

Subject: Busy Weekend and Upcoming Town Meeting
September 21, 2022

It has been and will continue to be a time of gatherings this fall in Highlands. The first great gathering was on Saturday night with the inaugural event at the new Highlands Performing Arts Center. What a great new venue! BRAVO Amici was a wonderful first act to open this spectacular venue.

The next gathering was for the ribbon cutting for the new PAC facility on Sunday afternoon. The community can't thank the supporters enough who made this dream of a world class venue a reality. After the ribbon cutting folks got to go on a tour of the new building, including the dressing rooms and stage production areas.

If that was not enough, the second annual Porchfest took place on Sunday afternoon. Outstanding musicians performed at locations throughout the downtown area. It was a festive occasion with strong attendance at each location. The Center for Life Enrichment is to be congratulated organizing and putting on this free event.

On Tuesday another gathering was the joint meeting of the Highlands Board of Commissioners and the Board of Directors of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce. Both boards had been striving to set up a meeting even before COVID. Working around busy schedules we were all able to meet at the Highlands Recreation Department on Tuesday morning.

This gathering of board members covered an array of topics that relate to the town and the business community. Kaye McHan gave an overview presentation about the chamber and visitor's center that included their current budget. The budget covers the operation of the visitors center, all the special events in the downtown area, and the promotion of tourism.

A conversation was held about the particulars of upcoming renewal of the lease of the visitors center. The town owns the property, and the chamber does all the maintenance and upkeep of the building.

The group also had lengthy discussions on how to continue developing and improving the downtown area. Parking, way finding signage, planters and Wi-Fi deployment were some of the topics covered. Electric vehicle charging stations were also discussed. I anticipate decisions about charging stations to be made in the near term.

This Thursday evening the board of commissioners will be traveling to the Franklin Town Hall for a joint meeting of the Macon County Board of Commissioners and the boards from the towns of Franklin and Highlands. These joint meetings were taking place on a routine basis before COVID. With the resumption of these meetings, elected officials will discuss how to work together for the betterment of the two communities and the county.

The final gathering, I want to make everyone aware of will be next week, Friday, September 30, at the Hudson Library. The community coffee starts at 11 am. I will be hosting Representative Karl Gillespie and Senator Kevin Corbin. Our representatives will be talking about priorities in the upcoming North Carolina legislative session. I hope everyone can come to the coffee to share your concerns and ask our representatives questions.

Mayor Pat