This Thursday, the Highlands Town Board of Commissioners returns to work for the new year. Our monthly workshop meeting will begin at 6 pm, followed by the business meeting at 7 pm. Both sessions are at the Highlands Community Center next to the ball field. There will be a video link on the town website for those who cannot attend.

We have a full agenda for both sessions. At the workshop, the board will hear a report from Lamar Nix, the town's public works director, concerning the status of the major upgrades to the water plant. Specifically, the board will receive cost estimates to replace the pre-clarifier tank and to build a new water filter train in the plant. Staff will be seeking direction on how to proceed. There will also be a discussion and review concerning the planning board appointment policy. At the December meeting, the board decided on a procedure to select planning board members. This review will center around such issues as how many planning board members should be town residents and the length of terms on the board.

The agenda will also have an item concerning tabled UDO amendments, specially creating a new definition of commercial building and subdivision road paving requirements. Finally, staff proposed modified weekend construction work regulations will be reviewed.

At the 7 pm business meeting, the first agenda item will be a presentation of the 2022-23 town audit by Travis Keever of Gould Killian, CPA Group. There will also be a discussion of a proposed workforce housing grant engagement letter that the Highlands Chamber of Commerce is requesting. The board will also review the proposed chamber events calendar for 2024.

Also on the agenda will be the appointments to the planning and zoning boards. Commissioners have been reviewing the applications and have made recommendations concerning who should serve on these boards.

There will also be a discussion of the bids for the renovation of the Highlands Community Buildings. These renovations include kitchen upgrades and improvements to ADA building accessibility.

Finally, a budget amendment request will be made to the Poplar Street waterline overage. Those hidden rock formations turned out, as in many past instances, to cause a budget overrun. Contractors constantly remind us that it is near impossible to identify hidden rock until the excavation is underway. Such was the case with this waterline project. The contract was about 100 yards away from completion when solid rock was hit.

MAYOR PAT