

Subject: Town Meeting Agenda
September 16, 2023

Thursday night is the monthly Highlands Town Board meeting. It will start at 7 pm at the Highlands Conference Center next to the ball field. But before this official business meeting, there will be a board workshop that will begin at 6 p.m. at the same location.

This new workshop format will allow the board and staff to discuss upcoming town issues, and it will be open to the public. This first workshop will review several items. First on the agenda will be a presentation by Principal Holdbrooks about placing an illuminated sign at the Highlands School. Another item will be a review of street lighting policies followed by a discussion of the need to pave Arnold Road, a private road just outside the town limits. It is the road to the town sewer plant.

The agenda for the 7 p.m. board meeting is very full. Top on the agenda will be a one-year lease agreement for the Chamber of Commerce Building. This lease will be a temporary measure as we continue a review of room tax revenues and how they can be spent.

The board will hear a report from Josh Ward, our town manager, concerning meetings with NCDOT officials concerning the proposed section of the NC 106 sidewalk that would be located on the Shelby Place property. After hearing the report, I anticipate the board deciding where to locate the sidewalk and how to proceed.

The board will also review the final plat for the Sanctuary Subdivision on 1st Street. Our zoning director, Michael Mathis, will report to the board on 160D state compliance amendments concerning Article 16: Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance changes. These changes are being driven by state updates that the town must comply with in our ordinances.

The agenda also has an encroachment agreement request for a property on 5th Street and several financial matters. A budget amendment for the Little Bear Pen caution light will be done.

The board will go into a closed session to get an update concerning the Huff et al. versus Town of Highlands lawsuit. Several months ago, the town entered into a court-approved stay with the Huff litigants, where both parties agreed to take no legal action before August 27. Our town attorney, Bob Hagemann, has had discussions with the Huff attorneys since the end of the stay. He will update the board on the status of the case.

Finally, and I hope it's finally, let me provide a legislative update. The NC House and Senate were to convene on the first of last week to approve the state budget. The stumbling block was the issue of casino gambling. Things fell apart, and both houses adjourned. At the time of this writing, they were to convene this week to resolve their differences and approve the new budget. What is in it for Highlands remains to be seen. I was very optimistic that the town would get some needed support from the state, but as this process has gone awry, I'm not so sure. Anything can happen in protracted budget negotiations far away in Raleigh.