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The Highland Inn

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For Immediate Release

(from our press release and the Highland-Bath Recorder newspaper article)

Highland Inn makes Transition

The 110-year-old Highland Inn will close for the season at the end of October, its owners confirmed Monday. "Yes, we will be closing," Gregg Morse said. We have worked out a transition plan with our lender."

"The closing is due to the length of the current economic downturn," Morse said. "If it had been for a shorter period, we might have worked our way through it. Six years of a slower economy was just too long for us." Morse who has been in the hospitality industry for almost 40 years, says that most hotels renovate every 5 -7 years; the Inn is overdue.

The Morses have owned and operated the inn for over twelve years. During that time, they have maintained the Inn to insure that mechanicals and guest rooms stay in good repair. In 2004, the inn got its first new roof in 101 years. The two-level porch was renovated at the same time, replacing some of the more deteriorated parts, especially the decks. "We just wish we had the funds to do the remainder of the renovation that the Inn needs," Morse said.

"The bank has helped us, but it is to the point where the Inn needs someone with deeper pockets," Morse said. "There is a real opportunity for someone to bring the Inn up to date with refreshing, repainting, renovations and even reconfiguring the inn to better serve its clientèle," Gregg Morse noted.

Highland Tourism Council Chair, Donna Bedwell spoke about the 110 year old Inn and said, "It's obvious that the Inn is a critical part of the tourism infrastructure for the County and the Morse's commitment during economic hard times has played an important role. Gregg has shown his support for tourism repeatedly by helping with our initiatives, supplying needed data for grants, and giving insight into our visitor demographics. His willingness to assist in any transition with a new owner shows his continued commitment to not only the future success of the Inn but to Highland's tourism efforts".

The Highland Inn is a Virginia Historic Landmark. Originally called the Hotel Monterey, the inn was built in 1904. The original owner was Silas W. Crummett, a local businessman. The Eutsler Brothers of Grottoes built the structure in late Victorian style for \$6,000. The hotel's prominent architectural characteristic is its porch with turned-and-sawed embellishments. In the late 1970's additional bathrooms and modern electrics were added for guests convenience.

“For visitors planning a trip to Highland County, we want them to know that the Highland County Chamber of Commerce website maintains a list of the wide variety of lodging opportunities for the County”, said Theresa Wagner, President of the Chamber Board. She noted that Gregg and Deborah Morse will continue to run the Montvallee Motel where they currently reside. The Montvallee is slated for renovation in 2015 to better serve the community.

Gregg and Deborah want to express appreciation to their loyal patrons and friends of the Inn over the last 12 years. Debbie said, “The current and past staff have been the best you could ask for, they are not only dedicated to their job but also caring for the Inn and its future.”

The Highland Center’s Executive Director Betty Mitchell says, “Once the Center’s renovation is complete, our new retreat/conference space will certainly need good lodging facilities in the County to support groups coming into the community. It’s great that the Inn’s current staff is interested in being part of future operations. I’m certain that partners with a vested interest in the community can come together with a creative financing package to attract investors for the Inn.”

EDA Chair, Nancy Witschey agrees, “There are so many exciting things happening in our community right now -- the Highland Medical Center finishing up with its major upgrades; a Town Park in the works; The Highland Center’s pending renovation to include a conference/retreat Center; our local citizens group exploring plans for a state park in the County; and a one-year contract with the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship to develop a Strategy to attract and develop young entrepreneurs. There are several storefronts which have been shuttered that are undergoing work to reopen. That said, the passing of the torch with the Highland Inn is yet another opportunity for growth in the County. I feel certain that the Highland Inn's best days are still ahead.”

For questions about future reservations, information, and updates, please call the main hotel phone number (540) 468-2143.