

TOWN MEETING AUGUST 15

This Thursday is the August meeting of the Highlands Town Board of Commissioners. It will begin at 7 pm at the Highlands Community Building next to the ball field. The meeting can also be accessed remotely by going to the board meeting link on the town website.

The meeting has a full and interesting agenda, beginning with the board's discussion of short-term rental amortization. In July, the Highlands Planning Board voted unanimously not to amend the current short-term rental ordinance to amortize and thereby eliminate the grandfathered short-term rental use in R1 and R2 neighborhoods. The commissioners will now review the planning board's recommendation and decide whether or not to move forward with amortization.

Any vote to move forward with amortization will not be a final resolution. A public hearing concerning the amortization amendment will be held before a final vote on amending the ordinance takes place. I anticipate the hearing process and a final vote to go into September or even longer if the board votes to move the issue forward.

The board will also hear concerns from the Mount Lori Homeowners Association concerning construction issues that have impacted their neighborhood. I might add, with the current boom in residential home building town staff has been getting more complaints about construction practices in recent months.

Pat Gleeson will also give the commissioners a report on the progress of the Mirror Lake Improvement Association's effort to begin the first phase of dredging the lake. Once this phase is completed, the town will manage the other phases of dredging and administer the state funds earmarked for it. In a related matter, our town manager will present to the board a project engineering contract that the state requires. This contract involves several hundred thousand dollars for developing a complete design plan for the dredging and for securing all the permits and easements that will be required. As I have said before, many preliminary tasks are required before the actual dredging takes place. The Mirror Lake Improvement Association has already spent over a year securing permits and easements for the first phase. Like all the projects the town has in play with state funds, the process of completing the work becomes extended and frustratingly slow. On the other hand, we would rather be using external funds rather than town tax dollars.

The board will also hear about Hank Ross's streetscape request on Maple Street. The renovation of the Shudder building is connected to the streetscape design. Along with this

project, the conversion of the old fire department to the ABC Store, and future planned development, Oak Street is in the process of getting a facelift.

At the town meeting, Kaye McHan of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce will share a year-long plan for celebrating Highlands' 150-year founding, i.e., a sesquicentennial. Many community groups will be involved in this historic benchmark.

At the time of this writing, no 6 pm workshop is planned for this month. I anticipate the workshops to resume in the fall.