

# Highlands Newspaper

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Thurs., July 25, 2024

## Town Board hears about STRs and more

By Kim Lewicki

The July 18 Town Board meeting began with public comment with the amortization of STRs, the destruction of residential trees and noisy cars the topics

of concern.

### Public Comment

Jeannie Chambers of Chambers Realty and Vacation Rentals, in business now for decades was the first to speak.

"I want to convey to you tonight the absurdity of you wanting to amortize STRs," she said. "Mr. Mayor you have already stated that your views on amortization have

• See TOWN BOARD page 10

## School lunches will be \$4 for '24-'25 school year

*Only Highlands and FHS have to pay; HS soccer field deemed playable*

By Kristin Fox

At its Monday, July 22 meeting, the MC Board of Education voted to ask the county to fund free lunch at Highlands School and Franklin High School for the upcoming school year – the only two schools in the 11-school system where students are set to pay for lunch.

Breakfast will remain free at all Macon County schools, at-risk after-school programs at all schools will also remain free and the district is looking to expand

• See LUNCHES page 9



Mary McCord and Andrew Weissmann at a CLE presentation at PAC on Monday.  
- Photo by Jim Lewicki

## Ex-prosecutors discuss Trump's legal woes and more

By Jim Lewicki

On Monday, July 22, the Center for Life Enrichment hosted Andrew Weissmann and Mary McCord, co-hosts of the MSN-BC podcast Prosecuting Donald

Trump, at the Martin Lipscomb Performing Arts Center. Together they analyzed current developments in the four prosecutions pending against the former presi-

• See TRUMP page 11

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## Planning Board votes 7-0 against amortization

By Kim Lewicki

Mayor Pat Taylor is now against amortization; Town Attorney Bob Hagemann warned against it; and now at its July meeting, the seven-member Planning Board voted unanimously to not amend the STR ordinance and move toward amortization.

The amendment sent to the Planning Board – Chairman Darren Whatley, Vice-Chair Helene Siegel, KC Cunningham, Bill Grubb, John Muir, Chris Wilkes and Rachel Wilson – by the Town Board after its June meeting, proposes amortizing STRs as of Sept. 15, 2027.

The current ordinance, Sec. 6.5.18 B of the Unified Development Ordinance states: Notwithstanding anything in this UDO, short-term rentals in operation as of September 15, 2022, are nonconforming uses in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts. Only STRs in existence prior to Sept. 15, 2022, are allowed to continue but new STRs aren't allowed.

The proposed amendment,

drafted by Hagemann as instructed by four members of the Town Board – Commissioners John Dotson, Amy Patterson, Eric Pierson, and Brian Stiehler -- Sec. 6.5.18 B states: Notwithstanding anything in this UDO, short-term rentals in operation as of September 15, 2022, are nonconforming uses in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts until September 15, 2027. After September 15, 2027, short-term rentals are not permitted in the R-1 or R-2 zoning districts, and all short-term rentals in those districts must be discontinued.

Commissioner Jeff Weller voted against the proposal saying the current ordinance has halted the proliferation of STRs which he estimated to be about 280, and he was against doing anything further.

Though not the norm for the Planning Board, given the passion associated with the STR ordinance issue, Chairman Whatley suggested allowing public comment and the board agreed

• See AMORTIZATION page 13



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# • THE PLATEAU'S POSITION •

## • MAYOR ON DUTY •

### Residential tree removal is allowed

It began at my Community Coffee with the Mayor in June and has continued since then. A number of folks at the coffee were upset by the large number of trees that had just been cut down at a home-building site in an old neighborhood in town. The question to me was, why the town allowed this to happen when it was a clear violation of the town tree ordinance.



Highlands Mayor  
Patrick Taylor

My response was that while we have a tree ordinance for commercial zones, there is no such ordinance for residential zones.

In commercial zones, the requirement is to replace any trees of a certain size, 8" or more in diameter, that are removed during construction. To have this commercial tree ordinance, special local legislation had to be acquired from the state legislature. The legislation was secured decades ago, but the North Carolina Legislature never passed legislation for residential zones.

I might add that replacing a large, old tree with a new, smaller one still does not

totally reduce the impact of losing an old, majestic tree. Large-scale removal of trees has a long-lasting impact on neighborhoods and special places in town. For instance, removing the two large oaks at the Loafers Bench property on Main Street could not be ameliorated by planting two small farm-raised specimens.

Special state legislation would be required permitting regulation of tree removal in residential areas. For many years, the legislature has not been receptive to such local legislation that many representatives believe impinges on personal property rights.

For instance, Highlands passed Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) zones about 20 years ago, only to rescind it a few years later. To reinstate ETJ now is an uphill battle in that the legislature has instituted new limitations in recent years. Some folks predict ETJ will soon be invalidated altogether in coming legislative sessions.

So too, are ordinances regulating tree removal on private residential property. Any special local legislation regulating trees in residential areas would probably not be well received. There are strong lobbies by builders and real estate organizations that make the case to legislators that local governments already have too many ordinances that impede developers and individual property owners. Some of these lobbyists even contend that there are too many restrictions on land disturbance, erosion control, and watershed restrictions. At the last Town Board meeting our town attorney confirmed it may be difficult to secure legislation permitting a residential tree ordinance.





My concern is that folks coming to Highlands to build their dream homes are unaware of the issues related to building in this unique environment versus not totally clearing a site in metropolitan areas to construct a home. What further aggravates this problem is that many new residents will use architects and contractors from outside this area who also have no knowledge of this area's critical construction factors. I will continue to work on this issue in the coming months. Perhaps new initiatives can be made to make prospective homeowners aware of these environmental issues.

• See MAYOR page 16

## • HIC'S VIEW •



## • WEATHER •

Thu, 25-Jul	Fri, 26-Jul	Sat, 27-Jul	Sun, 28-Jul
			
73°F 62°F	71°F 61°F	68°F 59°F	72°F 60°F
Showers and a heavier t-storm	A shower and thunderstorm	Cloudy with a thunderstorm	Mostly cloudy
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## • INVESTING AT 4,118 FT. •

### Thank you, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital

What a beautiful, fun summer 2024 is offering all of us in Highlands and Cashiers: from picnics to parades, from fishing trips to white-water rafting, golf, tennis, croquet, dinner parties, museum exhibits, plays, symphonies and every activity in between. The one institution that is so important to this community but oftentimes is overlooked in its significance is the Highlands/Cashiers Hospital.

My husband, Wood, was feeling dizzy this morning so as a precaution, we went to the emergency room. What a wonderful experience from the front desk reception workers to the "care" team: Morgan, Duane and Dr. Worthington. Dr. Worthington suspected it was a case of vertigo but did a comprehensive exam including a CAT scan of his head all within 60 minutes. Everyone was so professional and kind. We are so fortunate to have such a compassionate team operating our local hospital. Curious about the history of the hospital, I turned to the hospital website and learned the following:

"After serving in Italy during World War II, Dr. William H. Matthews returned to the beloved mountains of North Carolina where he had spent the summers of his youth. Recognizing a need for a hospital in Highlands, he quickly convinced community leaders to help him fulfill his vision. Chartered in 1947 as a non-profit organization, the Highlands Community Hospital opened its doors on January 2, 1952. This first facility was a small, wood-framed structure with wards that housed a total of eight acute-care beds. It was located on a tract of land donated by the late Eva Cleveland, at the intersection on what is now 5th and South Street in Highlands.

In 1966, a major expansion and renovation tripled the number of hospital beds. The hospital also got a new name to more accurately reflect the areas it served: Highlands-Cashiers Hospital.

By 1974, the hospital was serving 400 patients a year, with another 1,400 visiting the emergency room. By the late 1980s, the



**Jody Lovell**  
Highlands and Cashiers  
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hospital had outgrown its aging facilities and was at another crossroads.

Beginning in 1988, the campaign for a new hospital rallied hundreds of supporters and raised more than \$12.5 million over five years, with cornerstone gifts from the Woodruff, Oxford and Eckerd families. The result was a new 24-bed acute care facility, 80-bed skilled nursing facility and a new medical office building, all located on a 40-acre campus in Macon County.

Since opening in March 1993, the new hospital began a period of unprecedented growth in the numbers of patients being served. Additionally, a new 20,000-square-foot medical office building, the Jane Woodruff Building, opened in 1995, while another 52,000-square-foot medical building, the Jane Woodruff Clinic, opened in the fall of 2004.

Likewise, the emergency department continued to see growth, with a new, leading edge emergency facility opening in 2017.

Throughout its history, what has never changed is its commitment to the citizens of Highlands and Cashiers and beyond. The bedrock of the hospital's values is the ability to serve more completely and compassionately. As the community grows, the hospital intends to continue to grow with it; expanding facilities, services and level of care, all in the interest of ensuring that people have the most positive healthcare experience possible."

Thank you to all of the generations of support from the local community to establish and continue the growth of this amazing facility and extreme gratitude to the employees of the hospital who show compassion and concern for our residents and visitors.

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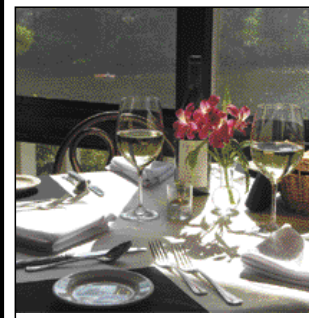


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# • LETTERS •

The following letter was sent via electronic mail to Mayor Pat Taylor, and Commissioners Eric Pierson, John Dotson, Jeff Weller, and Brian Stiehler on Wednesday, July 17, 2024.

## RE: Highland's Amortization of Short-Term Rental Properties

Dear Mayor and Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners,

It has come to my attention that the town of Highlands is once again considering ordering the elimination of the town's short-term rentals through amortization. As before, I have been contacted by concerned residents and property owners who see this as an affront to their property rights. I am writing to you because I (still) believe they are correct.

As I explained in my previous letter to Highlands, the Institute for Justice ("IJ") is the nation's leading law firm for liberty and a nationally recognized advocate for property rights. In addition to successes at the state and federal level, including the United States Supreme Court, IJ also successfully represented Peg and David Schroeder in their challenge to Wilmington's short-term rental amortization scheme. Highlands' proposal shares several similarities with the Wilmington restriction, which, it should be noted at the outset, was deemed unlawful under North Carolina law and was struck down as such by the North Carolina Court of Appeals. And it also bears striking similarities to a Mauldin, South Carolina ordinance that—before being wisely withdrawn following a lawsuit by IJ—would have forced the needless closure of a local U-Haul business. Given many of those similarities, the town's proposal is deeply concerning.

First, forcing property owners to eliminate a lawful existing use offends the settled expectations of property owners. Many of those owners purchased their property and made improvements—often incurring substantial ex-

pense—based on their reasonable belief that their intended use was (and would continue to be) legal. Next, the town's proposal, while less complicated than its earlier iteration, still requires a de facto permitting or registration scheme to be functional. After all, if the town is unaware who was renting, it cannot know who must stop and when. But as discussed below, state statute does not permit registration and permitting for residential rental properties.

My understanding is that the town council is perhaps still under the mistaken impression that the amortization of non-conforming uses — a controversial land-use tool to say the least — has been categorically approved by the North Carolina Supreme Court. Given this understanding, I suspect that the town council might expect that it will be successful in a potential legal challenge to the town's use of amortization here. I recommend caution. As your city attorney publicly advised you in your commission meeting on June 24, the North Carolina Supreme Court has addressed amortization only once, nearly 50 years ago. See *State v. Joyner*, 286 N.C. 366, 211 S.E.2d 320 (1975). And Joyner hardly involved property interests like those at issue here. For one thing, the challenging party in Joyner did not even own the land; he was a lessee. Nor did the case involve the elimination of a common, low-intensity use like a residence. To the contrary, Joyner dealt with a nonconforming industrial scrapyard in a business district. That is nothing like what the town is considering here — the elimination of undesirable residential uses within an area zoned residential.

Again, Joyner marked the first and only time the North Carolina Supreme Court addressed amortization. And in the intervening time since Joyner was decided, amortization decisions (in the North Carolina intermediate court of appeal) have uniformly dealt with the elimination of billboards and signs, not residences. See *Naegele Outdoor Advert., Inc. v. City of Winston-Salem*, 113 N.C. App. 758, 760–61, 440 S.E.2d 842, 843–44 (1994) (billboards); *Summey Outdoor Advert., Inc. v. County of Henderson*, 96 N.C. App. 533, 544, 386 S.E.2d 439, 446 (1989) (outdoor advertising signs); *Goodman Toyota, Inc. v. City of Raleigh*, 63 N.C. App. 660, 664–66, 306 S.E.2d 192, 195 (1983) (billboards); *R. O. Givens, Inc. v. Town of Nags Head*, 58 N.C. App. 697, 702, 294 S.E.2d 388, 391 (1982) (outdoor advertising); *Cumberland County v. E. Fed. Corp.*, 48 N.C. App. 518, 521, 269 S.E.2d 672, 675 (1980) (signs). In other words, amortization has been upheld where it has been used to eliminate typical nuisance-like uses; but not homes. This understanding makes sense, given that Joyner is itself rooted in North Carolina nuisance jurisprudence. Joyner, 286 N.C. at 373, 211 S.E.2d at 324–25 (relying on *Town of Wake Forest v. Medlin*, 199 N.C. 83, 154 S.E. 29 (1930); *State v. Moye*, 200 N.C. 11, 156 S.E. 130 (1930)). And as your city attorney also advised you, there is a growing trend among courts—both state and federal—favoring property owners in disputes involving abuses of this type.

Then there is the issue of attorneys' fees — which Highlands, by law, will almost surely be responsible for paying in the likely event of a successful legal challenge to the proposed ordinance. Indeed, North Carolina law, rather unequivocally, provides for attorneys' fees:

[I]n any action in which a city or county is a party, upon a finding by the court that the city or county violated a statute or case law setting forth unambiguous limits on its authority, the court



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## ...LETTERS continued from page 7

shall award reasonable attorneys' fees and costs to the party who successfully challenged the city's or county's action.

N.C.G.S. § 6-21.7 (emphasis added). Here, this attorneys' fees statute will likely be triggered because the town's proposal involves a de facto registration—something that is unambiguously foreclosed by state law. See N.C.G.S. § 160D-1207(c) ("In no event may a local government . . . adopt or enforce any ordinance that would require . . . any permit or permission . . . from the local government to lease or rent residential real property or to register rental property with the local government."). This is precisely the statute that was at issue in the Schroeder v. Wilmington matter. And because the appeals court in that case unequivocally concluded that Wilmington's ordinance was unambiguously foreclosed by state statute, plaintiffs' counsel successfully obtained a judgment recovering all of its fees sought: \$304,564.20, plus costs.

In sum, the town's proposal would deploy a legally dubious land-use tool to eviscerate the settled expectations of property owners. And the supposed legitimacy of the town's approach rests on a half-century old legal decision upholding, unremarkably, the power of government to moderate nuisances. Finally, the town's implementation of

the proposed ordinance calls for the creation of a de facto registration or permitting system—something the North Carolina Court of Appeals struck down as unlawful in Schroeder. Accordingly, the proposed ordinance also exposes the town to substantial

financial liability in the form of attorneys' fees, if (or, more likely, when) it must defend its unlawful permitting/amortization scheme in court.

I urge you to reconsider your proposal in light of this information.

**Sincerely,**  
**Ari Bargil**  
Senior Attorney

<sup>1</sup> *Schroeder v. City of Wilmington*, 282 N.C. App. 558, 872 S.E.2d 58 (2022).

<sup>2</sup> *Sark et al. v. City of Mauldin*, 2022-CP-2304935 (S.C.Tr. Ct., filed Sept. 8, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., *Zaatar v. City of Austin*, 615 S.W.3d 172 (Tex. App. 2019) (striking down a ban on short-term rentals under the Texas Constitution); *Hignell-Stark v. City of New Orleans*, 46 F.4th 317 (5th Cir. 2022) (striking down New Orleans' residency requirement under the U.S. Constitution).

<sup>4</sup> *Wilmington's attorneys—the same law firm evidently retained by Highlands—could at least defend its interpretation by relying on the supposed novelty of this issue. Highlands will not have that luxury. To the extent there was doubt before, the Court of Appeals' decision in Schroeder eliminated it (and the trial court awarded fees accordingly). Thus, whereas the City of Wilmington violated only unambiguous statutory language, Highlands is considering violating both unambiguous statutory language and case law affirming that statutory language's meaning.*

<sup>5</sup> Copies of the Schroeder court's Order Granting Plaintiffs' Motion for Attorneys' Fees and Costs and its Order Entering Final Judgment and Granting Plaintiffs' Motion to Dissolve Stay are enclosed.

## The 'Grand Old Party' is dead and gone

Dear Editor,

I spent the vast majority of my adult life voting for the Republican party at the national, state and local levels. However, I came to the realization over a period of time that the Republican party no longer reflected my values and principles.

The gap between the rich and poor remains too wide and giving more tax cuts to the wealthy only makes that situation worse. President Trump has pledged to do that if he wins. They keep insisting that trickle-down economics works. If it does, why has the middle class shrunk from 61% of the population in 1970 to 51% today while the wealthiest of our nation have seen their net worth grow dramatically. Today the top 1% own 54% of the stock market and the wealthiest 10% own 93%. I believe the Democratic party has the best interest of all Americans as they govern to ensure our capitalistic system works effectively for all.

Secondly, I am a female who benefited from affirmative action regulations such as the one President Nixon implemented in the early 70s. The 1976 Platform of the Republican party reaffirmed their pledge to work to eliminate discrimination in all areas for reason of race, color, national origin, age, creed or sex. None of that is in their current platform. The lines are now drawn with considerable clarity over women's rights. The Republican party has largely adopted an opposing position, distancing itself from equal rights and is siding with those who prefer more traditional women's roles. Read the Heritage Foundations 2025 platform which will almost fully be implanted by President Trump if he wins. Is it ok with you if your daughter earns 84 cents for every dollar earned by men for the same jobs?

It is never possible to return to past

• See LETTERS page 9



## ...LETTERS continued from page 8

ages as I believe the Republican party is attempting to do. The spokesman for the Heritage Foundation stated that they were "initiating a 2nd American Revolution and it would remain bloodless if the left allowed it be." When in history has any civilization been able to return to prior times. It is impossible. I know many women join me in saying

the days when we were subservient to men are gone for good.

Your choice today is between a party that is committed to serving everyone in our country and is loyal to our constitution and a party that has been taken over by an individual who is a serial adulterer, a pathological liar, a convicted harasser of women and is facing large fines for business fraud. I never

thought I would live to see the day when an American President continues to use incendiary rhetoric to pit one group against another and continues to encourage political violence as we saw on Jan. 6 2021. What has happened to the Grand Old Party where decency and character were most important? It has sadly disappeared.

**Linda B. Arnold**  
Scaly Mountain

## Vote carefully: Basic rights of women are on the chopping block

Dear Editor,

I was in my 20s in the late 1960s – early 1970s. Legislative and legal decisions this year brought back memories from those days, and not pleasant ones.

Married couples had access to birth control prescriptions after 1965; not so single women. Unmarried women were denied birth control until 1972. Hard to believe, but true.

Abortions were illegal until

Roe v Wade was enacted in 1973. Illegal abortions could be had, but the outcomes often were sterility or death. Not a week went by during my college years that someone on my hall was terrified she might be pregnant. And, I don't need to hear from anyone that women are responsible for unplanned pregnancies. We are not.

Incidentally, but related, I was a college graduate before single women could routinely get

a mortgage, open a checking account or get a credit card in only their name. I expect most of you can't imagine a life with those restrictions.

I'd like to think it might be hard to take these "rights" away from women, but the courts and legislatures have already started down that slippery slope. Please consider this come November.

**Karen Patterson**  
Highlands

## ...LUNCHES continued from page 1

that as well. The summer food program will also remain free.

Until word is had from the county, for the 2024-2025 school year, free lunch will continue to be offered to students at 9 out of 11 Macon County schools. Highlands School and Franklin High School (FHS) are the two schools which will continue to charge students for their lunches.

In addition, lunch prices for students at Highlands and FHS will be increased to \$4 per lunch meal, unless they qualify for free or reduced lunches after completing the required application.

The increased lunch price was approved Monday night by the Macon County Board of Education.

The nine schools, East Franklin Elementary, Cartoogechaye Elementary, South Macon Elementary, Iotla Valley Elementary, Mountain View Intermediate and Macon Middle School, qualify to offer free student lunches to students under the state's CEP Community Eli-

gibility Provision (CEP) program.

"I was hopeful that either Highlands School or Franklin High School or both would be eligible to be a part of the CEP program this upcoming school year, but after looking at the numbers and discussing with my regional consultant, that's still not feasible at this point," said David Lightner, MC Schools Nutrition Director.

The overall purpose of the CEP is to improve access to nutritious meals for students in high poverty areas by providing meals to all students at no cost to the students.

The benefit of the CEP program is to help reduce hunger at schools, ensuring access to nutritious meals for all because studies have shown that academically students do better and there are fewer behavior and attendance problems if the kids are eating at school.

Participation in the CEP program also benefits school districts as it eliminates the need to col-

lect and process free and reduced meal applications translating into both administrative and cost savings.

According to Lightner, the higher lunch price was driven by higher food and labor costs.

He told the board that USDA food costs are about \$60,000 a week and do not include costs from other delivery companies; labor costs have gone up from \$11.77 to a starting rate of \$16.07 an hour. He stated that the lunch price increase was necessary just to fund these higher costs.

"For the past two years, we have been serving K-4 at \$3.75 and 5th through 12th grades at \$3.85 for lunch meals," he added. "We have reached a point where we have to look at increasing that rate, and I am proposing \$4 for lunch at these schools."

He said the increase is in line with the national reimbursement rate of \$4.54.

"We get reimbursed 53 cents for paid student lunches, increas-

• See LUNCHES page 14

## • BIZ/ORG NEWS •



### HCCDC children get a tea party

Each summer The Highlands Community Child Development Center holds a tea party for the enrolled children. This year the event was held on Tuesday, July 18th. Staff and parents served fruit, sandwiches and lots of desserts.



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# ...TOWN BOARD continued from page 1

evolved over the last few years. It's too bad most of your board hasn't seen the light as you have."

Commissioners John Dotson, Amy Patterson, Eric Pierson and Brian Stiehler want to amortize STRs.

She said STRs comprise about one-half of her business and their annihilation would essentially close it.

"We've been doing this a very long time and have had no complaints from the town or neighbors about any of our renters. The only complaints we've had have been trash-related but with bear-resistant cans that is no longer a problem," she said.

She said since 2021 there has been a slowdown with sales and rentals dropping which the ordinance prohibiting new STRs in R1 and R2 after Sept. 15, 2022 has been responsible for.

She said there has to be a better way for the town of Highlands to handle the "problem" of having guests in its town, referring to comments made by Commissioner Amy Patterson at the June Town Board meeting.

Commissioner Patterson said having renters every week or two leads to the overuse of the area's natural environment because renters visit those areas weekly instead of now and then like full-time residents.

"If I live here full-time, maybe I go up to Satulah a couple times, or Whiteside or Iron Bridge a couple of times, but every week someone in my house doesn't go up there," she said. "When you have a lot of rentals, suddenly those people are crowding and degrading our natural environment, which means part of what people are coming for we will lose if we become a visitor place as opposed to a resident place."

In addition, Chambers said she wondered how long Highlands' long-standing restaurants and shops could make it with just the year-round population or those who own homes here but only come a few weeks or a couple of months a year.

"Also, people are saying the infrastructure in Highlands can't handle the number of visitors. What if the owner, not a renter, the owner of every existing home in Highlands came here at the same time? Would that strain our infrastructure? Should we put a moratorium on new home builds like the moratorium put on condominiums being built in the 1970s?" she asked.

She also suggested HOAs be in place in neighborhoods.

"People should only move to neighborhoods with existing HOA rules if they want to live within those regulations, but people who bought homes in neighborhoods with expired HOAs shouldn't be penalized," she said.

Mike King, who is an alternate on the Zoning Board also had STRs on his mind.

He thanked the Town Board for doing a great job and said he thought a letter-to-the-editor calling certain Town Board members selfish and naïve was rude.

He also said the idea that the town couldn't survive without STRs was incorrect.

"I have had a place here for 23 years and I remember when we were surviving with much fewer activities and cute little shops and everything was going very well and I didn't see the turnover with the shops which are more frequent now," he said. "This is a lovely place to live, and I appreciate what you do to keep it that way."

Long-time local Highlander Frieda Bennett said she was glad the Town Board had sent the STR issue to the Planning Board again.

"You spoke well and spoke the feelings of many people and we appreciate you," she said.

She said she wanted equal representation regarding home values.

"I'm not getting that. My neighbor can have a STR but I cannot. My neighbor can sell his home as a STR. I cannot. That makes me an inferior citizen," she said.

However, before the town passed the current STR ordinance allowing STRs in existence prior to Sept. 15, 2022 and prohibiting new ones after that date, home values were on equal standing with homeowners who were free to make a choice between being an STR or not.

Bennett said she's been told to call the police if there is a problem with a neighbor, but she said, "You don't go to the doctor or call the doctor every time you feel sick."

"I don't know how to fix this, but I am glad you are having the Planning Board look at this," she said.

King brought up two other issues during public comment – the removal of residential trees and noisy cars coming into town after traveling up the Gorge Road.

Regarding residential tree removal, an issue brought to light due to removal on a piece of property bordering Chestnut Street, Town Attorney Bob Hagemann said bills have been considered in the past but they haven't passed due to a certain amount of ambiguity.

"One bill presented would allow municipalities to regulate the removal of residential trees, but another prohibits municipalities from regulating," he said. "There needs to be clear authorization from the General Assembly before moving to regulate the removal of residential trees."

King also said the town needs regulations to stop noisy, fast race cars from en-

• See TOWN BOARD page 15

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## ...TRUMP continued from page 1

dent.

The title of the presentation was "An update on the Trump trials and a look at a Trump 2.0 Department of Justice."

Given the issues of the various trials presented in July 2024, they explained the plans Trump and his various spokespersons have laid out to transform the United States Department of Justice that he initiated in his first term.

Trump and some conservative legal scholars at the Heritage Foundation, among others, propose to abandon post-Watergate reforms set up to prevent such a scenario from happening again, so as to enable a new President to control all federal law enforcement decision making.

Weissmann and McCord, both of whom have extensive experience working in the Justice Department, addressed the perils of this conception of Presidential power and the concrete consequences of this transformation of the Justice Department and the FBI.

As veteran prosecutors they discussed and dissected the cases against former President Donald Trump, including the historic indictments from the Manhattan D.A., Special Counsel Jack Smith and Georgia's Fulton County D.A. Fani Willis.

During the presentation, Weissmann commented on President Biden's announcement to not seek re-election saying now "the result is one candidate is a former prosecutor and the other is a convicted felon and people must consider that the rule of law is also on the ballot."

Both responded to pre-submitted questions during the presentation. After the presentation, Weissmann and McCord were available to respond to additional questions during a reception held in the lobby of the Performing Arts Center next door.

For more information, see Podcast: Prosecuting Donald Trump MSNBC <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/prosecuting-donald-trump/id1679657705>

• **Andrew Weissmann** is a Professor of Practice with the Center on the Administration of Criminal Law at New York University School of Law. He served as a lead prosecutor in Robert S. Mueller's Special Counsel's Office and as Chief of the Fraud Section in the U.S. Department of Justice. He is the author of *Where Law Ends: Inside the Mueller Investigation*. He also served as General Counsel for the F.B.I., Director of the Enron Task Force, and as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for 15 years in the Eastern District of New York, where he served as the Chief of the Criminal Division. He is a frequent MSNBC

news contributor on matters related to federal and state prosecutions of high profile political figures

• **Mary McCord** is Executive Director of the Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection (ICAP) and a Visiting Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center. At ICAP, McCord leads a team that brings constitutional impact litigation at all levels of federal and state courts across a wide variety of issues, including protecting democratic processes and combating political violence. McCord was the Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security at the U.S. Department of Justice from 2016 to 2017 and Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General for National Security from 2014 to 2016. Previously, McCord was an Assistant U.S. Attorney for nearly 20 years at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia. Among other positions, she served as a Deputy Chief in the Appellate Division, overseeing and arguing hundreds of cases in the U.S. and District of Columbia Courts of Appeals, and Chief of the Criminal Division, where she oversaw all criminal prosecutions in federal district court. McCord served as legal counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives Task Force 1-6 Capitol Security Review appointed by Speaker Nancy Pelosi after the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol

• To register for CLE programs go to [cle.highlands.com](http://cle.highlands.com)

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# • HIGHLANDS AREA EVENTS •

## MOVIES at PAC's MLPC

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**at 5:30p**  
**Tues., July 30 & Aug. 6**  
**2p and 5:30p**

### Tickets:

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## SUMMER POOL SCHEDULE

**Lap Swim** Mon.-Fri. 6am-9:45am, and Saturday 10am-1pm 6 lanes. **Water Aerobics** 18 years plus Mon.-Fri. 10am-1am with Karen Chambers. **Public Swim** Mon. thru Thurs. 11am-7pm, Fri. and Sat. 11am-6pm and Sun. 1pm-6pm. For info, call 828-526-1595.

### PICKLE BALL

• At the Recreation Dept. every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 10am-1pm indoors for the winter (notice the days and time has changed), everyone is welcome meetings

### ALL WEEK

• Alcoholics Anonymous: "Open Meetings" are for anyone who thinks they may have a drinking problem or for anyone interested in the A.A. program of recovery. Highlands Mountain View Group holds open meetings in Highlands at the First Presbyterian Church, 471 Main St., on Monday at 5:30 PM and Wednesday and Friday at noon. The Cashiers Valley Group holds open meetings at the Albert Carlton Cashiers Community Library Monday at 8:30 AM, Tuesday at 7 PM, Friday and Sunday at 5 PM, and Saturday at 9 AM. For more information, please visit [www.aawnc80.org](http://www.aawnc80.org) or to speak with a member of

AA 24/7 at 828-349-4357.

## SUNDAYS & TUESDAYS

• Movies at the Martin Lipscomb Performing Arts Center at PAC on Chestnut Street 5:30pm Sundays and 2pm and 5:30pm. on Tuesdays.

### Thurs., July 25

• Glenville and Tampa resident Nancy Turner will be signing copies of her books at the Highland Hiker in Highlands (526-5298) on Saturday from 2 to 4 pm, with refreshments.

• At Hudson Library, "Finding Fish" EcoSplash program with Alex from Mainspring Conservation Trust. Kids will learn about the fish in local waters, catching them and will be viewing through a digital microscope.

• The North Carolina Baroque Orchestra will perform in a 5pm concert at Highlands First Presbyterian Church.

• Bingo fundraiser for The Scaly Mountain Womens Club 6:30-8:30p in the Highlands Community Building by the ballfield.

• The Highlands Biological Foundation (HBF) next installment of their Zahner Conservation Lecture Series. Join HBF at the Highlands Nature Center on Thursday, at 6 PM for an engaging and informative talk. The lecture, titled "Climate-informed Forestry in the Southern Appalachians," will feature Adam Warwick, the Southern Blue Ridge Stewardship Manager for The Nature Conservancy. A small reception will follow.

### Fri. & Sat., July 26 & 27

• At The Bascom, 13th annual Pottery Show and Sale 10am - 4pm.

### Fri., July 26

• At Hudson Library, Community Coffee with the mayor at 11 AM in the Meeting Room. The topic will be: "Town Parks: Past, Present and the Future with Hank Ross and Friends of Founders Park."

• Friday Night Live showcase on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. - Kettle

### Sun., July 28

• The Barak Norton Heritage Association cordially invites all descendants and friends of Barak Norton to the annual family reunion on Sunday. This year marks the 154th anniversary of the family reunion started in 1872! The meeting begins at 11:30 a.m. at the Historic Whiteside Cove School House located at 4601 Whiteside Cove Road, Highlands NC. Bring your favorite dish to share and join us for a day of music, stories, food, and fellowship as we celebrate our mountain heritage.

### Tues July 30

• A HCLT Community Reads: Braiding Sweetgrass Section 4 - Braiding Sweetgrass (Chapters 18-25) noon to 2p. Albert-Carlton Community Library, 249 Frank Allen Rd, Cashiers

### Wed., July 31

• A HCLT Community Reads: Braiding Sweetgrass Section 4 - Braiding Sweetgrass (Chapters 18-25) 10a - noon. Hudson Library, 554 Main St, Highlands. Where: Hudson Library, 554 Main St, Highlands, NC 28741

• Village Nature Series Presents: Restoring Landscapes with John Lane, 5:30-6:30p at Lewis Hall at The Village Green 160 Frank Allen Rd, Cashiers. Free and open to all.

### Thurs. Aug. 1

• The Highlands Biological Foundation (HBF) next lecture in their Zahner Conservation Lecture Series at 6 PM at the Highlands Nature Center. The lecture, titled "The Surface Water and Ocean Topography Mission: NASA's New Eye in the Sky for Earth's Water," will be delivered by Dr. Tamlin Pavelesky, a renowned professor of global hydrology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A small reception will follow.

• At The Bascom, The Aaron Shearer Foundaton Summer Guitarfest 7 p.m., cash bar opens at 6:15 p.m.

### Fri., Aug. 2

• At The Bascom, Artist Talk with TJ Erdahl and Beau Raymond from 4:30-6p.

• Friday Night Live in Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. - Ezra & Katie

### Sat., Aug. 3

• Pop-Up Bag Pipers are scheduled from 4:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

• Saturdays on Pine at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. - The Holiday Band

### Mon., Aug. 5

• High Mountain Squares is sponsoring a new class for beginning students beginning Monday. The classes will be taught by Keith Lester, caller and instructor, from 6:30-8:30pm at the Robert C. Carpenter Community Building on Highway 441, Franklin, NC. The first two of 12 classes are free; the remaining ten classes are \$50 per person. For more info call Betty at 828-787-2324 or Bob at 828-332-0001.

### Thurs., Aug. 8

• At The Bascom, Artist talk with

TJ Erdahl and Beau Raymond 4 pm

### Fri., Aug. 9

• Friday Night Live showcases traditional mountain music and exceptional local talent on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. - ABC Combo

### Sat., Aug. 10

• Saturdays on Pine at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. - Will Thompson Band

### Fri., Aug. 16

• Friday Night Live showcases traditional mountain music and exceptional local talent on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. - Steady Hand String Band

### Sat., Aug. 17

• At The Bascom, Blacksmithing Truck Show 1-5 p.m.

### Thurs.-Sun., Aug. 22-25

• At PAC, Highlands Community Players presents "The Lifespan of a Fact" at 7:30p and 2p on Sunday. For tickets go to: [www.highlandscashiersplayers.com](http://www.highlandscashiersplayers.com) or call 828-526-9047.

### Thurs., Aug. 22

• Highlands School Orientation/Open House is 3-6 pm • At

• The Bascom, From the Lowlands to the Highlands Exhibition Reception 5-6:30 pm

### Fri., Aug. 23

• Friday Night Live on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. - Southern Highland Band

### Sat. & Sun., Aug. 24-25

• Art and Craft Show in KH Founders Park on Pine Street. 10a to 5p Saturday and 10a to 4p on Sunday. Rain or shine.

### Sun., Aug. 25

• OEI's Chef Dinners at The Farm. 3RD ANNUAL SUNDAY SUPPER. Book Online at [OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners](http://OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners)

### Thurs.-Sun., Aug. 29-Sept. 1

• At PAC, Highlands Community Players presents "The Lifespan of a Fact" at 7:30p and 2p on Sunday. For tickets go to: [www.highlandscashiersplayers.com](http://www.highlandscashiersplayers.com) or call 828-526-9047.

### Fri., Aug. 30

• Friday Night Live on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. - Spare Parts Bluegrass Band

### Sat., Aug. 31

• Saturdays on Pine at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. - Full Circle

### Fri., Sept. 6

• Friday Night Live on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. -

## Snip, Sip and Support!

A Fundraiser for the  
Highlands Community Child Development Center

September 18 at 4 PM  
Church of the Incarnation  
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[www.highlandscmmunitychildcare.org/events](http://www.highlandscmmunitychildcare.org/events)





# •EVENTS•

Johnny Webb Band

**Sat., Sept. 7**

Pop-Up Bag Pipers are scheduled from 4:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

• Saturdays on Pine features a variety of popular, regional bands and musicians at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. — Steel Toe Stiletto

**Fri.-Sat., Sept. 13-14**

• 2024 Native Plant Symposium, Connecting Place, People and Plants. \$150 per person. \$20 per student.

**Fri., Sept. 13**

• Friday Night Live showcases traditional mountain music and exceptional local talent on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. — Silly Ridge

**Sat., Sept. 14**

• Saturdays on Pine at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. — High 5

**Sun. Sept. 15**

• The Literacy & Learning Center fall fundraising event "Celebration of Education" at Wildcat Cliffs Country Club. Guest Speaker — Shelby Van Pelt, author of Remarkably Bright Creatures.

• Fourth Annual Highlands Porchfest on Sunday from 1-6pm!

**Sept. 18**

• At the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, a fundraiser for Highlands Child Development Center, Sip, Snip and Support at 4 p.m. Flower Arranging Demonstration and Childcare Celebration.

**Fri., Sept. 20**

• Friday Night Live on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. — Curtis Blackwell Band

**Sat., Sept. 21**

• Saturdays on Pine at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. — The Boomers

**Sun., Sept. 22**

• OEI's Chef Dinners at The Farm. 6TH ANNUAL OYSTER & SEAFOOD FEST. Book Online at [OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners](http://OldEdwardsHospitality.com/ChefDinners)

**Fri., Sept. 27**

• Friday Night Live showcases traditional mountain music and exceptional local talent on Main Street's Town Square 6-8:30 p.m. — Nitrograss

**Sat., Sept. 28**

• Saturdays on Pine features a variety of popular, regional bands and musicians at Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park 6-8:30 p.m. — Kayla McKinney

## ...AMORTIZATION continued from page 1

unanimously.

Also, not the norm, was the presence of Town Attorney Bob Hagemann via zoom who told the Planning Board and those in attendance what he has been telling the Town Board — that there will be a legal battle and there is a good chance the town will not prevail which means the town will be responsible for attorney and legal fees incurred on both sides as well as any judgement the court applies.

"I am confident the courts will not allow you to enforce a STR amortization period while the litigation is pending," he said. "And it is almost certain that there will be a legal challenge."

When drafting the requested verbiage, he said he picked the amortization period of five years because the courts would likely consider that period reasonable and because he is confident that the legal challenge will take that long to go through the trial court, the court of appeals and possibly an appeal to the state supreme court.

He reminded the board that two years ago, when amortization was brought up, the Institute of Justice, a national public interest law firm with a libertarian bent and a strong belief in property rights, wrote the town and made it clear there would be a legal battle.

"And they sent a similar letter to the Town Board just last week," he said. (See Letters on page 7.)

He also explained that if the pending legislation now in the legislature passes — which could happen at any time — it may very well require the town to rescind the STR ordinance now in effect which has at least stopped the proliferation of STRs.

"I anticipate their arguments will be that the town lacks the authority to amortize. And even if the town had the authority, it is unconstitutional under a variety of unconstitutional theories," said Hagemann. "One of which is that the NC constitution protects citizens' rights to the 'fruits of their labor' and we are seeing that clause come forward more and more."

Furthermore, Hagemann has said over the last 15 years, there is a trend in NC court rulings that tend to favor property rights over local

government authority which has made government authority more narrow.

"This is not an attempt to dissuade you; you need to do what you think is right for the town of Highlands. But if you choose to go this route, we need to consider the makeup of our courts and the direction our courts have gone," he said.

He also said the only amortization cases that have been "won" dealt with billboards, scrap yards and adult entertainment venues where those items/venues were taken down or dismantled.

"Amortization of an STR will not require the home to be destroyed, so use can still be had by the homeowner and questioned why the word amortization was being assigned to STRs in the first place.

"It's not really the same thing," he said.

About half the speakers spoke for STRs and not for amortization; the other speakers were members of the Highlands Neighborhood Coalition which is pushing for amortization.

Each reiterated points made at previous planning and town board meetings.

Those against amortization say losing STRs will affect people's livelihood — both the owners of STRs, the property managers of STRs one of which has been in business since 1930s, the people who service STRs like housekeepers, landscapers, and handymen. How without visitors and renters restaurants and shops would suffer as well as the people who work them because local full-time residents don't frequent shops and restaurants enough to make businesses sustainable, and how the inability to buy a home that could be an STR is affecting some home sales.

Kevin Gabbard an STR owner said he felt like he was being signaled out.

"Doing this will affect my livelihood. My renters support the restaurants, the shops, the town and the people who rent my house are not a problem," he said.

Realtor Pat Allen said there are rules in place and there should be fines if rules are broken.

"We shouldn't penalize everyone for the behavior of a few," she said. "We are a resort town and there are going to be tourists. The locals and the visitors care about this town. This needs to be approached with common sense."

Owners and users of STRs said they have great renters and are great renters themselves and some bought a house after renting STRs.

Those for amortization — who come to homes they have owned for decades and occupy them part-time for a few months during the year — said "mini-hotels" shouldn't be allowed in residential zones, that their lives shouldn't be disrupted by new people coming into their neighborhoods every week for 1-3 days, that vacation rentals of old when people rented for 1-3 months are not the same as the STRs of today, and how STR renters don't support the town or its nonprofits.

President of the Highlands Neighborhood Coalition, Cathy Henson, who has owned her second-home for 20 years, said STRs are unmanageable, unenforceable and unsustainable. She said the Town Board was intent on phasing out STRs and left the door open to amortize them when they passed

the current ordinance back in August 2022.

She said as it is now there is a "total lack of enforcement" because the town doesn't know how many STRs there are — estimating between 200 and 400 — and won't tell people where they are.

"I encourage you to move forward with the amortization of STRs," she said.

Carol Gable, also of Highlands Neighborhood Coalition who has had her home for 29 years and who also lives in it part-time, said "living next to an STR is absolute Hell."

"There is a different group of strangers checking in and out and then there are the housekeepers and landscapers who come. This is my refuge, and we have the right to use our home the way were led to believe," she said. "I am sucked into their business and its not good for the neighborhood."

She said there are six STRs on her street of 20 houses.

The Howlands, who would like STRs amortized sooner rather than later, said they bought their property on Sagee in 1998 believing it to be a residential neighborhood and built their home in 2002 with the understanding that com-

• See AMORTIZATION page 22

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NORTH CAROLINA

— ELEV. 4118 —

## Outdoor Concert Series

Each Friday and Saturday night from May through October, the Highlands Chamber of Commerce/ Visit Highlands, NC hosts live music downtown.

*Join us for our July concerts!*

All shows take place from 6 – 8:30 p.m.

### Friday Night Live

Town Square | 343 Main St.

*Showcasing traditional mountain music and local talent*

JULY 5  
Nitrograss

JULY 12  
Silly Ridge

JULY 19  
Leadfoot Lilly

JULY 26  
Kettle

### Saturdays on Pine

Kelsey-Hutchinson Founders Park  
Pine St.

*Featuring a variety of popular, regional bands and musicians*

JULY 6  
Blaze the City

JULY 13  
Dive Bar Divas

JULY 20  
Lazrluvr

JULY 27  
The Breakfast Club



visithighlandsnc.com

## ...LUNCHESES continued from page 9

ing to \$4 would put us one penny short of being in line with the free rate which is the intent of the federal national school program pricing,” he said.

School Board Member Hilary Wilkes questioned Lightner about how much it would cost for the district to offer free lunches to all Macon County students. Lightner said a low estimate based on last year’s reimbursement rates, would be \$152,000 to cover Highlands School and Franklin High School for entire school year.

If these funds were available, the school district would continue to do the free and reduced lunch application process for those two schools, but would try to to cover the difference between what are reimbursable meals to the system from that program versus what’s not covered and just make it free for all students.

Neighboring Jackson County recently approved spending approximately \$500,000 to offer free lunches to all its students and will not be taking any free and reduced applications. Other counties in western North Carolina offering free lunches to all their students include Transylvania, Swain and Cherokee counties.

“You can identify as a CEP school district at a low identified student percentage, but you can lose money that way,” said Lightner. “All students would eat for free and your participation rates would support that. That is what Jackson County is doing budget wise; they are actually going to lose money, and the county is going to fund that loss.”

Wilkes said the school system has been given the gift of nine schools being covered, and brought up the fact that monies coming into the county from the opioid settlements.

“We’ve talked about investing the money in mental health, and I think food insecurity among school children from K through 12th grades is one of the biggest components you can look at in the mental health foundation for our students,” she said.

Wilkes said she would like to talk about how to bridge the gap and offer free lunches to all students prior to school starting next month

“The cost of lunches adds up very, very quickly, and offering free lunches to all could be meaningful to family budgets. This could be the make-or-break point for some folks. Free lunches would mean that all our students would be getting a good quality, healthy meal,” she said.

She suggested going to the county to help with funding.

“I would like to see us go to county level to see if there is funding from some source to the county that makes sense to bridge this gap,” said Wilkes. “It would be very important to many families in Macon County.”

Wilkes made a motion to ask the county commissioners to consider funding free lunches for all Macon County students at its August meeting. The motion also included the lunch price increase for Highlands School and FHS. If the county agrees to fund lunch for Highlands and FHS, this increase could change or be eliminated if free lunch could be offered at both schools. The school board unanimously approved the motion.

### Soccer Fields

In her liaison report, Wilkes updated the school board on the status of the playability of the soccer field for the upcoming fall season.

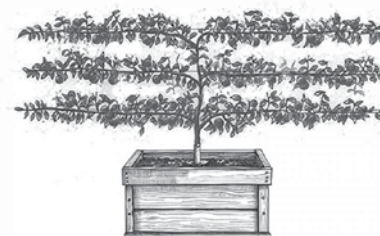
At the last school board meeting there were concerns expressed that there may be some issues for the upcoming soccer season due to the infringement from a construction fence for the ongoing addition project.

“At first we thought, yes, we are all good to use the field, then it was, no, there would be an issue, and now I think we’re back to probably OK, so I think it’s a fluid situation,” said Wilkes. “It is my understanding that the construction firm has been working very closely with our athletic director to try to avoid any sort of issue that will affect the high school and middle school boys’ soccer season.”

She said as she understood it, as far as the quality of the field goes, “It is what it is.”

“It’s not great, but it is playable,” she said.

### HAGAN BINDER LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT



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# • UPCOMING AREA EVENT •

## CLE welcomes Ron Suskind, Pulitzer prize winning journalist, and Paige Alexander, CEO of the Carter Center

Ron Suskind, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, author, and filmmaker, returns to Highlands for two timely presentations. On Tuesday, July 30 from 10 to Noon, Ron discusses "Race Across the Decades," as he traces race relations in America for the last 25 years since the publication of his signature best seller, A Hope in the Unseen. The book, a favorite of three Presidents, chronicles the journey of an impoverished student from the inner city to the Ivy League. But it is not a book that Ron could write in America today. What has changed? Have these changes advanced equality in America? Ron will answer these questions as he reports from the epicenter of the issues on race and equality. Copies of A Hope in the Unseen will be available for purchase at the presentation.

Ron returns on Wednesday, July 31 from 2 to 4 to discuss the competing worldviews that frame our upcoming Presidential election – the Election of the Century. Given the present uncertainties about who will be the Democratic Party's nominee, the recent assassination attempt on the Republican Party's nominee, Donald Trump, and our struggles with disinforma-

tion, we may emerge from this election even more deeply split than we are now. But we may find pathways to progress and national healing. Ron will handicap each possibility.

On Thursday August 1 from 10 to noon, Paige Alexander, CEO of the Carter Center, will discuss the important work of the Center to protect the democratic electoral process in the 2024 U.S. Elections. Founded in 1982 by Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, the Center monitors elections in the United States and internationally to ensure that democratic principles are maintained. In her presentation, Paige will share lessons learned from the Center's more than 30 years of monitoring elections and how the Center will use that experience to help protect the 2024 elections. She will also discuss the Center's work to strengthen trust in the U.S. electoral process.

These three presentations will be held in the CLE Lecture Hall at the Peggy Crosby Center, 348 S. 5th Street, Highlands. Cost is \$30/\$40 Member/Non-Member for each presentation. Register to attend online at [www.clehighlands.com](http://www.clehighlands.com) or by calling 828 526 8811.

## ...TOWN BOARD continued from page 10

tering town.

"There needs to be speed regulations and maybe a decimal noise limit," he said. "The sound of those cars echoes across the lakes."

### Bank of America Property

The owners of the Bank of America property bordered by Carolina Way and Pine Street asked that the B2 Conditional Zone (CZ) requested and granted April 2022 be changed to B2. The Planning Board OK'd the request in May 2024, but the Town Board has the final say.

With B2 versus B2 CZ, there are less restrictions regarding setbacks, sidewalks and pedestrian access than for the special plan submitted for the original vision which was for retail shops on the bottom and apartments above.

With less restrictions and more flexibility, the owner believes he will be able to entice investors and move forward.

"We can't be tied to a specific plan at this point," he said.

Though nothing is set in stone as to

use, the building will be razed to make room for a new structure possibly a boutique hotel and small restaurant.

The Town Board OK'd the rezoning request.

### Grease Traps

The environmental consequences of grease generated at the town's 52 restaurants and food establishments, which includes country clubs and churches, has been brought to light.

Due to grease buildup in the town sewer system, Environmental, Inc. has been inspecting grease traps and requiring under-sink traps be installed in establishments without them.

Town Manager Josh Ward said so far 21 of the 52 establishments have been inspected with most clean and satisfactory with others given time to conform.

While they are at it, Environmental, Inc is checking on the bio-fuel containers where grease is stored until pumped out to make sure they are secure from bears who are apt to turn them over if not secured properly.

## Highlands-Cashiers Center for Life Enrichment Program Highlights

### College Football Preview and Tailgate Party

Presenters: Tony Barnhart, Loran Smith, and Don Munson, Friday, July 26, 2-5pm \$70/\$80 Location: The Village Green in Cashiers, NC

### How and When War Ends

Presenter: Andrew Owsiak, Monday, July 29, 10am-noon, \$30/\$40

### Jams and Jellies Cooking Demo

Instructor: Susan Hansen, Monday, July 29, 2-5pm, \$70/\$80

### Race Across the Decades

Presenter: Ron Suskind, Tuesday, July 30, 10am-noon, \$30/\$40

### Music and the Movies: Function, Genre, and Brain Training

Presenter: Scott Stewart, Tuesday, July 30, 2-4pm, \$30/\$40

### Music and the Movies: Bernard Herrmann

Presenter: Scott Stewart, Wednesday, July 31, 10am-noon, \$30/\$40

### Election of the Century - It's Here!

Presenter: Ron Suskind, Wednesday, July 31, 2-4pm, \$30/\$40

### The Carter Center's Work to Protect the Democratic Electoral Process: the 2024 U.S. Election

Presenter: Paige Alexander, Thursday, August 1, 10am-noon, \$30/\$40

### Alcohol Inks (Advanced)

Instructor: Mary Cavaioli, Thursday, August 1, 1-3:30pm, \$85/\$95

### Supreme Court Year in Review

Presenter: Todd Collins, Friday, August 2, 10am-noon, \$30/\$40

### The Supreme Court, The Right to Bear Arms, and Original Intent

Presenter: William Lasser, Monday, August 5, 2-4pm, \$30/\$40

### The American Presidency: Executive Orders From George Washington to Joe Biden

Presenter: Douglas Brinkley, Tuesday, August 6, 10am-noon, \$30/\$40

To register for these and other CLE programs, please visit [clehighlands.com](http://clehighlands.com)

(828) 526-8811

office@clehighlands.com





# THE BASCOM

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323 Franklin Road | Highlands, NC  
TheBascom.org | 828.526.4949

## 13th Annual Summer Pottery Show

*Featuring work by Studio Members*

**JULY  
26-27**

Friday & Saturday  
10 am - 4 pm

The summer installment of our 13th annual pottery show will be held on Friday, July 26th and Saturday, July 27th from 10am - 4pm. Enjoy beautiful handmade pottery while supporting local artists in our community!



## Highlands Hurricanes finish 2nd out of 5 at conference meet

**By Steve Hott  
Head Coach**

On Saturday, July 13, 39 members of the Highlands Hurricanes team traveled to Franklin for the 2024 Mountain Swim League (MSL) Conference Championship where the Hurricanes finished 2nd to Franklin Amateur Swim Team (FAST), and ahead of Smoky Mountain Aquatics Club (SMAC), Cherokee County Aquatics Club (CCAC), and Jackson County Swim Team (JCST).

The Hurricanes were led by Jr. Olympian (JO) Finneas Garner and 1st-time JO qualifier Alex Lopez, each of whom won three gold medals and scored 28 pts. Garner broke the 24-year-old MSL record in the 50- yd Freestyle by going 21.85!

Jr. Olympian Justin Powell and another 1st-time JO qualifier Emilina Hernandez both brought home two gold medals and a silver medal scoring 26 pts. Jr.

Olympians Conner Hughes and Jasmine Abranyi scored 24 pts. Hughes had a gold medal and two silvers, while Abranyi had two golds and a silver.

Allstar Ivan Shchelgachov, Jr. Olympian Aniah McKim, and yet another 1st-time JO qualifier Bella Batista scored 22 pts. McKim had three silvers, Batista two golds and a bronze, and Shchelgachov a gold and a silver.

Jr. Olympian Corena Dearth scored 20 pts with a silver and two bronze medals. All-star swimmers Wylie Hinton and Penelope McCrae had 19.5 and 19 pts, respectively. Hinton brought home a gold and a silver,

McRae two silvers.

All-star swimmers Asa Garner and AnnMarie Hinton both had 16 pts and a silver and a bronze medal. First-time Jr. Olympic qualifier Dodo Zhang scored 15.5 pts and brought home a silver and a bronze medal. Allstars Charlie Hinton had 15 and 14.5 pts and two bronzes. Allstars Jayce Powell and Max Jestin scored 14 and 13.5 pts. Powell had two silver medals and a bronze, Jestin two bronze's.

Swimming in perhaps the most competitive bracket (15-18 boys), Jr. Olympians Chase Kenter and Paolo McRae scored 13 pts each. Kenter won a silver and a bronze, McRae won a silver. All-stars Max Basil and Anna Shchelgachova scored 11.5 and 12 pts, Basil won a bronze medal.

All-star Harper Bresnahan and Annabelle Searles scored 9 and 8 pts. All-stars Nikita Denisoff and Rocco Basil had 7.5 pts. All-stars Ellie Bysura, Agatha Jestin, and Andre Jimenez each had 7 pts. Jestin won a gold medal, Jimenez, a silver. Briella McKim and All-star Hayden Bysura scored 5 pts. Jr. Olympian Benjamin Halldin had 2.5 pts, Cooper Fisher 2.

Also swimming well for the Hurricanes were Harrison McKim, Kate Vanderweile, Zoe Ivy, Lucas Zabrian, and Stefan Halldin. Ben Shchelgachov could not attend and Emma Denisoff and Dasha Halldin were both out with ankle injuries.

The Highlands Hurricanes are a Highlands Recreation Park swim team that practices mostly in the evenings at the Highlands Recreation Park pool. The only requirement to joining the team is that a prospective swimmer must be able to swim 25 yards (the length of the Highlands Recreation Park Pool) unassisted. For further information please call at 828.421.4121.

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**On the corner of 3rd & Spring**

## ...MAYOR continued from page 2

once again treating the 25 hemlocks that live on our 0.64-acre homestead. Sallie and I take pride in living among some majestic hemlocks, some of which are 6-to 7-feet in circumference. We try to follow Frank Lloyd Wrights concept in building homes, that the house should be sited within nature, not constructed despite and over nature.

The other big challenge with a residential tree ordinance would be the wording and requirements. I am open to ideas, but an ordinance that is too prescriptive would be problematic, especially when it comes to enforcement.



# \*\*\* LOOK IT UP \*\*\*

## REPUBLICAN EXTREMIST BLUEPRINT FOR CANCELING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY: HERITAGE FOUNDATION'S PROJECT 2025

*"We are in the process of the second American Revolution, which will remain bloodless—if the left allows it to be."*

—Kevin Roberts, president of the right-wing Heritage Foundation

### **Giving Absolute Power to the President:**

Rearranging the entire structure of government to eliminate checks and balances, consolidating all power to the Oval Office.

**Enabling Presidential Retaliation:** Ending the independence of the Justice Department allowing the President to seek revenge and prosecute political rivals and dissenters.

**Replacing Experience with Loyalty in Civil Service:** Purging the government of 20-50 thousand civil servants, replacing them with appointed loyalists to the President alone.

**Abolishing the Department of Education:** Using our tax dollars to defund public schools and channel our tax dollars to private and religious schools; requiring public high school students to take the military entrance exam; and eliminating the early education Head Start Program.

**Dictating our Personal Values:** Affording federal recognition only to biblically based, heterosexual marriages and eliminating no-fault divorce thereby making it more difficult for a spouse to leave a violent or threatening marriage.

**Losing our Reproductive Freedom:** Undermining women's bodily autonomy by eliminating reproductive choice nationally, including restrictions on birth control.

**Persecuting the LGBTQ+ Community:** Increasing governmental interference regarding choices in family partnerships and abandoning anti-discrimination laws.

**Discriminating Based on Gender, Sexuality and Race:** Ending all government efforts to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Reducing Benefits for Veterans:** Re-classifying disabilities differently such that many veterans qualify for fewer benefits or no benefits at all.

**Decreasing Workers' Rights:** Eliminating overtime pay by replacing the 40-hour work week with a 160-hour work month, such that management can require more work hours per day without additional compensation.

**Denying Immigrant Rights:** Promising massive deportations and incarceration of immigrants.

**Cutting Your Social Security:** Raising the retirement age and/or lowering your benefits.

**Privatizing Medicare and Eliminating the Affordable Care Act:** Putting Medicare on a path to privatization, raising prescription drug prices and terminating the Affordable Care Act.

**Canceling Insured Banking:** Abolishing the FDIC so your bank accounts are no longer insured, while also deregulating banks allowing them to take risks making them more likely to fail (remember 2008).

**Losing Environmental Protections:** Canceling all US Initiatives to combat climate change, dismissing proven science, removing protections for clean air, water, land and energy, and ensuring continued reliance on polluting fossil fuels.

**Prioritizing Tax Cuts for the Mega Rich:** Assuring permanent tax breaks paid for by the taxes on working families while raising our national debt.

**Reducing Corporate Taxes:** Decreasing the corporate tax rate to 18%, its lowest ever in over 80 years encouraging more record-breaking and inflationary profits.

*The GOP aims to dismiss the Constitution, relying instead on various interpretations of the Bible leveraging our government to support a fascist and authoritarian agenda.  
Our beloved freedoms will be lost.*



# • SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING •



## Is it Christian nationalism or Christian love for nation?

Pastor Mark Ford  
First Baptist Church  
Highlands

Recent diatribes utilizing the straw man of “Christian nationalism” to caricature a great part of our citizenry is both disappointing and invective.

“Christian nationalism” by definition is a type of nationalism that gives focus to the politics of society and civil law in light of the Christian worldview uniquely. It is an intentional pejorative term used to arouse suspicion, angst and even fear of those who dare to bring their Christian faith and convictions into the public square out of a devotion to one’s country and the Lord Jesus Christ – often viewed as radical patriotism, even chauvinism.

What is most often represented by this attack is the fearmongering that would paint certain Christians of attempting to set up a theocracy that would exclude all other views and faiths, and further resort to silencing the opposition by coercive measures. Christians are gratuitously granted by these voices the permission to possess our faith but be careful and restrained in proclaiming that faith and convictions in political domains and the public square of popular opinions.

Out of a forced sense of humility and spirit of inclusiveness – not to mention the need to accept new versions of our history as a nation – Christians are being asked to compartmentalize our Biblical convictions lest we appear aggressive, intolerant or even imperialistic. The underlying determinant is to marginalize any views or convictions that may offend or limit truth to a singularity like the Holy Scriptures.

How many more times will we hear, “Don’t mix faith and politics” - or said another way, “Keep your patriotic feelings and Christian convictions fashionably separate.” This is another facet of “woke” progressivism that would alert the world to the prejudice and discrimination of conservative Christians. Conservative Christians, who want to share their faith and belief that God’s Word and precepts are what is best for a people and a nation, are lumped in with what is known as “dominion theology” or a minority who want to institute a nation governed solely by Christians and biblical law, coercively excluding all other faiths, political parties, and voices.

But the conservative, Scripture affirming Christians that I know don’t want a theocracy (God rule) or dominion theological ideology (rule of the Bible only). Only God can accomplish that and will one day as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Until then, we believe strongly in the freedoms established by our Constitution and Bill of Rights, and likewise the free market of ideas and convictions in the public square. We are convinced that the Christian faith and ab-

• See SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING page 19

# • 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

## CHAPEL OF THE SKY

Sky Valley, GA • 706-746-2999  
Sundays: 10 a.m. Worship; Holy Communion 1st & 3rd Sundays

## CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Rev’d Dr. Michael Matlock, Rector  
464 U.S. Hwy. 64E, Cashiers, NC

CAC@christanglicancashiers.org • 828-743-1701

Sunday: 9:30a Adult Christian Ed; 10:30a Holy Eucharist;  
6p Contemplative Worship with music and prayer thru Oct. 27

Wed: 6p Potluck, Bible Study

## CHRIST CHURCH OF THE VALLEY, CASHIERS

Pastor Brent Metcalf • 743-5470 www.cashiers.church  
Sun. S.S 9:30a, 10:45a; Tues. Guys study 8am. Gals 10am.;

Wed. 6pm supper and teaching.

## 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.

## CHURCH IN THE WILDWOOD,

Horsecove Rd, Highlands - 919-523-7067  
Traditional Hymn Sing Sundays 7-8p, thru Sept 21.

## 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 & Thurs-  
days 7am @ Zookeeper Bistro

## COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH OF SKY VALLEY

706.746.3144 • 696 Sky Valley Way #447  
Pastor Steve Kerhoulas  
Worship: Sun. 10:30 a.m. Holy Communion 2nd Sunday  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION  
Rev. W. Bentley Manning, Rector • 526-2968  
5th and Main streets • www.incarnationwnc.org  
Sunday: Rite I, spoken, 8 am in Chapel, Rite II with Choir 10:30  
am in Sanctuary, Wed: Healing Eucharist 12 pm in Chapel, Morn-  
ing 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

## GOLDMINE BAPTIST CHURCH

(Off Franklin/Highlands Rd)  
Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am  
GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH OF CASHIERS  
Non-Denominational-Contemporary Worship

242 Hwy 107N. 1/4 miles from Crossroads in Cashiers  
www.gracecashiers.com • Pastor Steve Doerter 743-9814  
Services: Sundays 10am - Wed. - 7pm; Dinner - Wed. 6pm

## HAMBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Hwy 107N. • Glenville, NC • 743-2729 • Nathan Johnson  
Sunday: School 9:45a. Worship 11a & 7p. Bible Study 6p  
Wed. Kidsquest 6p.; Worship 7p.

## HIGHLANDS ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Randy Reed. Pastor 828-421-9172 • 165 S. Sixth Street  
Wed. Bible Study: 6 p.m.; Sundays: Worship: 11

## HIGHLANDS CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Dan Robinson • 11339 Buck Creek Road  
The Highlands Central Baptist Church is temporarily  
sharing the facilities of the Shortoff Baptist Church.  
Sunday Worship is at 9a. Wednesday Worship is 6:30p

## HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Dr. Randy Lucas. Pastor 526-3376  
In-Person and live-streamed Worship Services  
909a Bluegrass and 11a Traditional  
www.highlandsmethodist.org

## HOLY FAMILY LUTHERAN CHURCH: ELCA

2152 Dillard Road • 526-9741  
Rev. Ken Langsdorf  
Worship/Communion: 10:30 All are welcome.

Visit our website: Holy Family Lutheran Highlands NC

## MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11. Choir: 6 p.m.  
Wed: Bible Study and Youth Mtg.: 7 p.m.

## MOUNTAIN SYNAGOGUE

Franklin • 828-634-1312 • mountainsynagoguewnc.com.  
Services: 1st /Fri. and 3rd Sat.

and Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur.

## MOUNTAIN BIBLE CHURCH

743-2583 • Independent Bible Church  
Sun: 10:30 a.m. at Big Ridge Baptist Church. 4224 Big Ridge  
(4.5 miles from NC 107)

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

## OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Jason K. Barone – 526-2418  
Tues. - 9:30am; Thurs. - 9:30am; Sat. 4pm; Sun. - 11am

## SCALY MOUNTAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

Rev. Marty Kilby  
Sundays: School – 10 a.m.; Worship – 11 a.m. & 7  
Wednesdays: Prayer Mtg.: 7 p.m.

## SCALY MOUNTAIN CHURCH OF GOD

290 Buck Knob Road; Pastor Donald G. Bates • 526-3212  
Sun.: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 10:45 a.m.; Worship: 6 p.m.

## SHORTOFF BAPTIST CHURCH

Pastor Rev. Andy Cloer  
Sundays: School: 10 a.m.; Worship: 11 a.m.  
Wednesdays: Prayer & Bible Study: 6 p.m.

## ST. JUDE’S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mass: Tues. noon (Latin). Thurs. 9a.; Fri. noon;  
Sat. 5:30p; Sun. 9a

## THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

1448 Highway 107 S.. Office: • 743-2359 • Rev. Rob Wood  
Sunday Rites-Holy Eucharist: 8a. 9:30 & 11a  
Visit our website www.goodshepherdofcashiers.com for  
schedules of activities.

Our Bazaar Barn is open Thurs. - Sat. 10a -2p.

## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP

85 Sierra Drive. Franklin • uufranklin.org  
Sunday Worship - 11 a.m.

## WHITESIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Sam Forrester/Cashiers • 828-743-2122  
Sunday School: 10 am. Worship Service: 11 am



# • POLICE & FIRE REPORTS •

**Highlands Police entries from July 15. Only the names of persons arrested, issued a summons/citation, issued a Class-3 misdemeanor or those of public officials have been used.**

## July 15

• At 1:58 p.m., officers responded to a report of larceny after concealment of \$400+ worth of wine at Mountain Fresh Grocery.

• At 4 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on Chowan Road where a driver ran off the road and struck a power pole.

## July 16

• At 8:10 a.m., Madelyn Lee, 26, of Franklin, was arrested on a warrant for an offense committed in another jurisdiction. She was issued a \$2,000 secured bond. Her trial date is Aug. 1.

## July 17

• At 3 p.m., officers responded to a one-vehicle accident on S. 5th Street where a parked vehicle on S. 5th Street was struck by an unknown vehicle.

## July 21

• A little past midnight, Jonathan Maudillo Lopez Grion, 28, of Clayton, GA, was arrested for DUI. He was issued a \$1,500 unsecured bond. His trial date is Sept. 25.

**The Highlands Fire & Rescue log from July 16.**

## July 16

• At 12:23 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a location on NC 106 (Dillard Road.).

• At 4:48 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on NC 28 south (Walhalla Road.).

## July 17

• At 6:54 a.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a residence on Happoldt Drive.

• At 12:13 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Warren Road.

## July 18

• At 8:19 p.m., the dept. responded to a fire alarm at a location on Main Street.

## July 19

• At 8:01 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

## July 20

• At 5:46 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Mt. Lori Drive.

• At 8:30 a.m., the dept. conducted a search on US 64 west (Franklin Road).

• At 11:48 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a gas leak at Midpoint on Oak Street.

• At 1:57 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Bruner Lane.

• At 3:29 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Happoldt Drive.

• At 6:51 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a residence on Kent Drive.

• At 7:07 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Arnold Road.

• At 11:17 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

• At 11:20 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on NC 106 (Dillard Road).

• At 11:53 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Panther Mountain Road.

## July 21

• At 10:22 a.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Big Bear Pen.

## July 22

• At 1:14 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Hummingbird Lane.

• At 1:21 p.m., the dept. responded to a motor vehicle accident on Dendy Orchard Road.

• At 2:33 p.m., the dept. was first-responders to a residence on Maple Way.

• At 4:39 p.m., the dept. provided public assistance in Highlands Plaza.

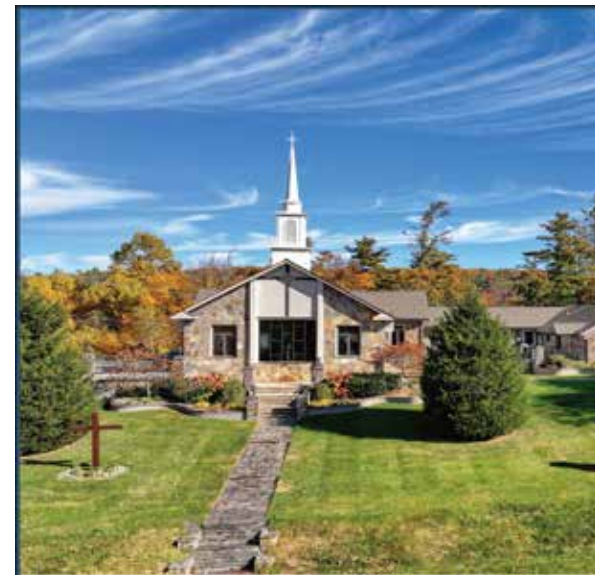
• At 6:04 p.m., the dept. responded to a Co2 alarm at a location on Helen's Barn Ave.

## July 23

• At 2:20 a.m., the dept. responded to a call of a tree on power line on Dog Mountain Road.

## NOTE:

"Public Assistance" responses can mean various things: keys locked in vehicles, batteries in a smoke detector and more.



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## ...SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING continued from page 18

solutes of God's Word must be unreservedly proclaimed and lived out and will win out in the competition of ideas. We cannot separate our patriotic love for country and our love for God and faith in His Word. Out of love for our fellow citizens and our nation, we advocate Psalm 33:12, "Blessed in the nation whose God is the Lord."

We echo the sentiments of Abraham Kuyper who said, "There is not one square inch in the domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign, does not cry 'Mine!'" As Christians who have a mutual devotion to God and our nation, we are not fascists or trying to force and coerce others to align with us. Only the Spirit of God can bring conviction and save our nation from sin and wicked ideologies. We are simply messengers, being salt and light – a presence for God's absolutes and a light that cannot be hid under the proverbial basket.

We are not "Christian nationalists" - but we are patriots and citizens who love America, and we bring into the public discussions what is best for our nation via the belief that God has those answers. It is not a nationalistic vision we proclaim, but our conviction in God's absolutes and prescriptions for national prosperity. We will take our place in the debates about what is best and what is right for our nation until forced out.

Our Christian faith and our patriotism will blend because we love God, and we love the United States of America – a gift from the Lord for those privileged to live here. Call me a Christian nationalist if you must, but I am simply a Christian who loves his nation enough to tell those who will listen the prescription for personal salvation in Christ and the prescriptions for spiritual and overall prosperity for our nation. "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:11).



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“Our decision to open an office in Highlands was influenced by several factors,” says Don Jowdy, Founder and Chief Investment Officer, Suncoast Equity Management. “First, many of our clients’ own homes in the area, and we wanted to offer them exceptional service while they enjoy the mountain lifestyle. Second, after personally experiencing the beauty and charm of Highlands, we knew it was a place we wanted to be.”

Suncoast Equity Management also has offices in Tampa



From left: Robin Cook, Donald Jowdy, founder and Marci Sherwood, director of marketing.

and Sanibel, Florida. For more information about their services

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## ...AMORTIZATION continued from 13

mercial activity wasn’t allowed. They said STRs are ruining the character of Highlands and its neighborhoods.

“If we devalue our residential neighborhoods, we will lose the support for all our nonprofits which give meaning and enrichment to our community,” said Lila Howland.

“They advertise, they make money, and they pay taxes, and I don’t understand why they are allowed,” said Slocum Howland.

Following public comment the board jumped in.

Vice Chair Siegel said she was worried about “poking the bear” and losing what was in place regarding STRs.

“I don’t want to lose what we have,” she said.

Member John Muir said the courts have said STRs are a residential-use so they are allowed. He grew up coming to Highlands

and staying in a rental and over the years his parents bought two houses in Highlands after experiencing it.

“There are rules in place. Highlands has a vibrant, year-long economy. Second-home owners leave their houses to sit empty and when they are rented, the economy is better in the long-term. I understand second-home owners concerns, but now we have people here year-round which is good.”

Chris Wilkes said no one wants Highlands to be “just a weekend” town and enforcement of STR regulations is key.

“If we put teeth in the ordinances with fines, that solves the problem-renters which will in turn keep the neighbors from being uncomfortable,” he said.

He also noted that according to police records for 2023 and so far in 2024 there have been 15 STR-related complaints.

Rachel Wilson said with the current ordinance, STRs will self-amortize over time.

“If someone buys an existing STR they can continue renting it, but I know people who are buying STRs who don’t need to or want to rent which means the STR goes away. There are also HOAs that can regulate this,” she said. “What’s important is we don’t want to be a test case. We need to hold tight to what we have in place.”

Whatley said there is no need to pour gas on the fire before giving what’s on the books a chance to work.

“If the town’s system isn’t working, then work on a new system. There is always a better way than suing and going to court,” he said.

The Planning Board’s recommendation will go to the Town Board which can either accept it or dismiss it which means a legal battle is likely to ensue.



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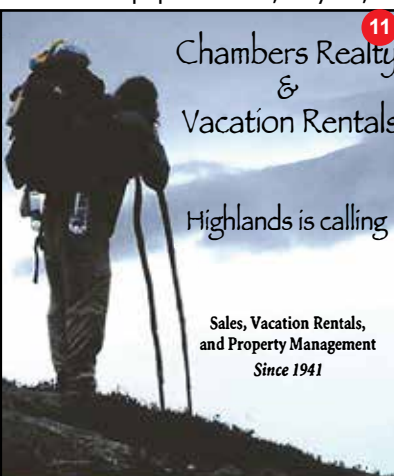
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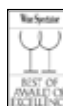
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