

Subject: Town Board Meeting
January 18, 2023

The new year is well underway. Thursday, January 19, will be the first meeting of the year for the Highlands Town Board. It begins at 7 PM at the Highlands Community Center next to the ball field. You can remotely access the meeting through the town website.

Several agenda items are carryovers from last year. I hope the board will take final action on several of these items.

The draft of the lease for the WHLC transmission antenna located on the town's Big Bear Pen tower will again be up for review. If the board approves this draft, it will have to be posted in the newspaper before final action is taken. The same will apply to the lease for the small HAM radio antenna that will also be placed on the town tower. Since this antenna is for non-commercial use, I foresee no issues.

The board is still waiting for information from the county concerning the renewal of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce building lease. Hopefully, more information will be available at the next town board meeting.

Members of the ABC board and staff will attend the meeting to present a more detailed proposal concerning the possible relocation of the ABC Store to the old Oak Street fire department building. The fire department has transferred its operations to the new facility on US 64. Last month Steve Mehder, the chair of the ABC Board, and Kevin Vinson, the ABC Manager, proposed that the ABC store be relocated to the old fire department building. The Town Board requested more information before making a decision. The ABC representatives will make an in-depth presentation, including architectural schematic drawings, an assessment of future space needs, project financial data, and the impact on the long-term ABC store operation. I anticipate a final decision on the ABC proposal at a later date.

At the December meeting, commissioners expressed an interest in conducting a land-use study for the entire town property where the police, EMS, Playhouse, and town hall are located. If the board decides to hire a company to conduct a land-use study, I believe it should be a comprehensive review of future needs for all facilities, including those in the recreation and public works departments.

As he first did last fall, Lamar Nix will present a report concerning town obligations and costs for the proposed downtown electric vehicle charging stations. Upon hearing Lamar's report, I hope for a final decision on this proposal.

Last year the board entered a contract with Environmental, Inc. to operate the Highlands sewer plant. In the meantime, we have also been helping town personnel acquire the required operator licenses. The contract and training efforts have gone well. The current strategy is to continue using a private company to operate the plant while also developing redundancy by having license operators on staff. At the Board Meeting, the Board will review the contract for operating the sewer plant for the coming year.