

New COVID-19 policy kicks off in Lincoln schools

Voluntary mask use by students and staff will be the standard for all Lincoln County schools as schools re-open for traditional face-to-face instruction today.

"We are very excited to get all of our students back to face-to-face learning," Superintendent Dr. Samuel Light said. "At this time, masks are optional in our schools. We will be watching the numbers very closely to provide the best decision possible for the safety of our students and staff. If a student wishes to wear a mask, they are always welcome."

The district's back to school plan states the following: "We understand our community's concerns regarding the potential impact of COVID-19 and want to keep our families updated on how Lincoln County Schools is responding. We also want our school community to have access to the most updated and reliable information. As always, our

top priority is the safety and health of our students and staff. This is not an exhaustive list of all the procedures and protocols that will be implemented in the schools. Each school will meet to further develop its safety plan and detailed return to school/work procedures."

Practicing Prevention

- Provide hand sanitizer at building entrances and throughout the building as available.
- Teach, practice, and reinforce good hygiene measures (frequent handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, use of face coverings).
- Encourage limited use of high traffic areas with additional safety protocols (i.e. water fountains).
- Encourage students to bring their own water bottles.
- Avoid shared classroom supplies between students.
- Avoid shared food/snacks.
- Strongly recommend that students and expect staff to follow

CDC/DPH recommendations to wear face coverings when social distancing is not possible during school or related activities (sensitive to needs of students/staff with medical issues that make wearing a face covering is advisable).

- Implement social distancing measures as possible.
- Implement enhanced cleaning protocols (high touch surfaces, restrooms, etc.).
- Encourage social distancing for all students and staff in every possible circumstance.
- Recommend that students and staff to follow CDC/DPH recommendations to wear face coverings when social distancing is not possible during school or related activities (sensitive to needs of students/staff with medical issues that make wearing a face covering inadvisable).

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The Lincoln County School District welcomes new teachers (front row, l-r) Heather Huff, Ashley Rivera, Matthew Hayslip, Katie Hayslip, Connie Burton, Charity Zellars, (back) Elizabeth Fogarty, Paul Cook, Christain Wilder-Jackson, Dazmond Ferguson, and Chris Knight.

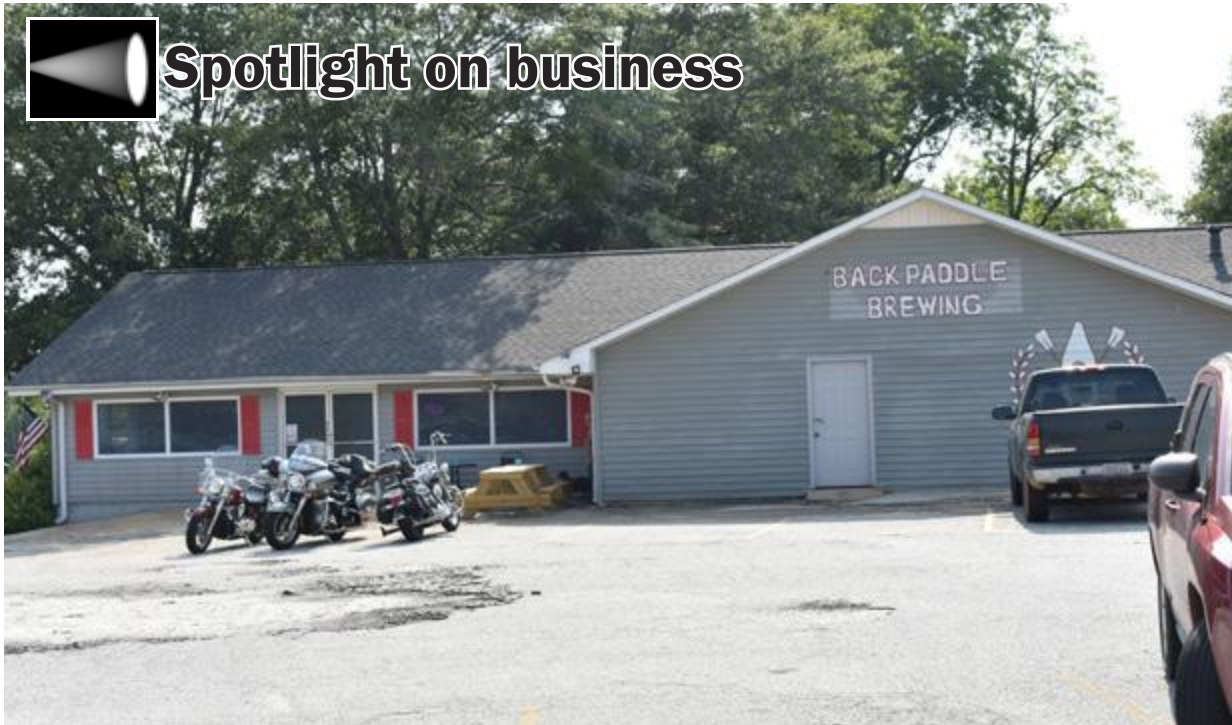
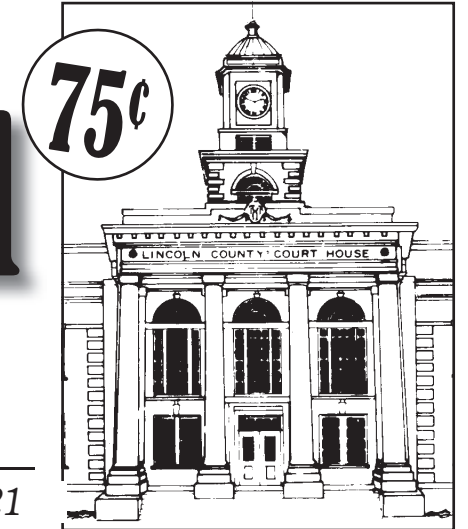
The Lincoln Journal

"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

www.lincolnjournalonline.com

Vol. CXXVIII, Number 31 • P.O. Box 399 — Lincolnton, Georgia • Publication No. 313-660 • 8 Pages • August 5, 2021



Back Paddle Brewing at Bethany Church Road and US 378.

Back Paddle Brewing brings growing specialty market to Lincoln County

By JOHN STONE
editor

When Kyle McCloud opened Back Paddle Brewery back in October it marked not just a new Lincolnton restaurant but the first of a growing trend of specialty venues that attract culinary tourists from outside the county.

The past two decades have seen phenomenal nationwide growth in vineyards, distilleries, and craft breweries to which folks pour out of the cities on weekends to taste unique locally produced wine, beer, and liquors.

What is a craft brewery? According to the American Brewers Association, the national organization that represents small and independent craft brewers, the hallmarks of craft brewers are:

- Small: Craft brewers are small — very small.
- Innovation: They interpret historic beer styles with unique twists and develop new styles that have no precedent. With more than 150 beer styles now recognized by the Brewers Association, many of today's craft brewers also stray from brewing to style completely. That is what makes their craft brewed beers so interesting.
- Community Involvement: Craft brewers tend to be very involved in their communities through philanthropy, beer donations, volunteerism, and sponsorships.

Some brewers go even further by also offering farm-to-market fare such as meats, cheese, seafood, and baked goods from local farms and kitchens.

Kyle McCloud is taking that community involvement to the extreme. Starting with his own multiple brewed beers, Back Paddle offers beef from Lincoln County's



Back Paddle Brewing owner Kyle McCloud.

Tackett Family Farm and the Dent farm, pork from Three T's farm, and eggs from McDuffie County's Little J farm.

When we visited Kyle last Friday night he was kicking off "Comedy Night", with comedians from around the state coming to Backpaddle for a night of laughs in addition to the craft beer and farm-to-market foods.

The restaurant business has been in Kyle's blood since high school when he worked in his grandparents' diner. He became interested in craft beer while serving in the U.S. Navy, which gave him the opportunity to sample specialty beer all over the world. That led to becoming a home brewer, then on to wanting to brew for a living. He became serious about the industry and graduated from culinary school at Ivy Technical Community College in Southbend, Indiana, where

he interned in food service at Notre Dame University.

McCloud has his family helping there at Backpaddle. His wife Emily is joined by her mother Jen and the McCloud's 14-year old son Aidan.

"Business has been fantastic since mid-January," Kyle says. "It was slow starting last fall, but has picked up to a point we are looking for more room already, especially for parking."

Kyle says the business is bringing large numbers of customers from outside the county, with big numbers from Columbia County and Savannah Lakes Village. That's good news for Lincoln County taxpayers, with sales tax revenues finally coming in from residents of other counties, instead of the norm of Lincoln county folks working,

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ARC may need to speed up hiring; LCDA discusses multiple issues

The immediate hiring needs of America's Remanufacturing Company (ARC) may speed up if the company succeeds in landing a new direct contract with Amazon, according to company officials. ARC currently contracts to handle returns with various products that are sold through Amazon, but not with Amazon itself.

During the July 23 meeting of the Development Authority, Director Josh Coble briefed the board on a conversation he had with an ARC representative on the need to hire immediately. "We're looking really quickly at 100-120 personnel within the next six weeks," Coble said.

According to Coble, ARC projected a build-up of employees over time, but Amazon has tasked the company with getting the facility up and running to accommodate approximately 100,000 units per week within the next six weeks. ARC requested the Authority's help in getting the word out on new hiring with wages ranging from \$12 to \$20 per hour, with promises of advancement within the company in the first year based on ability. ARC says no prior experience is required.

ARC Chief Executive Officer David Hogan confirms with the Lincoln Journal that the new Am-

azon contract is pending, but the company is not yet accepting job applications. Hogan says the contract still awaits final confirmation, and ARC plans to have landscape cleanup completed and human resources personnel in place at their new Lincolnton plant before beginning his application and interview process. ARC leased the former JimTex building at 1022 McCormick Highway last month. Initial plans were to hire 30-40 employees initially, with up to 150 employees by sometime next year. The direct Amazon contract would mean an immediate need for more employees.

In other Development Authority action, during public comment local resident Dr. Doug Harmon questioned the board over efforts to recover losses after the failure of South Georgia Equipment Company, who formerly occupied the Jim-Tex building. Authority Attorney Ben Jackson said the matter was under litigation and further discussion should occur in executive session. SGE President Rob Hinnant personally guaranteed the Authority's \$350,000 loan on the project and the Authority is seeking recovery.

Harmon then asked to be appointed as an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors of the

Development Authority. Jackson advised that only County Commissioners can make appointments to the Board.

Board Takes Aim at Apex Marine Building

Harmon also voiced his concerns over the lease agreement with Apex Marine and its subsequent sublease of the facility to Lakeside RV. Lakeside RV was recruited by the Development Authority as a sublease partner for Apex in order for the two companies to collaborate on potential production of a RV houseboat project.

Apex Marine acquired a three-year initial lease on the building with an option for a 15-year lease purchase agreement for \$650,000 from the Development Authority in exchange for a \$1 million investment in the marina, restaurant, and factory. Apex has since invested \$1.5 million in restoration and reactivation of all three facilities, which now have a combined employment of 35, making the overall project Lincoln County's largest private-sector employer. The 15-year lease purchase contract is set to begin in January, and includes a waiver of property taxes for the duration of agreement.

Coble then informed the board of an alternate offer from Apex Marine owner and President Mark Dupuie to purchase the factory at a discounted price in cash at the end of this year and immediately begin paying property taxes rather than remaining tax-exempt for 15 years and making payments to the Authority. After discussion by board members no vote was taken, but the board approved a motion to hire outside counsel to determine if the Authority can void the contract and evict Apex from the building.

Board member Bo Reed said he was for trying to take back the building even if it closed the factory and the marina. "I just really want to keep the building. I just hope this doesn't derail what they are doing down at Soap Creek because it's looking really good. I don't think he would pull the plug on it, but it's the chance we have to take."

According to board member Jeremy Dawkins, "if we get the building back, we can continue to rent the building to Lakeside RV and possibly, down the road, help them with the financing of a new building at the industrial park."

Before adjourning, members approved getting quotes on a new security system after a recent break in, and to purchase new office computers. The board also voted to authorize a phone poll among board members to avoid future called meetings.

Funding for fire truck approved, water expansion project on hold

A new fire truck is in the works for Lincoln County following approval of a USDA loan agreement by commissioners in a called meeting last Thursday. The new purchase will replace the county's current aged Engine One, with a new fully equipped E-ONE 1500 GPM top-mounted rescue pumper with a 1000-gallon booster tank, on a 2021 two-door International MV607 cab and chassis.

Commissioners approved a "Letter of Intent to Meet Conditions" between Lincoln County and the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development for a Community Facilities Grant to purchase the truck for the Lincoln County Public Safety Department.

According to Area Director with Rural Development Kathy Ross, the loan amount not to exceed \$264,200 will be repayable over a period of ten years at 2.25 percent interest with no pre-payment penalty. The grant portion is not to exceed \$100,000.

Hidden Harbor Water Expansion Project on Hold

The Hidden Harbor Water Expansion Project now appears on

hold until better funding is available. In addition to the USDA fire truck grant, the county had requested a USDA Loan/Grant to finance the project.

Public Works Director Roby Seymour explained to commissioners that the offer from USDA on the over \$4 million water expansion project came in at roughly 25.25 percent or \$1 million in grant funds, with the loan portion at about \$3,056,000. The interest rate on the 40 year loan was 1.375 percent. Ross stated that the county would have to let USDA know by August 5, whether to proceed with the project.

Seymour stated that the county was hoping for about 45 percent grant to make the numbers work. The county could add about 125 customers, but under the smaller grant water rates would have to increase 9 percent. "The county is already at the higher end regarding water rates in the CSRA, and with the funding right now, it is just not a feasible project at this time," Seymour said. He went on to say that "we are not giving up, Chairman Norman and I will be looking at other avenues for funding the project."