Subject: Town Board Meeting

October 15, 2023

Thursday is the Highlands Town Board meeting starting at 7 p.m. at the Highlands Community Center next to the ball field.  At 6 p.m., the board will have a public workshop meeting at the same venue.  Both meetings can be accessed on YouTube with a link to the town website.

A major board meeting issue at the time of this writing will be the location of the proposed sidewalk on NC 106, beginning near the business district and going around the Highlands Country Club.

At the last meeting, Commissioner Dotson urged the board to continue to consider the proposed route that would require an easement on the Shelby Place Homeowners' property. I have met with Rick Siegel of the association and shared with him a photo of an elevated steel walkway that could be installed. This walkway would be level with the road and traverse Munger Creek, which is right next to the road and prevents the sidewalk from following the roadway.

If the homeowners at Shelby were interested in pursuing this alternative concept, then the board would need to decide how to proceed. The option to relocate the sidewalk on the opposite side of NC 106 is still on the table if the board chooses to do so.

The bottom line is there are state/federal funds available for such proposed sidewalks.  Our staff has a grant proposal almost ready for submission, dependent on the board’s final decision. Staff from the Southwestern Regional Planning Organization have been of great assistance in identifying funding sources and working with our staff in developing the grant request.  Our contacts indicate there is an ample supply of funds for the grant, at least for now. The longer we wait to submit a grant request, the more likely that the funds will have dried up.  I will press for a final decision concerning the location of the sidewalk at the meeting Thursday.

We will also have a request for the final approval of the new subdivision located on Gibson Road. It is an unusual situation where major water utilities will not be available until the water and sewer lines are completed on Gibson Road. The installation of these lines is the responsibility of the town. ARP funds have been approved, and a contract is in effect for the project. The developer is ready to start selling the lots and building homes.  By the time any of the homes are completed, about 18 to 24 months from now, the water and sewer lines will be installed.  The subdivision owner is requesting not to be delayed simply because of the schedule of this town project. Normally, subdivisions are developed next to roads that already have utilities in place.

At the workshop at 6p.m., the board and staff will revisit the Highlands School request to install an illuminated, electronic sign.

It is fall, and leaf blowers are active and in full force.  I want to have a discussion about a possible ordinance regulating the commercial use of leaf blowers. I have received feedback from residents that this is an issue that needs review.

**MAYOR PAT**