



The Granite Tablet



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February 2024

WELCOME TO GRANITE FALLS New Town Manager to Start April 15

During a meeting on February 26, the Granite Falls Town Council selected Daniel Cobb, current town manager of Mills River, North Carolina, to replace Jerry Church, who is retiring March 31. Church has served as town manager since December 1, 2009. Cobb's contract begins April 15. His annual salary will be \$140,000. Granite's new town manager holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Community Regional Planning and Geography from Appalachian State University and a Master of Public Administration from Villanova University.

Dr. Caryl Burns, Mayor of Granite Falls, endorsed the selection. She said, "We are impressed with Mr. Cobb's knowledge and experience. His strong municipal

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Daniel Cobb



DINING WITH THE DEMONS Returning to GFMS on May 4, 2024

The annual Granite Falls High School Reunion, known as Dining with the Demons, will be held on May 4, 2024 at Granite Falls Middle School from 11:30 a. m. until 3:00 p.m. The DWTD Planning Committee (Jeanne Whisnant, chair; Linda Crowder, secretary/ treasurer; Teresa Jackson; and Renae Winkler) met recently with Principal Chris Ackerman to look at the facilities and make initial decisions. After visiting the cafeteria and seeing new furnishings, they realized the facilities could now accommodate a pot luck luncheon with all attendees eating at the same time. The

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THIS IS OUR STORY 1792 - 2022

When Caldwell County Schools held the ribbon cutting for Granite Falls Middle School in October 2022, one planned feature had not yet been installed - wallpaper in the main entry way featuring the history of education in Granite Falls. Sharon Bryant (former teacher at GFMS), Linda Richards Crowder (GFHS class of 1967), and Cindy Hedrick Day (former GFMS guidance counselor and director of Caldwell Heritage Museum) had the difficult task of selecting photos to depict the various aspects of education from 1792 (when Andrew Baird first moved to Granite Falls) to 2022 when the new school was finally completed. They worked remotely (online and via email) with Paula Mann of McKissick and Associates, the architecture firm that designed the new GFMS. Chris Ackerman, school

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Mrs. Crowder and Mr. Ackerman pose in front of the History Wall.



PARKS AND RECREATION *Planning for the Future*

Although the Town of Granite Falls has an excellent parks and recreation program in place, town officials are constantly looking at ways to improve facilities and services. In order to develop a master plan for growth and expansion, the town hosted the first of two public meetings on Tuesday, February 13, 2024 for the purpose of soliciting citizen input about wants, needs, and obstacles. Parks and Recreation Director Chad Raby (shown standing to the left in the photo) introduced Mike Norris of McGill and Associates (standing on the right), who led a brainstorming session to solicit ideas from attendees. Requests included a pickleball court, dog park, covered swimming pool, walking trails, travel ball, an adult league recreation program, an entertainment venue (such as amphitheater), and better access to the falls. Challenges to meeting these requests included funding, land/space constraints, need to expand work force, rising costs, ensuring safety, reaching capacity in current facilities, and providing amenities (lodging) for visitors participating in travel ball.

The second public meeting will be held Tuesday, March 5 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The two meetings are a necessary part of applying for grants to fund recreation expansion. The Parks and Recreation Department wants to apply for a Accessible Parks (AP) grant through the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) to renovate Neighborhood Park located on the corner of Chestnut Street and Sterling Avenue. Proposed renovations would be ADA compliant (playground focusing on sensory activities, sidewalk, parking lot, outdoor exercise equipment, picnic shelter, and a multi-purpose court (basketball, pickleball, and 4-square). For additional information about our parks and recreation program, contact Chad Raby at (828) 396-1221.

Team Sports at the Rec Center - 2024

Registration for co-ed indoor soccer and girls' volleyball begins Monday, May 13 and lasts through Monday, June 3. Indoor soccer is for boys and girls ages 6 through 12. Volleyball is for girls ages 9 through 15. The fee includes a uniform. Residents pay \$40.00, and non-residents pay \$65.00.

Help Wanted: Lifeguards

The Town of Granite Falls is accepting applications for lifeguards to work 15 to 19 hours per week when the pool is open this summer.

Newcomers start at \$10.00 per hour. For information, check out the town's website: www.granitefallsnc.com/employment or email recreation@granitefallsnc.com.

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cafeteria seats more people and has a surface suitable for dishes/service trays along with electrical outlets for crockpots. Instead of meeting in the auditorium, attendees will use the main entrance and go straight to the cafeteria. Along the way, they will want to pause and check out the History Wall, which was installed after DWTD last year. (see separate article)

Jeanne, Linda, Teresa, and Renae request your assistance. Persons willing and able to help plan, set up, and coordinate the event should contact Jeanne at (828) 320-3725. Persons wishing to help defray expenses should contact Linda at (828) 496-2835. You may also contact any of the ladies if you have ideas and suggestions to make DWTD a better event.

During the reunion, alumni and guests will also learn about an opportunity to benefit current and future students at Granite Falls Middle School. Computer technology is always changing, and the school needs funds to stay up-to-date. GFMS would appreciate your tax deductible donation to the Education Foundation, Inc. of Caldwell County to purchase needed electronics.

For updated information about DWTD, check out the "Dining with the Demons 2024" Facebook page and/or the "Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum" Facebook page.



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principal, facilitated in person and remote meetings. The process took a year longer than anticipated. The wall paper was finally installed before the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year. In addition to photos, the wall also features a historical narrative written by Mrs. Crowder.



MAKING WAY For Road Construction

In less than an hour on Monday, February 19, a local landmark came tumbling down to make room for the widening of North Highland Avenue and Pinewood Road. It took three or four days to clear off the debris and sow grass seed where the house stood. The house was built about 100 years ago by Perry L. McRary (1894-1977) and his wife Artie B. McRary (1892-1974). They reared two sons (Ken and Donald) on the property. Mrs. McRary grew beautiful flowers around her home, and the couple tended a garden and, for many years, kept a cow. After his death, various families rented the property.

Local residents first heard about the road project on October 4, 2018 during a Public Hearing held at the town hall. The hearing was advertised as “SR 1109 (Pinewood Rd) from SR 1252 (Bert Huffman Rd) to US 321”. Much to the surprise of some North Highland Avenue residents, the project included taking their land to make a right turn lane onto Pinewood Road. Surveying began in December 2018, but, over time, the stakes fell over. Surveyors returned on February 13, 2024 to replace them.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, Granite Falls, N. C.!

On May 1, 1899, 38 voters (all men, since the Nineteenth Amendment had not been passed yet) decided to incorporate the Town of Granite Falls. Six men voted “no.” The same day voters chose Rufus Hefner to serve as the first mayor and picked Dr. A. D. Jones, H. C. Mackie, and James Houck to serve on the Board of Commissioners. May 1, 1899 is considered the date of incorporation, but the elected officials held their first official meeting on June 3, 1899.

To commemorate the town’s 125th Anniversary, the Granite Falls History Committee will host a reception in the Council Chambers on Wednesday, May 1, 2024 between 2 and 4 p.m. They will display historical photos of the downtown district and serve a birthday cake. Then on Monday, June 3, 2024, during a regular meeting, the Granite Falls Town Council will pay homage to its first meeting 125 years ago.

The Town will announce more celebratory events as they are planned during the coming year.

HELP KEEP OUR MUSEM OPEN Volunteers Wanted, Needed, and Appreciated

The Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum has openings for volunteers to open/close the museum and assist visitors as needed. Volunteers serve one two-hour shift per quarter. The museum is currently open on Sundays (except holiday weekends) from 2 until 4 p.m., but Saturday hours could be added if enough people volunteer.

A member of the Granite Falls History Committee will train volunteers, and each volunteer will receive a guidebook with instructions as well as a historical narrative that provides background information about the town and the museum. To volunteer, call the town office at (828) 396-3131.



management pedigree, coupled with his capital planning and infrastructure experience will be a valuable asset across all town operations. We are excited for Mr. Cobb to continue his excellence in developing and implementing strategic infrastructure and working with our wonderful staff while cultivating partnerships for Granite Falls' success in his new manager role."

Cobb said, "I am thrilled to accept the position of town manager for the Town of Granite Falls. Throughout the recruitment process, I got to know the town council and could tell from their questions and feedback that they are passionate about doing what is best for Granite Falls. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the future of the town and I look forward to beginning my work."

Ashley Presnell, Assistant Town Manager and Finance Director, will serve as interim town manager from April 1 through April 14. .

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) guided the Town of Granite Falls through the town manager selection process. The WPCOG offers expertise in long range planning, economic development, and technical assistance to 28 local governments in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties. Their goal was to find the candidate who was the best fit for Granite Falls in regard to education, experience, and personal characteristics.

ELECTION INFORMATION Choosing Candidates for November

During the statewide primary election to be held on March 5th, political parties will choose candidates to run for office in November. Early voting was held between Thursday, February 15 and Saturday, March 2. The polls will be open from 8:00 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

This is the first election that voters had to show photo identification or present "a reasonable impediment" preventing them from having one. More information about voter ID could be found at ncsbe.gov/voter-id.



Granite Falls, a Hidden Natural Treasure

WELCOME TO CALDWELL COUNTY Boosting Tourism

The Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce will host a public meeting on March 7, 2024 beginning at 5:30 p.m. to introduce the UPLIFT Tourism Program to local residents. According to the announcement, "The goal of UPLIFT is to boost tourism in rural North Carolina communities." Their objectives are to:

- *Develop multi-night itineraries that connect sites in your region to strengthen the overall tourism product mix, keep visitors in the community longer, increase spending & make it easier for travelers to visit*
- *Enhance, innovate and scale the tourism experiences offered within your region, working with new and existing tourism providers*
- *Strengthen tourism economies, skills that stimulate entrepreneurship, grow businesses and create/retain jobs*
- *Tell the stories of your region, your communities, and you individual tourism sites*
- *Integrate sustainability practices into the region's tourism experiences.*

Appalachian State University implemented the program in collaboration with NatureScapes, North Carolina State University, and local residents.

For more information, go to www.UPLIFTtourism.com.



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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