

Subject: Town Meeting  
August 15, 2023

Thursday night is the August meeting of the Highlands Town Board of Commissioners. It will begin with public comment at 7 pm. The meeting can be accessed remotely by using the YouTube link on the town website.

When I predict the length of the meeting based on agenda items, the reverse effect is always in play. I have long given up on telling Sallie whether we should eat dinner before or after the meeting. If I tell her the agenda is short and I will be home for dinner real soon, it guarantees a dinner time of about 9 or 9:30. Telling her the agenda is long and we should have dinner before the meeting usually translates into me returning earlier than expected.

So, the agenda for this meeting is rather short, but who knows how long the meeting will last? The homeowners on Little Bear Pen will be first on the agenda to do a presentation about installing a warning light at the entrance to their subdivision that empties out to US 64 on a hazardous curve.

Next on the agenda will be a report from our town attorney concerning talks with the county attorney about the Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center Lease. At the last meeting, the board directed Mr. Hagemann to consult with the Macon County attorney concerning issues and options related to the lease. He will file a report and present options and recommendations at the meeting.

Another item for review will be the ADA compliance for the proposed section of the NC 106 sidewalk. A question was posed at the July board meeting concerning the ADA requirements for the section of the sidewalk that would be built on the Shelby Place easement. This issue has been researched by the town attorney. Our staff has also consulted with the company that did the recent town ADA study and with state ADA experts. The board will discuss how to proceed based on the report of the town attorney and staff. The options are to continue with the current route or move the sidewalk to the other side of the street, where ADA issues would be less challenging. A third option is to not move forward with the sidewalk project.

At the July board meeting, a discussion was held concerning town board committees. Currently, there are a number of committees that research issues prior to the full board taking action. We have committees for recreation, public safety, public works, finance, and technology. Each committee has three members, and all meetings are open to the public. The staff will report to the board about scrapping the committee structure and having work sessions that include all board members. These work sessions would also be public meetings. In my opinion, there is merit to having all board members involved in these kinds of deliberations prior to an issue being placed on the agenda for a vote. The board will review several possible formats before such a new operating procedure is adopted.

See you Thursday tonight at the meeting, or I will wave to you on YouTube.