On this Memorial Day Weekend, Highlands was alive and doing well. On Saturday morning, downtown was full, and many community events were underway. The American Legion was giving away poppies in front of the Methodist Church to commemorate Memorial Day. Just down the block, the volunteers of the upcoming Highlands Motoring Festival were holding their Saturday mini-car show in front of Town Square.

If that were not enough, the Farmers Market was in full swing atFounders Park while the Annual Plant Sale by the Highlands Garden Club was at the ball field.

Graduation was also underway at the Highlands School on Saturday morning. I was gratified to read in the newspaper that almost all graduates plan on continuing their education beyond the secondary level. Graduating from high school is a great start, and certainly a better life-choice alternative than being a high school dropout. Our school provides graduates with a wonderful foundation to acquire advanced skills, whether at a four-year college, a community college, or a vocational college. We need young people to go into critical fields such as healthcare, automotive, electrical, construction, heavy equipment, and computing. Employers on the Highlands Plateau are always ready to hire young people with basic training and entry-level skills. New graduates should not be apprehensive about starting a new career due to their lack of experience;  knowledge and experience come with being on the job.

My advice to the new graduates is something a former colleague used to tell students. Tim Mescon was the Dean of the Coles Business College when I was at Kennesaw State University. He always emphasized that over 50% of being a good and successful employee was to show up for work on time every day. Any other issues can be addressed while one is on the job. Sometimes, the simplest and obvious advice is the most critical information to know and practice. It is like my motto for the last 12 years, “Mayor on Duty;” it is my job and my responsibly.

Last week, I had the honor of having Senator Kevin Corbin and Representative Karl Gillespie visit with me and others at the Mirror Lake Dredging site. John Bryant of River Sand Dredging gave us a very informative update on the project. The first dredging phase, which the Mirror Lake Improvement Association is financing, will continue throughout the summer. Mike King of the Improvement Association stated he hoped more private funds could be raised to do even more than what was planned for Phase 1. State funds will be used for the dredging in subsequent phases. From my conversations with our legislative representatives this weekend at the Mirror Lake Dredging site, I can report that they have been impressed by the involvement and contributions of private citizens.

In addition to the Mirror Lake project, several other major projects will be underway this summer. The Dog Mountain water project is another that is about to get underway. This week, we experienced another delay due to the bid process. Our public works director was scheduled to open the bids from the contractors, but unfortunately, only one bid was submitted. When this occurs, state law mandates a two-week rebidding process. After the two-week period, if only one bid has been submitted, the contract can then be awarded to the one bidder. So, the projected start time after the bid is reviewed and the board approves will be this fall.

Finally, new utility poles on US 64 from Highlands County Club to Maple Street will be installed throughout the summer. These new poles will carry the lines for a new third circuit for the town’s electric grid. Delays are expected on US 64 when crews are at work. The crews are on an 8-day work schedule, followed by a 6-day off period. The contractor follows this plan because he has to bring workers from distant places. Due to travel distances, returning home each night is not feasible, and they have to stay in area motels during their 8-day work schedule.

I hope you had an enjoyable Memorial Day Weekend, and as always, I will continue to be your Mayor On Duty.