

Subject: Pre-K
April 18, 2023

HIGHLANDS SCHOOL ADDITIONS

The Highlands School has been a unique educational institution for this community, and frankly, I can't understand why any parent wouldn't want their children to attend this small K-12 school. Our school is one of only a few schools in North Carolina with the 13-grade format. The school has an excellent record of students going on to make outstanding achievements both here in Highlands and across the country.

For a number of years, my wife Sallie was the art teacher at the school. She shares my views on the Highlands School size and grade structure. Coming from a metropolitan school to the Highlands School years ago, this jewel of a school was a breath of fresh air. Sallie views her tenure at the Highlands School as a high point in her 25-year career as a teacher. Our daughter was a graduate of the school.

Thursday night at the April Town Board meeting, I will ask the commissioners to approve a resolution asking the Macon County Board of Commissioners to reinstate the \$329,000 contract with the LS3P architects order to complete the design phase for the additions to the Highlands School. The design phase includes two classrooms for a Pre-K program and four classrooms for the regular school program, and would also include upgrades to the school's media center. If the project were to move forward, it would cost around 5 million dollars. To put that number in a budgetary perspective, the proposed new Franklin High will cost about 120 million dollars and the Highlands project cost 5 million. As a matter of comparison and some fairness, the Highlands School improvements would be about 4% of what it will cost to build the new high school, yet about 50% of the Macon County property tax base comes from the Highlands Plateau. It gets down to basic equity of a sort as our children will not attend Franklin High School; nevertheless, I support the building of the new high school.

HIGHLANDS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Sallie and I will be supporting the Highlands School Town Scholarship program again this year. On Honors Day in May, each graduating senior will receive a scholarship to further their education.

We are supporting the scholarship program by entering the Three Rivers Fly Fishing Festival, which will be from May 4th to the 6th. We are sponsoring two teams this year: my son with his wife and Sallie with me. We probably won't win the tournament, but believe me, the family competition will be intense. The women in the family are convinced they will catch the most fish.

All proceeds from the festival go to the Highlands School Town Scholarship fund, so that is why we are participating. I hope others will fish for our students' benefit also. If you don't fish, you can make a contribution or send a \$250 entry fee. Google the Three Rivers Fly Fishing Festival for more information. To make a donation, send a check to the Town of Highlands Three River Fly Fishing Festival and mail it to PO Box 460, Highlands, NC, 28741. In recent years we have had tremendous and generous support for this program.

If you want to wait to support the scholarship program, the Highlands Scholarship Golf Tournament will be this fall at the Sky Valley Country Club. More information about the golf tournament will be coming soon.