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I hear this refrain or a variation of it all the time. It goes like this, “Mayor, Highlands is changing!” Or “Mayor, Highlands is changing too much.” Or “Mayor, we don’t want Highlands to become . . .” Or a more extreme declaration of the mayor should be tarred and feathered for allowing change to take place in our beloved Highlands.

My general response is that those protesters of stability and stasis for our community actually do want change, only just the way they want it to change. Honestly, all of us who have moved here have been catalysts for change in Highlands by our demands for this and that service or amenity.

I was at the final concert of the 45th Season of the Highlands Cashiers Chamber Music Festival this past Sunday. The jammed-packed concert hall was the venue for a world-class concert. The festival has a bright future for years to come because it has evolved from an initial small season supported by a handful of classical music aficionados to a full, jam-packed series featuring some of the best chamber music performers in the world. At the dinner celebration after the concert, Will Ransom, the festival director, declared that the schedule for next season will be better than ever.

Like so many other organizations and events in our community, this event is the result of a dynamic organizational structure. It is constantly evolving, making changes and deliberative improvements.

Dynamic change is described as a continuous multi-dimensional adaptation within complex systems. It is contrasted with static, linear positions. A community where people want to and take pride in living and embraces dynamic change.

At the chamber music dinner, many people were recognized and thanked for their work and support for the season and festival over the years. That organization has had a core value of collective action, which is many people working together toward a common goal—the love of live, dynamic performance. They have embraced a model of shared accountability to create a dynamic organizational structure. And, from their supporters and audience, they have embraced a culture of continuous feedback. At the dinner, I overheard multiple discussions about how to improve the upcoming season. In summary, the folks involved with the festival do not want to keep it the same; they constantly strive to make it better, and if you will, more beautiful and uplifting than before. They are also mindful that they also must preserve and honor the chamber music art form.

That dynamic mode can also relate to the Highlands community at large. I contend that we want a dynamic community that adapts to change and new situations. This is not a new concept; the Highlands Improvement

Association was created well over a century ago and morphed into new community organizations over the years that strove to make Highlands a better community.

The alternative, no change in a community, is the moniker of many dying towns that blot the maps throughout the county. They are communities with dwindling populations, stagnant economies, and dwelling or nonexistent organizations. With all the talk about change in Highlands, the alternative does not seem practical to me. The challenge as we move into the future, is always to balance progress with preservation; this is the theme that runs through the Highlands Comprehensive Plan.

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