

COASTAL OBSERVER

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50 cents

PAWLEYS ISLAND

Beach project awaits word from Corps on documents

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

After a rush to get easements from property owners to allow a federally-funded beach renourishment project, the town of Pawleys Island is still waiting to receive a formal agreement from the Army Corps of Engineers.

And the lone property owner who has yet to sign an easement is also waiting to hear if the Corps will alter the language of the document, according to the town administrator.

"He's asking me do we have an updated easement," Ryan Fabbri said. "The Corps of Engineers said they were working on it over a month ago."

The Corps project will place up to 840,000 cubic yards of offshore sand on the island's south end at an estimated cost of \$16.7 million. The Corps will manage a town- and state-funded project to place another 350,000 cubic yards of sand on the beach as far north as Third Street. The cost of the additional work is estimated at \$5.2 million.

The Corps required the town to get easements from 113 property owners ensuring that the renourished beach remains public. One owner, whose name has not been made public, balked because he thought it would allow the public to use his beachfront deck. Town Council has discussed using eminent domain to obtain the easement.

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COASTAL MONTESSORI

Field of 21, produces six new members for board

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

The board of the Coastal Montessori Charter School will have mostly new faces starting in August. Only one incumbent was re-elected by staff, parents and guardians last week.

Tyler Easterling, Paula Johnson and Carla Todd were elected to two-year terms. Kathy Redwine, Joy Burch, Kimberly Evans-Roby and Kelly Hayes were elected to one-year terms. Hayes is a current vice chairman.



Easterling, the top vote-getter

Under the state charter school law, board members are elected by the employees and the parents or guardians of its students.

Families get one vote for each student. Employees also get one vote. Employees who have students enrolled also get one vote for each child. Out of 297 possible votes, 142 ballots were cast.

Only three of the seven current board members filed to run: Hayes, Pat Gadek and Rob Phillips. Ryan Fabbri, the current chairman, said he was not going to run, but filed anyway. When he found out there was a full field of candidates, he withdrew. He received one write-in vote.

When the new members join the board in August the school will be in better financial shape than it has been during the last two budget cycles. According to the preliminary 2020 budget, the school's expenses will be \$2.5 million and there will be a surplus of \$45,682.

After the Georgetown County School District discovered it had made an error in calculating payments to the school last year, it cut funding. That left the charter school with a \$290,480 deficit.

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Photos by Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

Seniors scramble to catch up with the procession to the gym. Below, Scott Streiffert was invited by William Daniels to walk with the grads. Streiffert is retiring after 27 years at Waccamaw High.

WACCAMAW HIGH | Class of 2019

A walk to the future

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Another school year has come and gone and 189 members of the Class of 2019 officially said goodbye to Waccamaw High School and hello to the future last night.

First-year principal Adam George said he will always remember these seniors, the first graduating class in his tenure.

"It's always going to be special," George said. "They've been through quite a year. They're very resilient. A lot of kids with a lot of goals. They're going to do great things."

George said his best advice to the graduates is find something you love to do.

"Whatever you want to do, whether it be work, whether it be college, the military, go at it 100 percent and give everything you've got every day," George said.

Valedictorian Jared McCabe urged his classmates to rise above defeat.

"Losing is not being defeated; quitting or losing the motivation to succeed is," McCabe said. "We can't let one failure – or even several failures – define us or weigh us down because then they truly do defeat us. We must keep a



short memory and only use our mistakes to guide us in the future instead of dwelling on those mistakes in the present."

McCabe also encouraged the Class of 2019 to fight "passionately and emotionally" for what they want and what they believe in.

"We may take on our share of new, harsh experiences, but we have to be ready to fight and give our futures our all. Otherwise, how can we truly call ourselves Warriors?" McCabe said. "Warriors would not give up. Warriors would not give less than 100

percent. And Warriors certainly would not fear new challenges or obstacles."

Salutatorian Lena Gammel spoke about the power of choice.

"Every second of every day we make choices," Gammel said. "We have to live with them. ... Choose wisely and make your choices count."

Gammel praised and encouraged her classmates. "There is so much talent in this room," she said. "I hope you all live up to your potential."

This year's ceremony was

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CHURCHES | Belin Memorial UMC

Longest-serving pastor has seen flock double

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

You'll have to excuse the members of Belin Memorial United Methodist Church if they've been a little tearful this week. The parishioners are saying goodbye to the Rev. Mike Alexander, the pastor who has led them for the past 14 years.

"This has been an incredible place, I love this church," Alexander said. "It has been 14 years full of constant activity. ... There are so many demands, so many people who just have needs. I wish I could fix everybody. You can't. But I can tell them that God loves them. That's what I've tried to do."

Alexander's first worship service at Belin was June 19, 2005. His last will be Sunday. That is the longest tenure of any of the

church's 22 pastors.

More than 1,500 people have joined Belin since Alexander took over, although not all of them have stayed. It is the 18th fastest growing United Methodist church in the United States.

"The growth has been exponential, and I'm grateful for that," Alexander said. "When I first came here it was incredible for me to preach to 600 to 700 people on a Sunday. Now we preach to anywhere from 1,300 to 1,400 on a Sunday."

In 2012, Belin started a monthly contemporary worship service, although Alexander did not like to call it that.

"I was the one who said we're not going to call it contemporary," Alexander said. "All worship should be contemporary, whether it's traditional or

SEE "BELIN," PAGE 2



Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

The Rev. Mike Alexander will retire after 14 years at Belin.

HIGHWAYS

Cracks in paving add to delay on parkway

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Faulty concrete on a bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway has delayed the opening of the newest phase of the Carolina Bays Parkway at least until the fall, according to the state Department of Transportation. The project has already been delayed two years.

Lawmakers say they have tried for months to get answers from the agency about the project. "They've been very tight-lipped about it," Mark Hoeweler, executive director of the Grand Strand Area Transportation Study, said.

The GSATS policy committee, made up of state and local officials, hoped to get information at a meeting last week. None seemed to be forthcoming until Tony Cox, who represents the 7th Congressional District on the DOT commission, said the paving on one of two spans across the waterway will have to be removed and replaced.

"They're going to have to redo the whole bridge?" state Rep. Russell Fry asked.

"Just the part across the waterway," Cox said.

He told the committee, quietly, that a new contractor will complete the project, but that the firm has not been announced. There is no completion date.

It is only the pavement, not the structure, Stacey Johnson, a DOT project manager, said.

"That makes me feel better," Fry said.

The project is a 7.5-mile extension of the parkway, also known as S.C. 31, from Highway 544 to Highway 707 in Horry County. The route has become the bypass to Bypass 17, Hoeweler said.

Pawleys Island Mayor Jimmy Braswell said he hopes the bridge repair can be completed before the peak of the hurricane season in September. It will help move traffic off the beach if there is an evacuation, he said.

Johnson said that is unlikely. The concrete on one of the 3,600-foot-long spans included a retardant.

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