News from the Mayor
Roger Snyder

Things seemed to have slowed down quite a bit, which is a good thing. Since the last newsletter, the Council has gotten some projects up and running. The Planning Board and Town Council are currently reviewing the draft of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Nothing more to report on the future of the Regional Water Facility or the water situation associated with that Plant.

Our branch library is taking off and growing by leaps and bounds. Special thanks to the hard work of the volunteers and to Jere Brittain, our Volunteer Coordinator. Speaking of volunteers, if you are interested in serving on a Town committee, we hope you will stop by Town Hall and fill out an application.

One project that we have started looking into is the traffic on Butler Bridge Road. With the possibility of additional development(s) using the road, the Council feels that we need to look at that road before the traffic gets any worse and come up with some suggestions for NC DOT.

Another project, that we continue to work on, is a Mills River Post Office. Senator Elizabeth Dole and Congressman Charles Taylor have both agreed that Mills River has a need and support us having one. Stay tuned for updates on this as it progresses.

As always, if we can be of any assistance, please give us a call.

Note: As we go to press, our Newsletter’s volunteer editor-in-chief, Kathie Doole’s father passed away and Ashley Snyder compiled this newsletter as a special educational project. The Town’s sympathy goes out to Kathie and we look forward to having Kathie back with the next edition.

Upcoming Elections
The Town has 3 Council seats up for election. The seats are for 4-year terms. Please remember October 11, the Primary and November 8, the General Election. Everyone registered is eligible to vote. Don’t know whether you are registered to vote? Contact the Henderson County Board of Elections at 697-5970.
BUTLER BRIDGE ROAD

The Mills River Town Council is seeking input on traffic issues and conditions that concern Butler Bridge Road from Highway 280 to the French Broad River. Written suggestions will be collected and organized for presentation to the Department of Transportation to help in future planning. Please send only written suggestions to:

Town of Mills River
P.O. Box 189
Mills River, NC 28742
Attn: Butler Bridge Road

OR
e-mail your suggestion to martha.orr@millsriver.org

Suggestions must be at Town Hall by October 17th.

Mills River Fire and Rescue
By JoAnne C. Hill

Many of you know the voice that answers the call for help or information at the Mills River station house. It’s the soft spoken voice of Clyde Bryson, our full-time salaried firefighter. Clyde is a Mills River native who, with his lovely wife, Melissa, lives and raises their daughters, Ashley and Kimberly, in what Clyde describes as the prettiest place around. They are a community-oriented family. The girls attend West High School and Ashley is a Junior Firefighter which makes Dad especially proud. Clyde began as a volunteer firefighter in 1974 and moved into his present position in 2002.

Among his many duties, he answers calls for EMS, fire, motor vehicle accidents and other requests for service. Coverage for the fire department is a five-day week from 7 AM to 4 PM. Weekend and vacation days are covered by other volunteers. Clyde said that the volunteers all work well together and will respond without hesitation to a request for assistance. This district is the largest in area of any Henderson County fire district and includes the Town of Mills River plus some unincorporated areas and the Pisgah National Forest.

Accidents in the forest are especially difficult since very few cell phones work in that area. The Mills River station has an established procedure for this type of rescue. They use radio transmission and set up a “relay man” to keep in contact while in the deep valleys and gorges. Much of the area from Yellow Gap to the Pink Beds is in a “dead zone” where the only reliable communication is with this relay transmission set up. One of their trucks is a four wheel drive and is ambulance certified for rescue.

If you think you’re busy, just think of maintaining the buildings and equipment on School House Road and the sub-station on Fanning Fields Road, ordering supplies and restocking those facilities and the EMS equipment. Rounding up stray cattle, clearing away downed trees and

This work results in the rates assigned for business and homeowner fire insurance. The lower the rating of the fire district, the lower the cost of your policy will be. The Mills River district has worked hard to get the current low rating of 5. Because of the rural nature of Mills River, frequently mortgage companies and real estate companies will call to get the ISO rating number to help them with their business.

Perhaps now we’ll have a little better appreciation for the hard work, long hours and dedication to this community you exemplify. Thanks Clyde!

Lost and Found
Each quarter we will run a new picture of a person or place from Mills River. The above picture is circa 1900’s. Contact us if you have the identity. If we can find out, then we will post them in the next newsletter.
The story of how the upper Mills River valley did not become the site of a Lake in the system of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is quite a remarkable one. It is a story of how a determined group of Mills River residents, with the help of a few supporters from outside the valley, managed to block implementation of a TVA plan to construct a dam just below the confluence of the two principal forks of the river. This was despite the fact that federal funds to undertake the project were actually appropriated and despite the strong support of the TVA plans by most officials of state and local governments as well as the state’s congressional delegation.

Even before the creation of TVA, there was considerable discussion of installing a dam on the French Broad River near the mouth of Bent Creek during the 1920s. Depending on the height of the dam, it was estimated that it would create a reservoir of as much as 80,000 acres and would flood many communities including Mills River. In October 1923, the Hendersonville Times-News (HTN) characterized the proposed Army Corp of Engineer’s lake as being the “ultimate development of Henderson County as a playground.” The newspaper anticipated the lake giving a great boost to water sports and asserted that the “lake frontage for tourist housing would be ideal.”

President Franklin Roosevelt signed a legislative act authorizing the TVA in May 1933. Speculation soon followed that a future project of the TVA would be the building of a dam on the French Broad near Bent Creek. This speculation was reinforced when a TVA engineer addressed a crowd attending a public meeting at the Henderson County Court House in November 1933. He stated that a 125 foot dam at Bent Creek could produce up to 45,000 horse power of hydroelectricity and would elevate the water level as much as 30 feet in Rosman. He suggested that a dike might be required to protect Hendersonville from flooding by the lake. Uncertainty about the project led to the temporary interruption of work on Highway 280 between Brevard and Mills River in June 1934. The Mayor of Brevard was quoted as saying that, although he opposed the dam, he thought that “fighting the proposition was useless”.

However, in July 1934, the TVA issued a press release disclosing that its engineers had determined the benefits of a Bent Creek dam would not justify the cost although one or more dams might be built at other locations some time in the future. For the next few years, the TVA’s focus shifted to the encouragement of soil conservation and improved agricultural practices in the upper French Broad watershed. The TVA sponsored a number of demonstration farms and provided low-cost lime and fertilizer. It also distributed tree seedlings for erosion control and gave a small subsidy to farmers who planted them.

The prospect of a TVA dam on Mills River was raised in 1943. This time the announced plan was to fill the reservoir temporarily during river floods and did not include electric power generation. The TVA began collecting flow during 1944, and landowners signed a petition urging location to one or more sites in the Pisgah National Forest on the headwaters of Mills River. The TVA estimated that the preferred site would adversely affect about 22 farms whenever the storage reservoir was filled. A prominent Hendersonville attorney, Monroe Redden, who himself owned property on the South Fork of Mills River was elected to Congress in 1946 and became an effective opponent of the dam. He argued that flood control could be achieved at less cost with less damage to fertile farm land in the valley than with the proposed dam.

The political landscape changed considerably with the election of Roy A. Taylor, a strong supporter of TVA projects for Western North Carolina, to Congress from the mountain district. In 1961, the Western NC Regional Planning Commission requested that the TVA undertake a comprehensive study of water and other resources in several mountain counties including Henderson. This resulted in a two volume report in May 1964 entitled “Economic Development of the French Broad Area.” In December 1965, a preliminary TVA plan for a system of dams on the main tributaries of the upper French Broad, including one on Mills River, was disclosed. The same month, the Upper French Broad Economic Development Commission (UFBEDC) was formed with three members from each of five counties, including Henderson. Its first chairman was Kermit Edney, a Hendersonville civic leader and radio personality. He was an outspoken proponent of the new TVA proposal as were the other members.

The UFBEDC’s backed effort to secure initial funding for a proposed 14 dam system on tributaries of the French Broad gained momentum in 1968. In its edition of 19 September 1968, the HTN announced “Five County Water Project Passes Last Major Hurdle” and that Congress had approved an expenditure of $250,000 for engineering studies. A TVA official was quoted as promising that public access to lake shorelines and recreational facilities would be available soon after the dams were completed.

The presidential budget message in January 1969 included specific information on the proposed Mills River dam. It was to be built about two miles upstream from Highway 191 and would be an

(Continued next page)
earthen dam with a height of 110 feet and length of 2400 feet. The nominal size of the resulting lake was 660 acres with about 14 miles of shoreline. It also was reported that water in the impoundment might be used by local municipalities including Asheville and industrial plants. Other benefits claimed by proponents were that the dam would protect downstream fields and potential industrial sites from floods and provide recreational boating and fishing. A TVA official asserted that the Mills River reservoir would offer the “greatest benefits with respect to cost” of all the proposed lakes in the region.

In early February 1969, a special meeting of the Mills River Community Development Club was convened to hear presentations on the proposed dam and its impact on the community. Congressman Roy Taylor declined an invitation to attend but confirmed that he supported the TVA plans and intended to do all he could “to get the needed appropriations approved.” A TVA official who did not attend the meeting was not able to say whether land owners of upper Mills River would be permitted to keep property not permanently flooded by the reservoir. The Community Club members voted to “continue to oppose, by all appropriate means, the construction of the downstream Mills River dam by the TVA.” A TVA press release on 5 March 1969 stated that actual construction of the Mills River dam was not expected to begin before the spring of 1970. It also mentioned that more than a million cubic yards of fill dirt would be needed to build the dam and that it would come from the area where the reservoir would be located.

In April 1969, it was announced that the latest federal budget request did not include funds for the construction of a dam at Mills River. This news soon stimulated the UFBEDC and Congressman Taylor to launch a vigorous effort to get the funding restored. Kermit Edney asserted that the project had the “endorsement and backing right now of all the proposed lakes in the region.

A new weapon for residents of upper Mills River became available in December 1969 with the enactment by Congress of the National Environment Policy Act. The Act required that an environmental impact statement be prepared for public projects such as dams and highways spelling out the anticipated environmental impacts and “available alternatives to the proposed course of action.” This meant that the TVA would need to prepare such a statement before beginning construction of the dam at Mills River.

Another significant development in the on-going struggle was the formation of the Upper French Broad Defense Association (UFBDA) in September 1970. Prior to its creation, the TVA opposition had been rather fragmented consisting of small independent groups in Henderson and Transylvania counties. But as an umbrella organization, the UFBDA seemed a more formidable opponent and was better able to recruit new supporters. At its first meeting held at the Mills River School, the UFBDA elected Jere A. Brittain as its chairman. He was a Mills River native and a descendant of several pioneering families of the valley.

But even as the UFBDC was organizing and planning its strategy, word came that Congress had approved a bill including 2 million dollars for the Mills River project of the TVA. In October 1970, the HTN reported that President Nixon had signed the Public Works Bill including the Mills River funding, but that a freeze remained in effect on the start of new federal projects. In its edition of 2 December 1970, the HTN announced that “Mills River Dam Money is on Ice” and that the freeze by the Office of Management and Budget would continue at least until 1972. In late January 1971, it was reported that the President’s new budget request did not include funds for the dam at Mills River.

The TVA released a draft environmental impact statement on its proposed system of dams including the Mills River dam in late June 1971. It was a rather weak document and had flaws which quickly were discovered by the TVA opponents. North Carolina Governor Robert W. Scott was among those who found the impact statement to be inadequate.

In August 1971, the TVA announced that a public hearing on the proposed Mills River dam would be held on 31 August on the campus of UNC Asheville. The hearing turned into a virtual pep rally for the UFBDA and its friends who wore yellow neckerchiefs with the UFBDA emblem and operated a hospitality suite during the hearing. It was something of a public relations disaster for the TVA and its supporters. Shortly after the Republicans landslide in the November 1972 elections, the HTN edition of 14 November 1972 reported that the “TVA Drops Plan for French Broad Dams.” A TVA spokesman attributed the termination to “the evaporation of local support for the Mills River Project” and credited it with “killing the overall project.” Thus ended the protracted conflict which had, in fact, become an illuminating object lesson in grass-roots democracy at work.
Local Small Business Ads
The Mills River Town Newsletter is printed quarterly: March, June, September, and December. At sometime in the future we hope to increase the frequency of circulation. In order to defray the cost of publishing, the newsletter will be taking small business ads. These ads will be business card size and black and white. The business must be located within the town limits. There is a $50 fee for each quarterly advertisement and since there is a limited amount of space, ads will be taken on a first come, first serve basis. The ad must accompany payment and checks should be labeled for the newsletter. The fee collected goes directly for newsletter costs. Site selection within the newsletter is to be determined by the newsletter committee and the committee reserves the right to refuse an ad. Both ad and payment will be returned if this occurs.

Committee Spotlight
This issue we spotlight the Newsletter Committee. This group of people work behind the scenes and are responsible for the content, format and distribution of this newsletter, which is produced toward the end of each quarter. They meet once or twice each quarter prior to publication time and discuss issues concerning the Town and makes decisions on the articles. The newsletter is distributed as an email or via regular mail. Councilmember Jennie Hernandez is the “mentor” and Kathie Doole has been its Editor-in-Chief since the beginning. If you are interested in helping with the newsletter, please let Martha Orr or Sue Powell at the Town Hall know. Contact Martha Orr if you would like to subscribe by either email or regular mail. Remember to let us know if you change your email address.

Financial Corner
This financial note concerns this newsletter. Just a brief history—when we sent out the first newsletter, it was by regular mail. In that first issue, one was sent to each property owner in the Town— which was approximately 3,500. That first edition cost about $1,700 dollars. Since then, our circulation has average about 750, at a cost of about $300.00. Of the 750 copies, the distribution is broken down: By regular mail – 350, By email – 200 and our local businesses hand out about 200. At that time, we requested that you let us know if you wished to remain on the mailing list. The newsletter is almost self-sufficient due to local business ads.

Planning and Zoning Special Note
We are setting up specific hours for zoning and development activities for our Town Manager. This will allow him time to pursue other interests and activities for the town. Hours will be Monday, Wednesday and Friday during Town Hall hours.

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MEETING DATES

Oct.
Oct 4  Planning Board  7:3
Oct 11  Municipal Primary Election
Oct 11  Board of Adjustments  7:0
Oct 12  Finance Committee  7:0
Oct 13  Town Council  7:0
Oct 17  Agricultural Advisory  7:3
Oct 18  Planning Board  7:3
Oct 27  Town Council  7:0
Oct 27  Public Hearing-  7:1
         Rezoning Application

Nov.
Nov 1  Planning Board  7:0
Nov 8  Municipal Election
Nov 9  Finance Committee  7:0
Nov 10  Town Council  7:0
Nov 11  Veteran’s Day Town Hall Closed
Nov 15  Planning Board  7:0
Nov 21  Agricultural Advisory  7:0
Nov 24-25  Thanksgiving Town Hall Closed

Dec.
Dec 6  Planning Board  7:0
Dec 8  Town Council  7:0
Dec 13  Board of Adjustments  7:0
Dec 14  Finance Committee  7:0
Dec 19  Agricultural Advisory  7:0
Dec 20  Planning Board  7:0
Dec 22  Town Council  7:0
Dec 23  Christmas Town Hall Closed
Dec 26  Christmas Town Hall Closed
Dec 27  Christmas Town Hall Closed
As the seasons change, so do the leaves. Soon the traffic on our roads will increase with the added vehicles of those coming to see the color changes in our area. Here are a few quick safety tips in regards to our highways and secondary roads in Mills River:

1. Please obey all posted speed limits and regulatory signs.
2. Please be aware of and obey all traffic control devices (stop signs and traffic lights).
3. Remember to drive defensively and be courteous to others on the roads. And as always, buckle up. Seat belts do save lives!

Once again, please remember to contact law enforcement in Mills River, call the Henderson County Sheriff’s Department.

For Emergencies: 911
Non-Emergencies: 697-4911
NC Highway Patrol 693-4141
NC Wildlife Resources Commission 662-7137
(to report wildlife violations)

The Mills River Planning Board Invites Your Comments on a SIGN ORDINANCE in the Town Of Mills River

Would you like to see a Sign Ordinance in the Town of Mills River?

__________ Yes  □ NO

What would you like to see in a Sign Ordinance?

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Comments must be returned to Town Hall, or emailed to martha.orr@millsriver.org by November 1, 2005.