

Subject: Town Board Meeting Results  
March 22, 2023

At last Thursday's meeting, the Highlands Town Board approved a number of items that will now move forward. Let me review several major decisions that were made.

First, the board approved the new leases for the HAM Radio and WHLC antenna located on the town's Big Bear Pen Tower. These leases will now be published in the newspaper during a 30-day period before the final lease can be signed.

Second, the board approved the placement of the Highlands Greenway new way-finding signage throughout town. The greenway directions will be placed on 5" x 5" posts at the height of four feet. These signposts, a long-awaited improvement, will help folks better find and navigate the greenway.

After signage was approved, I encouraged the greenway board to ask the county to provide funding for future improvements. The county commission has on several occasions provided funding for the greenway in Franklin, but never have they provided funding for the Highlands Greenway. There needs to be equitable support for our greenway since Highlanders represent a major portion of the county tax base.

The board also approved \$5,500 to survey the portion of the proposed NC 106 sidewalk that would be located on the Shelby Place Homeowners' property. The homeowners are requesting a specific location for the walkway in order to make a final decision. The survey is an important step in the town securing an easement and building the sidewalk.

Final approval was given to the ABC Board to begin the conversion of the old fire station to a new ABC Store facility. The ABC Store is a state-controlled operation owned by the Town of Highlands. In accordance with state statutes, the town board appoints a five-member ABC Board that is in charge of the total store operations. In North Carolina, ABC stores sell all spirited alcohol (liquor) in a designated service area, i.e., The Highlands Township. Bars and restaurants have to purchase liquor from the Highlands ABC Store. Both these components will be enhanced at this new facility.

The ABC Board has retained substantial funds to make the conversion and begin operations at the new location in a short period of time. This new facility will generate several hundred thousand dollars yearly in additional town revenue.

The board also approved several budget amendments. Fifty thousand dollars was approved for an extensive study of our electrical grid. A similar study of over \$200,000 was approved to evaluate the condition of critical points in our main sewer lines. Given the recent sewer line failure, this study hopes to identify any additional problems.

Finally, the town staff and the fire chief were given the go-ahead to begin staffing the fire department with full-time personnel. This staffing can be accomplished without raising the fire tax at this time or in the near future. Also, approved was the immediate hiring of additional seasoned electrical linemen. The new linemen will replace a number of veteran linemen who will be retiring.