

# COASTAL OBSERVER

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50 cents

## FEMA funds help county weather stormy budget season

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Federal funds to reimburse Georgetown County for the cost of dealing with a series of disasters starting with the 1,000-year flood of 2015 only arrive in a trickle, but they are enough to offset part of the county's looming budget deficits.

The county has included over \$1.5 million in reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency in its revenue projects for the coming year, helping reduce a budget deficit of about \$4 million.

Administrator Sel Hemingway said some of the funds are related to a 2015 storm.

Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

But Administrator Sel Hemingway told County Council this week that the revenue is only a one-time payment. So is additional funds the county hopes to raise by selling surplus equipment.

Even that won't be enough to erase a deficit at Midway Fire and Rescue, where the board is

SEE "BUDGET," PAGE 4



## Atop no one's list, jail upgrade looms as major capital project for county

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

As Georgetown County starts to look at ways to spend surplus sales tax, and projects to pitch to voters for another round of the local 1-cent tax, a project that is not high on anyone's list is likely to rise to the top. The county needs to repair or replace its aging jail at a cost estimated between \$26 million and \$36 million.

The mechanical systems at the jail have worn out, said Dan Mace, a vice president at Moseley Architects in Charlotte, which did a study of the facility. "I've seen very few detention centers that have the level of deterioration" as this one, he told County Council members at a workshop this week.

The facility, which opened in 1993, also needs a different mix

SEE "JAIL," PAGE 4

VETERANS | The greatest generation

## Who has Sgt. Atkin's dog tag?

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Bill Atkin joined the Marine Corps at 17, just shy of the first anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He served in the Pacific as a mechanic in a bomber squadron. He was a sergeant and not yet 21 when he returned home to Massachusetts in 1946. He went to college, became an engineer, he married and raised a family.

Atkin never visited South Carolina, as far as his family knows. But a man showed up at the home of Don Corinna in the

Pawleys Island area this winter who said he had Atkin's dog tag. He wanted help in returning it to the owner.

"I was almost about to turn him away," Corinna said, thinking the man was selling something.

Corinna runs the Toys for Tots program for the local chapter of the Marine Corps League and is often visible around the holidays in his dress uniform. Other than that, he can't think why the man came to his doorstep. The man said he found the dog tag, but didn't know how to contact Atkin.

"When he came to the door, I was so amazed and interested in it, I never got the man's name and phone number," Corinna said.

The man, whom he described as well-dressed and in his late 50s, didn't have the tag, but he left Corinna with the information it contained: Atkin, William F; 508269C; T-12/42; A; USMC; P. Along with his name and service number, the tag gave the date of his tetanus vaccine, blood type, branch of service and religion.

Corinna is also a member of American Legion Post 197 at Pawleys Island. That's where he took the dog tag information. Alan

Wright, another post member, did some research.

"I was able to find the military records of him without any problem," Wright said. They showed him going through training in Jacksonville, Fla., in 1943 and at Cherry Point, N.C., the following year, by which time he was a corporal in VMB-613.

The Marine bombing squadron flew the PBJ-1, the Navy version of the B-25 Mitchell bomber made famous by the Doolittle raid on Tokyo in 1942. Wright was familiar with the planes. His father-in-law was in a similar unit.

SEE "MARINE," PAGE 2



Sgt. Bill Atkin, center, in a photo of pilots and mechanics of Marine Bomber Squadron 613.

Marine Corps photo

## MURRELLS INLET Rising costs keep I2I project 1,400 feet short of destination

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The first phase of the Inlet to Intracoastal path through Murrells Inlet will stop 1,400 feet and about \$114,000 short of its goal.

The project, known as I2I, is a partnership between the Murrells Inlet 2020 revitalization group, Tideland's Health and Georgetown County. The first phase was due to run from Business 17 west on Macklen Avenue, around the Tideland's medical campus on Bypass 17 then cross the highway by Waccamaw Community Hospital. It was due to end up at the county-owned Wachesaw Park.

But the \$219,000 earmarked by the county and \$500,000 by Tideland's Health were not enough to fund the project when the state Department of Transportation required curbing and drainage work.

"The whole cost inflation with this has to do with drainage," said Jeff Ciuba, an organizer of the project with Murrells Inlet 2020. "If we didn't have to do the raised curb, it's a whole different story."

The County Transportation Committee approved an extra \$250,000 for the work last year. In April, the committee approved another \$65,000 for improvements to the intersection at Riverwood Drive and Bypass 17. DOT required a separate traffic safety study for the highway crossing, Ciuba said. That cost \$8,500.

The path will end at the corner of Riverwood Drive and Kings River Road without additional funds. State Sen. Stephen Goldfinch and Rep. Lee Hewitt have asked Georgetown County Water and Sewer District to fund the \$114,305 cost of running the path to Wachesaw Park as part of a water main upgrade along Old Kings Highway.

"We understand that this is a big request, but this is the greatest project for Murrells Inlet since the construction of the Marshwalk," the legislators wrote.

The water district board is due to take up the issue today. Staff is not recommending approval.

"They were really nice," Ciuba said after meeting with district staff. But they explained that the way rates and fees are structured for capital projects doesn't allow add-ons like a bike path.

The same contractor is doing the path and the water line and planned the work so the projects won't conflict. "After they made arrangements to do that, it came up that we didn't have the money to finish" the path, Ciuba said.

If the utility board doesn't approve the funds, organizers will try to raise additional private donations. If those aren't enough, they will apply for a state Parks, Recreation and Tourism grant, Ciuba said.



Photos by Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

**One last blessing** | The Rev. Mike Alexander delivered his first Blessing of the Inlet in 2006, its 10th anniversary. This was the 23rd year Belin Memorial United Methodist has celebrated the inlet and its people. Alexander will retire as pastor next month. "Accept our heartfelt gratitude for the past, present and future of our beloved Murrells Inlet," he said to end the service.

NONPROFITS | Palmetto Giving Day

## Social media drives \$1.2 million in donations

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The third annual Palmetto Giving Day was another success, raising \$1.2 million on Tuesday for 48 Georgetown County nonprofits.

Teach My People in Pawleys Island was the top fundraiser, taking in \$125,390 from 128 donors.

Helping Hands of Georgetown raised \$115,000, the second most on Tuesday, from 131 donors.

"It was a great day for us, a terrific response from the community" said John Bush, director of Helping Hands. "Without

Michelle Greene of Optimism Preventive Services gets an update on donations.

Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

it our programs would struggle."

Bush, his staff and volunteers came up with a large social media campaign, which included numerous Facebook posts and live video feeds.

"It caught on and obviously the community is enthusiastic and supportive," Bush said, adding that many people were inspired to donate by the \$48,000 in matching funds the nonprofit secured.

SEE "GIVING," PAGE 3



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE



**Race to the starting line:** A new track allowed Waccamaw High to host its first Lower State meet.

SECOND FRONT

**Lesson from the pro:** A student-staff basketball game drew an ex-WNBA player to WIS. She teamed up with Superintendent Randy Dozier, right.

PAGE 6



**Books:** A Feast for 'Crawdads' author inspired by isolation.

PAGE 9

Crime.....	7
Opinion .....	8
Crossword .....	12
What's On .....	13
Classifieds .....	14
Property transfers .....	16
Sports .....	18

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Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer  
Drainage work added to the cost of the path.