

The Village Record



The Newsletter of
Village of Flat Rock
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Flat Rock, North Carolina
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April 2020

From the Mayor's Desk

Nick Weedman

As the new Mayor who took office in early December 2019, all I can say is what a time to start in this position. My report will be unusually long, but these are difficult times.

Coronavirus Impact on the Village of Flat Rock

In March, in response to the pandemic and after the County declared a state of emergency, the Village took what was believed to be appropriate steps to help contain the virus locally. These included:

Closing the two playgrounds, Rudnick meeting room, and pavilion

Closing Village Hall meeting rooms

Cancelling Village Council meetings for the balance of March and all of April

Cancelling other Village meetings such as the Planning Board, Board of Adjustments (after the March 23rd meeting).

The Park and Recreation Foundation cancelled its meetings and the planned Spring Fling originally set for April 25th.

Postponing or cancelling the Celebrate Flat Rock or Ice Cream Social scheduled for Saturday, June 6th. This could be rescheduled later in the year if conditions permit.

Postponing or cancelling the Shred Day scheduled for May 9th. This too may be rescheduled later. A second Shred Day remains on the calendar for October 10th and we trust we will be back to

more normal conditions by that time.

The Park at Flat Rock remains open as far as walking the trails are concerned and over the first weekend large numbers of citizens enjoyed being outdoors. Our Park Ranger, John Wilkerson, stated that people were keeping the recommended social distance and respected the closed conditions that were in effect. The rest rooms at the Park remained open and were being sanitized daily.

While the number of people experiencing the virus remains at a small number when this was being written, it appears we will experience greater infections as time goes on. So, please follow the precautions the air waves continually extol everyone to follow and stay safe.

New Council Members

The November 2019 municipal election saw three new Council members being elected. Tom Carpenter was elected as the representative from District One replacing outgoing Council member Nick Weedman; Anne Coletta from District Two replacing Ginger Brown; and David Dethero from District Three replacing John Dockendorf. Congratulations to all three!

North Highland Lake Road Project

Following new Council members taking office on December 12th, the Council voted 4 – 3 to ask NC Department of Transportation (NC DOT) to cancel the North Highland Lake Road

Improvement Project. Subsequently, actions taken by the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization supported the project and it will now proceed.

The council voted unanimously at their March 12 meeting to request that NCDOT modify the road project to lessen as much as possible the impact on the road. These modifications primarily are concerned with safety, the environment, and aesthetics on one of the main scenic gateways into our historic Village

NC DOT has started to take land by eminent domain if owners have not agreed to sell land or easements to the organization. It is planned to let a construction contract in July with construction likely to start in October. Early work will be done on utility relocations thus making real construction likely to begin in 2021. Construction will likely take about two years and the cost of the project is now approximately \$3.4 million.

In this uncertain environment with the Coronavirus, please follow governmental guidelines and stay safe.

PROPERTY TAX UPDATE

Efforts continue to collect property taxes owed to the Village. Collections are over 99% of those billed but are running slightly behind 2019.

The Village billed \$1,237,340 and collections so far have reached \$1,225,371 or 99.03% as of March 26, 2020.

Real property accounts (primarily residential properties) have about 36 accounts delinquent. The initial bill was sent in late August and follow-up billing was done in January, February and early March.

Several steps will be taken to collect outstanding accounts. First, one or more contacts will be made by mail and/or telephone. Second, garnishment of bank accounts will begin in April. Garnishment freezes the bank account and costs the property owner at least \$100 or more depending on the bank fee schedule. Finally, advertisement of delinquent accounts will be done as required by North Carolina G.S. § 105-369 (a).

The Village has collected 100% of billed accounts since the Village started tax collections in 2005. Vehicle taxes are collected by the North Carolina state government in what is commonly called tag and tax. Under that system in order to keep a vehicle currently registered, the owner must pay the property tax due on it. The system has proven highly successful.

We seek the cooperation of property owners in payment of taxes due so the advertisement of the delinquent account and possible garnishment of bank accounts can be avoided.

You can check the status of your property taxes online. Go to the Village web site (www.villageofflatrock.org) and click on the Property Tax logo on the upper right side of the page. In addition, payments may be made by credit card online on that web site. Credit card companies charge a fee for that convenience to be paid by the taxpayer. You may also pay by ACH or e-check, there is a \$1.05 convenience fee

If you have questions regarding your property tax account, please contact Martha Orr, Tax Collector, at martha.o@villageofflatrock.org or telephone her at (828) 697-8100.

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PARK RANGER JOHN WILKERSON

Share the Trails!

Our beautiful park offers lots of open spaces to enjoy nature, play games and run with your dog, but when on the trails it is important to follow some simple guidelines so everyone has a fun, safe day at the park. Trail etiquette is like the rules of the road when driving your car. You want to be as predictable as possible so that when others approach you, particularly from behind, they know what to expect. Here are four rules that allow all of us to successfully share the trails:

1. Everyone (walkers, joggers, dog owners, cyclists) should keep to the right side of the trails. It's just like driving a car: ride on the right and pass on the left.

2. If you stop to chat, check your phone or enjoy the view step off the trail so others can pass by.
3. Cyclists must give a warning when passing pedestrians or other cyclists; ring a bell or say “passing on the left.”
4. Dog walkers should shorten their leashes when on the trails. (Lengthen the leash when you are off the trails exploring other areas of the park when no one else is around.)

TRANSPORTATION ANNE COLETTA

Report a Problem to NCDOT and Other Transportation News

An update on the N. Highland Lake Road project is covered in the article by Mayor Weedman.

Most of the roads in the Village of Flat Rock, with the exception of private roads, are owned and maintained by the State of North Carolina.

So what to do if you see a maintenance problem on a state road in the Village?

Road maintenance problems include:

- Potholes
- Blocked culverts and drains
- Shoulder and guardrail damage
- Missing or damaged signage

The easiest way to report a maintenance problem is to alert NCDOT online at their **Report a Problem to NCDOT** webpage (ncdot.gov/contact). The information that you enter here goes to the NCDOT Henderson County Maintenance Department, where it will be added to their maintenance list for repair. The Henderson County Maintenance Department is making every effort to repair problems as quickly as possible, but they are under significant financial and staffing constraints. It may take some time before you see your reported problem taken care of, but the maintenance crew will get to it.

Feasibility Study

In 2018, the Village of Flat Rock received a grant from NCDOT to look at the feasibility of a bike/ped path connecting the Park at Flat Rock with the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site. The final draft report of that study has been completed and is available for review online (villageofflatrock.org).

Final presentation of the report to the village council in a public meeting is on hold until the COVID-19 emergency has been declared over, so please check our website and with the village office for further updates.

Next Round of Road Projects

NCDOT and the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) are in the process of identifying the next round of potential road and bike/pedestrian projects for our region. Henderson County has presented to the MPO a list of seven road projects and seven bike/ped projects the county and its municipalities would like to see move forward for funding in the 2023-2032 timeframe. None of these potential projects are in the Village of Flat Rock. This is the first major step in the NCDOT prioritization process to determine which projects will get funded. You can get more information about this process on the MPO SPOT 6.0 webpage (frenchbroadrivermpo.org/spot-6-0/).

A Perfect Picture of Spring





Tracey Daniels,
Development Director

Letter from Tracey Daniels, Development Director

Hello!

The Park at Flat Rock is even more important to our community during challenging times. Medical experts say fresh air and exercise are important for physical and mental health. We encourage families to utilize the outdoors as an opportunity for social distancing. *If you are currently sick or are considered at higher risk for illness, we encourage you to postpone your visit.*

With the rapidly changing updates on Coronavirus, The Flat Rock Park & Recreation Foundation has decided the most sensible and responsible course of action to protect the health of our community is to postpone all Foundation-sponsored events scheduled now through April 30th. Nature Walk programming is also canceled at this time. Our staff and programming partners are working diligently to reschedule each of our events to a safer time in the future. We look forward to hosting **Pardee in the Park: FREE Yoga classes** and **Hands On! Museum** nature programs for children. Please remember, our Park programs are only paused – *we are very excited to share with you the work and new partnerships we are embarking upon!* For timely updates, please be sure to follow our website (www.flatrockfoundation.org) and our Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/parkatflatrock/>).

Inserted in this Flat Rock Village Newsletter, please find **two important documents** from our Foundation. The first is our 2019 annual report! The Foundation had a great year made possible by our generous donors. YOU make The Park and our community a very special place.

Along with the annual report, you will also discover information on the launch of our giving society, **FRIENDS OF THE PARK AT FLAT ROCK**. This new initiative will help raise funds for sustainability, trail improvements, wellness programs and nature education. The enclosed rack card will refer you to our newly updated website where all the details and easy-sign-up instructions are posted. Feel free to call or email me directly – I am happy to help.

The Flat Rock Park & Recreation Foundation's work is far from being done. We hope you will continue to contribute and help sustain The Park for our current Park users... *and for generations to come.* During these unprecedented times and when we are on the other-side of this health crisis, The Park at Flat Rock will stand strong as a beacon in our community for health and wellness. Please stay safe and healthy. I look forward to Meeting You at The Park (*6 feet apart, of course!*)...

Tracey Daniels
828-697-8100
tracey@villageofflatrock.org

COVID-19 and Public Health

We hope everyone is healthy and safe, but there's no doubt these past few weeks have been difficult. At the Village, we have been in regular contact with the Henderson County Public Health Department (HCPH) to keep up with the most recent guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the N.C. Department of Public Health (NCDPH), and HCPH. We have been using our website (villageofflatrock.org) and social media to get this information, as well as government directives, out to you in the Flat Rock community.

Please check *The Village of Flat Rock* page at [instagram.com/village_of_flat_rock](https://www.instagram.com/village_of_flat_rock) to see the latest information. And go to the Henderson County Public Health COVID-19 webpage for information on what to do if you have symptoms and other health measures important for reducing the spread of this virus: www.hendersoncountync.gov/health/page/public-health-advisory-coronavirus-covid-19.

Social distancing. . .Community spread. . .Self-isolation

Just a few of the new phrases we have been hearing over the past few weeks—let's hope that we will soon no longer need to use them!

SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Are you concerned about failing septic systems?

24% of the people responding to the recent Village of Flat Rock Citizen Survey question replied yes.

FACTS

Annual failure rates of septic systems in NC is estimated by various studies at 6-20% a year.

Failure of septic systems is a threat to both public health and the environment. Bacteria and viruses thrive in untreated sewage and when exposed to untreated sewage it can impact human and wildlife health.

Here are two links from the NC State Extension office that provide useful information on septic systems.

Septic System Owners Guide

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/septic-system-owners-guide>

Why Do Septic Systems Fail?

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/why-do-septic-systems-fail>

NEWS FROM HISTORIC FLAT ROCK

Gardening Tips from Well-Seasoned Gardeners: Historic Flat Rock Inc. (HFR) will sell its new book on Saturday, April 18, from 11-2 pm at HFR's Cultural Center/Museum (Old Flat Rock Post Office, Circa 1847) at 118 Village Center Drive. There will be a pop-up tent in the parking lot behind the building. HFR enlisted the help of 38 professionals, master gardeners, and other plant enthusiasts. Three are nationally recognized plantsmen, 11 hold important positions at popular Western North Carolina garden shops, and 14 are HFR members. HFR is deeply grateful to each and every one of them. The tips were vetted by Steve Pettis, NC Horticulture Agent, Henderson County. The price per book is \$20. There is no sales tax. Exact change will be appreciated. All proceeds support HFR's mission To Protect, Preserve and Promote the Historic and Cultural Heritage of Flat Rock, NC.



NEWS FROM THE MERCHANTS

Hello neighbors,

We hope everyone is doing well and staying healthy during our 21st century pandemic!! At this point, most of our Merchants are OPEN and welcome questions to them individually about their day and hour schedules.

And there is a lot of good news to share...

New Restaurant

The Campfire Grill There is some exciting news from us...a new restaurant has opened in the former Deans Deli/The Village Pub space along Little Rainbow Row. Our own Starr Teel has done it again...a wonderful new venue for food and drink. A casual bar/American style cafe for our neighborhood. Right now, Open Thursday-Saturday, 4-8 pm (or maybe by the time you read this. Wednesday—Saturday) see. [campfiregrillnc](http://campfiregrillnc.com) for more info.



The Wrinkled Egg Turns 30!

The Wrinkled Egg is celebrating its 30th Anniversary this year. Along with the Flat Rock Bakery and HubbaHubba BBQ, it was the beginnings of what we know affectionately as Little Rainbow Row with all its colored store fronts. It's hard to image what it would be like without the charming and loveable EGG.

Drop by and congratulate Virginia.



Flat Rock Tailgate Market

The market is now held in the parking lot of Pinecrest Presbyterian Church...corner of Highland Lake road and 225. It will open in early May.



Support Local!

Please like and share our Flat Rock Merchants Facebook Page for all the news. Thank you for shopping and enjoying local. For more information on joining the Merchant group, contact ruth@portraitsinc.com.

KUDZU ERADICATION

Just a reminder, when everything gets back to normal, look around your property to make sure that you haven't been invaded by KUDZU.

If you see kudzu growing on your property, please telephone the Village office to obtain a form to fill out for Kudzu Eradication. Or you can go online at www.villageofflatrock.org. Then go to Services > Kudzu Control to print the form, fill out and bring into the office. Someone will then contact you and set up an appointment to visit you to make sure that what you are seeing is kudzu.

HELP SOUGHT

The Village of Flat Rock is seeking one or two people with a legal background to assist in amendments to our land use regulation ordinances.

The North Carolina Legislature has passed a new bill (North Carolina General Statute 160D) the objective of which is to consolidate municipal and county enabling statutes for land development regulation. This will entail making changes to our ordinances to bring them into compliance with the new State law. The deadline for having our ordinances in compliance is December 31, 2020.

The project management will have volunteers become familiar with NC GS 160D and our land use ordinances and to make recommendations for changes needed to the latter. The project team will review those changes with the Village Administrator/Zoning Administrator and then with the Village Attorney. The final step will be to go through the process of public comment and finally passing revised or new ordinances.

The North Carolina League of Municipalities and the North Carolina School of Government are resources that can assist in the project. Several publications are available for review and assistance as well.

If any potential volunteer would like further information, please contact Village Administrator Pat Christie at (828) 697-8100 or email administrator@villageoflatrock.org.

FLAT ROCK PLAYHOUSE COSTUME SHOP SEWS MASKS TO COMBAT SHORTAGE

Flat Rock Playhouse Production Manager, Adam Goodrum was recently alerted to a thread on an industry forum from an Oklahoma hospital seeking seamstresses to sew cloth face masks to combat the coronavirus shortage. The theatre forum was sharing a Facebook post from officials at Stillwater Medical

Center in Oklahoma looking for volunteers willing to “use up their fabric stashes.” The hospital shared a pattern online and instructions that the masks must be four layers of fabric for filtering and be adjustable. They also assured that the masks would not be used by healthcare providers dealing with COVID – 19 but by non-clinical personnel and other worried patients in the hospital. The donated fabric masks would allow that the N95 masks to be reserved for use by the caregivers on the frontlines of the battle.

The coronavirus has completely shuttered the theatre industry nationwide. Professional theatres, community theatres, and even Broadway houses sit dark for the foreseeable future, yet, industry professionals in costume shops across the country shared the Medical Center’s post and then sprang into action. The Playhouse was inspired and recognized an opportunity to help out a little closer to home.

The Playhouse reached out to Playhouse Development Consultant, Kim Hinkelman who reached out to Amy Treece at Pardee – UNC Healthcare and Advent Health Foundation Director and Playhouse Trustee, Sherri Holbert, both of whom responded that they would love to have additional face masks. Ashli Arnold, Resident Costume Designer and Costume Shop Manager got to work washing fabric and threading up the machines. Assisting Ashli are various staff members whose work has been impacted by COVID-19. The team continues to work, separated by six-feet or more, in the recently vacated dressing rooms.

Flat Rock Playhouse is proud to be able to help make an impact during this worldwide crisis and encourages other theatres or seamstresses to get involved if able. For tips and guidelines for donating, please visit getusppe.org/makers/.

**Village of Flat Rock
P.O. Box 1288
Flat Rock, NC 28731-1288**

Schedule of Meetings

All monthly **Council Meetings** are on the **second Thursday** of each month, and will start at 9:30 AM.

Agenda Workshops are scheduled to start at 9:30 AM on the **Monday** 10 days prior to the Council Meeting, unless that Monday falls on a holiday.

The Planning Board meets the **first Tuesday** of each month from 10:30 AM until 12:00 Noon

The Board of Adjustment meets the **first Tuesday** monthly at 3:00 PM (if there are agenda items).

The Historic Landmarks Commission meets the second Thursday of each month after the monthly council meeting (if there are agenda items).

Village of Flat Rock office hours are 9:00 AM—4:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

The deadline for articles to be included in the September issue of "The Village Record" is August 17, 2020

Village Directory

Mayor:

Nick Weedman 696-4020

Council Members:

District 1

Sheryl Jamerson, Vice Mayor 698-3330

Tom Carpenter 692-5352

District 2

Paige Posey 606-7078

Anne Coletta 595-0707

District 3

David Dethero 692-5375

Albert Gooch 698-0045

Village Clerk:

Michelle Parker, CMC 697-8100

Deputy Village Clerk/Tax Collector:

Martha Orr, CMC 697-8100

Village Administrator

Pat Christie, CZO 697-8100

Park Ranger

John Wilkerson 435-0397