

I loved the Highlands Christmas Parade this year. I am always honored as mayor to lead the parade just behind the color guard. Sallie, our grandchildren and Lucy, our dog, had a great time walking in the parade and passing out candy. At the end of the parade route all the participants turn on 2nd Street and go their merry ways. This year I stopped at the turn on Main Street and Second Street to greet and thank the parade participants. I especially wanted to thank the Franklin and Rosman High School Marching Bands for their participation in the parade. Their music created such a festive spirit for this traditional holiday event.

As I greeted and thanked parade participants I was struck by how important the many organizations are to the quality of life of this community. Now I won't attempt to cite specific organizations, but as I saw groups, cars and floats pass by I realized these are the folks and institutions that are the soul of our community.

A principle of Gestalt Psychology is that in observing an entity, that the sum of the parts is not greater than the whole. I sensed that concept in observing all the community groups who participated in the parade. Among us there is a synergy of cooperation, affection and community that becomes greater than all the individual organizations in Highlands. Our community endeavors and each group contributes to the whole, which becomes an extended effort throughout the Highlands community. I want to thank everyone for caring for this town and its people.

I also want to put in a plug for our downtown merchants during this Christmas season. I know it is convenient to order on line, but shopping in our downtown area is a special experience. I encourage everyone to simply stroll around downtown in the coming weeks to see what special, unique items are in our stores. You might discover that creative gift that would preclude an internet search.

Let me cover a couple of brief items. Our road paving projects for this year ended with the paving of Upper Lake Road this past week. Moving to a new budget year the board will prioritize more roads that need to be paved. Someone asked me this week why the town was paving dirt roads when so many paved roads need to be resurfaced? My response is that the town has been aggressively resurfacing town roads for the past two years and will continue to do so. There are some roads in Highlands that are state roads that the town does not and cannot pave.

Also, there has been a lot of chatter on social media about the town's position regarding short term rentals. My caution to folks is that no final decisions have been made. The Highlands Planning Board is currently reviewing a drafted conceptual proposal that our attorneys presented. That review process will continue in the coming weeks before planning board recommendations are forwarded to the town board.