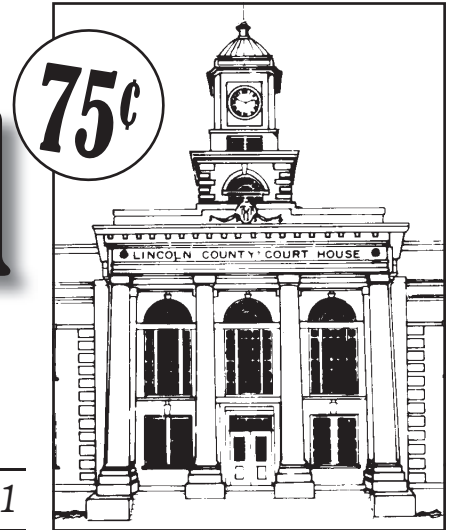


The Lincoln Journal



"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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First Responders march in memory of 9/11 attacks

Lincoln County Firefighters and Law Enforcement marched Saturday in downtown Lincolnton in commemoration of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States by Muslim extremists. The attacks using hijacked airliners destroyed the World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York, damaged the Pentagon in Washington, and crashed United Flight 93 in rural Pennsylvania after passengers overpowered the terrorists. 2,996 lives were lost in the attacks, including the largest loss of firefighters in a single incident in U.S. history.

Owner of Lincoln cockfighting venue sentenced to prison

(AUGUSTA, GA) A Lincoln County man has been sentenced to prison after admitting that he operated a cockfighting venue. Lanier Augustus Hightower Jr., 65, of Lincolnton, Ga., was sentenced to 14 months in prison after pleading guilty to Sponsoring and Exhibiting an Animal in an Animal Fighting Venture, said Acting U.S. Attorney David H. Estes. U.S. District Court Chief Judge J. Randal Hall also ordered Hightower to pay a fine of \$500, prohibited him from owning or keeping any birds or fowl or attending any events related to birds or cockfighting, and to serve two years of supervised release after completion of his prison term. There is no parole in the federal system.

"This sentence sends a strong message that animal fighting will not be tolerated in the Southern District of Georgia," said Acting U.S. Attorney Estes. "In coordination with our law enforcement partners, we will target and eliminate these barbaric operations and hold the organizers and participants accountable." As described in court documents and testimony, Hightower worked with others in sponsoring a Dec. 14, 2019 cockfight on his farm in Lincoln County. The federal indictment in that case named Hightower and 38 codefendants and remained sealed until June 2020 when multiple law enforcement agencies, led by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the

Inspector General, raided the cockfighting venue called Little Sunset in Midville, Ga., operated by William Shannon Scott, 48. Scott operated his venture on alternating weekend schedules with another venue called The Red Barn, owned by Wendell Allan Strickland, 67, of Swainsboro, Ga. Scott and Strickland both have pled guilty to charges related to the cockfighting ventures and await sentencing in U.S. District Court. As part of his plea agreement, Hightower will forfeit to the U.S. Government the 100.04 acres of land in Lincoln County where the cockfights were held. Both Scott and Strickland also face forfeiture of their farms as part of their sentences.

City Council approves new spending on water system upgrades, expansion

City Council approved an increase of \$513,000 to its Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) loan to continue water treatment system upgrades and water expansion on Elberton Highway during its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 7.

The original GEFA loan of \$516,000 has been applied to refurbishment of the Drinkard Street water tank and installation of new automatic meter readers. The final phase will be upgrades to the water treatment plant and the addition of the Elberton Highway water expansion project. Council Member Alana Burke noted that the water expansion project has been delayed due to a lack of available materials.

Continued Repairs at Wastewater Plant Questioned

Burke questioned Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor Ben Allgood about the repairs on the bar screen at the plant. Allgood's report stated that the gears were replaced but it was still locked up at the bottom. "The plant is still running, we can get by without it for the time being. I've been talking with Paul from H&H about the repairs or possible replacement," he said.

Council Member Dwaine Biggerstaff and Burke asked to be informed when H&H Industrial inspects the system.

"It seems we are constantly doing repairs on this and it may be

time to just replace it," Biggerstaff said.

Burke inquired as to the cause of the damage. Allgood replied that tree roots, hair braids, and baby wipes cause the most damage. "I've actually seen a baseball get through it."

Passing of Council Member Kelley

Mayor Henry Brown asked for continued prayers from Council and the community for Council Member Nicole Kelley who had been battling cancer since January. Since the meeting on September 7, Kelley passed away at home on September 10.

Biggerstaff stated that he and Kelley were personal friends and attended the same church. "She was just so excited to serve on City Council. She had a real excitement, that sometimes people don't have that being on Council. This particular illness is really tragic for someone to be struck down with. She was really active in the church, she loved Lincolnton, the community, and she loved the people," Biggerstaff said. "She spent 19 years looking after people at this particular point in life. I thank the Mayor for saying what he said and for checking up on her throughout this time. We need a true miracle. I just want everyone to remember how enthusiastic she was during her time on Council. I want the people of Lincolnton to know how lucky they were to

have someone on Council, which had that love for the city that Nicole had."

Home Café Variance Request Delayed

City Council voted to table a recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Board to approve a variance usage request for Home Café to allow new owner Oasen-Licalzi Enterprise more time to install a fire suppression system. The request will be bought back for a vote in October. The City is requiring a sprinkler system be installed in order to allow the second floor of the building to be used as a residence as designed in the building's original plan.

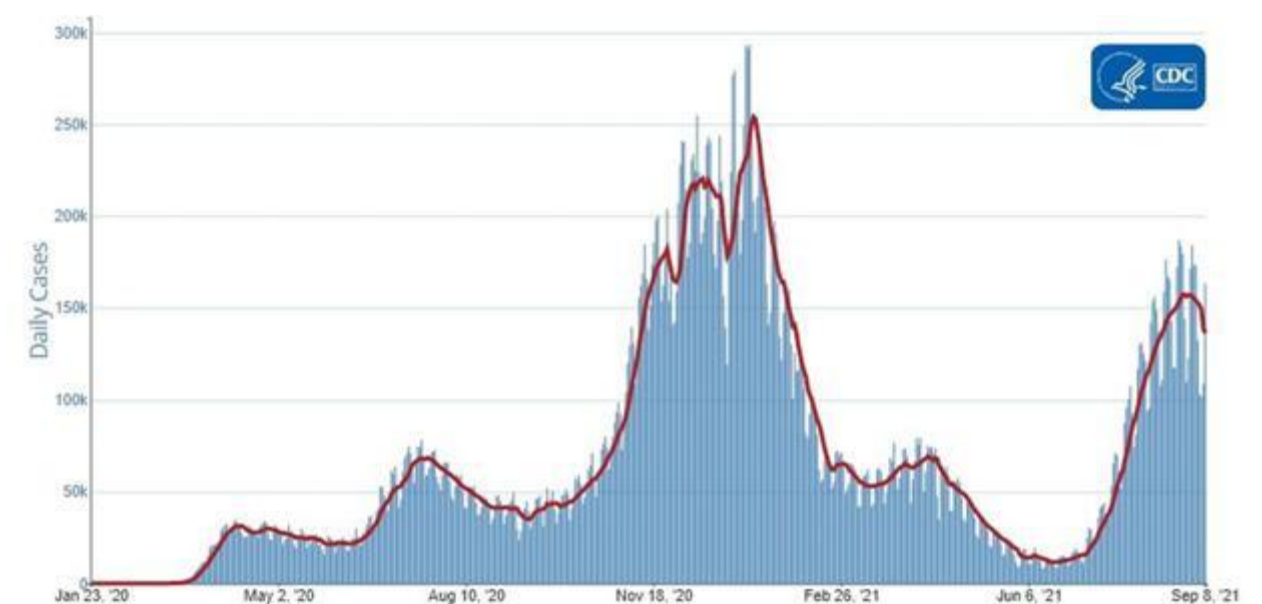
Monthly Department Reports

Police: Police Chief Brandon Lively informed council that he is currently working on the issue of large trucks using Peachtree Street and other side streets in the city.

Chief Lively's report confirmed all school zone lights functioned property before the start of the school year.

Biggerstaff encouraged Chief Lively to dispose of police cars not in service. "We want to get the City out of the car maintenance business and clear up some of the debt, so we can work towards purchasing another car. If you can expedite that we'd appreciate it," Biggerstaff said. Lively stated that he is working on a sale plan.

(continued on page 10)



National COVID graph - The current 7-day moving average of daily new cases (136,558) decreased 12.7% compared with the previous 7-day moving average (156,341). (CDC)

Sharp decline in COVID cases here

Lincoln County saw a sharp decline in new COVID-19 cases over the last two weeks, posting the lowest rate of new infections among all adjacent counties and the 15th lowest rate among Georgia's 159 counties.

New cases in Lincoln County dropped from 59 as of September 3 to 33 as of September 10 according to the Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH).

Statewide new cases dropped from 865 per 100,000 people to 799 over the two-week period. Nationwide cases fell 12.7% over the last week according to the Centers for

	New Cases	New Cases Per 100K People
Georgia	86,531	799
Lincoln	33	406
McDuffie	93	431
Wilkes	48	479
Columbia	848	535
McCormick	59	761
Elbert	152	802

Disease Control (CDC).

The Lincoln County Board of Education reports a total of just 5 new positive cases as of September 10 compared to 19 new cases in the previous week.

Sources:

U.S. Centers for Disease Control
Georgia Department of Public Health
South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
Lincoln County Board of Education

County moves forward on IT infrastructure upgrades

County Commissioners voted to approve \$30,000 to upgrade computer security and server software as well as virtual machine software as part of an effort to improve and modernize Lincoln County's internet technology (IT) infrastructure during the Commission's regular monthly meeting on September 9.

Commissioners Cooper Cliatt and Brian Henderson, Finance Director Ernie Doss; Public Works Director Roby Seymour, and IT Director Austin Dockery have comprised a committee over the last year to prioritize needed upgrades. The county ultimately looks to fund up to \$200,000 in improvements with SPLOST funds in the immediate future.

New Paid Time Off to Replace Sick/Vacation Time for County Employees

The Board also approved the new Paid Time Off Policy (PTO) to replace the current sick and vacation time policy for all regular full-time employees. The conversion to the new policy includes measures to minimize any loss of accrued time off before a deadline of July 1, 2022. County employees should work with

First Responders Appreciation BBQ to be held Sept. 18

Lincoln County law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel will be honored at the Annual First Responders Appreciation BBQ this Saturday, September 18, at Papa's Old South Café on McCormick Highway at Highway 220 from 11am-2pm.

All first responders from Lincoln and surrounding counties are invited as well as the public. Area citizens are encouraged to attend to show their appreciation. There is no charge to 1st responders or the public but donations are encouraged. All proceeds will benefit the 1st Responders widows and orphans fund.

The event will feature live music and games, as well as horseback rides for the kids. BBQ pulled pork, chicken, coleslaw, baked beans, potato salad, and banana pudding will be served.

supervisors to use excess time off before the deadline and to address any questions about the new policy.

Variance Requests Approved

Four variance requests were approved by commissioners in the meeting including set back requests by Ronald and Dianne Janssen, and

by Chris Watkins; a special use permit to operate a produce stand by Paige Reed; and a rezoning request by Melissa Dawkins for HD Construction to operate a dump truck and roll off dumpster business on McCormick Hwy.

(continued on page 10)

Roll-back on tax rate discussed at BOE called meeting Sept. 8

Board of Education Members discussed rolling back the school tax rate from 16.929 mills to 14.568 in a called meeting on September 8. No votes were taken on any issue, while the Board discussed various proposals.

The proposed change in the millage rate to compensate for the large increase in the appraised value of real estate this year received input from school system accounting and Lincoln County Tax Appraiser Kenny Adair.

Adair told the board that even though taxpayers are concerned about potential tax increases, they realize that what has been happening in the real estate market over the last year has resulted in significantly higher appraisals. "People understand," said Adair. "People hear about folks putting their house on the market and people start bidding on it and they get more than they were asking."

The proposed action by the Board would avoid a substantial increase in property taxes as a result of the higher appraisals. Like the Board of Commissioners, the Board of Education has no authority over appraisals, and must adjust the millage rate to accommodate desired changes in actual taxes paid by property owners. Lowering the current 16.929 rate to 14.568, if adopted for 2021, would leave actual taxes due the same as 2020.

Costs of old high school campus examined

(photo of old high school building with GMC sign)

The Board also discussed the costs and benefits of maintaining the old high school campus build-

ings currently used by Georgia Military College (GMC), the Bell Ringer Consignment Shop, and the county's school bus maintenance shop. The county currently pays \$54,298.84 annually for electricity, water, lawn care, pest control, heating and air maintenance, fire prevention, and insurance.

In return, the Bell Ringer pays \$7,200 annually in rent, while GMC provides college courses and qualified college-level instructors for 54 duplicated class students 39 unduplicated students over the last year.

The Board has looked into other potential revenue sources for the campus including Head Start and possible federal grants.

Members also discussed the old school board building, which is currently disconnected from water and electricity. Board Member Jim Mattison favored investigating demolishing the structure, which also served as the old coaches' building. "I would like to see us get a price on tearing the old board building down, and a price on cleaning and repainting the front of the old high school building," Mattison said. The Board was unsure of whether the old board building constructed in the 1970's contained asbestos, which would impact both the cost of demolition or restoring the building.

Proposed Paving of Elementary School Parking Lot Dropped

The estimated cost of paving the elementary school parking lot left Board members inclined to drop the idea for the immediate future. The initial estimate for the job was \$330,000.