Thursday, September 19 will be the meetings of the Highlands Town Board of Com-missioners. At 6 pm there will be a board workshop followed by the official monthly meeting at 7 pm. Both meetings will be at the Highlands Community Center next to the ball field. The meetings can be accessed remotely by a link at the town website.

There are three items on the 6 pm workshop agenda. First, the board will go immedi-ately into closed session to consult with the town attorney concerning the handling of the Huff lawsuit against the town. Both parties to the suit agreed last year to a court ordered stay of the suit. This agreement ends at the beginning of October and the suit may move forward.

After the closed session the open public session will address two items. The town has received several requests from area facilities for our sewer plant to receive sludge from their small sewer package plants. Currently, this sludge is trucked a sub-stantial distance for disposal. If the board grants permission these entities would dis-pose their sludge into our sewer plant. Since they have treated the sludge in accord-ance with state standards at their package plants, our plant operators would know exactly what was entering our system. Prohibitions of septic companies depositing their waste in the plant would continue.

The reason the town would consider accepting sludge is that we now have a new, very efficient belt press for processing sludge in a rapid time. These agreements to process sludge would net the town about $40,000 a year. The board will have to weigh the benefits of such a program versus potential problems.

The board will also review a proposed NCDOT crosswalk that would be located at Hickory Street and North 4thStreet near the ball field. Since North 4th is US 64, NCDOT would oversee the project by designing and painting the actual crosswalk. The town would have to commit to altering the sidewalk curbing to be ADA compliant for the crosswalk. There may be a couple of other areas where crosswalks could be installed.

On a related matter, in recent weeks NCDOT has been repainting existing crosswalks in town with a specialized, long-lasting paint. The town has paid NCDOT extra funds to paint town street crossings also.

There will be one major item on the 7pm town board meeting. That item is final action on the proposed amendment to amortize short term rentals located in R1 and R2 zon-ing districts. A public hearing was held on September 5th where speakers on both sides of this issue had the opportunity to address the board. In accordance with state statues the town has been taking written comments before the hearing and also after the hearing prior to the final action tonight. Our town clerk has sent these comments to our Sunshine List in several batches. She has also made sure the comments are sent to the commissioners.

The 7 pm board meeting will open with public comments. I am requesting that those folks who have spoken at the hearing and/or have submitted written comments con-sider not speaking again at the public comment period. On the other hand, if some-one feels they have a new point on the issue that needs to be stated, by all means do so.

Finally, I want to lend my full support for our playground initiative that is being spear-headed by Commissioner Stiehler and Commissioner Weller. We are the middle of seeking private funds for the project. I encourage everyone to donate by going to www.highlandsplay.net.

MAYOR PAT