

Chronology of Front Street Fire and Aftermath

<p>September 25th</p>	<p>In the early morning September 25, 2013, a fire began at back of Limpin' Janes (713 Front Street) that completely destroyed 8 historic properties on Front Street. (711-725) and caused damage to the adjacent buildings (709 & 727).</p>
<p>September 26th</p>	<p>Immediately after the fire was suppressed, arson investigators from the SC State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF) were on the scene to examine the ruins for evidence of arson. As part of their investigation, the debris from the Limpin' Janes site was removed by ATF to the Public Works Yard on Kaminski Street. <i>(As of Oct. 23, 2013, approximately 85% of the debris has been moved from the Kaminski Street site to the County Landfill.)</i></p>
<p>October 1st</p>	<p>The City paid for asbestos testing to make sure the debris did not require special remediation for removal according to SCDHEC regulations. The results concluded that there was not a significant level of asbestos present to be a concern.</p>
<p>October 3rd</p>	<p>After trying to work with the State Fire Marshall and failing to get his order for removal of the remaining facades because of public safety, the City exerted authority to lead the demolition. The City awarded a contract with Coastal Structures to push down 5 of the remaining facades. Two had fallen on their own while trying to get the State Fire Marshall to act and one was being demolished separately by its owner the next day. This allowed for the fences to move back and traffic to reopen on Front Street.</p>
<p>October 7th</p>	<p>On October 7th, a meeting was held in the City Council Chambers with the affected property owners and representatives from the City, County Emergency, Waccamaw COG, and SCDNR to discuss the possibility of a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant. This program could provide grant funds (up to \$150k per property) for the owners to elevate their building to proper flood heights. The deadline for the grant was October 15th. The City applied on behalf of the property owners. Building & Planning worked closely with the Waccamaw COG and property owners to gather the information and development the grant application. The application goes to SCDNR's Flood Mitigation Program Director for scoring and then to FEMA for final awarding. SC does have a set aside</p>

	allocation but it will require some national pool funds to award the full amount. The application will also need a waiver from the FEMA Administrator because the program is designed for mitigating flood damaged properties rather than fire damaged. The Congressional Delegation is involved in getting support for the waiver.
October 10th & 11th	The City Police Department ended their 24/7 surveillance for the Front Street ruins
	The County provided equipment and the Sheriff provided inmate labor to remove some of the large debris from the Sampit River. This consisted mainly of the floating burnt wooden debris
October 16th	State Senator Yancey McGill convened a meeting at the Waccamaw COG to discuss what state resources could be available for rebuilding. The best opportunity may be to utilize the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for new infrastructure. This could include redoing the streetscape with water, sewer and utilities and providing fire suppression on the Harborwalk. There may also be a planning grant available from the SC Department of Archives and History to provide design work. As part of this meeting, a representative of the SC National Guard (SCNG) offered their expertise with debris removal from the Sampit River.
October 19th & October 20th	A SCNG unit from the Upstate has been onsite to evaluate the needs for dredging the banks and bottom of the Sampit for foreign debris that could cause environmental damage. The SCNG unit was supposed to begin work on October 21 st , but that has been delayed until later in the week. The SCNG did not have the proper tasking orders to incur the cost of the mission, which is estimated to cost between \$15k and \$20k. On October 23 rd , the City has made the proper request to the Governor for authorization and mobilization of the SCNG unit to Georgetown.
October 18th	The City has received bids from contractors to permanently repair the damage to the Harborwalk caused by the fire. Bids will be presented to City Council in the Budget Workshop meeting on October 24 th . City was notified that \$20,000 in PRT funds was set aside for the City's use in debris removal. Sen. McGill indicated in a phone call to Administrator that the

	funds were valid only for SC National Guard reimbursement.
October 18th	After discussions with the Waccamaw COG the City began evaluation whether to pursue a CDBG Planning Grant from the State to professionally evaluate all available options for rebuilding the Front Street properties including the estimate costs for Dry Flood Proofing (keeping elevation as is) or raising the elevation to the FEMA flood heights. This will dictate how the City approaches the streetscape work. A Planning meeting with City and COG was determined to be needed.
October 24th	At Special Meeting Council approved bid to RL Morrison & Sons for repair of Harborwalk.
October 28th	The City signed and forwarded a request to Gov. Haley asking for National Guard assistance to remove debris
October 29th	Governor Haley visited Georgetown to review recovery efforts. Issue of river cleanup and asbestos abatement & regulation of the abatement was discussed.
October 30th	Met with Michael Morrison of RL Morrison & Sons to discuss getting a bid on cleaning up the River. This seems to be a prerequisite before the Governor will consider use of the National Guard. The purchase order authorizing repair of the Harborwalk was delivered to Mr. Morrison.
November 1st	Haley signed Executive Order directing SC National Guard to assist in debris cleanup. Insurance settlement received for repair of Harborwalk from MASC for \$67,788.
November 6th	National Guard Col. Jakie Davis visited Georgetown and advised National Guard unit would arrive in the afternoon and begin work. They have “budgeted about three days” for men and equipment. Their plan is to watch their expenditures closely and work until the \$20,000 grant is expended.
November 7th	National Guard Unit, hailing primary from Batesburg, SC, began work cleaning debris from the River directly being the burned buildings. Sam Hodge the County Emergency Management Director is serving as on-site coordinator for the joint City-County effort.
November 9th	The National Guard began preparing to leave the Sampit River site around 11 AM. The ability to remove any more debris from the River had been limited somewhat by the reach of the equipment.

	Overall the six Guardsmen spent approximately 25 hours at site along with their equipment. Two construction dumpsters of metal debris and one dumpster of general construction debris were removed from the Sampit River.
November 12th	Some additional pilings were cut off by the City Tree Crew at or near the low tide mark at the direction of Mayor Scoville through Chief Tanner for aesthetic purposes.
November 19th	On November 21 st the City Council hired a consultant, Ms. Vida Miller to serve as a liaison with the various interests: property-owners, state regulatory agencies & City staff.
December 5th	Ms. Vida Miller met with a group of property-owners to discuss ongoing issues such as asbestos abatement. The clean-up of the area was halted previously due to direction from the DHEC Bureau of Air Quality: Asbestos Section. The concern was the presence of asbestos in unknown quantity and location in the debris piles.
December 19th	The City let a contract with RL Morrison and Sons of McClellanville to complete the river cleanup and remove burnt piles and debris unable to be reached by the SC National Guard.
December 31st	The debris contractor, RL Morrison & Sons had substantially removed most of the debris and burnt decking from the water. Eight Construction containers had been filled with debris from the River. The SC Guard removed 2 construction containers previously. All told the three efforts (1 earlier by inmate volunteers) had cleared 11 construction dumpsters (a construction dumpster is approximately 8' X 20' X 6') from the Sampit River at the scene of the Front Street Fire.
December 31st.	A request for qualifications was developed to engage a professional to perform an analysis of redevelopment of Front Street. Specifically it would evaluate the different alternatives for building back, i.e., elevating about the Base Flood Elevation or "flood proof" construction at the existing elevation. Ms. Vida Miller the Front Street Fire Coordinator will be the key contact for this work. The selection will be paid for by CDBG planning funds.