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Your VinFast questions answered

‘Chatham conservation icon’ awarded Public Lands Conservation of the Year

Community’s lengthy ballot features plenty of contested races

By Ben Rappaport

News & Record Staff

After returning from Vietnam to tour VinFast’s manufacturing facilities and learn more about the company, I found myself left with several questions about the skyline of the Vietnamese electric vehicle manufacturer and what it would bring to Chatham County. I attempted to pierce through those questions in two stories published in last week’s edition of the paper.

VinFast has made big promises to Chatham County with its planned $1 billion investment in a 1,275-acre site in Macon, saying it will bring 2,500 jobs to the county. Likewise, the state and county are taking a gamble that VinFast will succeed, having the EV company with $8.2 billion in tax incentives. It’s only natural to be skeptical. But the hands of VinFast seemed to have persuaded local and state officials.

Writing last week’s article, I got a feeling — you, reader, probably have some questions about VinFast too. So, I put out a call on social media and in The Chatham Messenger for asking your questions about the company.

Here are answers to a few things you wanted to know.

What will community engagement efforts look like between VinFast and Chatham County? There is no plan to host events or talk with community members about the company.

This company will certainly be making an impact on the county, whether residents use it or not. Community engagement is always in the works and for now, VinFast officials say they are primarily focused on breaking ground on the Triangle Innovation Point site in September.

After the ground breaking, we may see more specifics of relations between the company and the community.

‘VinFast has a strong relationship with Chatham County officials and the Economic Development team and we stand ready to support their efforts to maintain an open dialogue with the local community,’” said Van Anh Nguyen, chief executive officer of VinFast U.S. manufacturing.

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By Bill Horner III

News & Record Staff

Mike Zelei, the director of the Chatham County Public Health Department, says there’s a lot of COVID-19 out there.

And that rate has been the number of N.C. counties with “high” COVID-19 community levels dropped from less than a dozen a few weeks ago to more than 60 today, Zelei said.

“I am feeling it in every sense,” he said.

“I’ve been in isolation this week after testing positive which was done after I had symptoms,” he said.

“I was able to get tested and do not have any family coming or going at this time.”

COVID, he said, “pucks a punch.”

“I am fighting to feel almost five days in 10,” he said.

Like last winter, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had recommended N.C. of the U.S. population had been infected by SARS-CoV-2 in the United States.

Since then, a new wave of infections driven by Omicron, various new variants and, most recently, hospital admissions.

Zelei, after being suppressed by COVID for more than two years but never being infected, is fighting it at this point in the game.

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By Maya Devrajan

News & Record Staff

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By Maya Devrajan

News & Record Staff

Among his children, grandchildren, friends and colleagues, John Wayne Strawb Sr. — known as Wayne to most — could be counted on for his devotion to three things: his family, his farm and his fire department.

The former chief and a founding member of the North Chatham Volunteer Fire Department, died of cancer on July 6 at his home in Pittsboro at the age of 88. In his wake, loved ones noted that Wayne leaves behind a legacy of hard work and commitment, evidence in the community he helped

See CHIEF, page A6

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Northwood alum Oldham gets MLB shot with Frederick Keys.

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And she has done so, even as she has written that the country to do some of these things will make us more than we are. But it is the dream that we will be more than we are, that has me realize that we can embody not just the needs of the present, but that we can build the future.

Chatham conservation icon

To Margaret Sandis, member and outreach coordinator for Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC), Smith is a “Chatham conservation icon.”

“She really doesn’t even do environmental work without knowing Ginnie,”

Smith says. Sandis first met Smith while she was beginning work for TLC—an acronym for the Triangle Land Conservancy— which works to protect private property that works for public benefit. Smith set up the TLC conservation position while she was in college, Mrs. Sandis says. Smith played a key role in establishing the group and in making it the first group that was given a funding opportunity to work. Smith also set up the conservation position for the Lower Harbour State Natural Area. Together, Smith and Mrs. Sandis have also worked on Harv River projects, including one in which they have flown for conservation work.