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

Sunday Services Chapel: Rite I spoken, 8a. Rite II with Choir in

Sanctuary 10:30a; Morning Prayer Mon-Thurs 8:30a in 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

Emily Wilmarth, pastor

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

### GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am

### GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS

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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

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www.highlandsmethodist.org

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Rev. Ken Langsdorf

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Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

### MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

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Pastor Zane Talley

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

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

### MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

Franklin • 828-634-1312 • mountainsynagoguenc.com.

Services: 1st /Fri. and 3rd Sat.

and Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur.

### 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.

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

Tues. - 9:30am Latin; Thurs. - 9:30am English; Sun. - 11am English

### 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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### UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

85 Sierra Drive, Franklin • ufranklin.org

Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

### WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers

Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am



# • BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION NEWS •



From left: Gardner Davis, PAC Audio Services, Mary Adair Trumbly, PAC Executive Director, Lee Trevathan, incoming Audio Services and Chris Wilkes, President of Rotary.



Rotarians Bert McCall and Sherry Holt on the job.

Mary Adair Trumbly was the featured speaker last Tuesday at the meeting of the Rotary Club of Highlands. Mary Adair is the Executive Director of the Highlands Performing Arts Center, and she took the opportunity of her presentation to say goodbye to the outgoing Audience Services Manager, Gardner Davis and introduce to us his replacement, Lee Trevathan. She brought us up to date on some improvements taking place in the Martin Lipscomb section of PAC and give an overview of the upcoming season at PAC. Highlands is very fortunate to have a facility of the caliber of PAC and the level of talent she has been able to bring Highlands through PAC.

## Rotarians serve it up at Community Dinner

On Tuesday, March 7th the Rotary Club of Highlands sponsored the Highlands community dinner. The photo shows Rotary members lined up behind a table ready to serve guests young and old.

## Law Enforcement Agencies increasing patrols for week of St. Patrick's Day

**Editor's note:** During the same week last year, there were 225 alcohol-related crashes resulting in 11 deaths. The original version of this release incorrectly reported those numbers. Below is the same release with the corrected fourth paragraph.

**RALEIGH** – On the eve of St. Patrick's Day, state officials are reminding people to never drink and drive.

From March 13-19, law enforcement agencies statewide will increase patrols to keep impaired drivers off the roads during the St. Patrick's Day "Booze It & Lose It" enforcement campaign.

"St. Patrick's Day is well established as a time for celebration, but people should do so respon-

sibly," said Mark Ezzell, director of the N.C. Governor's Highway Safety Program. "Never get behind the wheel if you've been drinking alcohol. Drinking and driving can be deadly. Have a plan to get home safely so you don't risk seriously injuring or killing yourself or someone else."

During last year's weeklong observation of St. Patrick's Day, 225 alcohol-related crashes resulting in 11 deaths occurred on North Carolina roads.

"The most tragic thing about these deaths is that all of them could have been prevented and their impacts avoided, if people would just do their parts by plan-

ning ahead and ensuring they celebrate this St. Patrick's Day responsibly," said Colonel Freddy Johnson, Jr., commander of the North Carolina State Highway Patrol.

Increased enforcement during specific campaign periods year-round is a key part of making North Carolina roads safer.

If you drink and need a ride home, call a friend, take public transit or call a cab. All are better options than getting behind the wheel after you've been drinking. For more safe driving tips, visit ncghsp.org or follow NCGHSP on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

# • POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

**Highlands Police entries from March 7. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

### March 11

• At 4:30 p.m., officers responded to a motor vehicle accident at Oak Street and US 64 west, where a car was flipped on its roof due to the driver driving while impaired.

• At 5:20 p.m., Erika Michel Deleon, 27, of Franklin, was arrested for DWI at the site of a motor vehicle accident at Oak Street and US 64 west. She was issued a \$800 secured bond. Her trial date is May 10.

### March 12

• At 1:50 a.m., officers were called to the High Dive on Carolina Way regarding disorderly conduct where someone was fighting.

• At 2 a.m., Dennis Ronald Allen, 71, of Highlands, was arrested for disorderly conduct.

### March 13

• At 11 a.m., officers investigated a report of larceny of tools valued at over \$1,000 from a construction site on Lower Lake Road.

• At 2:21 p.m., officers investigated a report of larceny from

a construction site on Split Rail row where a closed utility trailer was taken.

## The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from March 7.

### March 7

• At 5:32 p.m. the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on N. 4th Street.

### March 8

• At 8:48 a.m., the dept. investigated the source of smoke a location on Clear Creek Road.

• At 2:09 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Church Street.

### March 9

• At 2:32 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a

### March 11

• At 4:27 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident at US 64 west and Oak Street.

### March 12

• 10:13 a.m., the dept. provided mutual aid to Cashier FD.

• At 4:42 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident at Village Walk.

### March 13

• At 10:08 a.m., the dept. was first-responders at a residence on Keener Road.

At 1:37 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

## ...HPD continued from page 1

Lower Lake Road.

An enclosed utility trailer with construction tools was stolen from Split Rail Row in Highlands during the week of March 6, 2023. The trailer was located on a property off Whiteside Cove Road, On Monday, March 13, 2023; however, the equipment was not located.

If you see anything suspicious in your neighborhoods, please contact our agency. We urge you to be diligent in securing

your homes and property. If you can put up cameras, please consider installing camera systems.

We are working leads; however, if you have any information, please get in touch with Chief Andrea Holland or Sgt Detective Tim Broughton with the Highlands Police Department at 828-526-9431. Any information may help bring the individuals who are responsible to justice.



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## LOST

**LOST JAN. 29, 2020** - 2 gold bangle bracelets - one thin and one wider. Reward offered. Contact Carol Haughes at 706-982-2658.

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**2000 LINCOLN CARTIER TOWN CAR,** Excellent condition. Call 828-371-2579 for details. (st. 11/3)

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...LIBRARY continued from page 10



It was a full house Tuesday at the Fontana Regional Library meeting at Hudson Library.

vide public library service to the residents of said counties by unifying the administration of the participating libraries, providing professional library specialists, cooperating in the selection of books and other materials, and crossing county lines for the benefit of all; this collaboration provides opportunities for service and resource allocations otherwise beyond the financial and service capacities of the individual county governments and libraries.”

The contract defines the relationship between the participating counties and the library system stating that all real property such as buildings, grounds, and other facilities of each library shall be acquired and owned by the respective counties while all other property such as library materials, technology, furnishings, and books, are owned by Fontana Regional Library, with an exception for the Hudson Library in Highlands, which calls for joint ownership of materials within the library.

Gaston also said he wouldn't want Macon County residents to have to pay to build a new library in Swain County.

While Gaston presented that example during public comment period Tuesday night, the regional agreement specifically states that individual counties are responsible for their own buildings – and the regional system only shares resources such as books and personnel.

For instance, Macon County is in the middle of building a new library for the Nantahala Community and those funds are specifically from Macon County, not the regional system.

Commissioner Danny Antoine, who serves as the liaison to the library addressed those in attendance Tuesday night to say



Commissioner Antoine at Tuesday's meeting at the Hudson Library.

that he is “100% on board” with pulling out of the Fontana Regional System, however, he acknowledged that it will be a difficult, lengthy process.

Antoine said his basis for wanting to move forward with pulling out of the regional system is due to concerns over the types of books in the library's catalog that he personally deems inappropriate. He specifically referenced a book mentioned during public comment

period that is available in the Macon County Public Library's teen's section, which is identified as being for teens 14 to 18 years old, Antoine said teens shouldn't have access to those materials.

Antoine accused the library system of having an “agenda” that involves the sexualization of children.

“I am working really hard on this, especially for the kids because it is disgraceful that you would have pornographic books with kids and you have people defending a position saying that that is ok for a child to read,” said Antoine. “Just understand my heart, and I know these gentlemen [other commissioners] are definitely on board with the fact that these books are completely unacceptable to kids and the fact that the Fontana Regional System won't work with us, even in terms of separating them to make it an adult section, so kids can't access it... that tells me you have an agenda. It is not even about these books, it is more about an agenda and that they are trying to hyper-sexualize kids, that is a perverted situation.”

Since all of this was conducted during the public comment period of the MC Board of Commissioner meeting Tuesday night, no action was taken.

Commissioner Antoine said this was a complex issue and will take time to work out.



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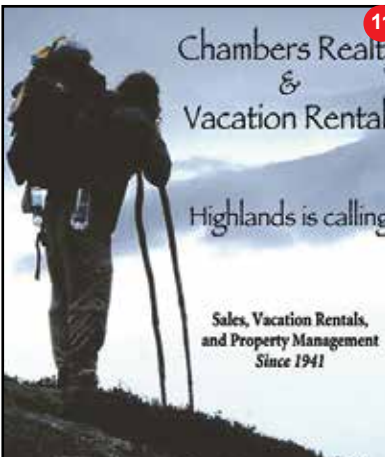
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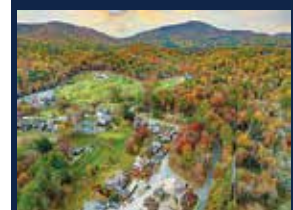


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