

I will have been at the North Carolina League of Municipalities annual meeting, City Vision, in Raleigh for most of this week. I do not look forward to traveling to Raleigh, staying in a hotel, and attending meetings for most of the week, but this meeting has been mostly an annual trek for the town manager and me.

While at the conference, we will attend meetings, workshops, meet with other municipal officials, and talk with potential town vendors. The talk of the conference will have been what is happening down the street as legislators are in a short session. I hope they drop the notion of controlling towns, cities, and counties' authority to raise property taxes. Their main focus should be on passing a biennial state budget. They were supposed to do that in the long session back in 2025.

Let me update everyone on several town projects that are still on the books and in the budget. Some of the infrastructure and paving projects will be guided by weather patterns and seasonal traffic flows.

First, the state, to my dismay, recently repainted the center line on the hill on 4th Street. The board had directed our staff to ask DOT to move the line over a foot or so to the center of the road so the traffic lanes would be even, and safer passage would be improved. In fact, our town manager had again contacted DOT in March about the status of our request. Again, after the new painting of the yellow lines, Josh called them again to ask what had happened. We have been assured that the line adjustment request is still on their project list and will be done. Stay tuned.

Second, in the current budget, we have funds for two new pedestrian crosswalks on US 64: one near the intersection of 64 and Foreman Road, and the other at Spruce and 64 near the ball field. The town's responsibility is to redo the sidewalks with ADA curb cuts, where the crosswalks will be installed. We have hired a contractor to do that work this spring. As soon as that is completed, the state will mark the crosswalks and install the proper signage.

Third, motorists can expect work to begin this spring on the sewer force main upgrade project and the electrical circuit upgrade, both of which will be installed on US 64 and Franklin Road, starting around the 1st Street intersection and going toward the Lake Sequoyah area. Hopefully, work on both projects will move extremely fast and be done early in the tourist season.

Finally, the construction plans for the dredging stages of Mirror Lake are nearing completion. If they are ready, representatives of McGill Engineering will share the plans with the board and the public at the May town board meeting. If they are not ready, I expect that presentation to occur in June. After permits, easement, and construction documents

are completed, a request for bids will be sent to potential contractors. As I have said before, the dredging will be a major project involving a lot of equipment and activity.