

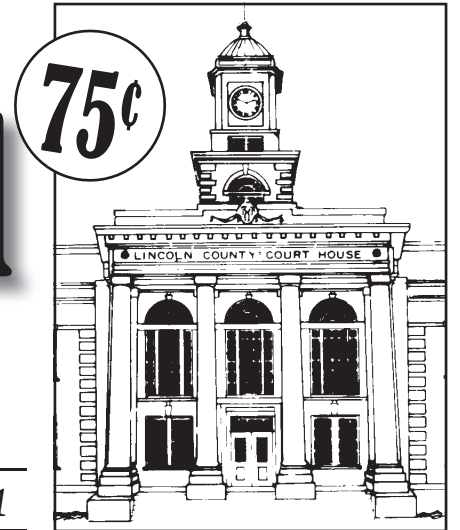
The Lincoln Journal

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

Established in 1893

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Ann Sprinkle and therapy dogs take center stage at library

Ann Sprinkle (standing) and her therapy dog, Irish Wolfhound Sally, along with other handlers from the Alliance of Therapy Dogs gave an informative and fun program to children at the Lincoln County Public Library on Thursday, July 8. Visits by Sprinkle and her associates consists of a variety of dog tricks, and at the same time teaches children the basics of how to care properly for their pets. Part of the program deals with safety, teaching children about stray dogs, and what to do when encountering one. The library will host a "Party at the Splash Pad" today, July 15, from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. (weather permitting) to conclude its Summer Reading Program.

Heated debates on zoning requests dominate commissioners meeting

Heated public comment over a new cell phone tower, RV park, and a new subdivision led to a lengthy July session of the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners. Public hearings for a variance request by Steve Watkins for Verizon, a rezoning request for Fishing Creek RV Park by Wade Burkham, and a final plat approval by Jim Mattison for Crooked Bridge Subdivision took the spotlight at the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners meeting last Thursday night, July 8.

Verizon Requests New Tower in Double Branches

First up was the special use request by Steve Watkins with Com-Site, LLC representing Verizon Wireless to construct a 255-foot (265 ft. overall, including 10-foot lightning rod and appurtenances) lattice-style wireless telecommunications structure (self-supporting tower). According to Planning and Zoning Director Roby Seymour the recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission after extensive review was for denial until the two previous tower locations which were already approved for special use permits, and are now expired, be constructed. There were also some issues with the application and documentation which has since been resolved.

Speaking in favor was Steve Watkins, stating that Verizon has made an unprecedented commitment to getting this tower up and operational before the end of 2021, with the intention of coming back in January 2022, and reapplying for the previous two special use permits which have expired.

Resident Al Gray spoke against the permit, taking issue with the engineer certification; the "fall zone" of the tower; the lack of a letter of intent to lease excess space on the tower, and the expandability of the tower. "I just think there are a lot of things wrong with this one and it is going to take some more work to get it into compliance with the ordinances," Gray said.

Addressing Gray's concerns, Seymour stated that the proposed tower does meet the set back requirements set forth in the zoning ordinance, Verizon has also provided its letter of intent for leasing space which was included in the commissioner's package, and Seymour indicated that he is confident in the engineer that signed off on the project.

Several commissioners voiced their concerns to Watkins over the

two previous sites including Amity which was approved in May 2020 and Loco/Ferguson which was approved in October 2020.

Watkins explained that everything was in upheaval last year, Verizon went into both of those applications with the full intent of building both sites and expanding the network across the eastern side of Lincoln County. They ran into supply chain issues, construction team issues, everything pretty much fell apart last year. With both applications expiring they wanted to build the Double Branches site first, with it coming on-line at the end of 2021 and then reapplying in January 2022 for the previous two sites with plans to build in 2022.

Commissioner Cooper Cliatt asked if it was appropriate to send the issue back to planning and zoning to have some of the questions and concerns answered and bringing it back next month for a vote. Commission Chairman Walker Norman said, "Our job is to get the best service for the people of the county. Verizon is a national company and a big company. If they did business all over the country like they do in Lincoln County I doubt you would be in business. We want to work with you because we need you, but we hope you will relay our concerns over the lack of service in the northern end of the county. I think there are a few things we need to clear the air about. I'd like to see the commissioners send it back to planning and zoning so we can all get on the same page."

A motion was made to "lay the matter on the table" sending it back to planning and zoning. It will come back for a vote at the August meeting.

Fishing Creek RV Park Re-Zoning Approved

A request by Wade Burkham for rezoning of Fishing Creek RV Park from R-2 to C-1 drew a number of speakers in support of the request. While the RV Park has been in business for decades it was recently purchased by Fishing Creek Store owner Wade Burkham which requires rezoning.

Marsha Sherrod of Springfield, Georgia, who has frequented the park with her RV, took issue with unfair accusations against visitors to the RV park. According to Sherrod the accusations of drug and alcohol abuse, gun shots, and vehicles driving around all hours of the night are not coming from visitors of the RV park, but from the

subdivision itself.

She also explained to commissioners that several visitors to the RV park have since purchased land and homes in Lincoln County. "I don't live here, but I do frequent your stores. We come to Lincolnton for just about everything. I pray that you will take this into consideration and open this park," Sherrod said.

Shea Chamberlain spoke next stating that he is currently building a home in the area. After attending the meeting last month he wanted to investigate for himself and found no issues with the RV park.

Kirby Lavender a resident of Fishing Creek subdivision provided commissioners with a list of former guests of the RV park who are now building homes in Lincoln County. He went on to say that he had met some very nice people at the RV park during the last two years, and attended fish fries, barbecues, and birthday parties at the park. "I'm not here to call out names, this is a zoning issue plan and simple," Lavender said.

Brenda Woodard explained to commissioners that she had purchased land at Fishing Creek and stayed at the RV park in a camper, alone, for a year and a half during the construction of her home. "I never felt unsafe while living at the RV park or since moving into my home," Woodard said.

Fishing Creek RV Park owner Wade Burkham addressed commissioners and assured them that since recently purchasing the park he takes Fishing Creek residents' concerns seriously and has instituted policy changes to address those concerns. He also assured residents that he has no plans on expanding the RV park or adding storage units. "Fishing Creek is rich in history, that park and store have been together for a lot of years, and I'm trying to bring the place back together," Burkham said.

Also speaking in favor were Sherry Landry and Marvin Wilbanks. Speaking in opposition was JoAnn Hanley.

Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the zoning change. Commissioners also unanimously approved the final plat for Crooked Bridge Subdivision, despite technical objections by Al Gray.

Commission Informed on Sale of Lincoln Journal

Lincoln County resident John E. Stone, Sr. (continued on page 8)

John Stone takes over ownership of The Journal from Newsomes

The Lincoln Journal newspaper has been sold to Lincoln County resident John E. Stone, recently retired Director of the Lincoln County Development Authority. The sale between Stone and Wilkes Publishing Co., Inc. was finalized Thursday, July 8.

The 128-year old paper was first published on June 16, 1893, by James H. Boykin, and was originally named *The Lincoln Home Journal*. The first edition is held in archives at the Journal.

John P. Drinkard, Sr. acquired the paper from Boykin in 1924 after which it remained in the Drinkard family for three generations until 1988, when it was sold by J. Thomas Drinkard to Wilkes Publishing Co., Inc. of Washington.

Parks "Sparky" Newsome and his wife, Mary, president and vice president, respectively, of Wilkes Publishing, have operated the paper for the past 33 years, with Sparky serving as editor and publisher. The Newsomes plan retirement from the publishing business following the sale of *The Journal* and the *The News-Reporter* in Washington, Georgia.

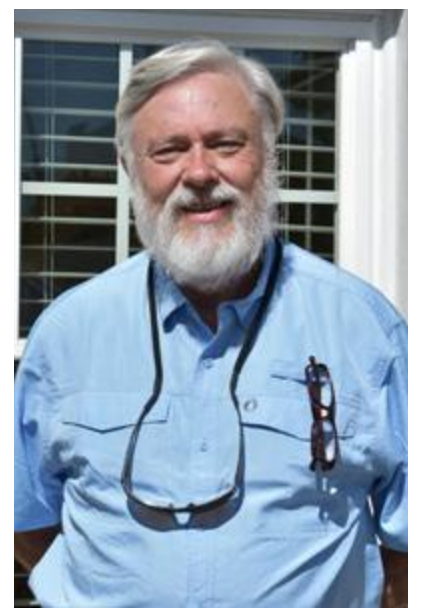
Stone, who retired from the Development Authority in April, says it is critical for a rural county to maintain a local newspaper that is active in community affairs, events, and local news. "As a distant county in a large media mar-

ket like the Greater Augusta area, a local newspaper is the only source of consistent detailed coverage of city and county governmental affairs, happenings, and major family events.

"The Newsomes have provided this great public service for over three decades in a rapidly changing environment for print publications, and they deserve our thanks for keeping alive the tradition started by James Boykin and carried on by the Drinkards, Stone continued. "The team here at *The Journal* will strive to make sure our time at the helm will steer this paper through the challenges of the digital age."

"Mary and I have reached the time in our lives that it's just time to retire," Newsome said of the couple's decision to sell the newspaper. "The closeness of the communities of Lincoln and Wilkes counties has made *The Journal* a big part of our lives for more than three decades and even converted a former Washington-Wilkes Tiger into a Red Devil fan."

"We will miss the people of Lincoln County, certainly, but we are confident that Mr. Stone will take *The Journal* to a new level of success. His plans are ambitious and we know that he has the skills to implement them. Plus, Teri and Anne are staying on, and that will make the transition easy for everyone. We wish them all the very



JOHN E. STONE

best."

All current employees will remain in place, with Stone assuming duties as editor and publisher. Teri Eno will serve as general manager, while Anne Ritchie remains as production assistant.

Stone says the immediate business goals of *The Journal* will be to increase subscriptions and advertising sales in order to allow an expanded workforce, enhance online presence, and acquire a new facility.

"We are a growing county, and we intend to grow *The Journal* activities and coverage to keep up," Stone says.

City changes waste disposal ordinances, will enforce yard waste pick-up rules

July City Council action resulted in adoption of new waste disposal regulations and enhanced enforcement of existing rules on yard waste pickup, among other issues.

Building and Code Enforcement Officer Larry Goolsby requested City Council approve changes to city ordinances pertaining to unlawful disposal of solid waste, refuse, garbage, or rubbish, and the unlawful burning of solid waste. Council approved the changes as requested.

The new regulations amend Section 38-37 to read:

a. The burning of construction and demolition debris is prohibited, even if the property owner grants express permission.

b. The burning of solid waste is prohibited in any manner, even if the burning is done safely.

Changes to Section 38-29 are:

d. It shall be unlawful for any person to dump or buy or cause to be dumped or buried any garbage, refuse, solid waste, or rubbish anywhere in the city not previously approved by the city and/or the appropriate state authorities.

f. Improper disposal prohibited. The disposal of solid waste in any manner that will impair the air quality, impair the quality of ground or surface water, impair the quality of the environment or likely create other hazards to the public health, safety, or wellbeing is prohibited.

Mayor Henry Brown addressed issues that the city street crew is having regarding yard waste pick-up. Brown stated that residents should be made aware of the requirements for limb, shrub, and pruning pick up which includes:

1. Limbs/shrubs/pruning must be stacked as close as possible to the street edge and must not impede traffic. Limbs/pruning must not be stacked in ditches.

2. Limbs/pruning cannot exceed 4 inches in diameter and cannot be over 4 feet long.

3. Limbs/shrubs cannot exceed 4 inches in diameter and cannot be over 4 feet long. They must not contain dirt, rock, or root material. Stumps and root systems will not

be picked up.

4. The City reserves the right to remove one quantity per resident per week.

5. All debris must be hand stacked, "not" done by machine. Debris must be easily picked up by hand for loading onto the trailer.

The requirements for leaf pick-up include:

1. Leaves must be stacked as close as possible to the street edge and must not impede traffic. Leaves must not be stacked in ditches.

2. The City reserves the right to remove one quantity per resident per week.

"This service is provided to residents of the City to help with the maintenance of their yards not for large scale clearing of lots or debris left by a hired professional. The hired professional is responsible for removing any large items and items not-hand stacked. The City reserves the right to refuse pick-up to residents that do not adhere to the requirements," Brown said.

Water Expansion on Elberton Highway Approved

In other July Council action, Kenneth E. Green of G Ben Turnipseed Engineers received a green light to proceed with a water expansion project for the City of Lincolnton during its regular meeting on Tuesday, July 6.

According to Green the six-inch line would connect with an existing line on Rowland York Road/Elberton Highway and run up to New Petersburg Road. The extension would provide water to potentially sixteen new and existing customers, some of which are currently having well issues.

The cost of the project would be approximately \$300,000 and would be added on to the City's existing Georgia Environmental Finance Authority Loan.

Discussion was held between Green and Councilmen regarding the use of the American Rescue Plan funds to help pay for the project, but at the present time City Council will proceed with adding the cost on to its existing GEFA

loan.

Green also stated that they had run into an issue during the application process with the Historic Preservation District which had requested a Cultural Needs Assessment. "As it turns out shortly after the meeting on Tuesday evening, I received word that the assessment would not be required by the Historic Preservation District, only the Claim Document for GEFA, which will save the City about \$4,000," Green said.

Other items approved by City Council were:

- A request from Wastewater Treatment Supervisor Ben Allgood to accept the quote from B&D Industrial of \$1,184.62 to make repairs to the bar screen at the wastewater treatment plant.

- Accepted the bid from The Drain Surgeon in the amount of \$2,832.42 for sink line repair and replacement at City Hall.

- Approved a request by Mayor Brown and Councilman Alana Burke to attend the Georgia Municipal Association Convention in Savannah August 6-20.

Monthly Department Reports

Police: Chief Brandon Lively reported that the new patrol car is awaiting lettering but is in use. He attended Family Violence First Responder Training during the month of June. According to Lively the training not only equips him on his response to family violence incidents but will help him train the department on current protocols and procedures. Lively's monthly report showed that the department answered 415 calls for service in June. The calls included 16 incident reports, 61 miscellaneous, five accident reports, along with 12 citations and 31 warnings.

Fire: Chief Matt Goldman informed City Council that Engine 21 is still at R&W Automotive with brake issues. The truck was built in 1968 and parts are getting hard to find. "They have had the truck for five and a-half months now and aren't sure they will be able

(continued on page 8)