

The Granite Tablet



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A Publication of the Granite Falls History Committee

February 2023

NEWS FROM GRANITE FALLS *Public Works - Annual Report*

Public Works Director Randy Smith presented the 2022 Annual Report, which provided information about the Street Department, the Sanitation Department, Water Distribution and Wastewater Collection, and Water Resources. He noted that "The goal of the Public Works Departments is to operate efficiently and effectively while providing the best possible services to our citizens."

The Street Department is responsible for town owned properties, sidewalks, right of ways, storm drainage, and 35 miles of streets. Town employees erect signs, remove leaves, chip brush/limbs, mow grass, and take care of two (2) cemeteries (Pinecrest and Sunset Hills). In 2022, this department removed 100 tons of leaves (130 in 2021), chipped 252 tons of brush/limbs (287 in 2021), mowed the cemetery grass 55 times, and completed 63 cemetery work orders.

The Sanitation Department is responsible for disposing of trash. The town contracts with Republic Services for recycling and trash pickup. In 2022, the town recycled 253 tons of plastic, paper, glass, and cardboard (302 in 2021) and picked up an additional 1,602 tons of residential trash (1,666 in 2021). Town employees pick up other unwanted items such as used appliances, broken furniture, and old electronics. In 2022, they picked up 279 tons (349 tons in

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HIKE TO THE FALLS *March 18, 2023*

The Granite Falls Historical Association will sponsor a Hike to the Falls that gave our town its name on Saturday, March 18, 2023. Persons wishing to attend will meet at the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum at 2

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Granite Falls Middle School on July 6, 2021

DINING WITH THE DEMONS *An Invitation from Jeanne Whisnant*

Hello all GFHS alumni and teachers! Dining with the Demons will take place on Saturday, the 6th of May. We have been invited by Chris Ackerman, the principal, to have our event at GFMS this year! He wants to make the school a center of community activity, and we are happy to oblige. The main entrance to the campus is on West Highland Avenue. We should have plenty of parking, but, if needed, we can also park on North Main Street Parallel or in the parking lots near the gymnasium (accessed from Park Avenue).

This event will be an easy one to have. The meal will be catered by David (Cloudy) Williams. You will have a barbeque lunch in the school cafeteria and will pick up your food in the serving line just as students do! All plates will have the same food. We cannot do specialty meals. The cost for lunch is \$7.00 person, which you pay as you pick up your food. Students who will clear our tables for us. Please let us know as soon as possible if you plan to attend. Cloudy has to know a week in advance so he can purchase the food.

We will begin in the auditorium at 11:30 a.m. with a welcome, special recognitions, announcements, and the invocation. So far we have almost 300 people who have signed up – our largest number so far! The cafeteria only holds about 200 people so we will have to divide into groups - with some people going on a tour of the facilities first while others go to the cafeteria.

Our GFMS students truly have a wonderful facility. You will be amazed by the differences between our

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p.m. Following the hike, the museum will be open for tours. Visitors will want to check out a special exhibit of historical photos collected by Eddie Sipes. The Association will provide snacks, water, and coffee. Persons interested in the hike should call or text Linda Crowder at (828) 496-2835.

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school and theirs - especially the gymnasium. You have seen photos in this newsletter, but they don't do justice to the school.

If there is a change, we will announce it as soon as possible. We have a group consisting of four (4) experienced DWTG planners (Vicky Sherrill, Nancy Martin, Carolyn Whisnant, and Jeanne Whisnant) who are hard at work! You are encouraged to check out the Facebook page – Dining with the Demons 2023. Or you may call me (Jeanne Whisnant) at (828) 320-3725. We cannot wait to see you and for you to see our school!



HISTORY IN THE MAKING *Living with COVID-19*

Caldwell County remained low risk on February 2nd, 9th, 16th, and 23rd.

National News: While the CDC continues to recommend masking in high risk areas, various news media reported that studies have shown masks to be ineffective in preventing the spread of COVID. Studies also show heart problems and other issues from taking the vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control still recommends masks and vaccines. On February 14, 2023, the CDC formally added the COVID vaccine to its vaccine recommendations for children ages 6 months and up.

Editor's Note: COVID first impacted Granite Falls in mid-March 2020 when Governor Roy Cooper declared a State of Emergency and the town closed its facilities to the public. While I mentioned COVID in the March 2020 edition of *Tablet II*, I began writing a monthly column dedicated to COVID in the March-April 2020 edition of *The Granite Tablet*. Unless COVID suddenly "rears its ugly head" again, I plan to end the column with the March 2023 issue of *Tablet II*. Three years is long enough!



NEWS FROM THE TOWN OF GRANITE FALLS *Job Openings*

Persons interested in being employed by The Town of Granite Falls should check out the town's website. As of March 1, 2023, the following positions were open: Police Officer, School Resource Officer, Street Maintenance Worker, IT Director, Fire Engineer, Detective, and Lifeguards.

Warning about Scammer

On February 20, 2023, the Granite Falls Police Department posted the following notice on its Facebook page: "The Granite Falls Police Department has received information about a scammer who is impersonating one of our officers. The scammer has been contacting individuals that have been involved in traffic accidents in our Town. The scammer is using information from accident reports, which are public record, to contact these individuals. The scammer tells the individuals that they are an investigator with our Agency and that they will take out warrants for their arrest unless they Venmo or send money to the caller. The Granite Falls Police Department, nor any other law enforcement agency, will ever call and ask you for money over the phone."

Planning Department - Annual Report

Town Planner Greg Wilson reported on February 20, 2023 that the Planning Department had issued 99 permits in 2022 with a total construction cost of \$12,121,799.00. Of the 99 permits, 74 were within the town limits for a cost of \$7,317, 281.00 and 25 were in the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) for a cost of \$4,804,518.00. These projects include new construction, new additions, remodeling, signs, accessory buildings, etc. for both residential and commercial uses.

In addition to issuing permits, Greg works with the Planning Board to develop and make recommendations to the Town Council regarding zoning and ordinances and with the Board of Adjustments to consider special requests and variances. The committees are staffed by volunteers who live in town and the ETJ. Planning Board members are Rob Howard, Chair; Scott Reid (ETJ), Vice Chair; Patrick Barker (ETJ); Elizabeth Carswell; Deborah Chernesky; John Coffey; Rita Church; and David Kirby, Alternate. The following persons are members of the Board of Adjustment: Wade Yount, Chair; Philip Shows, Vice Chair; Alan Hemphill; Ed Mangan; Mike Mathewson; Wylie Moore (ETJ); Michael Norris (ETJ); and Lauren Hart, Alternate.

The Planning Department also enforces Town Ordinances such as noxious growth of vegetation, abandoned vehicles, accumulation of scrap materials/solid waste, minimum housing standards, neglected swimming pools, animals/livestock, etc. In 2022, the department had to initiate 104 enforcement procedures. Most have been resolved, but some are still pending.

Photo by Karen Isbell

Dateline: Granite Falls, N. C. 1916 - 1930

From *Etched in Granite, The History of Granite Falls, North Carolina* by Maxine McCall

The Growth of a Town Continues: As Granite Falls grew, the duties of the town's only law enforcement officer, the town constable, changed with the times. From the beginning, law enforcement included tax collecting and overseeing the streets and cemetery. In 1916, the town board gave Chief L. W. Payne two new duties - turning on the street lights and winding the town clock. His pay was \$180 per year.

In February 1918, Chief Payne left a prisoner alone in jail. The jail caught fire, and the first persons on the scene were afraid to break down the door. The prisoner, who had been arrested for being drunk and disorderly, perished in the fire.

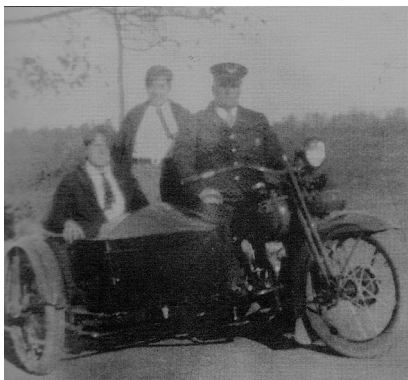
The town board approved plans for a replacement jail the following March. They sold the old lot to Warlick and Sherrill Company (aka the Pickerstick Factory) and acquired a lot between Hickman Hardware and the W. P. Hayes Building on Park Square (present day location of Sherrill's Jewelry). Built in June 1919, the new jail cost \$1,486.89.

In 1920, the town purchased its first fire fighting equipment, a hand pulled two-wheeled cart with two chemical tanks, from American-LaFrance Fire Engine Company. The cost was \$1,008.99. In 1921, the town built a stone structure to house the equipment. Within a few years, the town had the equipment mounted on a Model T Ford truck.

On July 7, 1924, the town council officially recognized eleven local men as being members of a volunteer fire department. In August 1926, Dr. O. J. Corpening established the first water lines in town, enabling the addition of a water hose to the first fire truck.

In 1927, the town purchased its first vehicle for law enforcement, a motorcycle with a side car, for use by Chief L. W. Payne.

In 1927, the Town of Granite Falls began purchasing power from Southern Power Company, the predecessor to Duke Energy. The town began seeing an increase in electrical customers with persons from outside the city limits requesting service from the town. In 1929, the town board voted to disconnect power bills not paid by the 10th of each month. The fee to reconnect power was set at \$1.00.



Also, in 1929, the town replaced the Model T fire truck with a new Chevrolet truck.

In 1930, the town traded the motorcycle and side car (shown at right) it purchased in 1927 for a Ford Touring Car. The price difference was \$336.00.

Celebrating 125 Years

Granite Falls History Committee

On May 1, 2024, the Town of Granite Falls will celebrate its 125th year as a municipality, and the Granite Falls History Committee has begun making plans to celebrate this special milestone. During its meeting on Tuesday, February 21st, members decided to ask the town council to kick-off the beginning of our 125th year with a special recognition during its regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, May 1, 2023. The committee hopes that local residents, businesses, civic organizations, and churches will promote our quasiquicentennial by using it as a theme for their regular projects and special events. For example, our 125th year can be the theme for Art in the Park, Festival on Main, Festival on the Square, and the Christmas Parade. Members of the committee also discussed sponsoring a photo contest, having a special event for children, and having a old-fashioned picnic at the William B. Shuford Recreation Center.

Granite Falls Historical Association

The Granite Falls Historical Association has already begun updating the town's history in preparation for the 125th year. President Linda Crowder reported at a meeting of the Board of Trustees on February 21st that she had completed a chronological history from 1999 through January 2023. She plans to publish the book, entitled *Dateline: Granite Falls, N. C. 1999 - 2024* sometime in 2024. The book will also include a section with oral histories. Vice President Jeanne Whisnant is spearheading this collection.

Etched in Granite, the History of Granite Falls, North Carolina by Maxine McCall, published in 1999 for our centennial, also included chapters about businesses, schools, and families. Instead of publishing this information in a book, the GFHA has decided to file it at the museum in a collection begun by the History Committee. They want to expand the file and make it available for research. The file will include news clippings, invitations, programs, family genealogies, and other memorabilia. Persons wishing to add items to the file may contact Linda Crowder at (828) 496-2835.



Trash Can Awaiting Pick Up

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2021). In addition to having trash, garbage, and recycling picked up, residents can borrow a dumpster from the town for special clean up/ clean out projects.

Water and sewer lines are also the responsibility of the Public Works Department. Employees inspect, flush, and repair the water distribution system as

needed. In 2022, they had 98 system repairs and line installations. Town employees also read 2,920 electric meters and 2,928 water meters each month. The wastewater collection system is over 50 miles in length. Employees maintain it, inspect it, clean it, repair it, and install taps as needed. The sewer system also requires pump stations, and the town has to regularly inspect, monitor, and repair/replace them.

In 2022, the Public Works Department completed 209 workers orders involving meter replacement, water line repairs, installation of taps, etc. They also responded to 1,168 requests from 811, the "Call Before You Dig" phone number to locate utilities. In addition to normal work hours, town employees answer emergency calls at night and on the weekends. In 2022, they responded to 109 emergency calls for water line leaks, pump station issues, and weather related problems.

Town employees are required to complete the following safety training classes: first aid, trenching/shoring, work zone/heavy equipment, DOT safety inspections, chainsaw safety, electrical safety, lockout/tagout, hazardous communications, emergency action plan, bloodborne pathogens, fire extinguisher training, CPR/AED, personal protective equipment, and confined space. As a result of their attention to safety, the Town of Granite Falls has received the Gold Safety Award from the NC Department of Labor for six (6) consecutive years.

In the coming months, the Public Works Department will work on construction projects with the North Carolina Department of Transportation and on capital improvement plans with various contractors. They will also be involved with the replacement of water and sewer lines to 68 homes

on Hill Street, Pine Street, Pearl Street, and Pine Lane using the \$4,999,999.00 block grant awarded the town by the NC Department of Commerce.

Water Resources - Annual Report

In addition to serving as Public Works Director, Randy Smith is the Water Resources Director. In his annual report, he noted that the mission of this department is "to promote and protect the environment, preserve natural resources, and ensure the health and safety of our customers." This department requires two (2) separate plants. Both meet or exceed state and federal standards. All staff are certified and maintain certification with mandatory six hours of continuing education.

The Water Treatment Plant on Lake Rhodhiss near Lakeside Park treats 347,732,000 gallons of water per year (an average of 952,690 gallons per day) so that it exceeds all drinking water standards. This plant has the capacity to treat 2,500,000 gallons of water a day, so it is operating at 38.1% capacity. Over the last year, the town has made upgrades to the facilities to keep them at their best.

The Wastewater Treatment Plan on Gunpowder Creek near the falls removes impurities from water before being released back into nature. Last year the town treated 129,036,000 gallons of water, an average of 352,917 gallons per day. It is currently operating at 39.2% of capacity (900,000 gallons per day). It has achieved a 99% combined efficiency removal rate and its meets set standards.



The Granite Tablet is a publication of the Granite Falls History Committee, which manages the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum. The museum is located in the historic home of Andrew Baird, an early settler. The building is the second oldest residence in Caldwell County. The Baird House was built around 1795 with additions made over the next hundred years. The house remained a residence until 2001 when the owner sought permission to have it burned down due to the high cost of maintenance. Recognizing the historical significance of the building, the Town of Granite Falls purchased the home with the intentions of turning it into a museum. With the help of a grant from the North Carolina Department of Transportation and hours of hard work by dedicated people, the vision became a reality. The Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum held its grand opening and ribbon cutting on February 18, 2007. Visit us on Facebook under "Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum." Our website is www.granitefallshistorymuseum.org.

Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum - 107 Falls Avenue, Granite Falls, North Carolina 28630 - Phone: 828-396-2792

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