

COASTAL OBSERVER

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Tanya Ackerman (left), Charles Swenson (right)/Coastal Observer

Brian Henry, above left, listens as Sarah Zimmerman reads the results from the poll. Jimmy Braswell, center at right, gets the information from a poll worker.

Henry confident of win as voter challenges reviewed

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Ashley Carter and Sarah Zimmerman won re-election to Pawleys Island Town Council, but the outcome of the race for mayor and the two remaining council seats hinges on 29 challenged ballots that will be reviewed today.

Pawleys Island Mayor Jimmy Braswell saw a 43-29 lead over challenger Brian Henry in his

bid for a second term reduced to a 58-58 tie as absentee and early-voting ballots were counted.

Henry said he is confident he will win the election once the challenged ballots are counted. Those include his ballot.

The 29 challenges "have been cherry-picked from voters who are favorable to my candidacy," Henry said. "Ultimately, everyone who actually cast a ballot will be counted and I will be announced mayor."

Braswell seemed to share that feeling as he read the printed results after the poll closed. "I wish some more of my voters had turned up," he said. "It doesn't look good."

The uncontested absentee votes favored Henry by nearly 2 to 1.

"We're going to see what the election commission has to say," Braswell said. "I owe it to everybody who supported me."

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Sheriff's race boosts turnout

For every voter who turned out Tuesday for the Pawleys Island Town Council election, about four others showed up to vote for the Georgetown County Sheriff.

Alison Martin, a poll worker, said she could envision the headline: "Voters turned away

at polls."

The voters were turned away, but they were encouraged to return on Dec. 3, when the GOP primary for sheriff actually will be held.

LaRue Lindstrand, the poll manager, estimated more

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SCHOOLS

Gun at GHS prompts district review of safety policy

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

A loaded gun found in the possession of a student inside a high school last month has school officials examining district safety measures and may lead to a clear bag policy.

On Oct. 22, three Georgetown High School students, two 17-year-olds and one 15-year-old, were arrested after two made threats on a bus and one was found with a gun at school.

More than 20 parents of Georgetown High students attended Tuesday's board of education meeting to hear from Alan Walters, the district's executive director for safety and risk management, and Superintendent Randy Dozier.

"They're upset and we're upset and angry that it happened," Walters said.

The threat was discovered by Lonnie Stuckey, the district's director for safety and risk management, who was investigating a different incident. Stuckey watched a video from a bus camera and heard the juveniles making threats. He then asked an investigator from the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office to get involved.

None of the students who were on the bus reported the incident.

"If you see something say something," Walters said. "Still, that's where we struggle."

Dozier said the district is forming safety teams at schools,

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NORTH LITCHFIELD

Storm remnant raises drainage concern

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The remnants of Hurricane Dorian are raising concerns about stormwater in North Litchfield, where Georgetown County has been working on drainage improvements.

The storm passed offshore in early September, causing heavy rains that flooded portions of the neighborhood. It also caused two sections of the wooded shoreline along Flagg Pond to break loose and float south toward Boyle Drive. A resident captured the passage of the floating islands on video.



Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

Flooding during Dorian.

The vegetation is now stuck near the bridge to the Bike the Neck path along Boyle. "It's already blocking the drainage," said Cindy Kerr, president of

the Litchfield Beaches Property Owners Association. "A lot of people are upset about that."

Flagg Pond is owned by the adjacent property owners, not the association or the county.

However, Georgetown County is working on drainage improvements from Litchfield by the Sea through North Litchfield to Sandy Island Road. It is due to replace a culvert under Boyle Drive next year to increase the flow of water.

The POA board this week agreed that it doesn't want to take on the debris removal on private property, but members said

SEE "DRAINAGE," PAGE 3

PAWLEYS ISLAND

Ex-officer's lawsuit links chief's alleged exposure to firing

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A whistleblower complaint filed last week by a former part-time Pawleys Island Police officer says a complaint that the police chief exposed himself at a Murrells Inlet bar was tied to his firing a year earlier.

Charles Houser Jr. of Myrtle Beach was hired in 2018 to police the island's south end parking lot between May and September. On his first day on duty, Houser, a former Border Patrol officer, rescued two brothers who were caught in a rip current. Their uncle drowned.

That September, Houser says in a suit filed in Circuit Court, that Officer Brian Folmer "verbally abused" him in public, waving his arms, yelling and using profanity. Houser reported the incident to Police Chief Michael Fanning and filed a written complaint.

Three days later, Houser said, he was told that his seasonal work was over. He filed an unemployment claim. Houser was then told by Fanning to return all his equipment although he said he was scheduled to attend a training class in October.

Houser claims he was fired in retaliation for filing a complaint about Folmer, who he says is a close friend of Fanning.

Houser, who is representing himself in the suit, said he requested clarification from Administrator Ryan Fabbri and Mayor Jimmy Braswell, but got no response. They are not named in the suit. Neither is the town itself.

A year after he ended his work with the town, Houser was at the Beaver Bar in Murrells Inlet for a fundraiser hosted by a law enforcement motorcycle group. Fanning was also there with the Coastal Carolina Shields, a pipe and drum band that was performing.

Houser says he was sitting with his back to Fanning, who "lifted his kilt and exposed his genitalia," according to his complaint. While he didn't witness the episode, Houser says others did and it was captured on closed-circuit video.

SEE "LAWSUIT," PAGE 3



Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

The art of the horse | Richard Allen is known in his native state of Maine for creating horse sculptures from driftwood found along its rocky shores. He was visiting Pawleys Island this week and found inspiration in items washed up along the beach. He created "Windy" in the Bird's Nest Park on the island's south end.

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Bring on the heat: Thousands turn out for an annual chili cookoff in Murrells Inlet to aid the Adaptive Surf Project.

SECOND FRONT

Nonprofits: Georgetown mayor takes over as director of Helping Hands.

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