

I must begin with a special shoutout to the volunteers of the Highlands Motoring Festival for putting on another great weekend end of motoring events including the capstone car show on Saturday. These volunteers and the challenging work they do is a labor of love. A passionate love for automotive technology and history and for a love of this community. All proceeds which routinely is a six-figure number goes to local non-profits.

We all nervously joke about the weather and rain as we approach the event. But, it is a critical concern, and I hate to see so much effort dampened by rainstorms. This year the weather was perfect, I was so relieved and happy for the show organizers. We all can look forward for another delightful event next year.

This Thursday, June 18, is the date for a town workshop and board meeting. The workshop is slated for 6 pm and the board meeting follows at 7. Both sessions are at the Highlands Community Center.

The workshop will feature a sound demonstration by the police department. Commissioners will go outside and listen to decibel levels that are in the current noise ordinance. At the board meeting the issue of adjusting the noise ordinance will be on the agenda. The board may decide to change some provisions of the ordinance, but a total makeover is not on the table.

At the board session there will be a public hearing concerning the proposed town budget for FYI 2026/27. That budget does have a 3-mil property tax increase to address current and future shortfalls. As we pass this budget I continue to track all the property tax reform legislation taking place in Raleigh. The mantra of many legislators is that property tax increases in towns and counties across the state are out of control and that the legislature has to reign the in out-of-control local governments

Not so for the Town of Highlands. The last property tax increase was way back in 2014. It was a 1.5 increase to improve recreation facilities. In later years that increase was earmarked for road paving and sidewalks. The current increase is to stop the bleeding in out reserve funds. Without and increase our reserves in the general fund would soon be at a critical level.

One other observation is about property revaluations. Over the past several revaluations where property values dramatically increased, the town board opted for a revenue neutral position. That tax formula reduced the millage rate so the town took in only the same amount of revenue as before the revaluation. In other words, there was not tax increase after a property reevaluation by the county. Nevertheless, there is also a 1.5 cent per hundred dollars of assessed property for the fire tax. That increase will go to fund full-time firefighters and expand the number per shift to 3 instead of the current 2 presently in place.

Also on the agenda is another presentation by Mike Hanson of McGill engineering concerning plans and scheduling for the Mirror Lake dredging project. There is a caveat for this item. Mike is reviewing a potential cost savings procedure that would increase the potential for more dredging. If this issue is still unresolved by the day of the meeting, we may postpone his presentation until July.

On June 9, a productive meeting took place at the Highlands Community Building concerning how to organize county districts and how to elect county commissioners. Of course, no outcome occurred, but a good and spirited discussion among the some 35 people in attendance took place. Amy Patterson did a comprehensive presentation about district alignment and election options. She has produced a PowerPoint presentation summarizing these options that I have now posted on AskMayorPat.com. I hope this meeting and Amy's presentation will be catalysts for further review and discussion across Macon County concerning this critical decision.

Also, this Friday I will be holding the month Community Coffee with the Mayor at the Hudson Library starting at 11 am. In addition to reviewing the proceedings of Thursday's town board meeting, Chief Andrea Holland will join us. She will update us on the Highlands Police Department and answering questions.