Repairs in Town

April 5, 2022

Highlands is moving toward spring, and activities will pick up in Highlands. I’m ready for the cold days and nights to go away.

Stillwell and Associates have begun replacing the old, outdated waterline on Moorewood Drive; there will be some disruption as crews dig and install the new six-inch waterline. The trenching will be mostly on the side of the road, and some plants and small trees will have to be removed. American Rescue funds are being used for this project. Water system improvement falls within the plan's permitted uses.

There are two sidewalk projects in the current budget that should get underway as we see warmer days. The sidewalk in front of the Presbyterian Church will be restored. The concrete under the brick pavers is crumbling and will be replaced. There will be a sidewalk installed on US 64 between the new residential development across from the ball field and down to the Wells Hotel. The developer of the residential development had to put in sidewalks in front of the development as part of the Highlands master sidewalk plan. Ironically, there was about a 400-foot gap between the sidewalk of the development and where it continues near the Well Hotel. The board decided last year to connect the two portions of the sidewalk. This new sidewalk project will also include better stormwater drainage.

As we move toward spring, town road crews will be doing cleanup and clearing operations in the ditches and drainage areas on town roads. With recent storms and high winds, there has been a lot of fallen tree debris and runoff that filled these road drainage systems. I anticipate NCDOT will be doing similar operations on the roads that they maintain both in and outside town.

Now, let me address the dreaded P word: potholes in roadways. As area asphalt plants resume production and temperatures increase, our crews will fill the potholes in town that have developed over the winter. I know motorists become frustrated about potholes popping up during the winter, but efforts to make repairs in cold weather, at best, last only a few days.

WLOS News recently ran an interesting story. A news reporter covered the Sylva Fire Department moving toward a combined staffing model. The department will hire a cadre of full-time firemen to staff their department 24/7 this coming year. The Sylva Fire Department will also continue to rely on volunteer firefighters. The combined model is a growing national trend. What caught my interest was that the fire chief said they had built a new department a few years ago with a barracks section. He indicated they built this larger facility with the aim of hiring full-time firemen. The chief pointed out that the full-time staffing would reduce response times, which would keep insurance rates down. That model and strategy is exactly what the Highlands is planning with the construction of our new fire department that also has a barracks section.