

Board Meeting March 21, 2024

Thursday, March 21, will be the March meeting of the Highlands Town Board of Commissioners. This meeting will have two sessions: Workshop and the Board Meeting, both open to the public. The workshop will begin at 6 pm at the Highlands Recreation Department.

Two items are on the workshop agenda. First, the board will discuss the appointment policy for members of the planning and zoning boards. The second will be a review of weekend construction and work regulations. The town currently has an ordinance concerning commercial work on weekends. This discussion will focus on clarifying and possibly modifying the existing ordinance. Both items have had initial reviews at previous workshop sessions.

At 7 pm, the board will hold its monthly business meeting. The agenda is rather full for this month. Top on the agenda will be a public hearing. This public hearing will have two items open for discussion: changing the definition of commercial and public/civic buildings and an ordinance amendment requiring street paving in new residential subdivisions.

There are several other items on this Board Meeting agenda, including:

- A presentation of an economic study by Highlands Festivals, Inc.
- A discussion on how to establish a business committee. This item is a follow up to the community business workshop held in February.
- Revisiting the Meander in May program, which will be sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.
- An update on the housing studies that are underway. Macon County is conducting a county-wide study, and the town and Chamber of Commerce have been partnering to get support for a housing study here on the Highlands Plateau.
- Our town attorney will present the acceptance documents for the Sherwood Forest sewer line to the board. Last month, the board agreed to take over the private sewer line. After board approval, the acceptance documents will be filed at the Macon County Courthouse.
- A major item will be a new ordinance concerning the control of fats, grease, and oils in the town sewer system. In recent years, there has been a growing problem with these materials clogging sewer lines. The North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources has been urging municipalities to adopt an ordinance they have developed to address this growing problem across the state. It is now time for Highlands to address this growing environmental problem that impacts how the town processes solid waste. This grease and oil ordinance will require routine inspections of grease traps at food preparation venues. The staff will present a budget amendment to fund the inspection process and begin the inspections immediately.

The meeting can also be remotely accessed by going to the YouTube video link on the town website.

At the next board meeting in April, I anticipate there will be a public hearing for the conditional zoning request by Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church. A procedural issue has delayed this hearing until that time.