

I read Reverend Manning's column several weeks ago about taking time to be thankful on Thanksgiving. The minister expressed concern about stores open and people working on that special holiday.

Thanksgiving morning, I rode through town and noticed Main Street was closed down. I drove to the major construction sites, like the new fire station, the Episcopal Church, and the Performing Arts Center. They were closed too.

Then I drove through a neighborhood only to encounter a construction crew working on a house under renovation. My Thanksgiving spirit sunk as I asked the question, are people so busy meeting deadlines that construction has to continue on Thanksgiving? People in the neighborhood were about to settle down to dinner, shouldn't have been subjected to construction operations.

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I contacted the police and asked them to remind the construction crew that work was not allowed on holidays. Highlands has an ordinance that prohibits construction work on holidays.

Friday morning construction work in the town was back to almost a normal level. The next day, Saturday, I was in my yard around 2:30. I heard a loud, concerted roar of leaf blowers coming from a distant area. I suspected a landscape contractor was working on Saturday afternoon. While I understand homeowners doing yard work on Saturday, such as grass cutting and leaf blowing, I do have concerns about commercial operations on weekends. Our ordinance is somewhat ambiguous about the issue of landscape companies working on the weekend, although I have witnessed commercial landscapers working in my neighborhood even on Sundays.

The leaf blowers continued to blare all that Saturday afternoon. About 4:30 I decided to take a road run. I ran toward the sound of the leaf blowers. After about a mile from my house I came upon the source of the noise. It wasn't one landscape contractor operating leaf blowers, but rather a concert of two crews from two companies operating multiple leaf blowers in the same area. I don't know how people living near by dealt with that situation.

My concern is that Highlands has always been a retreat community where folks come to get away from all the hustle and bustle of metropolitan, city life. The question for me is whether in our enthusiasm to build more, attract more visitors and expand business opportunities, are we not slowly and subtly degrading the quality of life in this special community? In our quest to build and develop more in pursuit of the good mountain life, are we destroying what we strive to enjoy?

I know some will say here goes that anti business mayor. I support businesses, wise growth and development. On the other hand, I'm concerned about growing practices that reduce our quality of life, especially in residential areas.

In the coming weeks I will ask the town board to review current ordinances concerning construction work on weekends. Our ordinance may need clarification. Also, I will request a review of noise issues coming from equipment operation.