

Subject: Town Meeting and More  
August 17, 2022

Thursday is the August meeting of the Highlands Town Board of Commissioners. It will be at the Highlands Community Building which is located next to the ball field. The meeting begins at 7pm with public comment at the top of the agenda.

The agenda is rather short, but there will be a number of reports that will update the community on impending projects and initiatives. Several agenda items will be for “discussion only.” For instance, an update on property revaluations that the Macon County Tax Assessors Department will be conducting this coming year will be of great interest to many homeowners on the plateau.

The board will also review several items related to the STR issue, but no final actions will be taken. On the agenda is a review and discussion of the March 3 letter that the attorney who represents the Save Highlands Group sent to the town attorneys.

The board will also go into closed session at the end of the meeting to discuss a letter the Institute of Justice sent the board concerning proposed STR amendments. This letter was not a surprise to the board and the attorneys representing the town. The Institute to Justice weighing in on the STR issue was anticipated.

The agenda also includes proposed procedures for conducting the August 25 public hearing concerning the proposed ordinance amendments that the Highlands Planning Board reviewed, as well as the recommendations that they developed. The procedures that I will present are the same ones used in the first hearing that was conducted on February 24.

The STR public hearing will begin at 5 pm on Thursday, August 25, at the Highlands Community Building. Folks wishing to speak can sign up as they enter the building. Each speaker will have three minutes to make remarks addressing any of the proposals that the planning board reviewed. One proposal is basically the same as the original one that the town board adopted. Another proposal drafted by the town attorneys includes the amortization provision. The planning board rejected both proposals and developed their own recommended proposal. All of the proposals have been posted on the town website, as are the procedures that will be followed at the hearing.

As with the first hearing, there will be the option for people to submit written comments to the proposals. Those written comments must be limited to 500 words or less. They will become a part of the hearing record along with the oral statements.

At tonight’s (Thursday’s) meeting I will request the board to follow the procedure of the first hearing by taking no final action at the end of the hearing meeting. After the hearing, the board will need to schedule one or more work sessions with town staff to address specific details of any amendments prior to taking a final vote. These work sessions will be open to the public.

The meeting will be on YouTube by way of the town website. Also, new speakers have been added to critical areas in the meeting room and I am hopeful these new speakers will improve the sound for people at the meeting and for those who are streaming remotely.