Recently a resident told me someone like you with clout should get the US Post Office here in Highlands to do a better job in postal delivery. My response is that is not a town function. We have made inquires before. But, the post office is a federal agency, and they work autonomously over local government. I have suggested in the past that any postal concerns should be sent to our congressman, Chuck Edwards.

My other suggestion when it comes to package delivery or shipping is to use a private provider. I ship my my pottery that I sell from my studio by way of a local business that provides choices was to what provider to use. In the past I have use the US Post Office to ship my work and in most cases, it arrives to the customer in pieces. Not so much with other shippers.

Another thing I can not control is where commercial trucks travel in town. The town has no authority to limit truck travel on public vehicular byways. For instance, we can not pass an ordinance saying no truck on 5th Street past Carolina Way as one resident insisted that we do. Deliveries of packages, building materials and contractor trucks loaded with equipment travel throughout town constantly. Having our police enforce such restrictions would be problematic and may not hold up in court if challenged.

The expectation is that trucks with trailers over 30 feet cannot use US 64 between Highlands and Franklin. That law did not come from the Highlands Town Board, but rather from the North Carolina legislature with the passage of a bill last year. The state is the regulator of highways and roads, not Highlands.

Another recent inquiry by as resident was about our town ordinance concerning the flying of drones. We have no ordinances. The FFA controls the airspace and the flying of drones, not the mayor nor the town.

I also sometimes get inquiries about rulings by the Highlands Zoning Board of Adjustment. Some residents may be of the impression that the mayor can overrule or influence the process or decision of the zoning board. I do not want to go to jail! By law the mayor can not influence nor overrule a zoning board decision. The zoning board follows a quasi-judicial process and is charged by state statutes to make an impartial decision base on the evidence provided. I do not talk with zoning board members concerning impending cases that they may hear.

Finally, the town nor the mayor have authority to control cutting of trees in residential areas. Such a tree ordinance would require state enabling legislation. The big question would be what restrictions would be in such an ordinance? Potentially, tree cutting restrictions could limit what a property owner could do on their property, and some may think that could be an overreach on the part of the town. Others counter that over cutting of trees impact the environment in this special place. The point I will make is that currently the town has no authority to control how many trees can be removed on residential lots. I tend to be very reluctant to impose such limits in residential areas. On the other hand, the town does have enabling legislation from the state concerning tree removal in commercial zones.

Now after reading this piece, some may think I am unwilling to take a stand and I am quick to pass the buck of inaction. But I must choose my battles based on what problems can resolved and those that can’t. Governance is a complex process of negotiating chains of authority, conflicting federal, state, local statutes, and court rulings. I continually find the old saying to be correct that one person’s rights stop when they crossover into the rights of another person. This principle creates the challenging waters that elected officials must navigate to steer an outcome for the public good.