

The Lincoln Journal

"To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

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LCPF receives generous donation from McCormick Lions Club

McCormick Lions Club secretary David Merrill (left) presented a \$1,000 check to Lincoln County Food Pantry President Naomi Cobb last Thursday. Also present were (l-r) Lions Club members Dan Moninger, Tom Westgate, and LCPF Ordering Specialist Gyp Hearst Jr. Cobb expressed her deep appreciation for the generous contribution, which will allow the pantry to continue to bless families in need.

BOE's General Fund budget amended to show increase in state allotted funds

An amended tentative budget was met with approval from the Lincoln County Board of Education after Finance Director Kaye Bufford presented certain changes to the fiscal year 2021 budget at last week's meeting.

Pertaining to the general fund, on the whole the fund balance – after several recent alterations and calculations – increased from \$703,702 to \$1,156,630, the director explained as she gave the board a rundown of the budget changes by category.

"This is not going to be the final, we're still changing grants — we still don't have all of the information on some of the grants that we're getting — but I knew we wanted to go ahead and get the Impact Aid revenue in there, and get some of these changes to the grants in there that have already been approved to the federal and state," Bufford began.

"And we have an estimate on what our midterm adjustment will

be to our QBE. They have not sent out the final allotment sheets yet, but they are usually close to the estimate," she said. "You can see that we received \$368,790 more in the midterm. The governor or whomever announces these things, said they gave back about 60 percent of the cut that they gave us last year, so we did get some money back."

Furthermore, Bufford noted that some adjustments were made to grants of around \$5,000 and that there was an increase in flood control revenue "to match what we had received."

"We did have the \$244,295 of the Impact Aid, and you can see 'employee replacements' and 'transfer to pre-k' are not Impact Aid. Everything else there adds up to the \$244,295, plus the flood control," she said. "We used that mainly for Chromebooks, because we're trying to replace them mostly at the elementary school and middle school, with the hopes of doing the high school next year."

Thomas, Edwards will speak at Chamber forum March 25

The Lincolnton-Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce is hosting its second "getting to know your local business community" forum on Thursday, March 25, at 7 p.m.

This month's spotlight will feature Lincoln County Historical Society President Don Thomas and past president and current program director Gary Edwards. The duo will be providing insight into past, present, and future events at the historical park and updates on the refurbishment of the Wright House and its plans for the future.

Those wishing to listen in and pose questions to the featured speakers are asked to contact the Chamber through its website lincolngachamber.org or by email at info@lincolngachamber.org. A call-in number and PIN will be provided for access to the forum. Only those who have registered by Wednesday, March 24, will have access.

"The Chamber is opening this forum to everyone in the community who is interested in listening and learning about our local businesses and non-profits. We have moved onto a zoom meeting platform,

which is a bit more interactive, with hopes of recording the forum for later view," Chamber Chairman Maggie Shaw said.

"During the zoom forum, participants can join in the discussion or just listen. We would love for residents to connect with us and get to know a bit more about the Lincoln County Historical Society," she said.

The "getting to know your local business community," teleconference/zoom forum is intended to spotlight local Chamber trade professionals and non-profits. It provides a focused introduction and insight into local business structure and gives the community an opportunity to learn first-hand what is readily available in Lincolnton.

Questions can be posted on zoom once the session begins or may also be emailed to info@lincolngachamber.org referencing the company to be spotlighted up to 24 hours before the forum begins.

Chamber businesses interested in participating in the next teleconference can contact the Chamber at the email address above and a representative will be in contact.

Additional adjustments included covering unexpected events or accidents, Bufford said. She included that they're also in the process of building up capital projects, with the hope of adding another \$40,000 to the existing \$52,000 in the fund.

"We're also planning to apply for a grant with the state for facilities in order to replace HVACs, but to do that we have to provide a local share," Bufford said. "We're trying to build that money up each year to get ready for that [in future, maybe FY '22-'23], but we have to start planning for it now."

Furthermore, the director also gave her monthly finance report, noting that 66 percent of the fiscal year is now complete. Taxes are in at 86 percent and revenues are at 75.5 percent.

"We're over on our revenues at this point in the year, which is a good place to be," Bufford said.

Expenditures are at 61.75 percent, and "we're under on all our categories of expenditures, which is also a good thing," she said.

Bufford reported that there is \$3.8 million "cash in the bank," and the fund equity is at \$2.9 million.

"We're looking good as far as the general fund is concerned, and we're staying within our budget,"

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Booster club hosts golf tournament at Rocky Branch

The Lincoln County Athletic Booster Club will host a golf tournament for a \$5,000 cash prize on Saturday, April 17, rain or shine, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Rocky Branch Golf Club in Lincolnton.

The tournament will involve a five-person team scramble with "A, B, C, D, and E players."

Individuals may sign up at Rocky Branch or may call the club at 706-359-4303. The cost is \$60 per person, which includes one mulligan and one red tee drive.

A tournament party will be held Friday night before the match at the Rocky Branch clubhouse at 7 p.m. Food will be provided.

All proceeds from the golf tournament will go toward the Lincoln County Athletic Booster Club and its support for middle and high school athletics.

County moves forward on USDA loan to purchase new ambulance, patrol car

The Lincoln County Office of Emergency Services and Lincoln County Sheriff's Office moved another step closer to getting new vehicles, when commissioners approved the signing of Letters of Conditions with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) during the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Commissioners on Thursday, March 11.

The USDA loan amount, not to exceed \$213,200, and grant amount, not to exceed \$100,000, would cover the purchase of a new Dodge Charger for the sheriff's office; a new ambulance for OES, a power stretcher, and state-of-the-art Tempet Cardiac Monitors. The two applications, which have been in the works for months, were combined into one loan/grant amount by USDA.

Finance Director Ernie Doss received a green light from commissioners to enter into an agreement with Tyler Technologies which provides software solutions designed specifically for the needs of state, local and federal government organizations.

During discussions held at the county work session Tuesday, March 9, Doss briefed commissioners on the benefits of the improved software and storage solutions, not only to departments and staff within the county government, but to residents as well.

Once fully implemented the new

software will include:

- Employee self-service portals which allow employees access to information anywhere including pay history, reprinting of pay stubs, and direct deposit advice statements. It allows employees to submit changes in personal information, tracks training and certification, and more.

- The utility billing online portal will offer real time information to citizens and county staff.

Payments made via the portal are reflected immediately on customer accounts. The portal will allow citizens to view and manage their own account information, view a copy of their bill and reprint them, see consumption history and yearly comparisons, see a history of transactions including payments, bills, adjustments, late fees, and re-connect fees, just to name a few.

INCODE Community Development encompasses permitting, licensing and code enforcement. The online portal will allow for payments, renewals, inspection scheduling, and more.

Doss indicated that the current software being used is designed more for small businesses. Making the switch will eliminate recent concerns about the county's aging and outdated software, servers, and security.

The one-time cost of \$116,180 will be covered by SPLOST funds and will be paid-out over the next 15 months, as the department pro-

grams come online. The \$49,753 recurring fee, which is locked in over the next four-years, will be paid out of the General Fund. Tyler will be responsible for transferring all the county's current data into the new software.

Commissioners approved two requests from Public Works Director Roby Seymour. The first, to pave Cherokee County Club Road using the Georgia Department of Transportation's Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant program which would cover up to \$162,550 or 90 percent of the project cost. The county would use TSPLOST funds to cover its 10 percent portion.

The second was the resurfacing of Metasville Road at an estimated cost of \$348,739.60 and Lovelace Road at a cost of \$133,446.31. LMIG funds would cover 90 percent of the cost with the county using TSPLOST funds for its 10 percent match.

Text changes in the county's Land Development Code Section 34-463 were approved dealing with the issuing of a temporary medical hardship permit by the director of planning and zoning.

The original text allowed for the placement of a single-wide manufactured home as an accessory dwelling by a member of the property owner's family.

The new text eliminates the use of

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Kemp opens up COVID-19 vaccines to those with health issues, 55 and up

By BEAU EVANS
Capital News Beat Service

Georgians ages 55 and older as well as those with a variety of health issues were eligible for COVID-19 vaccines starting Monday amid a recent boost in supplies.

Vaccines could also potentially be available for all Georgia adults starting next month if the current number of shots that federal officials are sending weekly to the state continues to increase as it has in recent weeks, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp said at a news conference.

"Provided we continue to see increasing vaccine supply, it is our intent to open up vaccination to all adults the first part of next month," Kemp said.

Along with adults 55-years and older, vaccines are now open to Georgians with health conditions including cancer, moderate-to-severe asthma, heart conditions, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, hypertension, liver disease, COPD, chronic kidney disease, cerebrovascular disease, and compromised immune systems.

Kemp said he is expanding eligibility to keep pace with the increasing supply of vaccines Georgia is receiving from the federal government and to avoid seeing lagging demand among currently eligible people. Georgia is currently receiving weekly shipments of 223,000 vaccine doses.

"Adding these additional high-risk Georgians will mean that vaccination will be available to categories that have accounted for 92 percent of our deaths due to COVID-19 in Georgia," Kemp said.

"As we have from the beginning, we will protect the most vulnerable to severe illness, hospitalization, or death, and enable Georgians to get back to normal."

The newly eligible Georgians add to a growing list of vaccine-eligible people including school teachers and staff, health-care

workers, nursing home residents and staff, first responders, those with mental and behavioral health issues, parents of children with medical conditions and people ages 65 and older.

Nearly 2.5 million vaccines have been given so far in Georgia, including to roughly two-thirds of all people 65-years and older in the state, according to Kemp's office. Vaccination rates have climbed as the state receives more doses of the Pfizer, Moderna, and recently approved Johnson & Johnson vaccines.

Kemp, who said he will get the vaccine soon, urged teachers and others who are already eligible for vaccines to sign up for appointments now with demand expected to spike from the newly eligible group of Georgians.

"This is your opportunity to get in the queue and get your vaccines," Kemp said. "This is going to move rapidly, especially in certain parts of the state, and what we want is for people to get vaccinated."

Georgians can pre-register for a vaccine appointment at myvaccine-georgia.com even if they do not yet qualify under the governor's eligibility criteria. They will be notified once they qualify and scheduled for an appointment.

The governor also said his administration is aiming to quickly expand eligibility further to Georgians who have been hit hard by the pandemic including restaurant, agriculture, and grocery workers. How soon those groups will be able to get the vaccine depends on supplies holding steady.

"We want to move that population as quickly as we can and try to protect them and keep our economy going," Kemp said. "All of this helps get us back to normal."

Georgia has been ratcheting up to distribute vaccines since the first Pfizer and Moderna doses started arriving in mid-December, particularly through moves to open several mass vaccination sites in different regions throughout the state.

So far, state officials have opened four mass vaccination sites in metro Atlanta, Macon, Albany, and Habersham County, and are set to open another five sites next week in Savannah, Columbus, Waycross, and Bartow and Washington counties.

The vaccine ramp-up comes as COVID-19 positive case rates and hospitalizations continue falling after a surging outbreak that swept over the Georgia around the winter holiday season. Hospitals have seen a fall in COVID-19 patients from around 5,000 during the winter to 1,500 currently, Kemp said. Deaths traced to the virus are also starting to decline, he added.

"Every metric in the COVID-19 pandemic is headed in the right direction," Kemp said.

More than 830,000 people had tested positive for COVID-19 in Georgia as of Tuesday afternoon, with nearly 197,000 more reported positive antigen tests indicating likely positive results. The virus has killed 15,647 Georgians.

Registration opens for adult softball at recreation dept.

The Lincoln County Recreation Department is hosting "Summer Slugfest," an adult softball league. The season will run June 15-July 22, with games held every Tuesday and Thursday.

Teams can be co-ed or all men with a \$250 registration fee per team. Registration will run from March 15-May 31 at the recreation complex.

League rules include: all team members must be in uniform (jersey); have 15 players to a roster; use 44 core and 375 compression balls; no illegal bats; five homeruns per game; any homerun after five changes the inning.

The end-of-season tournament will be held July 31.

For more information contact LCRD Director LeTrellis Glaze or Lisa Willingham at 706-359-2236.