

## Spring Cleanup and Easter

Last week marked the beginning of spring. Our faith community will hold services and observances that capture the spirit of renewal, resurrection, revival, and restoration. As a town, we, too, are entering a period that embodies these concepts.

Very soon, Highlanders who have braved the winter months will see an influx of new visitors and the return of seasonal and second homeowners. I now characterize many of our residents as transitory residents who, while leaving Highlands for periods during the winter, usually November through May, never fully sever ties with the town as once done by many homeowners in the past. Our town has undergone many changes, but this spirit of renewal and restoration is a big part of this period of the year, even a ritual.

First, although Highlands is always beautiful, we will have to restore the town's appearance. A major event will be the annual Highlands Plateau Pickup, sponsored by the Highlands Chamber of Commerce. This volunteer event will take place on Saturday, April 13. For more information and to sign up, call the Chamber of Commerce at (828) 526-2112.

The Town of Highlands will conduct its annual white goods pickup from April 15 to the 19th. During this week, the town will come to a residence and pick up any used appliances such as washing machines, stoves, or other appliances. Please call Town Hall at (828) 526-2118 for more information. The town will recycle the metal of these defunct machines. Money from the recycling effort will help defray some of the program's costs.

The town will also be restoring many parts of the downtown area and public roads. We have contractual agreements with the state and other contractors to re-stripe a number of crosswalks, streets, and some parking spaces. What is frustrating is that there is a high demand for these services across the state, which may result in delays in painting certain areas. Our road crews will also be patching potholes and clearing ditches and culverts.

Last Friday, I revived a program done for the last ten years by holding the Community Coffee with the Mayor at the Hudson Library. These coffees will continue, usually on the last Friday of the month through October. This first coffee focused on town budget planning, a process revived each spring. I discussed a number of capital budget items that the town board must prioritize. As we address these budget issues for this year and into the future, I pointed out that utility rate increases, especially in water and sewer, are definitely on the table. Property tax increases can not be ruled out in the future.

I look forward to a renewal of economic activities in the town. Like most communities with severe winters, the local economy takes a dip during our winter months. However, in recent years, as people remain in town, the dip has leveled off to some extent. With the return of moderate temperatures, more visitors and residents will be welcomed to downtown businesses and eating establishments.

Highlands will also have a restoration of community events and celebrations. The community fine arts organizations have planned wonderful lineups of events. In addition, there will be many concerts, art shows, and events in Founders Park that everyone can attend and enjoy. We are entering a wonderful time of the year in Highlands.

Sallie and I always enjoy going to the Highlands Biological Station and the nature trails this time of year to view the emerging native plants and flowers. I love the trilliums.

I hope everyone has a Happy Easter, Passover, and joyous spring as we enter this time of renewal.