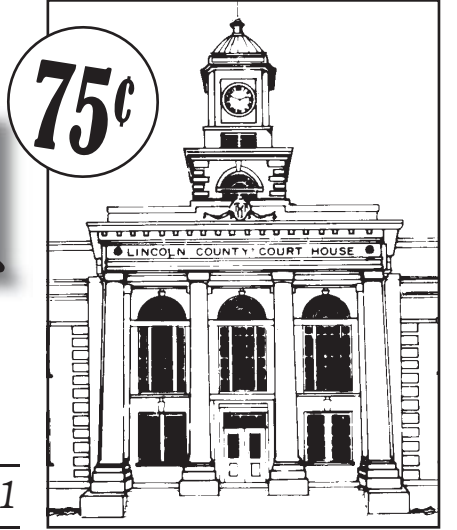


The Lincoln Journal



"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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Longtime Home Café personality Lee Young, youngest Oasen daughter Kat, and new part owner Geoff Licalzi man the front counter

Home Café's rich history isn't lost as new owners take over business

The day has always started early at Home Café, and that remains the rule with the latest owners of what has become a Lincolnton land-

mark. The doors open promptly at 6am as they have for decades.

The new owners, Sabrina Oasen and Geoff Licalzi may be new

but the regular staff all remains as Stephanie Allen, Harvey Freeman, Margaret McCall, and Lee Young are there as usual throughout the week.

Opened by sisters Lucille Norman (grandmother of County Chairman Walker Norman) and Nell Corbin in 1949, the Café has changed hands ten times over its seven decades of serving eggs and bacon, fried chicken, catfish, and collard greens to the people of Lincoln County and tourists. And that history is fascinating, complicated, and open to addition and debate.

According to extensive historical input from Walker Norman, Johnny Walton, and County Tax Appraiser Kenny Adair, Home Café was preceded by a number of other downtown cafes earlier in the 20th Century. The City Café was opened by Paul Myers in 1943, and moved to the brick building adjacent to the current Lincoln Journal building on Peachtree Street in 1947. City Café changed hands multiple times before being sold to the Mrs. R.T. Norman and Ruth Ivey in 1948.

Before opening Home Café, Lucille Norman and Nell Corbin bought the competing Lincolnton Café in 1948 in what is today Quarles Used Cars on Washington Street. They sold to Edna Cunning-

(continued on page 10)

Lincoln grossly undercounted in the new U.S. Census Report

Last year's COVID pandemic has taken a devastating toll on the accuracy of the U.S. Census Bureau 10-year population count, showing rapidly growing Lincoln County with a decline rather than the substantial increase shown in every other government count.

The national 2020 Census was finally released last Thursday due to an extensive delay from COVID, and reports Lincoln County with a 3.8% decline in population from 2010, rather than the substantial increase recorded by every other government agency. The report claims the county's population fell from 7,996 in 2010 to 7,690 in 2020.

The Georgia Department of Public Health currently lists the county's population at 8,125 as of August 15, while UGA's Small Business Development Center showed the county at 8,128 in 2018. The county experienced the largest number of building permits ever

in 2020 and has already surpassed that number this year. The Lincoln County school system shows a 4% increase in student population from 2020.

The undercount was predicted by Census Bureau officials last year, due to the low questionnaire response rate from Lincoln County households. Other rural counties appear to have suffered similar fates, due to the difficulty of Census workers making in-person calls on widely scattered homes. The report lists Wilkes County with a 9.7% decline, and McDuffie County with a 1.1% drop.

Census Bureau reports are used in marketing research for businesses looking to relocate and in drawing district lines for Congressional elections, among other things.

The Washington office of Congressman Jody Hice (R-GA10) has been asked to determine any appeals process that may be available to contest the results.

By JOHN STONE
editor

Before we even begin the discussion of COVID in Lincoln County we should remind ourselves of the famous statement from the late British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881):

"There are three kind of lies: lies; damned lies; and statistics."

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) liked the opinion so much and quoted it so often that most people now attribute the line to him.

According to the Georgia Department of Health, as of August 1 we were one of 9 Georgia counties with no new reported cases of COVID, out of 159 counties. That's great news.

As we enter the Third Wave of COVID, which was inevitable, there's not a better place to start than zero, even if we harbor some suspicions on those numbers.

Back to the Disraeli opinion (or Twain, your choice) on statistics, there were likely at least some COVID cases not reported in that August 1 report. As the health department clearly states on their website, reporting of cases is frequently delayed in reaching

their weekly report. However all 159 counties, including the other eight that reported no new cases, are subject to the same margin of error so it's a good report for us regardless.

But the August 10 Department of Health Report notes all counties, including Lincoln, have now entered the Third Wave. Not a single county of those initial 9 are still COVID free.

Here's where the data gets more complicated in determining where we stand. The standard statistic for comparison now becomes "new cases per 100,000 people". With a population of just 8,125 according to the Department of Health, that shows us with 172 new cases per 100,000 people. Counties such as Glascock (pop 3,025) and Taliaferro (pop 1,632), are so small that the Department of Health doesn't even assign a statistic.

Lincoln County is now reported with 14 actual new cases, which still has us in statistically better shape than most other counties in Georgia. Compared to our neighboring counties, we have fewer new cases than all but Wilkes County, and so close to Elbert County that it's a statistical tie (see Disraeli above).

Using that data, here's how we rated on August 10:

New Cases Per 100K People
Wilkes – 80
Elbert – 169
Lincoln – 172
Columbia – 273
Richmond – 312
McDuffie – 319
Warren – 345

For now, that ranks Lincoln County as a great place to be in Georgia as we weather what hopefully will be the last of the COVID waves, if history is any indication. But that's another column.

Our school system has adopted policies very much in line with these realities. As reported in the August 5 edition of this paper, those policies include voluntary mask use for non-exposed students, enhanced sanitization, student hygiene instruction, social distancing, careful monitoring of ongoing changes in the infection rate, detailed plans for dealing with students and staff who test positive, and consideration of more stringent rules if needed.

These are good policies for all of us. Thanks to our strong starting position for this wave, there's no need for shutdowns and fear. But if we want to both maintain our freedoms while avoiding infection these common sense hygiene practices are our best bet. Statistically speaking, that is.

Verizon cell tower approved; Board of Elections completed

Verizon is approved to bring a new cell phone tower online by the end of the year in action by the Board of Commissioners on August 12. The permit was opposed by several Lincoln residents and supported by one in the public hearing portion of the meeting.

The tower on Double Branches Road will bring improved cell service to the south end of the county, including the Augusta Highway area. Steve Watkins presented the special use permit for Verizon to construct a 255-foot self-supporting telecommunication tower on Double Branches Road.

Speaking in opposition was Tony Creighton who said, "As the closest and most impacted by the proposed special use permit for the construction of the telecommunications tower which would be located directly in front of our house we strongly oppose the Zoning Board and Board of Commissioners granting the construction of the telecommunications tower at this site. Research and common sense make it clear that the proposed tower would have an extraordinary negative and financial impact on our property values and also a visual blight being on the road for us and the citizens of Lincoln County driving down the highway."

Also speaking against was Gregg Grant referring to documents submitted by Al Gray to commissioners regarding the tower's location, boundaries and setbacks, lack of certification to meet the "will fall" requirement, and other deficiencies in the application.

Speaking in favor was Austin Dockery, a resident of Double Branches. Dockery expressed his concern over the lack of cell service in Double Branches and how it affects medical responders, law enforcement, and residents in the area. Dockery indicated that the safety of those living in the area would be much improved with reliable cell service.

Public Works Director Roby Seymour addressed Grant and Gray's concerns, as well as those previously expressed by other residents.

Seymour assured commissioners that Verizon has met all the of the Planning and Zoning Board requirements with the exception of the fencing requirement, which Verizon has agreed to correct.

Verizon faced criticism that two previous tower approvals have not been acted on and are expiring. The Planning and Zoning Board had accordingly recommended the permit be conditioned "that no other Verizon tower sites will be approved until this tower is constructed, equipped, and operational." Verizon confirmed in writing that the Double Branches Road tower will be constructed and on air by the end of 2021, and that the other two locations at Amity and Loco Ferguson are scheduled for 2022.

Seymour also suggested that the setback requirements currently in place should be looked at and possibly changed. "But for now, they have met all the current require-

ments to be issued the special use permit," Seymour said.

Commissioners voted unanimously to approve the special use permit with the conditions set forth by the Planning and Zoning Board.

New Board of Elections Now in Place

Commissioners made their three appointments to the new county Board of Elections that was mandated by state law earlier this year. Brenda Leopard and Cathy Mason-Smith were appointed for four-year terms as specified under the new law, and James Allen was appointed to a two-year under the staggered terms requirements on the new law. Commissioner Brian Henderson abstained from voting on one of the appointments due to family connections. The Commission action comes following appointments

(continued on page 10)

Lincoln school enrollment jumps 4%

Lincoln County schools continue to grow, as overall enrollment is up 4% over last year, according to the latest data. As of Friday, August 13, total system enrollment was 1182, up 3.96% from last year's 1137. The high school saw the largest increase, with 354 students compared to 316 in 2020, for a 12% growth rate. Middle school saw the system's only decrease, from 271 to 264, a 2.6% decline. Elementary rolls jumped from 550 to 564, a 2.5% increase.

As Board of Education members discussed in Tuesday's meeting, Lincoln County has experienced a larger percentage of middle school students in recent years who have now advanced to high school, leaving a small temporary decline in middle school numbers, and a larger increase at the high school level.

In other Board action, members voted to appoint Jandi Matthews to fill the Board of Education seat on Lincoln County's new Board of Elections. Under new state legisla-

tion, the Board of Commissioners appoint three members, the Board of Education appoints one, and the City of Lincolnton also has one appointment, all on staggered terms.

The Board approved multiple purchases during the meeting. Members voted for installation of WIFI in the field house at the stadium for \$13,877, and \$155 monthly thereafter. Athens Digital was awarded the system's copier contract for the next four years after their bid came in at \$386.04 a month less than the other bidders. And the contract with the CSRA Regional Educational Service Agency was renewed at a cost of \$12,225.

Following an executive session, new hires and a resignation were approved unanimously. Jim Redding, Jr. was hired as a bus driver; Justin Hornsby and Ashley Rivera were approved for one extra block for 2nd semester; Heather Riley was approved as a contract employee; and members accepted the resignation of Bethany Beggs.

The Third Wave in Lincoln County

Lincoln County School District COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

In accordance with a recently issued administrative order by the Georgia Department of Public Health, the Lincoln County Schools Public Health Protocols are intended to balance the importance of in-person learning and the frequent changes associated with COVID-19.

Face Coverings

• Strongly encouraged but optional for students and staff, unless following Lincoln County Schools quarantine protocol.

Communication

• Alert the school IMMEDIATELY if your child tests positive for COVID-19.
• A school's contact tracing team member will contact the parent/guardian by phone, email, or letter if their student is identified as a close contact.
• The district website will be updated each Friday with positive/active COVID-19 cases.

Scenario 1: Student/Employee tests POSITIVE for COVID-19.

• Any student or staff member who tests positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate in accordance with GADPH guidelines a minimum of ten days.

Scenario 2: Student/Employee has direct exposure to someone who has tested POSITIVE.

• Self-monitor but attend school wearing a mask (REQUIRED) if having no symptoms for a minimum of ten days. OR
• Choose not to wear a mask and quarantine at home for ten days without testing and showing no symptoms OR seven days after receiving a negative test result taken on/after the fifth day.

Scenario 3: Student/Employee has direct exposure to someone who has tested POSITIVE; however, the exposed person has already had a bout of COVID within three months of this exposure or has been fully vaccinated.

• Fully vaccinated persons or persons who already had a bout of COVID within three months of this exposure are not required to quarantine if they do not experience any symptoms since current COVID-19 exposure. Fully vaccinated persons who do not quarantine should monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following a suspect or confirmed exposure.

In addition, vaccinated persons should continue to follow all other DPH guidance to protect themselves and others, including wearing a mask (recommended), social distancing, avoiding crowds, avoiding poorly ventilated spaces, covering coughs and sneezes, and washing hands often.

If a student/employee has any symptoms of COVID-19, get tested. While waiting for test results, stay at home.