

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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Health department has reopened to public

The Lincoln County Health Department is open for business with acting Nurse Manager Heather Giles (right) and Lisa Willingham serving as administrative support.

The health department is now scheduling appointments for back-to-school vaccinations including the meningitis booster which is now a requirement for students entering the eleventh grade. COVID-19 vaccine shots are also available by appointment by calling 706-359-3154. The office is open 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and is located at 176 N. Peachtree Street.

BOE approves ARP and final budget, seeks pay increase for board members

Board members covered a lot of ground passing the final budget for the 2021-22 school year; the proposed budget for the approximately \$2 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act funds; and an increase in board member pay from \$50 per meeting to \$200 per meeting, during the regular meeting of the Lincoln County Board of Education on Tuesday night, June 8.

At the request of board members, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Samuel Light requested and received compensation amounts paid to board of education members for all districts in the state by the Georgia State Board Association, as well as local county commissioners and city councilmen.

According to Light, board members earn \$50 per meeting; county commissioners earn \$100 per meeting and \$200 per month for travel related to their positions; Lincolnton city councilmen receive \$2,400 per year paid annually; and Wilkes County Board of Education members earn \$200 per month.

Increases in board member pay must be approved by the state legislature. With the board's approval, Light will meet with the school district's attorney, Cory Kirby, to draft a resolution which will then be presented to the board for passage. Once approved the resolution will be given to State Representative Rob Leverett to take to the legislative floor for a vote.

The proposed increase from \$50 per meeting to \$200 per meeting will add approximately \$9,000 per year to the system's budget based on one meeting per month.

The final FY 21-22 budget was approved during the meeting and breaks down as follows: estimated revenues General Fund – \$11,861,226; Special Revenue Fund – \$3,855,889; Capital Projects Fund – \$50,000; and Debt Service Fund – \$1,421,220; totaling \$17,188,335.

The estimated expenditures include: General Fund – \$13,144,255; Special Revenue Funds – \$3,855,889; and Debt Service Fund – \$1,551,775; totaling \$18,551,919.

The fund balance as of July 1, 2021, shows: General Fund – \$2,157,208; Special Revenue Funds – \$170,000; Capital Projects Fund – \$92,556; Debt Service Fund – \$720,693; totaling \$3,140,457.

The estimated Fund Balance as of June 30, 2022 shows: General Fund – \$874,179; Special Revenue Funds – \$170,000; Capital Proj-

ects Fund – \$142,556; and Debt Service Fund – \$590,138; totaling \$1,776,873.

The final budget indicates that the \$1,363,584 shortfall in revenue could be covered by the fund balance. According to Finance Director Kay Bufford, the FY 21-22 budget is based on last year's tax digest. The millage rate won't be set until the tax digest is approved.

The board also approved the proposed budget for the approximately \$2 million in ARP funds.

The proposed budget for FY22 includes three instruction coaches, including salaries and benefits – \$282,948; LCES gym floor – \$70,000; LCES classroom floors in gym – \$15,000; LCHS terrazzo flooring repair – \$25,000; LCES and LCHS air conditioning units – \$600,000; LCES halls flooring/Texas granite – \$95,000; LCES dishwasher for lunchroom – \$58,000; District License Corrective Reader – \$25,000; Smart televisions across district classrooms – \$120,000; District License Accelerated Reader – \$20,000; summer school for high/middle school – \$13,204; and laptops for instructional coaches – \$4,000, totaling \$1,328,152.

The proposed budget for FY23 includes: LCES classroom flooring – \$250,000; three instructional coaches, including salaries and benefits – \$282,948; smart televisions across district classrooms – \$164,000; LCES I-Vu – \$110,000; summer school for high/middle school – \$14,000; PPE, maintenance, disinfecting supplies – \$45,000; 3.75 fine arts teachers including salaries and benefits – \$300,000; totaling \$1,165,948.

According to Light the sooner the proposed budget is approved and submitted to the state for its approval, the sooner the district can start drawing the funds. Budgeted items can be amended at a later date.

Bufford also gave her monthly finance report, noting that 99.68 percent of the year was complete as of May. Local ad valorem taxes are in at 106.25 percent, and total revenues are at 99.68 percent.

Expenditures are at 86.33 percent. Bufford reported that there is \$3.7 million "cash in the bank," and the fund equity is at \$2.889 million.

SPLOST collections for the month of May were reported at \$83,315.26, which was another record-breaking collection.

The balance of the SPLOST

account is \$324,779.34 for the year, with the bond tax balance of \$389,776.69, and \$714,556.03 available for the future bond payments.

The General Financial Reports showed LCES with a balance of \$26,656.17; LCMS, \$50,645.19; LCHS, \$37,919.24; and the LCHS athletic summary showed \$30,494.03.

A request by Pastor Tonita Cody of Parks Grove Holiness Church to use Buddy Bufford Field for a Gospel Concert in July was declined. Board members had concerns that the concert was too close to the first football game of the season. The board offered the use of the Howard Ellis Stadium as an alternative site.

Light gave a presentation on the district's Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) which took place over a period of three meetings and included teachers, students, and members of the community.

The CNA serves as a process to collect and examine information about district/school issues in order to provide understanding of student needs. Then, through a structured decision-making process, it prioritizes concerns that will become the basis of plans for improving student achievement and meeting challenging academic standards.

The district received operational and exemplary ratings in effective leadership, professional capacity, family and community engagement, and supportive learning environment.

The next step for the district will be to determine the root causes and identify needs; select interventions; the creation of a district improvement plan and school improvement plan to be submitted to the state for approval, and finally implementation of the plans.

Light made two announcements acknowledging Kay Bufford for receiving an Award of Distinction for Excellence in Financial Reporting and the entire food service team received the No. 1 Hungry Hero award for effectively feeding students throughout the school year during the pandemic.

In other business the board discussed policy revisions for the honors program. The revisions would effect only incoming freshman. It would not change how classes are weighted in existing grade levels.

Beginning with the class of 2025, seniors who possess numeric aver-

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Fishing Creek residents speak out against campground zoning change

A request for rezoning by Wade H. Burkham for an RV park and campground came under fire by those living in the Fishing Creek Estates subdivision during the public hearing portion of the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners meeting last Thursday night, June 10.

The request for rezoning was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission but requires final approval by the county.

According to Planning and Zoning Director Roby Seymour, issues about the RV park and campground had been brought to his attention regarding an unpermitted structure and sewer odors emanating from the RV park. It was at that time that it was discovered that a business license for the RV park/campground had not been issued, which is why it now requires rezoning. Once out of compliance, although still in operation, the RV park/campground, was no longer grandfathered in and fell into the R-2 status.

Seymour stated that the unpermitted structure has been removed, and that an inspection by Johnny Wasson, state environmental specialist with the Health Department, found the campground to be in compliance, with the required permitted septic tanks and dump station. Seymour also stated that the community well which supplies the campground is also permitted and is in compliance.

Three residents Teresa Jones, Joann Hanley, and Netashia Bacino all spoke against the rezoning, with Marvin Wilbanks speaking in favor.

Residents claimed the RV park had become a haven for drug activity and drinking. Jones stated that the noise, gun shots, and loud music at night is an issue for residents.

Hanley stated that she had purchased property in 1999 and moved to Lincoln County three years ago. "In the 1990s, a lot of bad things were going on at Fishing Creek, murders, drugs, drinking, but it is no longer that way. The subdivision has come a long way, and it still has a way to go," she said. "This is not about the store; this is about the campground." Hanley then asked commissioners to take the wishes of the residents into consideration and not let the subdivision revert back to the way it was 1990s.

Residents also took issue with the fact that the RV park is on the community well, causing low water pressure when the campground is full. Another concern was the trucks and ATVs driving the roads during all hours of the day and night setting the neighborhood dogs to barking and waking residents up.

Also, a concern of residents was the potential expansion of the campground and boat sheds.

Bacino agreeing with the claims by others in opposition, also stated that "joy riding" has increased the amount of traffic on the roads in the subdivision – that the roads just can't take.

Commission Chairman Walker Norman thanked all those who came to speak.

"The commissioners have three choices tonight," Norman stated, "one to approve, one to deny, and the third to send it back to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

"I believe the only reason we are here tonight is because the owner failed to renew the campgrounds business license, which led to it being out of compliance with planning and zoning," he continued. "Up until that point it was grandfathered in because the campground was in operation before Lincoln County had any zoning in place. I

don't believe it was done on purpose. I believe they are trying to be in compliance."

Putting the issue of expansion to rest, Norman stated that if approved, the campground could not expand. The permit would allow for only the 13 camp sites which currently exist.

Commissioners then voted to send it back to the Planning and Zoning Commission for further study. The request will be taken back to commissioners at a later date.

The second zoning request, by Lemuel and Margaret Brook for a set-back variance, was approved.

Commissioners then heard concerns from Al Gray regarding county commission ethics.

In other business:

- Commissioners approved the request by Seymour to allow Norman to sign the Title VI Federal Assistance Plan relating to federal assistance in transportation programs and activities.

- Heard the second reading of an amendment to Ordinance Section 34-314.

- Approved a request by the Lincoln County Tax Assessors Board to hire K&G Consulting to assist Chief Appraiser Kenny Adair in analysis of the market for all property types. The cost, not to exceed \$12,500, will come out of the tax assessors budget.

- At the request of Finance Director Ernie Doss, commissioners agreed to sign off on the interim financing resolution with Farmers State Bank for the Montego Point water expansion project.

- Approved an alcohol beverage license for Krazee Train.

- Renewed the county's property and liability insurance.

Commissioner reviewed departmental reports starting with Office of Emergency Services. Director Casey Broom informed commissioners that Courtney Davis and Dawn Denton-Davis, two of the department's employees, had

completed paramedic training and would be licensed by the state next week.

"These two work for us. They never missed a day of work unless they were sick during COVID. They have both worked very hard, during a very difficult time, to complete and exceed in their training. I am very proud of them both," Broom said.

The OES report included calls answered for the month of May, including 114 transports, 48 EMS NPU's, and one fire, with an average response time of 8.9 minutes.

The Lincoln County Recreation Department report showed that soccer registration is underway through July 15. A \$50 registration fee is required with \$10 off if a child participates in Lincoln County Public Library Director's Kerri Parton's summer reading program. Director Glaze also reported that Lisa Willingham has resigned and "will be truly missed."

Doss reported that the General Fund revenues are at 93.93 percent and expenses are at 90.42 percent. Total cash on hand as of May is \$7,648,699.93.

The Lincoln County Planning and Zoning Code Enforcement Office report showed that six new single-family homes, two new and one pre-owned manufactured home permits were issued; there were four re-inspection/renewal/penalties; one commercial permit; five alterations/renovation/addition permits; six accessory permits; seven demolition permits; 15 electrical; four HVAC; four plumbing; and three roofing permits; all issued totaling \$7,418. for the month of May.

Public Works Director Roby Seymour also provided a breakdown of new residential building permits for 2021.

A total of 29 permits have been issued with six in District 1; one in District 2; 13 in District 3, and nine

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MG Sprout program gets underway

MG Sprout participants gathered at the Walker T. Norman gymnasium for its first session on Tuesday, June 8. Lincoln County Library Director Kerri Parton (top photo) kicked off the hour-long event by reading a book followed by Lincoln County Agricultural and Natural Resources Agent Robyn Stewart using activities to bring the book to life.

The six-week program is designed for children ages 6-8 and is held every Tuesday from 11 a.m.-noon at the Lincoln County Agriculture Center on Rowland York Road.

According to Stewart, weather permitting, the hope is to have children outside for the next session.