

Subject: Voting Eligibility and Driving Safety
July 26, 2023

PART ONE: VOTING ELIGIBILITY

Highlands is moving into a period of evaluation and reflection concerning where we are as a community and where we should go into the future. We do this every two years with the fall municipal elections.

As of last Friday, Highlands has a robust field of candidates that filed for the three open board positions. I want to thank those Town of Highlands residents who filed for the election. It is a brave act of citizenship to offer to serve as an elected official by undergoing the rigorous process of an election. Whether a candidate is elected or not, they are all community winners.

I know everyone will look forward to an open discussion of the issues during the period before election day. As always, I will encourage town residents who are eligible to cast their ballots during the early voting period or on November 7, election day.

Let me clarify what is an eligible voter in a municipal election. In the last election, a candidate on Facebook told people that property ownership in Highlands qualified a person to register to vote. That was *not correct*. Voting eligibility is determined by residency, not property ownership. That rule is not a local policy; it is in the state election statutes. If property ownership was the standard for registering to vote, some folks could vote in multiple communities and counties where they own property.

Voters can vote only in the community where they permanently reside. An eligible voter does not even have to own property in the community, only reside in a domicile in that community for the majority of the year. For instance, a voter in Highlands may not own the property where they reside in Highlands, but if they rent or lease where they reside, they are fully eligible to vote in the municipal election. Furthermore, that person would also be fully qualified to run for local office.

On the other hand, if a person has moved from Highlands and now resides in another community, they are no longer eligible to vote and should change their voter registration accordingly. As we go into this election season, it is important that we all understand the rules and regulations concerning voting and candidate eligibility.

PART TWO: STOP SIGNS

On my AskMayorPat.com website, I posted a video about stopping at stop signs this week. Our police received a complaint from a citizen, along with a video of a motorist driving right through the intersection at NC 28, Satulah, and South Street. Upon investigation, the police placed an officer at the intersection in a marked police car. To the officer's astonishment, some motorists drove right through the intersection, never heeding any of the stop signs. The officer issued seven citations in a little over an hour.

We have not had a traffic-related fatality in Highlands in over a decade. I want the community to maintain this record of safety. We can all do our part by following basic traffic regulations. With so many people in town this time of year, both motorists and pedestrians, it is important

that we all follow traffic laws, especially stopping at stop signs and driving within speed limits.
Let's have a safe season of joy and fun.