

Walker County Messenger

LaFayette, Ga.

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FOUNDED IN 1877 — WALKER COUNTY'S OLDEST CONTINUOUS BUSINESS

Two sections ♦ 75 cents

LaFayette delays Freedom Festival decision

By Scott Herpst
SHerpst@WalkerMessenger.com

Organizers for LaFayette's annual Honeybee Festival made the decision to cancel the 2020 event back in April amid uncertainty surrounding the festival due to COVID-19-related issues, but the fate of the city's 2020 Freedom Festival is currently still up in the air.

May 11's scheduled City Council meeting, held via video and phone conference because of the continued regulations put in place by local and state governments, saw the council and Mayor Andy Arnold discuss possible COVID-19-related issues associated with holding the annual festival this year.

However, the council ultimately decided to postpone making a decision on the festival as they await further word from the state and Gov. Brian Kemp on what restrictions might still be in place and which ones might be rolled back by the time the festival arrives. The Freedom Festival is held each year on the Friday before July 4, meaning July 3 would be the date of this year's event.

Kemp's executive order of a public health state of emergency due to the virus is set to expire May 13 at 11:59 p.m., unless renewed. That executive order included things such as government-operated public pools and live performance venues, among other locations and businesses, where large crowds would gather.

The council chose to wait until the next regularly scheduled meeting on June 8 to make a decision, though leaving open the possibility of calling a special meeting before that date to decide what to do about this year's version of the popular event.

The annual Freedom Festival is free to the public and generally begins at 5 p.m. and concludes with fireworks around 10 p.m. Last year's schedule included vendors, an old timer's baseball game, a cornhole tournament, an eating contest, a pro wrestling card, free swimming at the Recreation Department pool and concerts.

The Honeybee Festival, which had drawn tens of thousands of people to the city in its three years' of existence, had been slated for June 13.



Catherine Edgemon

Construction obstacles faced by Corinth Baptist Church at 2524 Corinth Road, LaFayette, have stirred considerable debate on Facebook.

Stand-still

LaFayette church officials say burdensome regulations have halted building efforts

By Catherine Edgemon
CEdgemon@WalkerMessenger.com

Walker County Sole Commissioner Shannon Whitfield is puzzled why construction at Corinth Baptist Church has not resumed since the permit was issued seven months ago; meanwhile, church officials say they would have rethought their construction plans if they had known how many hoops they would have had to jump through to satisfy Whitfield's administration.

The Walker County Inspections Department issued a stop work order on construction at the church at 2524 Corinth Road, LaFayette, on Oct. 8, 2018, citing no building permit had been obtained, no plans had been sub-

mitted, no water flow assessment had been performed and environmental health staff needed to check the back septic system.

Over the next year, county documents record meetings and correspondence the county officials had with Rosville-based architect Jack Killian, pastor R.D. Wallin and church leaders Bruce Coker and Jerry Day, former Walker County magistrate judge, regarding the requirements for the church to resume construction. Oct. 18, 2019, the necessary building permit was issued. "We don't know what's got them held up," Whitfield said.

Coker said spraying the required fire-retardant material in the building is among the issues that have stalled

“So if you do the math, they are costing this community of believers around \$380,000 and we still can't get anything going even though we finally got a permit...”

Bruce Coker

SEE CHURCH, A3

Walker County launches community street light program to enhance public safety

Northern Walker County to receive 110 street lights in highly populated area

By Joe Legge
Walker County public relations director

Wilson Road in Rossville and a few other nearby locations in Walker County will soon be lined with light.

Commissioner Shannon Whitfield and Sheriff Steve Wilson unveiled the county's first community street light project Wednesday, May 13, following a grassroots effort to improve public safety in northern Walker County.

The county contracted with EPB to install 110 street lights along Wilson Road and sections of Happy Valley Road, James Street and Glentana Street. The public safety enhancement will cost Walker County about \$1,000 a month and includes installation and maintenance. The LED lights will illuminate



Joe Legge

Walker County contracted with EPB to install 110 street lights along Wilson Road and sections of Happy Valley Road, James Street and Glentana Street.

nearly 3.7 miles of heavily traveled roads where people live, work, shop and attend school.

“The recently released audit verified Walker County's financial position continues to strengthen, putting us in

a position to make modest investments in public safety

SEE LIGHTS, A2



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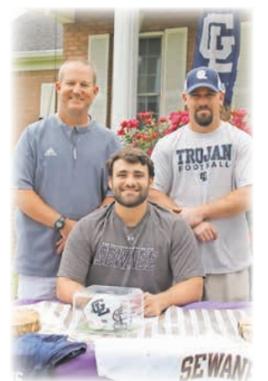
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The Walker County Sheriff's Office booking report for May 4-10

News/A11

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Gordon Lee football's Crowley makes college plans official

News/A3

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