

COASTAL OBSERVER

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50 cents

Visitor sues after injury at walkway

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A vacationer who fell on the steps of a damaged beach walkway at North Litchfield is suing Georgetown County and the local property owners association for damages.

Denise Stasulli was visiting from Delaware in April when she went to the beach with her family. As she went down the steps at Walkway 52, one of the treads was missing. So was the railing. She fell and broke her wrist, said Clay Hopkins, the attorney who filed suit on her behalf in Circuit Court last week. "She pretty much fell straight down," he said.

The suit alleges negligence on the part of the county and the Litchfield Beaches Property Owners Association. It seeks actual and punitive damages.

The walkway was among



Walkway 52 at North Litchfield was repaired last week. It was damaged by Hurricane Matthew in October.

Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

County Council Member John Thomas, a North Litchfield resident, urged the county to revise its schedule to repair four traditional walkways before starting work on the handicapped-accessible walkway, citing concerns for liability.

"Fifty-two was one of the ones they were trying to keep closed," Thomas said. He was not aware of the suit until contacted by a reporter. "I personally saw one of the walkways that I told them to close. They nailed a board across the front of it and somebody ripped it down," he said.

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those damaged by Hurricane Matthew in October. It was scheduled for repair by a contractor hired by the county. The county's Parks and Recreation director, Beth Goodale, initially

put the completion date at Easter. The project is being handled by the Public Services department, and the deadline passed with walkways at North Litchfield still needing repair.

WACCAMAW HIGH Warriors start search for new AD

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Joan Cribb will step down as the athletic director at Waccamaw High at the end of the school year. Interviews with applicants to fill the position she has held since 2002 will start next week, principal David Hammel said.

"It's time for me to get closer to home," said Cribb, who has taught physical education at Waccamaw since 1995. She still lives on the family farm where she grew up in the Pleasant Hill section of Georgetown County. "I'm actually worn out from trying to keep up with school and what I have to do there."

Hammel posted the opening

last week in an email to Waccamaw High staff. "We're limited by teaching positions, so we're looking in-house first," he said. He asked the district this year for an additional Spanish



teacher and he created a position for the new football coach who teaches social studies. He said he won't fill Cribb's position as one of four P.E. teachers.

Hammel praised Cribb for "mentoring and caring for students through athletics. That's a legacy that will live on."

Brian Henry, president of the school's booster club, will serve on a committee to interview candidates for the position. "She has been supportive of me in the last four years as president," he said. "It is evident that she really cares about the kids."

Cribb replaced Dennis Lee, who was the school's first AD. In her second year Cribb was named the Region VII-AA AD of the Year, the first year the award was offered. She won the award the next two years and was Class AA AD of the Year in 2008 and 2009. She won another region award in 2014. Cribb coached several sports including the 2010 girls tennis team that won the state championship.

Although her plans to move to the area after getting a job at Waccamaw High never materialized, she said the school has become like family. The biggest reward comes from getting visits by graduates. "That's when you know you've made a difference," she said. "I want to thank everybody for the 22-year ride and the 16-year AD ride. I've enjoyed it and I fell in love with all of them. I just think it's time for me to get closer to home."



Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

Two hot rounds, one cool title

The Waccamaw High boys golf team won the state Class AAA championship at True Blue this week. The Warriors were 37 strokes ahead of the runners up from Bishop England. Coach Nate Marozzi gets a celebratory swim in the pond behind the 18th green, joined by senior Trey Salley. See story, Page 20.

PAWLEYS ISLAND

Questions about site slow pace of Town Hall project

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Forty-seven years after it burned, people are still coming back to the site of the last Pawleys Pavilion. The property has changed a little and most of that happened since Hurricane Matthew.

Where kids once parked their Fords and Chevys, Pawleys Island Police now park their SUVs. The portable office that houses a temporary Town Hall sits across the street. And the street itself is under consideration as the site for a more permanent Town Hall.

The Pawleys Pavilion Re-

union on Saturday will draw hundreds of people to share the nostalgia for the island's past as the town tries to figure out a design for its future. The property itself is owned by the nonprofit Pawleys Pavilion Co. and leased to the town for \$1 a year as the Pawleys Island Nature Park.

"The Pawleys Pavilion Co.

looks at themselves as the steward of that property for the island, not the town," Mayor Bill Otis said. He was president of the company before being elected to Town Council 22 years ago. It was formed by island families to allow construction of what turned out to be the last of a

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Spring blooms: Butterflies emerge from cocoons to populate an exhibit at Brookgreen Gardens.

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ENVIRONMENT

Collaboration helps prepare for floods

BY NIKKI BEST
COASTAL OBSERVER

Welcome to Launton. It's flooding.

The coastal town has a population of 10,000. Its main industry is tourism, and it boasts beautiful beaches, and marshes and rivers protected by the Launton Nature Preserve. The eastern edge of town is developed with homes and businesses, whereas the western part is relatively undeveloped. Many beach front homes have been owned for generations, but rising taxes and flood insurance costs make it difficult to stay. The town has endured three "100-year" storms this decade.

Sound familiar?

Launton is fictional, it's based on a coastal town in Maine, but has a lot in common with Georgetown County. Coastal Carolina University and the University of South Carolina's Baruch Institute, in cooperation with North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, put together this role



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Flooding from record rainfall in 2015 prompted this warning sign on Highway 17 at the Litchfield Beach Fish House.

playing exercise for the county.

"We aren't here to make a decision about our town," Michelle LaRocco, NERR Coastal Training Program coordinator, said. "This is an exercise where we have information about a fictionalized community and

participants get the chance to be one of these people and try to come to a collaborative consensus about how we should move forward to protect our coastal town from flooding."

The exercise was designed
SEE "FLOOD," PAGE 4

BUDGETS

Committee wants to raise capital fund for bikeways by \$500K

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

County Council members will try again next week to shift funds in the next phase of the capital improvement plan to provide \$1 million for bikeways. The move follows completion of a master plan for bike paths and sidewalks. The funds would be enough to leverage \$5 million in state grants, according to the founder of the Bike the Neck project.

"The grant money is out there. If we had money in our coffers to match it, we would be right there," said Linda Ketron. The local match for state grants is typically 20 percent, she said.

County Council is preparing a final list of projects for a capital plan that will run through 2021. It includes \$500,000 for bikeways. Council Member Austin Beard last week proposed adding another \$500,000, taking the money from \$1 million allocated to camping and hiking trails. He chairs the council's Land Use and Tourism Committee, which approved the master plan.

The money for camping has been in the capital plan since it was first adopted in 2007. County Administrator Sel Hemingway said. "I think that a million dollars is excessive," he added.

But Beard's request prompted Council Member Everett Carolina to ask for a review of other projects in order to come up with \$400,000 to renovate the former Sampit Elementary School as a community center. "This is one of the things that would be an uplift to the young people," he said.

The capital plan includes \$2.2 million for a library that would serve the southern part of the county. Council Member John Thomas suggested that would provide space for the programs Carolina has in mind, but Carolina said the old school was

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