

Highlands Newspaper

Volume 20, Number 39

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Thurs., Sept. 28, 2023



Kay Craig John Dotson Brian Stiehler Jeff Weller Rachel Wilson

Candidates gather for 6-week Q&A

This issue kickstarts our candidate Q&A which will feature a question and answer each week for six weeks culminating with the Thursday, Nov. 2 edition prior to the Tuesday, Nov. 7 election. There are five candidates running for three seats on the Highlands Town Board. The candidates are Kay Craig, incumbent John Dotson, incumbent Brian Stiehler, Jeff Weller and Rachel Wilson. The candidates' answers will be presented alphabetically.

• See Q&A page 30

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Teacher-of-the-Year, Brian Aulisio and Support-Person-of-the-Year April Getz received certificates at the BOE meeting.

HS teachers/staff receive accolades at BOE meeting

At the September Board of Education meeting held in Highlands Monday, Principal Sarah Holbrooks commended Teacher-of-the-Year, HS math teacher Brian Aulisio and Support-Person-of-the-Year, library media coordinator April Getz for all they do for Highlands School.

Each year, teachers and staff of MC schools vote for the Teacher-of-the-Year and the Support-Person-of-the-Year. This year, Aulisio and Getz made the cut at Highlands School.

“Mr. Aulisio is an amazing math teacher. He makes math fun and engaging for all of our students. He is truly a light when he comes to school. Usually you can see him leading my small kids down in the morning to their classrooms by trumpet or you can catch him DJing at the Homecoming Dance. He truly is spectacular. He puts music into math so the kids learn rap songs to help them memorize everything they need to know for

• See BOE MTG page 25



Saturday night, K-H Founders Park saw a joyous crowd of all ages dancing to the sounds of the Holiday Band from Burlington/Chapel Hill that played oldies but goodies. They even solicited a visit by a bear who strolled through the park unfazed by the music or the people. Visit Highlands sponsors Music in the Park each Saturday through Oct. 14.

- Photo by Amanda Leggett

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• THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

• MAYOR ON DUTY •

State budget comes through for Highlands

For nearly 35 years, there have been several efforts to secure funding to dredge Mirror Lake. With the state appropriating 5 million dollars in the new budget, the restoration of the lake will become a reality in the coming months and years.

I want to thank our legislative delegation, Representative Karl Gillespie and Senator Kevin Corbin, for getting those funds in the recently passed state budget. They are a tremendous legislative team that garners support for Western North Carolina.

This project will have a lasting impact on preserving the watershed not only for Highlands but for this entire area of Macon County and beyond. It will also restore this scenic venue for our residents and visitors who enjoy our beautiful mountain venues.

The region has seen a decline in rainfall in recent weeks, which may portend drought conditions. Having a healthy tributary lake to our water source at Lake Sequoyah will be an important component in addressing future drought conditions. Increasing holding capacity through deepening Mirror Lake will serve the town's water system well. Given



Highlands Mayor
Patrick Taylor

rising temperatures, shallow water impoundments like the current Mirror Lake promote warm water and subsequent algae growth, complicating clean water production at our water plant.

This project could not have been possible without the citizen involvement of the Mirror Lake Improvement Association. They kicked off the effort by raising half a million dollars, but more importantly, they developed a viable plan for dredging and restoring the lake. I want to thank Patrick Gleeson, the president of the Mirror Lake Improvement Association, for his bold leadership in making this project possible.

This significant state-support not only provides the opportunity to dredge the lake but, just as importantly, puts into place a system where the lake can be maintained and serviced for years to come. The dredging of the lake is just the initial step in preserving this important community asset.

Representative Gillespie and Senator Corbin also secured five million dollars to replace the 1965 pre-water clarifier tank at the Highlands Water Plant and for related upgrades. The aging tank is still in service, but as Commissioner Marc Hehn has stressed, the tank has been on borrowed time. The board realized it had to be replaced, so several months ago, funds were allocated to begin the engineering and design for a new tank. Those plans are close to completion.

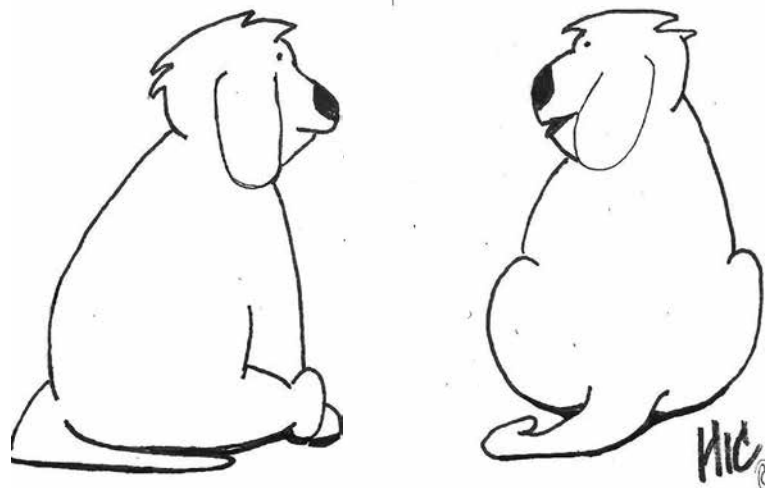
These funds that our legislative delegation secured were sorely needed. Senator Corbin and Representative Gillespie also got the town over 3 million dollars last year to replace the water lines and water tank in the Dog Mountain area.

The great news is that we have the state funds for these critical projects. The state money translates into more local tax money being directed to other projects on our long list of community improvements.

Please join Representative Gillespie, Senator Corbin, and me at the community coffee tomorrow, Friday, September 29, at 11 a.m. at the Hudson Library. Let's thank our representatives for their support. Also, they will update everyone on other aspects of the new state budget that will advance Western North Carolina.





• To see the full budget story go to page 20.

• HIC'S VIEW •



"Skip, I have been trying to improve communications with my lizard inner self."

• WEATHER •

Thu, 28-Sep	Fri, 29-Sep	Sat, 30-Sep	Sun, 1-Oct
 69°F 49°F	 70°F 49°F	 73°F 51°F	 70°F 50°F
Times of clouds and sun	Partly sunny and pleasant	Partly sunny and pleasant	Mostly sunny and pleasant
RealFeel® High: 73° Low: 51°	RealFeel® High: 76° Low: 52°	RealFeel® High: 78° Low: 53°	RealFeel® High: 73° Low: 55°

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Phone: (828) 200-1371

Email:

HighlandsEditor@aol.com

Publisher/Editor: Kim Lewicki

Reporters: Brittney Lofthouse

Brian O'Shea

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view details

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• INVESTING AT 4,118 Ft. • 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



Jody Lovell
Highlands and Cashiers
Sotheby's International Realty
828.526.4104

sense of self. A nature lover might want lots of windows bringing the outdoor in 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

• CORRECTION •

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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• LETTERS •

To our neighbors on the 'Knoll'

Dear Editor,

I have a four-letter word for the clergy whose Spiritually Speaking column entitled "Is God guilty of hate speech" that appeared on September 14 edition of Highlands Newspaper and for his congregation for whom he says he writes:

L-O-V-E

If what y'all up on that knoll are up to isn't about Love, then it's not about God is it? The way of love is essential for addressing the seemingly insurmountable challenges facing the world today: poverty, racism, selfishness, deep ideological divisions, competing claims to speak for God.

What's it like up on that knoll looking down on

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others: calling out our Chamber of Commerce, our arts center, a play (based on a famous movie) and some folks' sexual orientation?

There are those who would attempt to rip apart the fabric of our community and there are those who would weave the fabric of love into our community. This "spiritual" column on September 14 was a gratuitous ripping of the fabric of our community.

Let's instead be weavers of the fabric of society as we share and exhibit God's love. Let's go to that play together.

Gary Moore
Highlands, NC

Fix the 'rinky dink' sign

Dear Editor,

It was a year ago I contacted the Highlands Chamber of Commerce and the Visitor's Welcome Center about the sign hanging over the banister of their building and suggested that it be replaced. I was told they were waiting for some resolution over an issue with the Town of Highlands and didn't want to spend the money on a more permanent one.

Now, here it is a year and full summer season later and it's still that wimpy, almost un-readable sign hanging there.

For a town that's just been named by Travel and Leisure magazine as the Best Small Mountain Town in America, that sign is an embarrassment! It is truly "Rinky Dink."

Could the leadership not have a sign designed and placed that would be worthy of our new recognition?

Osborne Oakley
Highlands

The real end-game

Dear Editor,

I ran into a casual friend in Calder's the other day who said to me. "What's going on these days with Trump is mind-boggling." Thinking we were on the same page, I agreed. He followed up by saying, "They stole the election from him, and this Mar-a-Largo records thing is so bogus." I was stunned; I never thought he was on that side of the aisle and had always thought of my friend as an informed person. After telling him I was shocked by his position, I asked him if he could cite just one fact - I repeated, just one fact - that the election was stolen and that this came from anywhere or anyone except Trump or those under indictment. He could not. I then asked if he had read the indictment on the Mar-a-Largo records case. He had not. I told him I had read it, and the facts are indisputable: he took files, refused to give them back, tried to hide them, and tried to have others lie for him. The facts are irrefutable. If he were anyone else, he would already be in jail. I then asked him, if you cannot provide a single fact or have read a single word, how can you have an informed opinion either way? There was no response.

We both drank some coffee, sat quietly for a minute, and then I said, "Correct me, please if I am wrong, but are the facts not true? Has Trump not been convicted twice of business fraud - his University and the Trump Corporation? Did he not disclose highly classified information to Russia's foreign minister about a planned Islamic State operation? Has he not been convicted of sexual misconduct? Did he not have a private dinner at his home with the white

supremacist and Holocaust denier Nick Fuentes? Has he not disparaged US war dead as 'losers' and 'suckers,' and did he not tell General Millie not to have wounded veterans at ceremonies because "people do want to see them?" Did he not sit in the White House dining room for over two hours and watch the Capital riot on TV, doing nothing to stop it? And I am not even mentioning he is currently under four indictments with over 90 felony counts. Hell in 2015, Senator Lindsey Graham, his ally, called Trump a "race-baiting, xenophobic, religious bigot." So, I asked, are all those facts correct? His response was a reluctant yes. So, I asked how is he fit to be President?

His response staggered me, "Well, it doesn't matter. We (he emphasized the We) just want to make America great again."

My response to him was gut-wrenching for me, "I understand now; white again." It was then I realized the truth: It doesn't matter to these followers, at least this follower, what Trump did or does, only that the end game is achieved - White America.

Trump is certainly not a model of Presidential character, of honor and integrity. To me, he is an entitled rich kid who never grew up, cares about only himself, is a racist, and a disgrace to the Office of The President of the United States. His disrespect of fallen soldiers, especially Senator John McCain, and his treatment of women, are inexcusable; and you have to have your head in the sand not to think he was responsible for the January 6 riots. I was a soldier, and I am a father of two remarkable daughters. There is nothing about Trump that honors either, and that in itself is enough for me to dismiss him. I used to struggle to understand how people can support this man. But now I understand; it's just about the end game - White America. Trump is just a loud-mouth enabler for people who have been "hiding under a rock" waiting for the chance to be superior. His party is no longer a political party based on principle; the party of Reagan is all but dead, and what is left is a cult with just one objective - power.

America is about to enter a very serious time; a former President of the United States is set to go on trial - four of them - and is poised to run for re-election. Is Trump the man for the job? Let's discuss it. But if you want to convince me that Trump is Presidential, you better come to me with more than an emotional ranting - you might try facts.

So, what is all this about, what do I want? I want people to be honest, open their eyes to the truth, and choose a candidate who believes in the Constitution and supports Democracy over self.

Know the facts and the rest is just crap.

Thus ends the lesson.

Matt Eberz
Highlands

What If?

Dear Editor,

What if the Creator God of the Universe wrote down His ways saying His ways were not our ways, but He wanted us to know them, to hide them in our hearts so we would not sin against Him? What if He conceived marriage as a union between one man and one woman,

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John Thompson got this shot Saturday, Sept. 16 at 1:20 p.m. Though very much alive this bear's presence on a busy Saturday afternoon shows how secure bears feel in Highlands.

Bold female bear was euthanized in July

By Cynthia Strain
B.E.A.R. Taskforce

Social media has been alive with talk recently of a Mama bear being killed recently in the Sapphire area.

According to NC Wildlife biologist Justin McVey it's true - in July a female with cubs was shot under the depredation rule.

What is a depredation permit NC?

According to state statute, section 10B .0106 - Depredation permits shall authorize the taking, destruction, transfer, removal,

transplanting, or driving away of undesirable, destructive, or excess wildlife or wildlife resources as specified in this Rule.

"In July a female with cubs was trapped and euthanized because she had repeatedly breaking into home," said McVey. "Cubs that time of year have been weaned but are still staying with mom."

According to McVey, in this case, the cubs were big enough to be on their own and were not taken to the state's rehabilitation facilities.

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ABC Trio with Tom Herbort

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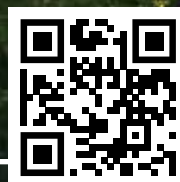
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Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC visithighlandscnc.com

Highlands Historical Society to again host 'Descendants Reception' at HUMC

The Highlands Historical Society will once again sponsor the Descendants Reception at Highlands United Methodist Church on Saturday, Oct. 14, from 1 to 3 pm. Light refreshments of coffee, iced tea, water and lemonade, cake and cookies will be served.

We are encouraging all generational families to come, visit and bring favorite stories from their family histories. We will welcome a heritage families of Highlands and the HHS has come up with the following list of names:

Cabe, Cobb, Wilson, Cleveland, Potts, Holt, McKinney, Halls, Calloway, Baty, Hutchinson, Bryson, Zachary, Norton, Wright, Keener, Webb, Kelsey, Talley, Speed, Reese, Queen, Zoellner, Houston, Ravenel, Lowe, Anderson, McCall, Mon-

roe, Edwards, Picklesimer, Harbison. We welcome any others we might have missed.

Mr. John Singleton, Direction of Education and Community Engagement of FoxFire will present a short talk on preserving family stories. The general public is invited from 2-3 pm when we hope we will have many stories to retell.

Last year we started a notebook of family names and stories and we hope to add many more this year. Many will be able to trace several different family names in their backgrounds.

We will honor families with the most representatives, oldest and youngest family members. And each attendee will receive a certificate of being at our second Heritage Day gathering.

Info about Chamber October events

OUTDOOR CONCERT SERIES

The Outdoor Concert Series will conclude with the following performances:

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

- Oct. 6 – Silly Ridge
- Oct. 13 – The Foxfire Boys

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

- Oct. 7 – Outlaw Whiskey
- Oct. 14 – The Foxfire Boys (5 - 7:30 p.m. as part of Highlands Heritage Jamboree)

Pop-Up Pipers – Saturday, October 7

Since May, the Highlands Bagpipers have performed at a variety of downtown locations the first Saturday afternoon of each month. Their series finale performance will be held between Highlander Mountain House and the Highlands Wine Shoppe from 4:30 - 5 p.m. on Saturday, October 7.

**Highlands Heritage Jamboree –
Saturday, October 14**

For the second year, the Highlands Heritage Jamboree will celebrate and honor the town's history with traditional music, dancing and more on Saturday, October 14. 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.

**Halloween on Main –
Tuesday, October 31**

Creating a safe, fun experience for ghosts and goblins of all ages, Highlands' Main Street (from Second to Fifth Streets) will be open to pedestrians for Halloween on Main from 6 - 8 p.m. on Tuesday, October 31. 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 with an inflatable slide and an obstacle course, provided by the Highlands School PTO and a kid friendly Haunted House manned by the Highlands Police Department. Popcorn will be provided by the Highlands School Booster Club, hot chocolate and apple cider will be distributed by Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Plateau and volunteers from both rotary organizations, Mountain Top and Highlands, will grill and give away hot dogs. Additional food and drink will be supplied by the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/Visit Highlands, NC, and all civic/nonprofit organizations will collect donations to be used in the community for their respective causes as they manage distribution of the items.

All events are free and open to the public. Dogs are welcome but should be leashed.

For more information on October events, visit highlandschamber.org or call the Welcome Center at 828-526-2112.

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• BUSINESS / ORGANIZATION NEWS •



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The eight-acre parcel - The Oakmont Property - is south of the Cashiers Crossroads and bordered by the Cashiers Road and NC 107 North.

Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation announces Request for Qualifications for Oakmont property

The Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation (Health Foundation) announced today they are seeking indications of interest and statements of qualifications from experienced housing developers interested in participating in a development on the Health Foundation-owned property (the Oakmont Property) in Cashiers, North Carolina. They desire to work with a developer who views the site as an opportunity for a mixed-use (residential, retail, recreation, green space) mixed-tenure (ownership and rental) project,

with an emphasis on workforce housing.

Over the past year, the Health Foundation has worked with a consultant funded through a grant from Dogwood Health Trust to develop a unique concept for the eight-acre parcel bordered by Highway 107 North and Highway 64 West.

The Health Foundation hopes to create a project at the Oakmont Property that aligns with the needs, character, and values of the Cashiers community and advances its mission to im-

prove health and well-being for all people.

The Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation's vision for the Oakmont Property is to be a transformative, community-focused project that will build on the strengths, unique attributes, and opportunities of the development site and the Cashiers Crossroads area.

For more information on the Oakmont Property Project, please visit www.HCHealthFnd.org

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• BIZ/ORG NEWS •



Rotary President Dave O'Harra and Carmen Waite.

The Rotary Club of Highlands hosted as our guest speaker Carmen Waite, CEO of The Boys and Girls Club of the Plateau. Its mission is "To enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens." The Boys and Girls Club aims to accomplish this by giving young people, through several different ways, a place to go to study and learn, and get knowledge of life skills in a safe and structured environment. The kids involved have someplace to go after school rather than to a home where parents are at work, and the children would be spending unsupervised time. The Boys and Girls Club leadership is hoping to open a location in the Jane Woodruff Building on the campus of the Highlands Cashiers Hospital in January that can serve 60 to 80 children of the Highlands community. If anyone wants more information about Boys and Girls Club their website is www.bgcplateau.org.

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September Town Board decides a myriad of subjects

Town Board deliberations began an hour earlier Thurs., Sept. 21 with a one-hour workshop prior to the 7 p.m. Town Board meeting.

This format will be tried for one year because the committee meetings which were broken into specific subjects – Rec Park, Safety, Financial, etc. and attended by three designated commissioners – were dissolved at the recommendation of Town Attorney Bob Hagemann.

Hagemann suggested committee meeting discussions should be held more regularly and be easier to attend by citizens as well as the commissioners not assigned

to the committees.

Subjects discussed at the workshop meetings will not be voted on nor will they be discussed at that day's Town Board meeting.

Instead, they will be put on the agenda for the next monthly Town Board meeting.

Not all the commissioners like the workshop idea. The vote to try the format for one year at Thursday's meeting was 2-2 with Mayor Pat Taylor breaking the tie. Commissioner Amy Patterson was absent, and Commissioners John Dotson and Eric Pierson voted against dissolving the committees in lieu of workshops. The mayor

said he likes the format.

A digital sign request from Highlands School, town installed streetlights on private streets and the resurfacing of Arnold Road were issues discussed at the first workshop. They will likely be on the October Town Board agenda.

Chamber of Commerce Lease

A year-lease was approved for the Chamber of Commerce until the chamber and the town learn definitively if room tax money can be used to pay rent which the town will then use to maintain the bathrooms in Town Square. The lease is the same as it's always been; the chamber will pay \$1

a year.

Hwy 106 Sidewalk Discussion

An anonymous donation for a sidewalk extension down NC 106 got the ball rolling last year for the project.

Since then, property owners from where the current sidewalk ends at the Highlands Plaza entrance down to Highlands Country Club have said they are for the project. The only snag is engineering issues due to where the sidewalk leaves the right-of-way along the Shelby Place property.

The embankment along that part of the road falls straight off which means the "sidewalk" would have to descend down onto Shelby Place property, cross over the creek and then travel back up to the roadway.

Shelby Place property owners were OK with the plan as long as the "sidewalk" wasn't visible, wasn't lighted and any foliage displaced during construction was replaced.

In addition to the donation for the project, the town wants to tap The Carbon Reduction Act Grant but to be eligible the "sidewalk" must be ADA compliant.

Town Engineer Lamar Nix, Town Manager Josh Ward and engineer Alec Stillwell recently met with Mitchell Bishop, NCDOT Division Construction Engineer and Aaron Powell, NCDOT Area Construction Engineer to review the sidewalk proposal and conduct a site visit along Hwy 106.

After the review, both NCDOT representatives explained the requirements for the section of sidewalk along the Shelby Place property that leaves the right-of-way. According to NCDOT specifications, when a sidewalk leaves the right-of-way it is treated as a ramp, which would require a number of landings as it switches back and forth down the incline. In addition, an environmental impact study would be required due to the close proximity to the stream, which the town anticipated.

Concerns arose about maintenance and liability in the wooded area, the lack of lighting in the wooded area, the fact that the town's water line runs down the left-hand side of the road, the fact that the sidewalk would have to be constructed over the water line, and that several utility poles would have to be moved.

Consequently, the recommendation was to construct the sidewalk down the right-side of the road which has fewer issues.

Commissioner Dotson has long said he would only consider the project if the sidewalk went down the left-side as that is the side most people are walking coming into town and because there are properties which could still be developed along that side of the corridor versus the right side which is

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Fall Home Improvement

Budget-friendly outdoor projects for any DIYer

(StatePoint) Want to transform your outdoor space while saving money? There are plenty of hands-on projects you can do yourself to eliminate expensive labor costs. The following ideas can be tailored to your budget and personal preferences:

Install a Party Pad

Make your backyard more fun and functional with a low-maintenance patio for entertaining and relaxing. Based

on your budget and experience level, there are a variety of styles and materials to choose from, such as brick, concrete and stone. You'll also need gravel to create a sturdy foundation.

If you're building on an existing lawn, clear out the grass and dirt first and dig an area deep enough, so the new surface will be even with the ground. Once you've prepped the ground and poured the gravel, use sand to hold the blocks in place and fill any gaps between the blocks once the layout is complete. Search online for step-by-step installation instructions and use a project calculator to determine the cost.

Increase Seating Capacity

A built-in seating wall near a fire pit, pool or patio offers more places to lounge and adds depth to the space. There are plenty of DIY-friendly materials to build with, including interlocking concrete blocks, which won't need to be recut and are heavy enough to stay in place without cement, or larger, flat stones that look more natural and can be laid in various ways.

If you use concrete blocks, add capstones as top piece to give the design a finished look. Watch tutorials online before starting the project for inspiration and to ensure you complete all the necessary steps.

Repair Over Replace

Fix up something old to make it new. If you have an above-ground pool or spa with a slow leak, easily repair it with the highly-rated T-Rex Waterproof Tape. The tape has a waterproof backing enhanced with R-Flex Technology for greater durability. It's also UV-resistant, can stretch up to 700% of its original length and is strong enough to be used underwater.

Locate the leak and then measure and cut a piece of tape with scissors (this tape is too tough to tear by hand). Remove the liner from the back and apply it to the crack to form a leak-proof seal. Press down firmly and smooth any creases by hand.

Hide Outdoor Eyesores

A privacy screen is an easy project for beginner DIYers and will hide unsightly air conditioning units, garbage bins and utility boxes. You'll need weather-resistant wood slats, like cedar wood, fence posts, a drill, screws and paint or stain.

Use your "eyesore" to determine how tall to make the screen. Then, anchor fence posts into the ground and drill your first slat about an inch above the ground. Continue adding boards all the way up. For air conditioning units, leave space between each slat to ensure proper air circulation. Add a finish—dark for a modern style or clear for a natural look—and enjoy.

Give it a Glow

Use lighting to give your backyard a bistro-like atmosphere. Rather than using a drill to hang solar or string lights, use transparent, double-sided T-Rex Clear Mounting Tape to permanently and discreetly decorate.

Whether placing the lights across wooden beams or on brick or vinyl fencing, make sure the surface is clean and dry before applying the tape. Stick one side to the surface and the other to mount the lights. The adhesive will build over



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What homeowners need to know before and after a hurricane

(StatePoint) The official Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30, and the National Weather Service is predicting between 12 to 17 total named storms. The best advice for homeowners who want to be better prepared? Proactively think about what can be done ahead of time -- as well as after the fact -- so that you and your family are able to withstand severe weather and quickly recover from it.

"Every day, our team speaks with homeowners needing guidance on their insurance and ways to help keep their family and property safe. Customers typically ask our loss consultation team about water damage, deductibles and what might be covered under their insurance policies," said Jim Wucherpennig, vice president of Property Claim at Travelers, a property casualty

insurer that assists homeowners in planning for and recovering from hurricanes. "Knowing policy terms and conditions can help alleviate some of a homeowner's anxiety that accompanies a storm."

Wucherpennig suggests taking the following steps to be ready for severe weather:

Before a storm:

- Review your policy: Know your insurance coverage limits and check to see that your coverage amounts will allow you to repair or rebuild your property based on current costs.

- Keep good records: Store your policies and insurance contact information in a safe place should your property be damaged and you want to make a claim.

- Create an inventory of personal belongings: Capture video or write a list of items and store it with any important photos in a fire-proof safe or safe deposit

box. Consider purchasing extra coverage for computers, jewelry, art and other expensive items that could be damaged or destroyed in a storm.

- Consider purchasing flood insurance: This is a separate policy and can cover water damage due to flooding resulting from tropical storms and hurricanes.

After a storm:

- Make temporary repairs: Consider hiring a vendor to board up windows, tarp the roof, clean up hazardous spills and debris or take other steps to reduce the possibility of additional property damage.

- Separate and inventory damaged personal property: Create a list of any damaged contents and include a description of each item with details such as the name of the brand and manufacturer; age, place and date of purchase, and other pertinent facts. Be sure to include photographs, video,

or personal property inventories you may already have available.

- Maintain accurate records: Keep detailed notes of your expenses and save bills and receipts from your temporary repairs.

For more information on how to get your home and your finances ready for severe weather, visit Travelers.com.

While no one likes to think about worst-case scenarios, being prepared be-

fore a storm, and having a help your family get back plan for its aftermath, can on its feet faster.



Kitchen trends – styles, colors, materials interior designers are looking at for 2024

By Pip Rich and Aditi Sharma Maheshwari

Understanding the kitchen trends that are in play right now can help you stay ahead of the curve with your kitchen remodel, especially if you're planning a remodel or building your home from scratch. After all, navigating the world of kitchens can be confusing with so many designs, styles, and options out there. It can be hard to determine which ones are truly on-trend.

In general, it's more about a mood than any particular finish. 'Kitch-

ens will feel like another extension of the home; like a room, an additional living space within the house rather than a utilitarian place to prepare food in,' says interior designer Joy Moyler. 'This will see more refined materials, art, and antiques, move into the space as it becomes less focused on pure function.'

These designer-approved trends will give an insight into the new direction for modern kitchen design. Take a look.

Unique Color Schemes

When it comes to kitchen color schemes, the latest

trend is to go bold. If your kitchen is part of an open plan space or is visually connected to the dining room or living room, consider a color block to give not only this space but even the rest of the home a big boost in personality.

Wood Flooring

When it comes to kitchen floors, interior designers are finding more and more that their clients want wood, where these spaces have been traditionally tiled for practical reasons.

Timeless and light, a great oak floor makes a

• See FALL HOME IMP page 18



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Fall Home Improvement

room feel open and airy. In particular, it doesn't have the reddish tones that cherry or mahogany do which can be a real challenge to complement when it comes to paint color or upholstery choices?

Color in Pantries

When it comes to kitchen pantry color ideas, there is a shift towards using darker tones, to fill this

space with personality, while also cleverly hiding any stains or dents. The pantry is a generally hardworking space that witnesses a lot of use and abuse. Large boxes, heavy bags and more can cause this space to look a little dishevelled. But darker paint tones can hide these issues easily while giving the room a fresh look, always.

Rounded Islands

Why does a big or small kitchen island have to have a sharp corner? Answer: of course it doesn't. And designers are realising that actually rounded edges are more convivial, and conducive to friends and family sitting around their kitchen together. Plus, it creates extra circulation area in the room.

'Curves are so much more inviting than hard edges,' says the interior designer Bryan O'Sullivan. 'They soften a space.'

Oversized Handles

Are you wondering what type of kitchen handles are best? Lately, a whole new world of handles has opened up, adding a touch of drama to this usually pared back space. Oversized, eye-catching



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designs are so easy and delightful to hold.

'A unique mix of materials and textures for kitchen cabinet knobs are having their moment including leather, Lucite, acrylic, wood and stone,' says Nadia Watts, founder of Nadia Watts Interior Design. 'Integrated pulls are sleek and functional and handleless cabinets are all the rage. Sleek, clean lines still rule with knobs and handles going incognito allowing simplicity to shine and the cabinetry to take center stage. On the flip side of the modern streamlined approach, vintage and antique styles are in, with distressed finishes and unique one of a kind vintage inspired designs.'

'I think we are seeing a huge appreciation for hardware at the moment,' says Samantha Struck, founder of StruckSured Interiors. 'I think with the market shifts and people being a bit more budget conscious, we are seeing people save on the cabinets themselves but splurging on the hardware to elevate the end result. As a rule of thumb, if you have to choose where to spend versus save, put the money into the items you physically touch and interact with (in this case, the hardware over the cabinets).'

Colorful Taps

If you're wondering how to choose a kitchen faucet, it's time to go bold. It's natural to turn to muted color palettes, but that wouldn't be a Livingetc-approved trend without a little twist. It's the pop of a jewel-bright tone or a bright color on the faucet that gives a little jolt of energy a room like this really

needs.

'Clients request a lot of brass and graphite/pewter faucets in their kitchens,' says Samantha. 'I don't think these colors will ever go out of style so definitely a safe choice in the long run.'

Aged Brass

When it comes to kitchen faucets trends, brass remains to be popular, but we're seeing unlacquered styles, allowed to naturally patina, come to the forefront.

'We still do a lot of aged brass in our projects,' says Samantha. 'From a lifecycle standpoint, I think people are still very interested in timelessness and want selections they know will last beyond one trend cycle.'

'Many designers suggest a living unlacquered brass finish,' says Bethany Adams, founder of Bethany Adams Interiors. 'It takes several months to go from shiny, polished brass, to that gorgeous aged look we all love, but it is worth the wait! Bonus – if polished brass becomes all the rage, you need only break out the Blue Magic (metal polishing cream) to stay on trend.'

Porcelain Countertops

While marble, granite and quartzite have long been the most common materials for kitchen counters, new innovations have seen porcelain step into the arena of best kitchen countertop material. It makes sense – as substance, it's hardwearing, durable and – just as importantly – quite beautiful to look at.

'Porcelain countertops offer a multitude of benefits that make them an ideal choice for kitchens,' says Aparna Kaushik, founder & architect at Aparna Kaushik Design Group. 'Their ex-

ceptional durability ensures they can withstand the rigors of daily kitchen activities, resisting chipping, scratching, and cracking. The non-porous nature of porcelain makes these countertops highly resistant to stains, spills, and the growth of bacteria, ensuring a hygienic and easy-to-clean surface for food preparation. Additionally, their heat resistance allows for direct placement of hot pots and pans without damage. Furthermore, their fade resistance ensures that they maintain their appearance over time, even with exposure to sunlight.'

Cabinets to the ceiling

While this is also another example of the curved island, what's particularly notable about this white kitchen is the way the cabinets run all the way up to the top of the ceiling.

'Unless you have a specific styling intention for the space between the tops of your cabinets and the ceiling, I think it's always worth running units up to the top,' says Gabrielle Aker, owner and principal at Aker Interiors. 'When cabinets stop shy of the ceiling, the space above them either becomes a dust collector or causes visual chaos with a hodgepodge of rarely used kitchen items.'

What is the bigger kitchen trend for 2024? 2024 is going to be all about bold tones, tactile surfaces, and statement lighting. Kitchens will open up to more nature-inspired palettes of green, light blue, and grey. The trend of indoor herb gardens is on the rise and homeowners will be open to vertical planters, as well as natural materials for benches, backsplashes, and flooring.

...TOWN BOARD continued from page 14

built out.

A boardwalk scenario was suggested which wouldn't require a descent but merely a pass over the area.

Since it might be visible from the Shelby Place property side, the board agreed to go back to Shelby Place homeowners to see if they would be agreeable if the "boardwalk" along their property could be hidden with foliage.

The grant is available through 2026 and very few entities have applied for any of those monies.

Sanctuary on 1st

The Sanctuary on 1st Phase 1 & 2 final plat was approved with a 3-1 vote. Commissioner Dotson voted no because the sidewalk

that ends half-way down Oak Street isn't required to be extended.

When construction began on Sanctuary on 1st, the town's Master Sidewalk Plan didn't include Oak Street. By the time the project was expanded to phase 2 the Master Sidewalk Plan was

amended to include Oak Street. Consequently, the developer was required to construct a sidewalk along the new part of the subdivision that ran along Oak Street.

Subdivisions within the confines of the Mas-

• See TOWN BOARD page 30

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Sen. Corbin and Rep. Gillespie secure major investments in MC & JC with passage of State budget

By Brittney Lofthouse

Senator Kevin Corbin and Representative Karl Gillespie joined forces during the state's budget planning process to secure significant investments for the region as part of the state's \$30 billion budget. This budget, which garnered bipartisan support after extensive negotiations, marks a major step forward for the WNC in terms of funding opportunities and will have an incredible impact on the entire state as the passing of the budget solidified Medicaid Expansion for North Carolina, which will expand access to health insurance to 600,000 citizens.

After months of careful deliberations, the North Carolina General Assembly successfully passed the state budget on Friday, September 22, 2023, with support from both sides of the aisle. The budget encompasses a wide array of improvements, including pay raises for state employees and teachers, substantial infrastructure funding, and several other vital allocations.

"This budget represents the culmination of several months of negotiations between the House and the Senate and builds upon the historic investments passed in the previous budget," stated Representative Gillespie. "Critical appropriations are included for education, state employees, teacher raises, and much more. I am also pleased to report that critical funding for our district was included in the final agreement. The budget now heads to the Governor's desk and I encourage the Governor to sign this responsible bipartisan spending plan into law."

Senator Corbin echoed this sentiment, stating, "Rep. Gillespie and I worked jointly to get the appropriations for the district. We are always happy to see these kinds of funds come to far Western North Carolina. It is our job not only to represent our district but to make sure we receive our fair share of funding. This budget certainly does that and we are very pleased."

The budget highlights several key areas of focus, including raises for teachers, an expansion of private school vouchers, and adjustments to certain laws. The proposed budget outlines an average 7% increase in teacher pay over the next two years. For new teachers, this increase means an additional \$2,000, raising their starting pay from \$37,000 to \$41,000.

North Carolina's current ranking for starting teacher pay stands at 46th in the nation, according to the National Education Association. The budget also addresses pay increases for veteran teachers, though these raises may be as low as 2%.

Additionally, the budget allocates a 4% raise for most state employees this year, followed by a 3% raise next year. This raise translates to an average annual salary of just under \$60,000 for state workers this fiscal year, and approximately \$61,400 the following year.

Beyond salary adjustments, the budget expedites planned cuts to individual income tax rates, aiming for a rate of 4.25% by

2025. Potentially, in the future, the personal income tax rate could reach as low as 2.49%, contingent upon the state meeting specific revenue goals.

Furthermore, the budget expands eligibility for publicly funded private school vouchers, allowing families of all income levels to participate in the Opportunity Scholarship program. However, it also includes controversial elements, such as shielding legislators further from public records laws and granting substantial authority to the legislature's governmental operations committee.

In a promising move for school districts in economically distressed counties, the budget designates \$6 million over the biennium to assist students eligible for reduced-price lunches and breakfasts, aiming to offset their meal co-pays. Additionally, the budget eliminates penalties for unpaid student meal debt.

Allocations for school psychologists would be redirected to fund "school health personnel," including psychologists, counselors, nurses, or social workers. This shift aims to address the shortage of these critical positions in schools and proposes a comprehensive report with recommendations to enhance hiring for these roles.

To address backlog and delays impacting the judicial system in WNC, the budget earmarks specific funding to alleviate the issue.

The state budget includes \$968,696 to provide funding for an additional district court judge to serve the 43rd judicial district, which includes Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain counties effective January 1, 2025.

The budget includes another \$4,129,496 to establish a new Public Defender District, which will be PD District 43 to serve Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties. The funding would be used to fund one new

• See BUDGET page 25

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...LETTERS continued from page 7

and designed men and women anatomically appropriately so that in their union a child could be born?

What if that same God described Himself as VERY Holy? As such a Holy Being, He could not be in the room while practicing sin. What if this Holy God who exercises Justice, Righteousness and Lovingkindness, loved us so much that He still wanted a relationship with His fallen creation, so He sent to earth His only Son Jesus to die for sinners?

What if God gave men free will to sin, to be carried away by their own lusts? What if God described drunkenness, greed, slander, and the practice of homosexuality sin? Stealing, gossip, lying, and adultery? What if we objected to His list, and decided to excuse sin and accept whatever we want? Do we then become God?

What if He forbade His Believers from participating in and endorsing sin? Moreover, if we decided nothing is sin, would His only Son Jesus have had to die?

What if God who saves sinners through Jesus asked Believers to know and obey His truth? What if He told those same Believers that if they aligned with His ways that they should expect condemnation and persecution?

What if He loved His design of marriage so much that He compared it to the future when a pure church would be the Bride of Christ?

Well, if this were all true, His Believers would stand firm against anything that contradicted His ways. They would debate and not hate, but they would choose the path of righteousness walking and talking the journey God's way and not the world's way. They would be salt and light, loving those with differing opinions but speaking God's truth boldly in love.

Because what if there is a Judgement Day? What if there is a day when we will give an account to the Holy Creator God and the Savior Jesus? How much better off will be the one who feared God and stood on His truth, who feared not the opinions of mere men who deem themselves supreme. What if we understood that no mere man could cancel God's design?

WHAT IF indeed.

**Diann Catlin
Highlands**

God's judgement matters

Dear Editor,

I would like to express my appreciation to Pastor Mark Ford for his Sept. 14 Spiritually Speaking column in which he

speaks for the silent majority. Poll after poll confirms that Americans are sick and tired of what has become a sexual and unscientific cult that believes they deserve special attention. <https://theindependent.co/reduction-in-support-for-the-lgbtq-community-dropped-lgb-community-blaming-the-trans-queers/>

Basic biology and Charles Darwin confirm there are only two genders. Leftists are simply changing terminology and erroneously claiming virtue. Anyone who disagrees with sexual propaganda, is a Nazi, bigot, homophobe. Nonsense! Constitutional Americans "tolerate" perverted behavior, but true Christians will never "accept" promoting of unbiblical principles for insecure adults to validate themselves. Even famous leftists like Bill Maher say enough is enough. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMBzfUj5zsg>

If an individual wants to be gay, queer, heterosexual, whatever, they are free to do so in America, but the victimhood charade is simply gaslighting. LGBTQ already have the same equal rights as anyone else. Perhaps the subjective dogma needs to be exported to places like China, Russia, or Saudi Arabia where gays are genuinely persecuted? Only a fool tries to convince others to support an alternative lifestyle by constantly shoving it in everyone's face with fear and name calling tactics - i.e. demanding the rainbow flag be flown on government buildings or maliciously attacking and bankrupting bakers and florists who have different beliefs. Stunts like this are as asinine as Tennessee football fans demanding libraries celebrate their team or petitioning magistrates to force Georgia fans to wear orange and never say, "Go Dawgs!" Do heterosexuals deserve special holidays and recognition? Of course not. Keep your preferences to yourself and stop ruining society with your entitlement attitude. America does not need a destructive color revolution <https://alt-market.us/pride-is-a-thinly-veiled-color-revolution-to-destroy-western-civilization/>

Furthermore, independent polls clearly indicate Americans will not accept the recent targeting of innocent children for sexual indoctrination and gender confusion which lead to STDs, mental problems, and even suicide <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/4073998-lesbian-gay-and-bisexual-gen-z-members-report-higher-anxiety-sadness-than-peers-gallup/>. It is LGBTQ who continue to sow seeds of disunity and strife using fallible emotions instead of facts and logic. Even Muslims are offended by LGBTQ propaganda.

Finally, I found Mr. Eberz's rant on this

• See LETTERS page 25

Three Potters Symposium

Sept 29
to
Sept 30

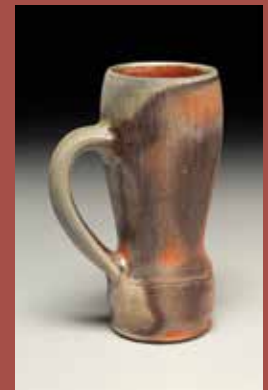
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Thurs., Sept. 28

- The annual Alpha Delta Pi "Alumni on the Mountain" luncheon at Wildcat Cliffs CC at 11:30 a.m. Gate Code is #3030. Mail your check for \$42 which is your reservation to Vesta Jones, 1420 Whiteside Mountain Road, Highlands, NC 28741. Please RSVP by sending check by Sept. 23. For more information, contact Emily Buskirk at 828-787-1015 or ebbuskirk@gmail.com.

Fri.-Sat., Sept. 29-30

- At The Bascom, Three Potters Symposium. Register at TheBascom.org.

Fri., Sept. 29

- Community Coffee with the Mayor at Hudson Library at 11 a.m., State legislators Representative Karl Gillespie and Senator Kevin Corbin will be there to discuss issues.

- Hudson Library is welcoming author Jeffrey Dale Lofton on Friday at 4 PM for a wine and cheese Books & Bites event. Jeffrey will be talking about his debut novel Red Clay Suzie.

Wed., Oct. 4

- At Hudson Library, VAYA Health program is Enriching Mental Health with Complementary Treatments: Acupuncture, Aromatherapy, Essential Oils, and Massage, at 11 a.m.

Oct. 6-28

- "The Rocky Horror Show" at Moun-

tain 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



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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., Oct. 13

• 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, clog-

ging 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@highlandersforgoodgovernment.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.

Dec. 8-24

• "Home of the Holidays" at Mountain Theatre Company now in residence at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street. Tickets go to www.mountaintheatre.com.

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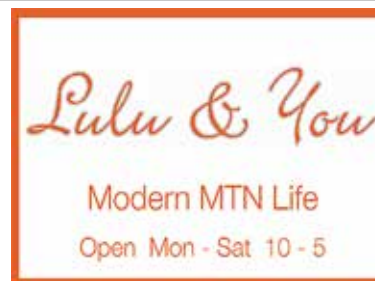
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Front row from left: Tim Overholt, Joel Henry, Allan "Blue," Travis Spivey. Back row from left: Jordan, Tony Darnell, Tony Norton, Mike Virga, Sterling Darnell and Jeremy Welch. Not pictured Dillion Overholt and Jamie Pendegrass.

Front row from left: Madison Rice, Clinton Porter, John Hall, Jonathon Hall, Austin Mireles, and Zach Hall. Back row from left: sponsor Travis Croncrite, Michael Jennings, Jeremy McCall, Justin Hall, Jim Madden, Nick Miles, and Austin Baumgarner. Not pictured: Cristian Mireles.

Front row from left: Blain Dendy, Taylor Schmitt, Ryan Vinson, Drew Chalker, Jacob Tedder, Isiah Vilardo. Back row from left: Calab Bowers, Jerry Moore, Jesse Stephens, Logan Houston, Craig McCall, Michael Baty, Scott Westondorf, Jake Miller and Destin Gearheart.

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...LETTERS continued from page 21

topic in his letter in the Sept. 21 edition amusing and disingenuous. He predictively changes the narrative and cherry picks Scripture ignoring biblical hermeneutics. This is Rules for Radicals 101 and typical virtue signaling. (I Corinthians 1:18-25) Christians are far from perfect but do, in fact, love LGBTQ folks. We are willing to speak harsh truth... celebrating sin results in eternal judgement.

Christ said He came into the world for judgment (John 9:39) and to bring division (Luke 12:51). He had a message of truth that unrepentant sinners will not

tolerate. Jesus was full of love for people yet hated their sin. (John 8: 1-11) He spoke absolute truth so people killed Him, thus we shouldn't be surprised the world hates His truth today. (John 15: 18-25). Christ will save anyone who turns from their sin and trusts in Him for salvation. (John 14:6).

Thank you, Pastor Ford, for being more eloquent than a nobody like me. My opinions don't amount to anything; however, God will not be mocked.

**Jim Gaston
Highlands**

...BUDGET continued from page 20

public defender position effective October 1, 2023 as well as 14 Assistant public defenders, and seven support staff effective January 1, 2024.

Senator Kevin Corbin and Rep. Karl Gillespie, both of Macon County, represent the furthest west districts in the state. All four of the counties Rep. Gillespie serves in the House of Representatives are part of Senator Corbin's eight county district.

Macon County Appropriations:

- \$10,000,000 to Southwestern Community College for capital improvements and equipment, including a new business development center and library.
- \$10,000,000 to Southwestern Community College for capital improvements and equipment, including a new regional firearm training center.
- \$5,000,000 to the Town of Highlands to complete dredging and restoration of Mirror Lake.
- \$5,000,000 to the Town of High-

lands for water/sewer upgrades to replace the town's 60-year-old water pre-clarifier tank.

- \$400,000 to the Town of Franklin for capital costs and equipment associated with the fire substation construction project.

- \$352,000 to Macon County for capital improvements and equipment.

- \$80,000 grant to Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center

Jackson County Appropriations

- \$50,000 to Cullowhee Valley Baptist Church for their food pantry ministry.
- \$300,000 to Jackson County to construct a pedestrian bridge within the town of Dillsboro city limits.
- \$800,000 for the Cullowhee Volunteer Fire Department for equipment, including a new pumper truck to better serve Western Carolina University.
- \$2,000,000 to the Southwestern North Carolina Planning and Economic Development Commission for capital improvements or equipment.

Bartram Academy and LBJ Job Corps partnership begins

By Brittney Lofthouse

Union Academy began a new journey at the beginning of this school year when new principal Brian Moffitt was hired. First he got approval to rename the school, Bartram Academy, reflecting a commitment to instill curiosity, adventure, and growth in its students.

Now a partnership between Bartram Academy and LBJ Job Corps has been established, offering enhanced educational opportunities for both sets of students.

During the September board meeting of the MC Board of Education, a program was approved that opens doors for Bartram Academy students to pursue career track vocational courses to enrich their education and prepare them for the

future. Simultaneously, students enrolled at LBJ Job Corps can now earn their high school diploma if needed, through Macon County Virtual Academy.

The LBJ Job Corps is a government-sponsored residential education and job-training program catering to young people aged 16-24, primarily from low-income and at-risk backgrounds. Established in 1964 by President Lyndon B. Johnson as a part of the War on Poverty and Great Society domestic reforms, the Job Corps program aims to impart academic and vocational skills essential for future employment.

There are 120 Job Corps centers nationwide, with four in North Carolina. LBJ Job Corps primarily serves students from in-

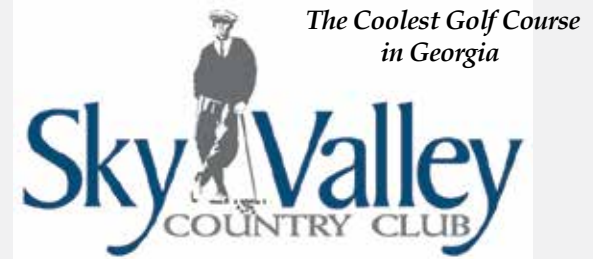
• See **BARTRAM** page 30

...BOE MTG continued from page 1

math class. He is one of a kind," said Holbrooks.

"Ms. Getz is the one I tell people to go ask when there is something I don't know. She does everything from tech to I pads, to computers, to reading the kids stories to making sure my kids know what fiction and nonfiction is. She's doing lessons, she's integrating the classrooms into the media center. She is all things Highlands School. We are so happy that she made her way to us," Holbrooks continued.

- **Kim Lewicki**



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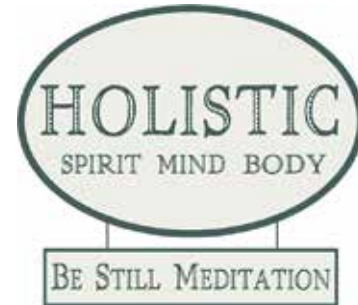
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• SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



Dear Fallen Away Catholics

Fr. Jason Barone
Our Lady of the Mountains
Catholic Church

Greetings. I am the local Catholic priest. We have probably never met, although I hope we do. I certainly do not presume to know your story or presume it is the same as others, but I would be happy to hear it. It has been on my heart to reach out to you. The temptation to walk away is certainly understandable – the Church is a mess and has been for decades now. The decision to leave is even more understandable when there is personal pain involved.

I wholeheartedly wish to follow Christ and His Church, but I am by no means a company man, i.e. blindly supporting every decision of those currently in charge. (My parishioners know well just how willing I am to call out corruption and incompetence either from the pulpit, or even more honestly, at Faith on Tap.) Perhaps my disposition was born out of the time during which my vocation came, namely during the first wave of scandals in the early 2000s. I had no desire to become a priest, but rather had my congressional nomination and was heading to West Point when the Lord began directing me elsewhere. After a few years, His plans became clear: I was to sacrifice a wife, children, and career in order to pursue this call and help rebuild a collapsing Church.

My vocation made no earthly sense; nonetheless, I was willing to trust that God had a higher plan. Understanding that there is a providential plan, I think, is a helpful way to understand the current dilapidated state of the Church. To be clear, there has been a plethora of earthly explanations, such as a lack of transparency and accountability. However, I think it is also important to consider a higher, supernatural explanation. Having a more comprehensive intellectual framework to understand the state of things, I think, can help us.

I gave a homily recently in which I propose that what we are witnessing is a diabolic plot to destroy the Church. This theory is evidenced by numerous approved apparitions that prophesied these events. For instance, in 1610 in Ecuador, the Blessed Virgin Mary prophesied events three centuries in the future: “shortly after the midpoint of the 20th century” “there would be an apparent triumph of Satan,” and that the devil “will corrupt many of them [clergy]. These depraved priests...will scandalize the Christian people.” Furthermore, the St. Michael Prayer was written and recited after Low Mass precisely because Pope Leo XIII witnessed Our Lord giving Satan time and power to try to destroy the Church.

If these events were prophesied, then they're part of a plan or providence. Christ died, and so must His

• See **SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING** page 27

• 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
Sky Valley. GA • 706-746-2999
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www.christanglicancashiers.com
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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

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706. 746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447
Pastor Steve Kerhoulas
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am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel,
Morning Prayer: Mon-Thurs 8:30 am in Chapel

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Dr. Mark Ford, Pastor • 220 Main Street, Highlands
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Wed.: Men's Bible Study 8:30 am; Women's 10:30 am

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Emily Wilmarth, pastor
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Tues: Men's Group 10 a.m. Wed: Bell Choir 4 p.m.. Choir: 6p

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• POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

Highlands Police entries from Sept. 17. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.

Sept. 17

• At 10 a.m., officers responded to a call of a larceny a 2021 Toyota Highlander from a location on N. 4th Street.

Sept. 21

• At noon, officers responded to a call of a shoplifting incident at Reeve's Hardware where a Carhart sweatshirt valued at \$64.99 was taken.

The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from Sept. 20

Sept. 20

• At 7:09 a.m., the dept. was

first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 4:58 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Clear Creek Road.

Sept. 21

• At 10:43 a.m., the dept. provided public assistance at a location on Big Pine Lane.

• At 10:52 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

• At 2:01 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on Main Street.

• At 5:51 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Garnet Rock Trail.

Sept. 22

• At 3:56 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Big Bear pen road.

• At 8:44 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a loca-

tion on NC 106.

• At 6:02 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Foreman Road.

Sept. 23

• At 9:49 a.m., the dept. investigated the source of smoke at a location on US 64 west.

Sept. 24

• At 10:09 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Thornhill Road.

Sept. 25

• At 12:09 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 106.

• At 12:56 p.m. the dept. was first-responders to a location on NC 106.

Sept. 26

• At 1:44 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Cobb Road.

Highlands MS Swim Teams swim well in Georgia

By Steve Hott
Coach

On Friday, Sept. 22, the Highlands Middle School (HMS) Swim Teams traveled to Rabun Gap Nagooschee School (RGNS) in Georgia to swim in a six-way meet.

The Highlands Boys team finished 2nd to Macon Middle School (MMS), while the girls finished 4th.

The Highlanders were led by Ian Batista and Jr. Olympian Blake Kenter, each who had 50 pts. Kenter won an event and Batista had a 2nd and a 3rd place finish. Aleks Petric scored 47 pts with a 2nd place finish while Emilina Hernandez won 44 pts including a 3rd place. Penelope McRae and Jr. Olympian Corena Dearth each had 39 pts. Ivan Shchelgachov won 38.5 pts, Justin Powell

36.5 pts and a 3rd place finish, and Miley Zagal brought home 29 pts. Alex Lopez was out due

...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING

continued from page 26

Church. Only then will we see a resurrection. Our Lady of the Mountains' plans for building a new church is entirely about this resurrection of the Church (but such as a story for a different column).

The homily mentioned above was picked up by the Sensus Fidelium YouTube channel and has over 200k views, suggesting an appetite for such an explanation. The following is a QR code to direct you there.

I hope this column at least begins to provide some explanation for an otherwise inexplic-

able situation. I hope to see you at some point. Until then, I hope the Lord blesses you.



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...BARTRAM

continued from page 25

ner cities like Charlotte, Greensboro, and Raleigh, as well as from the southeastern catchment area, encompassing Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. LBJ Job Corps also extends its services to students from diverse backgrounds, including world refugees from Africa and Burma.

At LBJ Job Corps, students have access to a range of vocations, including office administration, culinary arts, painting, welding, facility maintenance, and brick masonry. The career pathways available for students encompass entry-level jobs, military service, and college education.

The program also offers advanced training opportunities across America, allowing students to hone their skills and expertise through apprenticeships with institutions like the Forest Service, for a hands-on approach to learning.

"The goal of this partnership is to leverage our resources to help at-risk students earn a high school diploma and complete a technical job skills program enroute to finding long-term employment," said Moffitt.

As Bartram Academy embraces its new identity as the Home of the Explorers, this collaboration with LBJ Job Corps promises an exciting and fruitful adventure for all students involved, setting the stage for a brighter future.

...TOWN BOARD

continued from page 19

ter Sidewalk Plan are required to construct sidewalks.

The topography of the section of Oak Street bordering the first part of the subdivision would require the removal of 10 mature trees and numerous other plantings, as well as the construction of a concrete retaining wall 5-7 feet high along that portion of the street.

The developer has agreed to discuss options with the town but so far the planning board nor most members of the Town Board want to see the land and foliage decimated for the sidewalk extension.

Closed Session

The September closed session was in regard to the Huff vs. Highlands court case which was stayed until Aug. 27, 2023. Though that date has come and gone, both sides agreed to keep everything as it now stands regarding Short-term Rentals until the NC legislature discusses two bills that will likely be finalized during the short session beginning Jan. 2024.

- Kim Lewicki

...Q&A continued from page 1

Question #1

Tell us a little about yourself and why you feel this run for Town Board is important.

Kay Craig

My name is Kay Craig and I am running for town commissioner. I moved to Highlands as a newlywed in 1988. We raised our two children here and value the quality of life that Highlands has provided for our family.

I have had two businesses in Highlands. Highlands Cabinet Company which suffered during the recession and then in 2010 I opened The Ugly Dog Pub with the help of friends and family.

I have served on five boards in Highlands and I feel that is important to give back to your community. I would be honored to serve on our town board and hope to effect positive governance for Highlands.

John Dotson

For those who know me, you know that Highlands has my heart. For those who don't, allow me to fill in some blanks.

In my younger years, I was an Army Brat; I lived in so many places it's hard to remember them all.

My first memory of Highlands was about 1970 while doing a story for Foxfire magazine. I fell in love just driving through!

In 1973 I was lucky enough to return to Highlands for a short time. It was then I met my wife. We dated (long distance) and married here in 1975.

In 1986 I received a job offer and the opportunity to move to Highlands permanently. It took me about 30 seconds to accept!

My wonderful wife, Mary, and I raised two fabulous and successful daughters here. Both attended Highlands School from 1st thru 12th grade.

I have owned and operated Preferred Properties of Highlands for over 30 years and been involved locally since day one.

Previously, I have served on the Town of Highlands Planning Board, Chair of the Zoning Board, Peggy Crosby Center Board and Trustee of Highlands United Methodist Church. I was first elected to the Highlands Board of Commissioners in 2007.

Since being elected I've helped the town navigate numerous issues on and off the ballot - from mixed drinks to an updated Unified Development Ordinance to decisions on the boundaries of the city limits. I've given each issue, large and small, careful and deliberate consideration - always keeping how it will affect the present and future of Highlands top of mind.

Each election in Highlands is the voters opportunity to guide the future of our town. This one is no different.

I have no hidden agendas; I am in no

one's pocket. My number one concern is preserving the reason we all are here: Quality of Life in Highlands, North Carolina.

To learn more about where I stand on local issues, please visit my web page: www.DotsonForHighlands.com or my Facebook page at: John "Buz" Dotson

Brian Stiehler

My wife, Hilary, and I moved to Highlands 23 years ago because of my profession. I am employed as the Golf Course Superintendent at Highlands County Club. I have served and continue to serve in numerous community leadership roles through the years and was first elected as a Town Commissioner in 2011. Serving the community in this capacity is something that I find very rewarding and fun. Being engaged in the Town is something that motivates me and keeps me busy. The Town Board requires folks who are experienced, transparent, trustworthy, and rational. For me specifically, there are a couple things that are very important to me that I am constantly working on. First is the Town of Highlands Scholarship Fund, which I'd like to continue fundraising for so we can keep building this unique program. This fund allows graduates of the Highlands School to pursue post-secondary education with financial help from the Town. There is no other fund like this in the country because municipalities are typically not permitted to maintain investment funds. In 1975, thanks to the hard work of members of the Highlands community, the state of North Carolina granted permission to the Town to start this fund. In the last 13 years that I've been involved, over \$200,000 has been added to the scholarship fund. The other fundraising project I will continue to work on, if re-elected, is for a new, state of the art playground that is currently in the design phase. We were so fortunate to have a donor come forward and pledge a generous sum that we will work to add to, to make this a reality for the young children in Highlands. The job of being a great commissioner goes so far beyond what the public sees at the monthly meetings, and it takes someone who has the time, the passion, and the energy to fulfill its duties. For the last 12 years, I have proven my commitment to the town and I'm respectfully asking for your support to continue to serve as one of your Town Board members.

Jeff Weller

I have lived in Highlands for 30 years. During that time, I raised my two children, Colin and Emma, here as well. I've worked all 30 of those years professionally in the architecture, planning and construction field after graduating from Clemson University in Design-Architecture. In addition to

spending time with my family and working full-time, over the years I have gotten great enjoyment through community service. My professional career and my community service has allowed me to work closely with both the Town of Highlands government and administration as well as the Macon County Commissioners and county subcommittees.

In my professional career as a project manager for both residential and commercial projects, I spend significant time managing the design process as well as representing the owner(s) during the duration of the construction. At times, that involves problem solving and coordination between owners, contractors, suppliers, etc. Also, during projects' construction, building codes, town and county ordinances and state regulations are involved. Navigating projects through all of these factors while at the same time maintaining quality design takes coordination and leadership.

Over the past several years, there have been several Town of Highlands issues that have come through the town's Board of Commissioners that were very divisive. I feel the time is right to get some new and fresh ideas and views on the Board of Commissioners. I also feel if elected, my professional experience and my community service has prepared me to have a positive impact. I'd like to engage the community more in decisions in a positive way and feel that I would be well prepared to see that through as a commissioner.

I love Highlands and plan to spend the rest of my life on the plateau. I was very fortunate to raise my family in Highlands and I would like to help keep Highlands a community where my children and others' future generations will want to live, work and raise their families as well.

Rachel Wilson

Macon County has been home for almost 30 years, Highlands for the past 5. My husband and I are about to celebrate 21 years of marriage and we have a son and daughter who both attend Highlands school. My favorite ways to unwind are to read, hike and spend time with friends. I have a strong history of fiscal responsibility working as the Director of Accounting for Old Edwards and volunteering as the Treasurer on two local boards. This run for Town Board is important because it is a chance for new energy and fresh ideas. The Town and Commissioners have done a lot of good, but we need to be more proactive and collaborative in shaping the Town's future and maintaining the sense of community that we have.

The Oct. 5 question:

Are you for Short-term Rentals (STRs) in Highlands as they stand now? Do you think more or less regulations should be considered?

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Deborah "Bee" Gleeson
 404.307.1415
 BeeGlee4@Gmail.com
 and
Pat Gleeson
 828.782.0472
 PatrickGleeson4@Gmail.

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