

# COASTAL OBSERVER

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50 cents

## Pawleys Island expands renourishment plan

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Pawleys Island is poised to place the maximum amount of sand allowed under state and federal permits for a beach renourishment project due to start in just over a month. Town Council members who were concerned about straining the island's finances to put 1.1 million cubic yards of sand on the beach at a cost of \$14.4 million decided this week that spending the money now would provide more protection from storms and delay the need for



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer  
Work is scheduled to start Oct. 1.

future projects.

"We were not thinking about the life of these projects in the right way," Council Member Rocky Holliday said. He chaired the committee that recommended the renourishment project in 2017.

Instead of doing follow-up renourishment every 10 years, the council believes it can wait 22 years to do another project if it starts with the 1.1 million-yard project. "We just weren't thinking that way before," Holliday said.

The town worked with the Army Corps of Engineers for a year on a renourishment

project before deciding to continue on its own. That means giving up federal funding for the portion of the project on 1.4 miles of beach at the south end. The town was concerned that the agency would not fully fund the project or, if it did, would not complete the work before the end of another hurricane season.

Last month, Town Council approved a contract with Marinex Construction of Charleston to put 850,000 cubic yards of offshore sand on 2.4 miles of beach at a cost of \$12.1 million. The town will spend

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### ROADS

## County seeks state grant for bike path in Parkersville

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County is seeking a state grant to install a multi-use path that will connect the Parkersville community with the bike lanes to Stables Park. Even without the grant, County Council Member Steve Goggans wants to see the project completed before the county closes out its current capital improvement plan.

The county has \$500,000 in its capital improvement plan for bikeways. Three years ago it adopted a master plan for the routes. Martin Luther King Road "was the highest priority," Goggans said.

The county applied for a \$500,000 rural infrastructure grant from the state Department of Commerce for the project. The county will have to match that with \$125,000.

The preliminary plan calls for a multi-use path on the north side of Martin Luther King Road between Parkersville Road and Petigru Drive, which leads to the park.

"We want people to utilize our parks," said Ray Funnys, the county's director of public services.

Petigru Drive was paved this year between Martin

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Photos by Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

### Aviation week in the wild blue yonder

R.T. Dickson of Charlotte pilots his P-51 Mustang in a show over the Georgetown County Airport on Saturday. An event to mark Aviation Week drew crowds to watch the vintage World War II fighter. Below left, Cole Meredith, 8, prepares to take off on a Young Eagle flight with Pete Heinz.



### BUDGET

## Business license fee triggers objections

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County staff will continue to research a business license fee, but members of County Council say they are concerned about the impact on local firms.

The proposal is one of several offered by Administrator Sel Hemingway as a way to raise revenue to offset deficits in the county budget.

The county had to draw on its reserves to balance its last two budgets. Hemingway, who will retire at the end of the year, said he wants to leave the council with a roadmap toward a sustainable budget. A business license would raise at least \$1 million a year, Hemingway said.

Other measures include funding future capital improvements through a 1-cent local sales tax rather than with operating funds. That will free up at least \$1.6 million. The county is also reviewing its development and permit fees and looking for way to cut spending.

The council this week agreed to put a 1-cent capital projects sales tax on the ballot in 2020. A similar tax that expired April 30 raised about \$41 million over four years. Before a referendum can be held on a new tax the county has to spend a \$16.9 million surplus from the first tax, Hemingway said.

County Council will have to approve the spending.

Council Member Louis Morant said he was concerned that implementation of a business license could impact the success of a sales tax referendum. If it fails, the county will have to wait two years to try again.

Council Member Steve Goggans pointed out that the license fee is based on gross income, so it would be borne by companies whether they were thriving or struggling to make a profit. It could also impact the ability of the county to attract business, he said. Council Member Everett Carolina shared that concern.

"There are certainly benefits to the county, but it comes at a cost," Goggans said.

Council Member Ron Charlton was more direct. "I'm just not in favor of a business tax, fee," he said.

But the council agreed to let Hemingway and the finance director gather more information about the business license.

### TRANSITIONS | Sam Hodge

## A stormy career

### With emergency manager departing hurricane stirs in the Caribbean

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Sam Hodge wants the world to know one thing before he retires as the head of Georgetown County's emergency management department: county officials have nothing to do with deciding if the Highway 17 bridges are going to close during an emergency.

That's the job of the state Department of Transportation.

"It's always the first question we answer and the last question," Hodge said.

After 33 years of responding to and dealing with emergencies in Georgetown County, Hodge is retiring on Friday. He will take the weekend off and then go to work as director of emergency management and compliance for Conway Medical Center on Monday.

"I'm looking for a different challenge," he said.

His first challenge may be dealing with Hurricane Dorian, which was headed toward Puerto Rico on Wednesday as Hodge's colleagues were bidding him farewell at a "surprise" party.

To no one's surprise, Hodge, who is notorious about not liking surprises, found out about the party in advance.

In the last five years, Georgetown County has survived five federally declared national disasters. One of the most challenging

for Hodge was Hurricane Florence last year, during which the state Department of Natural Resources released a map that predicted 10 feet of flooding in parts of Georgetown County. That level of flooding never happened in most places.

"Did we like the map? No. DNR and the crew in Columbia did the best job with what they had to work with," Hodge said. "I think the information they gave us was the best they had, with the data they had to work with, but it was just bad information."

Hodge worries that the next time the county or state tells residents to evacuate, people will

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Kristina Burch, below, emergency manager from Florence County, gets Sam Hodge to sign her "situational awareness cards" with his likeness, left.



Photos by Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

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