

Highlands Newspaper

Volume 20, Number 40

Real-Time News, Weather & WebCams: HighlandsInfo.com

Thurs., Oct. 5, 2023



Kay Craig



John Dotson



Brian Stiehler



Jeff Weller



Rachel Wilson

This is week two of the Candidate Q&A

Five candidates are vying for three seats on the Town Board -- two incumbents and three newcomers.

This is the second week of the 6-week Q&A leading up to the Nov. 7 election. Candidates are listed alphabetically.

Question #2:

Are you for STRs in Highlands as they stand now? Do you

• See Q&A page 21



A preliminary rendition of one part of a proposed all-inclusive, nature-themed playground at the Rec Park.

Expanded playground planned for Rec Park

What started almost a year ago with an anonymous \$50,000 donation to upgrade the Highlands Rec Park playground has

grown into something more – an extensive playground for children up to 12-years-old.

Instead of just replacing

components and adding new ones, what is envisioned is an all-inclusive, nature-themed play-

• See **PLAYGROUND** page 7

•INSIDE THIS ISSUE•

Mayor on Duty	2	Fall Shopping.....	16-17
Weather	2	Events.....	22-23
Letters	7	Spiritually Speaking	26
Investing at 4,118 Ft.....	10	Police and Fire.....	27
Ink Penn.....	12	Classifieds	29



All the rock from the chimney and other areas of the structure (as well as other materials) will be repurposed.

- Photo by Kim Lewicki

An eulogy for the Cleaveland family home

By Ran Shaffner

Concealed behind a great maple and a simple loafer's bench in the middle of Highlands was an old family home that died last week. Few Highlanders today will remember the family that once lived there and the profound impact its members had on the early growth and development of Highlands.

This house was old, very old, and deteriorated to the state it

couldn't be saved. But in its youth, it blossomed with New Englanders seeking restoration of health and children playing in the yard.

William Bliss Cleaveland, known as W.B., and his wife Ida Estelle Bailey, known as "Stell," had arrived from Connecticut in 1884, among the first settlers of Highlands. W.B. established a grocery on Main Street and in 1888 built his home across the street.

• See **CLEVELAND** page 8

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

Commission discusses the state of Western North Carolina

I was at a Southwest Regional Planning Organization meeting last week, where elected officials from towns and counties met to address regional concerns. It was a celebration of sorts in that the state budget had just been approved. Our legislators, Representative Karl Gillespie and Senator Kevin Corbin, have obtained a lot of support for the counties and towns of Western Carolina. The items in the budget that our legislators secured were much needed and essential for this area. Those funds will directly impact the citizens and the quality of life in WNC.

At the meeting, Tommy Long, a commissioner from Haywood County and a director of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, gave a sobering report of major challenges facing this mountain region. For that matter, his assessments apply not only to local governments but to the state and the nation as a whole.

His remarks centered around several critical priorities: of course, economic development, but also education, aging populations, health and medical care, and national defense. He ended his remark with national defense because failure to address those other



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

issues does have implications for the national welfare, security, and defense.

Everyone at the meeting was celebrating the funds in the new North Carolina budget that will impact the region. Leaders are so grateful to Senator Corbin and Representative Gillespie for their work in making sure we all got a fair share. That is not an easy feat when the population numbers do not favor Western Carolina, at least not yet.

Commissioner Long and others at the meeting stressed that North Carolina is the ninth most populous state and soon to be number eight. A whole lot of North Carolina's new residents will be located in Western Carolina. We have challenges in meeting these impending demographic shifts.

Commissioner Long had a distinguished career as an electrical engineer at the now-closed paper mill in Canton. With his skill and training, moving to another position will be possible. But he, along with Mayor Smathers of Canton, continues to work to help those skilled and trained workers retrain for new careers.

Tommy stressed that all elected officials need to make education for our young people and career workers a number one priority. Yes, education is an expensive proposition, but we can't afford to neglect this important aspect of a functional, dynamic, and civilized society.

He, along with staff for the Southwest-ern Commission, reminded the group that we have a growing population of senior citizens. Many of our new residents will be retirees requiring healthcare and related services. The commissioner also stressed we need programs promoting healthy lifestyles, mental health resources, and programs to break the vicious cycle of alcohol and drug addiction.

Commissioner Long stressed these challenges translate into national security and defense issues. He reminded us that veterans compose 6% of the population but 20% of the national suicide rate. We can't let that stand. He also pointed out that recruiting quotas for the military are continuing to fall about 15% to 20% short each year; about 25% of the prospective recruits can't pass the basic literacy and math proficiency tests, i.e., they are poorly educated. Another 25% cannot pass the physical screening tests due to obesity and poor health. These problems stress our social

services, schools, and certainly our health and medical systems. Furthermore, it boils down to lifestyle problems that are exacerbated by addiction issues. The basic solutions begin with a comprehensive education in our

homes, towns, and counties.

While we were all upbeat about the future at the meeting, Commissioner Long reminded us there is much more work to be done.

• HIC'S VIEW •



"Well this year we're ready, for town politics and STRs. Whats for lunch?"

• WEATHER •

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• CORRECTION •

People, property and psychology

The world of real estate involves the three Ps: people, property, and psychology. The psychology of buying a home involves many different motivations and aspirations. Here are some observations after selling real estate on the Highlands/Cashiers Plateau for the last 23 years:

1. Emotion matters more than logic. Buyers are investing in more than just houses when they buy them. They are buying a lifestyle, a dream, and a sense of community.

Especially in resort communities such as this area, the decision to buy a second home triggers longing for family get-togethers, chilly nights by the fireplace, and a sense of belonging. Rational factors such as practicality and financial constraints often take a backseat to emotions.

2. Aspirations dominate the decision. A house is a canvas on which people paint their dreams; it is more than bricks and mortar. Buyers are drawn to homes that fit their aspirations whether that is becoming a noteworthy chef, a better golfer or a master gardener. You are more motivated to pursue hobbies or goals if you can picture yourself succeeding in a certain environment. Personal development frequently acts as a motivating factor in real estate decisions.

3. Extension of identity. Your house is a physical representation of your identity. The homes we select from rustic lodges to contemporary condos reflect our personalities, values, and taste. Searching for the right home is like searching for the right soul mate: you want a home that fills your sense of self. A nature lover might want lots of windows bringing the outdoor in



Jody Lovell
Highlands and Cashiers
Sotheby's International Realty
828.526.4104

while a social butterfly may gravitate toward the open floor plan to facilitate entertaining.

4. A next chapter. Significant life changes often precipitate home purchasing. In a second home community, retirement, empty nesters or a growing family all may initiate the search for a mountain home. This is more than just a real estate purchase; it involves the desire to have a new chapter of life experience.

5. Community connection. The search for a mountain home involves determining not only that the general area fits your personality, but searching for the right club or neighborhood that is comfortable for you and your family. Taking time to evaluate the different vibes of various communities is key to contentment with your decision.

6. Timing. Some people delay making a home purchase waiting on the perfect time in the market or their life. Covid seemed to infect buyers with more than germs. It created a greater sense of urgency to live your life and to create memories now instead of waiting for a perfect time that may never come.

7. Obsessive Biases. Some buyers fixate on certain issues instead of focusing on the big picture: purchasing a home for your and your family's future. The process can get bogged down with repair issues and frustration with negotiations. My advice is always to keep your eye on the prize and to calmly work through the process.

• The end of this Investing at 4,118 Ft., column was lost in translation last week. We apologize and are happy to run it in its entirety.

In-Person Early Voting begins **Thurs., Oct. 19 and ends Sat. Nov. 4**

The one-stop early voting period for the Nov. 2023 municipal election begins October 19.

The in-person early voting period ends at 3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 4.

During the early voting period, voters may cast a ballot at any one-stop site in their county. Eligible individuals may register and vote at the same time.

When voting, early or on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 7, voters will be asked to show photo ID. Most voters will simply show their NC driver's license, but many other types of photo ID will be accepted.

Voters without an acceptable ID can get a free photo ID from their county board of elections. Voters can also get a "No Fee ID Card" from the NCDMV.

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3
BR

3
BA

1
HBA

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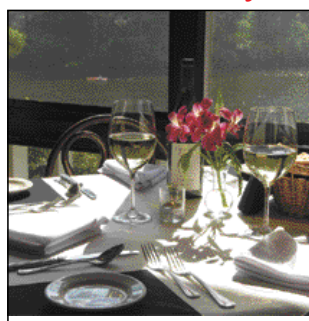
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• LETTERS •

The most naked of naked power grabs

Dear Editor,

The passage of SB 749 in the North Carolina House of Representatives on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, ironically called "No Partisan Advantage in Elections," removes the selection of local county election boards, from the counties, and gives that authority to the General Assembly in Raleigh, which at the present time is controlled by the Republican party.

This is the nakedness of naked power grabs.

Despite there having been no proven evidence of significant voter fraud anywhere in the US in 2020, Republicans in Raleigh are trying to convince voters that only they can save the country, and the counties (and by inference,

Democrats) are not qualified. These are people who are more interested in staying in power than doing what's right for the country. I would hope that NC counties would file a mass action lawsuit to repeal this legislation. Writing to your elected representative (karl.gillespie@ncleg.gov) does no good anymore. Their campaign donors get what they want. Wake up, Republicans, your party has deserted you.

David Stearns
Otto

Way to out the white supremacists!

Dear Editor,

Kudos to Mr. Eberz, and you for printing it his letter-to-the-editor in the Sept. 28 edition entitled, "The real endgame." It was one of the most eloquent explanations of an incredibly perplexing anomaly in this country today. Undying political support for a despicable person and choosing NOT to believe anything disparaging, illegal or unethical, he has said or done, in the hope that it couldn't be true.

(I picture little children with their fingers in their ears singing la-la-la-la-la-la-la) I never considered the fact that those people could be "closet white supremacists." Makes so much sense...Thank you!

Carole Stork
Highlands

PS: I also think his slogan should be changed to "Make America White Again" (Might get him lots more votes!)

...PLAYGROUND continued from page 1



Various spinners will be easily accessible by all.

ground accessible to children 2-12 and constructed to address all levels of ability – mobility, sensory disorders or visual and hearing impairments, as well as able-bodied children.

A committee made up of Commissioner Brian

• See **PLAYGROUND** page 24



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...CLEAVELAND continued from page 1

The Highlands Biological Station owes its founding to the collection of Native American artifacts that Cleaveland, a mineralogist, had bargained in his store for groceries. It was known nationally among collectors and ethnologists as one of the most complete in North Carolina and is preserved today in the Nature Center.

W.B. lived in his Main Street home only five years before succumbing in 1893 to pneumonia. It was W.B.'s wife, Stell, whom Walter Reese claimed converted him to Christianity and inspired him to become a deacon in the Baptist Church.

Of W.B. and Stell's eight children, Eva never married and remained in Bridgeport, CT but, she vacationed in Highlands. She donated the land for the Highlands Community Hospital (the current Peggy Crosby Center) and left money in her will for the clinic named in honor of her sister Mabel.

Mabel married Dr. G.W. Hays, whose sons Willie and Joe were especially known for their Tom Thumb Golf Course on Main Street.

Will "W.M." Cleaveland was an exceptional carpenter and built many homes and shops in Highlands, including current stores on Main Street and 4th Street Hill and the 1925 additions to Central House, today's OEI. Jamie Cleaveland, who married Helen

McKinney, was also an outstanding carpenter.

It was Nellie Cleaveland, whom some Highlanders remember as the apple-cheeked, bright-eyed, jovial postmistress for the Town of Highlands, who rang the bell perched atop a high pole every day when the mail was up. She served as Macon County Representative to the N.C. General Assembly.

The family home remained with the Cleavelands until Harvey Talley bought it in 1945 and the deVilles in 1968. Although the deVilles have demolished the home, they are saving the giant maple and the treasured Loafer's Bench, which Ralph deVile (who owned The Stone Lantern now Oakleaf Flower & Garden) commissioned in 1974 to replace the six loafer's benches that Will Cleaveland had built there in 1922.

The red Torii Gate, on the property behind Loafers Bench was made by Ron Weston in honor of deVile after his death. A Torii signifies entrance onto sacred ground.

Over the years many a resident or visitor has relaxed peacefully on that Loafer's Bench beneath the broad-shouldered maple fronting the Cleaveland family home, all of which gave downtown Highlands its unique tone.

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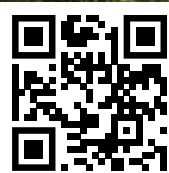
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Facts about vacation home markets

Last week, I took a course to earn a Resort and Second-Home Property Specialist Certification. There were a number of things that I already was aware of and numerous items that were quite surprising. The course was able to put it all together in a format that will help any Realtor in a second-home market, whether it is a coastal, mountain, lake or river front property. With some of the resources offered, I thought I would share some general information that I learned.



Carl Romberg
Landmark Realty

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) defines a vacation home county as a county where vacant seasonal, occasional or recreational use housing account for at least 20% of the housing stock. Based on information from 2020, 323 of the 3143 counties in the US are considered vacation home counties (10.3%). Of these, the top 1% are located in 16 states with four being in North Carolina. They rank these using 4 factors: 1) the number of seasonal homes; 2) year over year (y/y) change in the number of sales; 3) y/y change in the median sales price; and 4) y/y change in the days on market. Macon County is not only in the top 1% but ranked number 10 in the nation! It indicates that 29% of the housing stock is considered a vacation home.

Some national statistics on vacation home purchases are that 53% are all cash purchases with the remaining 77% having a down payment of 20% or more. There are more condo or co-op buyers (21%) as compared to non-vacation home buyers (12%). Only 4% of vacation home buyers are first-time home buyers.

Existing home sales typically rose by 24.2% in vacation home counties, more than twice the 11.2% increase in non-vacation home counties. The change in the median sales price was greater in vacation home counties and the y/y change in days on market had a larger decrease than in non-vacation home counties.

So, what motivates buyers to purchase a second home? In general, there are three reasons: investment goals, lifestyle interests and life-stage. Investment goals are for income and value appreciation. Many times,

the owner still wants the ability to use the property and some times it is shared ownership with friends or family. Income can be from vacation or long-term rentals. It is important to know that there are regulations on personal usage of investment properties. Lifestyle interests would include nature lovers, adventure seekers, snowbirds, sports fans and people who split time between an

urban home and a getaway, possibly working from each. Life-stage reasons would include retirement or pre-retirement, becoming an empty nester or purchasing a property for a child going to college.

I looked back at my buyer sales over the past few years and they were equally split between investment properties and second-homes for personal use. The investment properties included sales to be flipped, rented some and used some, or purely a rental. The recreational activities that bring buyers to the area are the same activities that bring renters, many that eventually buy.

Vacation home markets are unique markets and vary greatly from state to state. The differences in beach-front and mountain properties are great. However, almost all vacation home markets in the country (and the world) are experiencing the same burdens as we are. These include work-force housing, issues with short term rentals, traffic and infrastructure growth. It is most important that the full-time residents and the seasonal residents work together to maintain the uniqueness of the area. Luckily, this is something that does occur in Highlands. Just take a moment to look at the many non-profits, churches, festivals and events to see the different groups working together. Most recently, the progress the Mirror Lake Improvement Association and Town have made is a fine example. I highly recommend life in a vacation home community.

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



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• INK PENN •

Book Chatter

Book chatter is what you get when you join a group of avid readers. Believe it or not, it can be hard to get a word in edgewise.

In August, I met with a Mystery Book Club in Highlands, NC. What a fun time. Not only did Shakespeare & Company bookstore host the group, manager Stuart Ferguson also provided a tasty charcuterie board to fortify

us for the meeting.

I gave an informal presentation about my serendipitous path to becoming an author, and a free-wheeling back and forth ensued. Imagine a group of avid readers offering their opinions not only on mysteries but on all kinds of books. Picture all of us sharing the names of our favorite authors — from Agatha Christie to Rita Mae Brown. From Dorothy Sayers to

Sophie Hannah. Their eyes lit up when they heard that the books in my series all include either a book club meeting or a literary festival.

We reflected on the joy that reading brings us. We were all lifelong bookworms. Someone mentioned Anna Quindlen's book, "How Reading Changed My Life," and I was the only one in the room who hadn't read it. If there'd been a copy available in the shop, I would have bought it on

the spot. Instead, I went right home and reserved it at the library.

We even had a conversation about grammar when one reader bemoaned the mistakes in a newsletter at a senior living facility. Laughter greeted the story of the residents circling the errors and bringing them to the front desk. The group was aghast but not surprised that the college grad who composed the publication seemed unable to produce an error-free product.

That launched a discussion of our favorite books about grammar. I had to come home and scan my bookshelf and fire off an email with a list of my favorites:

- Dreyer's English — An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style
- Between You & Me — Confessions of a Comma Queen
- Lapsing into a Comma — A Curmudgeon's Guide to the many things that can go wrong in print—and how to avoid them
- Eats, Shoots, & Leaves

Ten days later, I met with a Dunwoody book club to discuss the first book in my mystery series. This group of women formed their club in 1997 and are still going strong. I smiled when one member walked in with a clipping from the column in which



Kathy Manos Penn

I'd recommended "The White Lady," a novel by one of my favorite authors. In her other hand, she carried a copy of the book.

Once again, I shared the tale of how I came to write my first work of fiction after I retired. This group

had read "Bells, Tails & Murder," book one in my series, so there were plenty of questions about the plot, the characters, and the setting. As I described the many Cotswolds sights and facts that appear in my books, I felt as though I were reliving my 2018 bucket list trip to England.

My heroine lives in a schoolhouse cottage we drove by, but the village where she lives is fictional. A waterwheel we saw in Upper Slaughter inspired the imaginary Olde Mill Inn in the book. It's true that J.M. Barrie summered in Stanway and donated a cricket pavilion to the village, but the literary mystery in the book exists only in my imagination. The spunky octogenarian in the book? The inspiration for that character comes not from the Cotswolds trip, but from closer to home. She's the embodiment of a 93-year-old friend.

You can always count on a group of avid readers to share the names of their favorite authors. Mine, of course, were all British

• See INK PENN page 14

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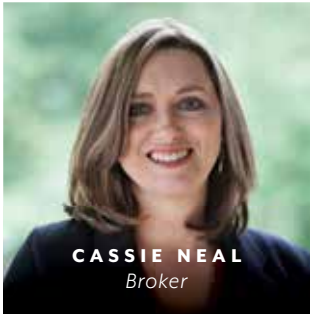
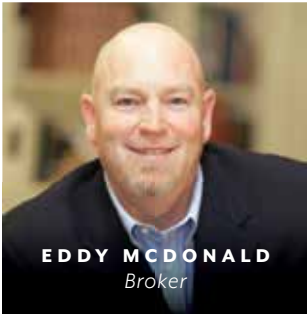
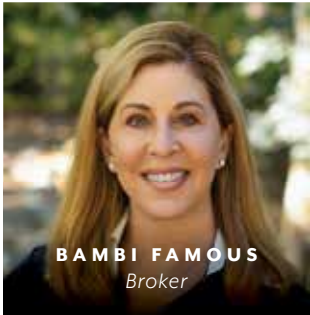
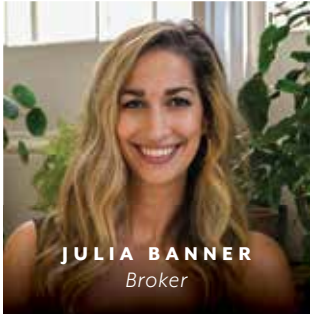


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...INK PENN continued from page 12

— Kate Ellis, Colleen Cambridge, and Jacqueline Winspear. The list changes depending on when I'm asked, though there are a few constants.

When one person commented that it must take lots of imagination to write a novel, I had to think. As someone who writes what she knows, I pluck characters and situations from my life. Describing bicycling, reading, or tossing together a Greek meal comes easily to me. How much imagination does it take to weave stories around

those elements? I'm not sure. What I know is that I get immense joy from writing. Talking books with groups like these is an unexpected bonus. Who knew retired life could be so rewarding?

• Award-winning author Kathy Manos Pen is a Georgia resident. Find her cozy mysteries at *Shakespeare & Company* in Highlands, *Franklin's Office Supply & Gifts*, and on Amazon. Contact her at inkpenn119@gmail.com, and follow her on Facebook, www.facebook.com/KathyManosPenAuthor/.

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Highlands Residents - You Are Not Alone!

Here's what your neighbors think about Short-term rentals in our neighborhoods:

*"Peace and quiet is a luxury only those in gated communities with restrictive covenants can afford. Everyone else is forced to live next door to the nonstop wedding party/birthday party/graduation party house. **When does this stop??????**"*

Satulah Resident

"So, my house is worth LESS with an STR next door but the STR next door is worth MORE because it is allowed to operate as an income-producing business and mine is not. The current "no new STRs" is not working for me.

Full-Time Resident

"I used to know my neighbors. Now I dread each weekend with the never-ending revolving door of one-and-done transient guests."

Holt Knob Resident

"Who goes to Main Street anymore? It is a tourist trap with hawkers at store fronts, five or six visitors walking abreast blocking the sidewalks, and restaurants packed weeks in advance. This is not the Highlands we used to know and love."

Bowery Resident

"Why should I be expected to forgo my property rights and quality of life in favor of the destination wedding industry and unsustainable over-tourism?"

Webbmont Resident

"Short-term rentals make it impossible for young families and local workers to live here."

Highlands Resident

"With the proliferation of STRs over the past several years, the family-oriented culture that has historically defined Highlands has been eroded. Today, people say 'let's avoid town' on a regular basis."

Big Bearpen Mountain Resident

"Don't tell me I should have known! When we retired here there were no STRs and now we are surrounded by them. This is a nightmare."

Little Bearpen Mountain Resident

"The paper had a great article about this and it said 'Tourism is like fire. It can warm our houses and cook our food. It can also burn down our village.' STRs have burnt down our village."

Mirror Lake Resident

**Vote Nov. 7th
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neighborhoods**



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This ad was paid for by Highlands Neighborhood Coalition, Inc. (made up of neighbors and neighborhoods). Not authorized by a candidate.

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



Photo by Kim Lewicki

Porchfest had the town hopping on Sunday, Sept. 17!

With a little help from his friends, Spalding McIntosh performed at The Bascom on that perfect Porchfest Sunday, Sept. 17. The 3rd annual Highlands Porchfest packed audiences into 14 hosting venues to revel in live music from local and regional musicians. This free-to-attend music festival is organized and presented by local, non-profit, Center for Life Enrichment, and made possible by generous community sponsors. The 4th annual Highlands Porchfest is already in the works. Stay tuned!



HIGHLANDS

ELEV. 4118 | THE HEART OF HAPPINESS

Tidy Our Town
Join us!

Saturday, November 4
8:30 a.m.

It is time to tidy up our town!
And we need a little help
from our friends.

We'll begin at
Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park,
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To participate, send an email to
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This event is hosted by the
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For more information: highlandschamber.org or 828-526-5841
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Ol' Dirty Bathtub

OCTOBER 13
The Foxfire Boys

Saturdays on Pine

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*Featuring a variety of popular,
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OCTOBER 7
Outlaw Whiskey

OCTOBER 14
The Foxfire Boys



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...Q&A continued from page 1

think more or less regulations should be considered?

Kay Craig

I am for STRs as they stand now – no new STRs in R1 and R2 as of Sept. 15, 2022 - with the vested interest of all homeowners protected. STRs are to be regulated like any other home and follow the town ordinances.

The two sides seem to have a more harmonious relationship and the town has done what was needed. The complaints are very low according to those at Town Hall.

The town has other issues that require the energy, focus and resources of the board.

John Dotson

Short-term rentals, as they have come to be known, have multiplied exponentially across the country and around the world. In many cities and towns they have been a dynamic that has unexpectedly changed communities. Many of those cities and towns have put in place ordinances that fit their particular circumstances.

According to the Wall Street Journal, even Venice, Italy is losing its permanent population - under 50,000 for the first time in 300 years - due to displacement by rentals and their effects.

Since the early '80s Highlands has had zoning districts. Each of those districts

came/comes with guidelines for allowed use.

Highlands has always had homes that owners chose to rent/loan out during the time they were not in residence - mainly to family and friends. In the past we have also had properties used as Bed and Breakfasts - state regulated and health department

• See Q&A page 30

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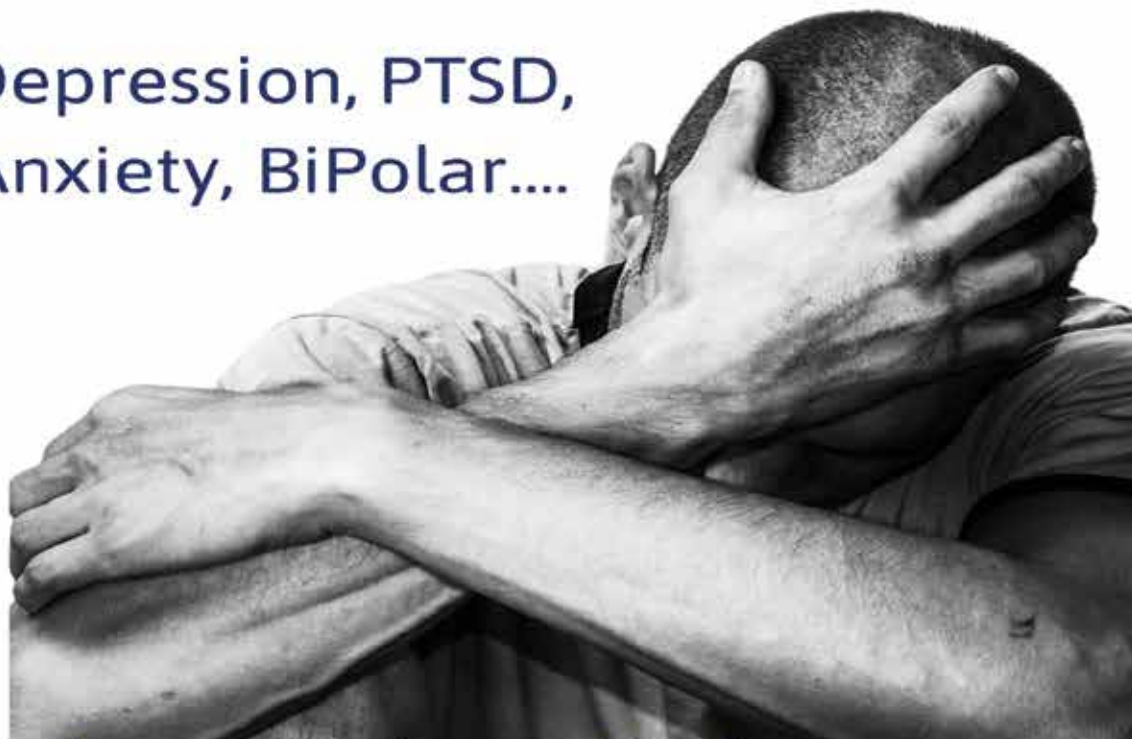
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Fri.-Sat., through October

• At the Nature Center, every Friday and Saturday in October – weather depending - at 4 p.m. come for FREE guided leaf tours open to the public. **Oct. 6-28**

• “The Rocky Horror Show” at Mountain Theatre Company now in residence at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street. For tickets www.mountaintheatre.com.

Fri.-Sun., Oct. 6-8

• Cashiers Valley Leaf Festival at The Village Green. A free 3-day festival featuring 90 artisan vendors spread throughout The Village Green park. 10am - 5pm on Fri. and Sat., and 10am - 3pm on Sun.

Fri., Oct. 6

• At Hudson Library, southern author Susan Zurenda will be at Hudson Library on Friday at 4 pm for a wine and cheese Books & Bites event. She'll talk about her latest novel, The Girl from the Red Rose Motel. Books will be available for purchase at this

free event.

• Friday Night Live – Town Square, 343 Main Street, 6 – 8:30 p.m. Silly Ridge

• The Smoky Mountain Pregnancy Care Center's annual fundraising banquet will be held Friday in the Faith & Fellowship Center of the Highlands United Methodist Church, 315 Main St, Highlands, NC. Guest speaker is author and recording artist Steven Holland, who will share his unusual and inspiring life story. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. to view raffle items donated from businesses in Highlands, dinner at 6. Please pre-register by October 1. Call 828-349-3200, or go to SmokyPartners.com.

Sat., Oct. 7

• The Highlands Bagpipers will perform between Highlander Mountain House and the Highlands Wine Shoppe from 4:30 - 5 p.m.

• Saturdays on Pine – K-H Founders Park, Pine Street, 6 – 8:30 p.m. Outlaw Whiskey

Mon.-Wed., Oct. 9-11

• At Estate Jewelers of Highlands at 360 Main Street, BUYING EVENT. Call 828-526-1960 for details. No appt. necessary. Immediate Payment. 20% bonus when traded for store credit.

Wed., Oct. 11

• The Highlands Biological Foundation (HBF) signature fall event – its 2nd-ever Carpenter Lecture. Established in honor of

Sonya Carpenter, former director of HBF, the Carpenter Lecture series aims to educate our community about the environment while inspiring stewardship of the natural world. This year's program is in partnership with The Bascom and will feature Florence Williams, acclaimed author of The Nature Fix, as she presents “Your Brain on Nature: Why Being Outside Makes Us Feel Happier, Healthier, and More Creative.” 11 a.m. at The Bascom's covered terrace. Space is limited. To register go to www.highlandsbiological.org.

Thurs., Oct. 12

• At Holistic Spirit Mind Body, Group Mediumship by Kelly Palmatier - Asheville Psychic Medium -from noon to 3p. \$45. Limited Seats. Reservations required. Call 828-487-5579.

• The Nantahala Hiking Club will meet in the Macon County Library, on Siler Road in Franklin at 6 p.m. Norm & Rochelle Morris tell the true story of his (jingles) AT hike from GA to ME while Rochelle (SherpaShell) provides her support from the backroads in their camper van. All are welcome to participate in a FREE raffle! This program is co-sponsored by the library and NHC. <https://wildmansbooks.com/product/jingles-promise/>

Fri. & Sat., Oct. 13-14

• At The Bascom, Fall Pottery Show and Sale 10a to 5p. Feature

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• HIGHLANDS EVENTS •

ing work by Studio Members.

- At M&CO, 782 Dillard Road, Fine and Estate Jewelry Extravaganza by Mike Booth, former auctioneer at Scudders. Unbeatable prices.

Fri., Oct. 13

- At Hudson Library, local author Bruce Katz will appear at Hudson Library on Friday at 2 PM to talk about his new novel *The Family Jewels*. Books will be available for purchase and signing at this free event.

- The LAST Friday Night Live – Town Square, 343 Main Street, 6 – 8:30 p.m. The Foxfire Boys

Sat., Oct. 14

- Highlands Heritage Jamboree will celebrate and honor the town's history with traditional music, dancing and more on Saturday, Residents and visitors will enjoy bluegrass, clogging and bagpipe performances. Performances at K-H Founders Park will include: Highlands Bagpipers, 3:30-4 p.m.; Bailey Mountain Cloggers, a championship dance team from Mars Hill University, 4-5 p.m.; The Foxfire Boys, 5-7:30 p.m.

- The LAST Saturdays on Pine – K-H Founders Park, Pine Street. The Foxfire Boys (5 - 7:30 p.m. as part of Highlands Heritage Jamboree)

- A Hike on the Historic Kelsey Trail. The public is invited to join one of three groups of hikers, 25 in each, on the morning of Saturday. Shuttles to Whiteside will leave from Founders Park at 8:30, 9, and 9:30. The walk is mostly downhill from Whiteside, taking 4 hours, at a casual pace. Water and snack bars will be provided along the trail. As a fundraiser for the Highlands Plateau Greenway, a \$75 donation is requested from each hiker in support of the Greenway trail system. Register at www.highlandsgreenway.com.

Tues, Oct. 17

- Highlanders for Good Government is sponsoring a Candidate Forum in the Community Building at 7 p.m. It will be two hours long will have six subjects to be asked by moderators. Public can send their questions, to info@highlandersfor-goodgovernment.com.

Thurs., Oct. 19

- 17th Annual Chili Cook-Off sponsored by Landmark Realty Group in Cashiers, NC at the Lewis Hall Center at The Village Green 5-7 p.m.

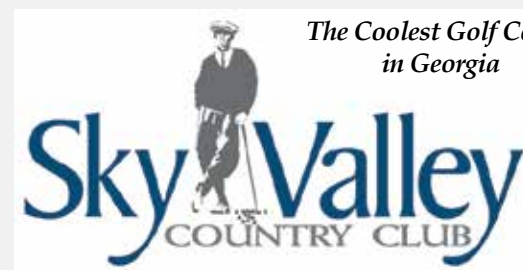
Tues., Oct. 31

- Halloween on Main (from 2nd to 5th streets) will be open to pedestrians from 6-8 p.m. on Tuesday, Participating merchants will distribute candy, some of which is purchased by the Highlands

Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC and delivered to them by the Interact Club. Musical performances include the Foxfire Boys in front of Reeves Hardware, High Five in front of Berkshire Hathaway and DJ Mike Murphy next to Kilwins. The Kid's Zone will be on Fourth Street

Sat., Nov. 4

- Volunteers are needed to help Tidy Our Town on Saturday beginning at 8:30 a.m., weather permitting. Volunteers will begin at K-H Founders Park on Pine Street, to get geographic assignment before collecting trash. Volunteers will get a light breakfast, a safety vest, gloves, pick-up tools and garbage bags. Only areas within the town limits will be covered. To participate please email events@highlandschamber.org or call 828-526-5841.



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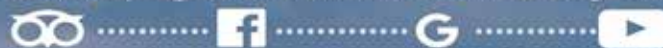
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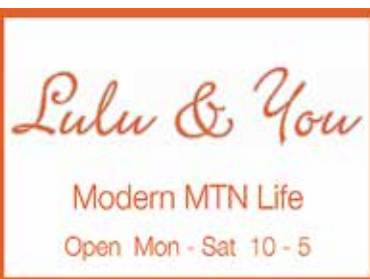
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...PLAYGROUND continued from pg 7

Stiehler, Jeff Weller of Summit Architecture, Chamber Director Kaye McHan, Charlotte Muir executive director of the Highlands Biological Foundation, and others has been collaborating in hopes of making the playground a reality.

The plan is to replace and expand the playground area from its current location down to the tennis courts and situated near the skate park. The playground will be constructed with the topography of the land in mind - for instance, a roller slide is envisioned for the hilly area - with different areas designated for ages 2-5 and 5-12.

All components will be age appropriately labeled so use will be at parents' discretion. The motif will be nature-themed with blues and greens and browns while celebrating creatures that inhabit the Highlands Plateau with stenciled renditions, signage and more.

The committee has enlisted

the help of Carolina Parks and Play which will ultimately design the space with a general contractor hired and sub-contractors used to pour and construct the groundwork and footprint on which components will be affixed.

The project is expected to cost \$1-\$1.5 million but the ultimate plan will depend on the amount of money raised.

"If we can raise money for things having to do with the kids, and if we spend \$1 million, I think we would have far exceeded anyone's expectations," said Weller.

Stiehler and Weller are hoping the town and the county will get behind the project with a fundraising campaign taking care of the rest. If all goes as planned the playground could be a reality in 2025.

"So, planning began the spring of 2023 and now that we know what we would like to see, we are looking at fundraising to

• See **PLAYGROUND** page 25

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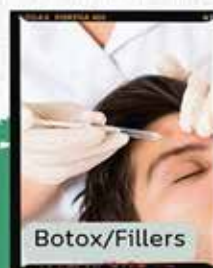
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...PLAYGROUND continued from page 24



There are various swing designs available.

start the spring of 2024,” said Stiehler. “And then hopefully, depending on how fundraising goes, we can pull the trigger on construction the fall of 2024 with a completion date sometime in 2025.”

Stiehler and Weller said they have no idea how long it will take to get the components – spinners, slides, swings, sensory

and tactile play elements - so that will determine an opening date as well.

Anyone interested in helping out financially is encouraged to contact the town’s current representative Commissioner Stiehler at bstiehler@highlandscountry-club.com.

- Kim Lewicki



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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



Pursuing a Humble Spirit

Ken Langsdorf
Lutheran Church of the Holy Family

If you are interested in living a life that is opposite of “road rage,” consider the ancient and very practical teaching of pursuing a humble spirit.

We very easily get caught up in pursuing our own interests and desires and see other people as interrupting our pursuit of what we want. Our lives can get so busy that we get absorbed with what we have to do and just see others as getting in the way. We don’t like to have our busy lives interrupted by someone else, especially when we are in a hurry to get somewhere. This often leads to conflict with others, even road rage.

It takes a lot of practice and intentionality, but pursuing a humble spirit brings great peace and joy to our lives.

A helpful quote from Bordon B. Hinckley says, Being humble means recognizing that we are not on earth to see how important we can become, but to see how much difference we can make in the lives of others.

As we pursue a humble spirit, we will practice treating others with respect and dignity. We will work on a perspective of seeing others as more important than ourselves.

Try it. The next time you go to the grocery store, practice seeing others as more important than yourself. Even as you are driving your car, go out of your way to be polite and considerate of others.

As we practice pursuing a humble spirit, we may feel ourselves overcome with a renewed joy and peace in life. We might find that we enjoy making a positive difference in other people’s lives.

One of the greatest teachers on pursuing a humble spirit was Jesus. And not only did he teach it, but he also lived it.

The Apostle Paul shares an ancient hymn about Jesus in his letter to the Philippians (2:5-11) as he writes:

5Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross. 9Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus shows us that true greatness is not found in forcing our own will by oppressing or belittling others but in showing mercy, compassion and even serving others.

As we pursue a humble spirit, we are not showing weakness but rather self-control and gentleness.

An anonymous writer said, Being a gentle person means that though you have the power and potential to be devastating through your attitudes and actions, you control them so that you have a calming and soothing effect on others.

Joy and peace will be yours as you pursue a humble spirit.

• PLACES TO WORSHIP •

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

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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
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

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Pastor Steve Kerhoulas
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EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

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5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org
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am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel,
Morning Prayer: Mon-Thurs 8:30 am 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; Women’s 10:30 am

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

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www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814

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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
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sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.
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HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby

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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.

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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 Sept. 25. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Sept. 25

• At 11:18 p.m., officers responded to a report of a motor vehicle theft from Highlands Plaza where someone took a vehicle and hit a trailer while being impaired.

• At 11:19 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident in the lower parking lot of Highlands Plaza.

• At 11:33 p.m., Robert Alex Mawnis, 58, of Cashiers, was arrested for motor vehicle theft, possession of a stolen motor vehicle and DUI. He was issued a \$6,000 secured bond. His trial date is Oct. 5.

Sept. 26

• At 2:15 a.m., officers re-

sponded to a report of a larceny at an apartment on N. 4th Street where photographic and optical equipment valued at \$200 was taken.

Sept. 27

• At 4:33 p.m., officers responded to a report of a larceny at 200 Main where \$12,750 in jewelry was reportedly missing.

Sept. 29

• At 4:53 a.m., officers responded to a 2-vehicle accident in Highlands Plaza.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Sept. 28

Sept. 28

• At 8:43 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a residence on View Point Road.

• At 10:56 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Hedden Lane.

Sept. 29

• At 3:01 p.m., the dept. pro-

vided public assistance at a location on Horse Cove Road.

• At 3:26 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Apple Mountain Lane.

Sept. 30

• At 7:57 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Hedden Lane.

• At 12:08 p.m., the dept. responded to a call of a possible gas leak at a location on N. 5th Street.

• At 7:30 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Skyline Lodge Road.

• At 10:40 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Arnold Road.

Oct. 2

• At 6:53 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a residence on Barney Road.

Oct. 3

• At 2:14 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Shortoff Springs Road.

• BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NEWS •

Community members recognized by the Highlands Chamber of Commerce

In a celebration of community spirit, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce proudly honored exceptional individuals and organizations at its Autumn Ovation event held at the Highlands Biological Station pavillion last week. The annual gathering brings together Chamber members to network and celebrate the honorees.



The Duke Power Award for Volunteer of the Year, was presented to Jim Spencer. The award recognizes leadership, volunteer involvement and community service. Spencer quietly but tirelessly supports a multitude of local initiatives. He lends a helping hand through Rotary projects and dedicates his time selflessly to organizations like the Emergency Council, Biological Center, and the Food Pantry



The Del Roberts Award for Outstanding Business was presented to the International Friendship Center. The award was created in 2005 to honor a business' unselfish contribution to Highlands.



The Robert B. Dupree Award for Outstanding Community Service, was presented to the Highlands Historical Society and their volunteer Kim Daughtery for her work on the Dahlia Festival.

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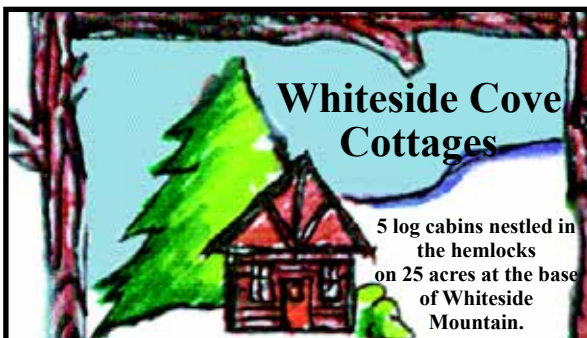
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...Q&A continued from page 21

inspected operations. To my knowledge B&Bs no longer exist in Highlands. They were only allowed in certain zoning districts in town.

In our most regulated district, R-1, “overnight” rentals were never allowed. In R-2, a more loosely zoned district, B&Bs were allowed - which may have given way to the thought of homeowners embarking on renting themselves - without serving food and the regulations that come with it.

Short term rentals “...as they stand now” is somewhat of a misnomer.

The Town of Highlands and its challenges have been aware for some time that bills have been introduced in the North Carolina Legislature that may or may not impact any decision the Town may have. To date, both parties have taken the opportunity to let the Legislature weigh in on the subject of STRs before proceeding with further action.

The final adoption of any bill in Raleigh concerning short-term rentals will give the Town guidance in future ordinances on the subject.

Pending legislative action, the consideration of more or less regulations on the subject is a moot point for the Town.

Brian Stiehler

Short-Term Rentals (STRs) started as a hot topic during the COVID pandemic when people were traveling regionally for their vacations as opposed to getting on an airplane and traveling longer distances. STRs are a nationwide issue and not one that is isolated to Highlands. Every community in America is dealing with this, more so in desirable resort areas like Highlands. With folks on either side of the issue, it became clear that the Town would likely see legal action from one of the two sides.

Let me start by saying I fully support STRs in our business zoning districts, where they make sense. I believe STRs do a nice job of supplementing hotel accommodations during the busy season. There are also many STR options outside of town limits, in the county, that serve our visitors. But as a Town Commissioner, I feel it is my duty to follow the ordinances as they are written. Our ordinances clearly state, no overnight accommodations in residential zoning districts. Our residential neighborhoods, R1 and R2 specifically, should be left for residents and/or long-term renters. Neighborhoods are about community. Some have gone as far as to say this is an anti-business stance, which couldn't be farther from the truth. I have fought for businesses on many issues over the years, but when it comes to neighborhoods and our residents, I feel they

deserve protection.

I am very concerned about the potential for STRs to change our sense of community, which it already has in the town. While there are many who feel this issue has been settled, there are still more issues to confront. My other concern with the way STRs are governed right now, is that it creates two different home values within the same zoning designation. I believe the same rules need to apply to all properties. As an incumbent, I've had the benefit of many hours of meetings where we looked at this issue from every perspective.

As we move forward, I think it is the town board's duty to listen to our legal counsel and determine what is the best way forward for the long-term benefit of the community. For me, that means protecting residents in R1 and R2 zoning designations.

Jeff Weller

The issue of STRs in Highlands has been one of the most contentious issues our Town has had since the days of ETJ (Extra Territorial Jurisdiction). During this process, each side of the argument brought their views and opinions to the table. Some compromises were made within the Town's final regulations that passed on 9/12/22. Since that time, the State has also started conversations on the subject of STRs and Bill 667 has been proposed. This Bill to me is too strong in its language in favor of STRs. Again, if the State decides to move forward with policy on this issue, there will likely need to have a middle ground found in order to garner the support needed to become law. I don't see Bill 667, as currently written, getting through both the House, Senate and Governor. According to Mayor Taylor, the current lawsuit brought against the Town has been paused pending the outcome of the possible current legislation proposed.

With that said, the current regulations in place at this time appear to be working based on firsthand accounts as well as the low level of complaints filed with the Police Department and Town.

Last I discussed with administration at Town Hall, there are 273 STR eligible properties out of approximately 3,000 homes. So right at 9% of homes are also STRs. Under the current regulations that number of eligible homes would not increase. STRs have been around for a very long time. Even the cottages around the Highlands Country Club Clubhouse were STRs many years ago. My first week when I moved to town over 30 years ago was spent in an STR until my garage apartment was ready on Holt Knob. I do not want to see STRs proliferate, but the current regulations in place won't allow

that to happen.

As I've said prior, we need to better involve the entire community in these decisions. I know the community had a chance to voice their opinions. I'd like to see that continue and even improve moving forward. Our community is the key to any Town's success on all issues, but especially the subject of STRs. The Granicus App approved by the Town that allows people to complain about an STR (or possibly even a non STR neighbor) is a way to try and improve communication. However, I do believe the App falls short in this process in that the owner of the property, which may or may not be an STR, is not informed in a timely manner of the complaint/issue. If this could be the case, then small or even bigger issues could potentially be dealt with immediately rather than wasting the time of the Police Department or the staff at the Town Hall 2-3 days later. With technology today, communication could and should be improved.

I am for the current Regulations in place at this time. I do not own an STR in town, so I come into this with no personal agenda or bias. I would not be looking to change the regulations moving forward. I don't think there should be more or less at this time. The biggest area for improvement is engagement of both sides of the Issue. I still feel that each side can have their views and still be pleased with the end result. That will be key with this Issue and possibly others moving forward. As a commissioner, I would be willing to listen and respect each side of these discussions.

Rachel Wilson

Short-term rentals are an issue that has divided our town. Over the past two years this has become an emotional argument rather than a level-headed collaboration to resolve an issue impacting small pockets of our community.

There is nothing right about people coming into our town, renting the house next door and disrupting our neighborhoods with noise, trash and intrusive parking. There should be consequences for this behavior, property owners should be held accountable, and I commend the town for purchasing a software program that makes it easier for neighbors to report such issues.

However, some estimates based on software used by the Town of Highlands indicates that less than 10% of the homes within the town limits are registered as short-term rentals. Of that 10% the number of rentals that could be deemed as a “party house” on a consistent basis is even smaller. This information is confirmed by

the limited number of complaint calls received by town officials as discussed at the July 20th Board meeting. Statistically, that is not enough to change the demographic of our community or warrant a complete ban of short-term rentals. I do believe there should be some regulation to protect all property owners' rights, but I am not in favor of eliminating short-term rentals within any part of town limits.

Let me be clear, I am not pushing anyone's agenda. I do not believe we should keep short-term rentals simply to support a business model but the simple fact is that Highlands is a tourist town. People who visit Highlands support our economy and provide a living for many locals. Short-term rentals in R-1 and R-2 meet the needs of families and groups who need more space or amenities than a hotel room while still providing the in-town experience.

Also, many people looking to build or buy a home in Highlands benefit from staying in neighborhoods to get a feel for the town and get to know the locals. These are good reasons to have short-term rentals in our town.

Many seasonal or part-time residents who own a home in Highlands can only do so because they have income from renting their home. These people are good neighbors and invested in our community. Others have made improvements to run down properties that were eye sores, increasing the value of the properties around them and they were willing to do so because of the return on investment a short-term rental provides. These Highlanders are not the enemy, but they have been painted as such.

The Highlands Town Board should strive to be an example of collaboration and a government that values the opinions of all stakeholders, not just the loud minority. This is how we can ensure we do what is best for Highlands now and in the future.

As I understand it, there are two pieces of legislation in Raleigh surrounding this issue. SB290 and SB667 were presented earlier this year but have not passed. The introduction of these bills show there is interest from the State to make a ruling on this issue. Until we are given direction from the State, I do not see the point of putting more time and energy toward an issue when whatever the Town Board decides might be overturned. There are more pressing issues to put our efforts toward.

The Oct. 12 question:

What are your views concerning tourism and Highlands' inevitable growth?

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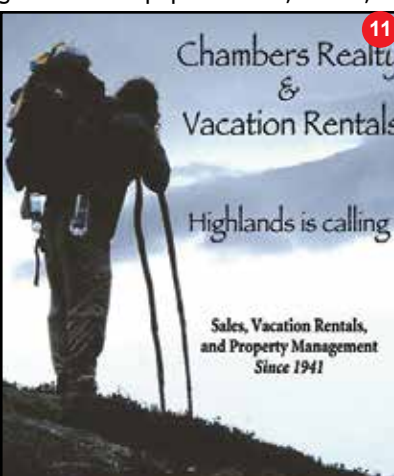
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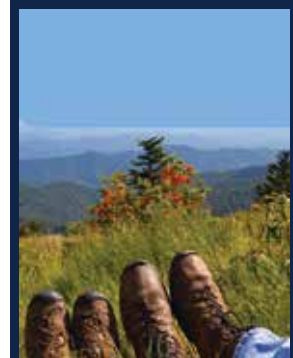
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