

COASTAL OBSERVER

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GEORGETOWN COUNTY COUNCIL

As clock ticks down, administrator search gears up

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County may need to find an interim administrator as it seeks a replacement for Administrator Sel Hemingway. It will also be looking for a new county attorney.

Hemingway agreed this week to delay his planned retirement from Dec. 31 to Feb. 29 with the understanding that he would no longer be in the office every day in January and February. He said he will work a minimum of 30 hours a week, and a priority will be starting the process to put a capital projects sales tax referendum on the ballot in November.

The next day, Wesley Bryant, county attorney since 2007, announced he will be leaving next month to take a job with Waccamaw Regional Council of Govern-



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Administrator Sel Hemingway will stay on through Feb. 29 while the county continues to search for his replacement, but he won't be in the office every day.

ments. Bryant is also Hemingway's son-in-law.

"It's a very frustrating series of events," Council Chairman John Thomas said.

Hemingway announced his retirement in May. After conducting its own search, County Council voted 4-3 to offer the administrator's job to David Garner, the current director of Abbeville County. He turned it down.

Ray Funnye, the county Public Services director, and Brian Tucker, the Economic Development director, were also finalists. But the council decided, also in a 4-3 vote, to hire an outside firm to conduct a new search.

The job was posted this week on the website of the International City/County Management Association by the search firm, **SEE "COUNTY," PAGE 2**

HIGHWAY 17

Traffic unit sets goal to reverse drop in stops

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Complaints by residents about a lack of traffic enforcement wasn't just perception. The number of traffic stops by deputy sheriffs decreased by more than 1,300 from 2017 to 2018, according to data compiled by the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office.

That should change in 2020 with the creation of a six-member traffic unit funded in part by a federal grant. County Council this week agreed to accept the \$257,601 **SEE "TRAFFIC," PAGE 3**

PAWLEYS ISLAND

Town budget renews debate over cuts or revenue

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

As Pawleys Island Town Council presses for a 5 percent spending cut in its new budget, the town administrator says collecting unpaid accommodations taxes could increase revenue by 20 percent.

There's a catch: the town would have to create a business license to identify which owners rent their property.

Administrator Ryan Fabbri said he finds information online about rental properties that do not pay state or local accommodations taxes. "It's a merit system. It's based on honesty," he told the council this week. "I'm not going to call someone a liar."

The 3 percent local tax and the 2 percent state tax on short-term rentals are expected to raise \$805,000 in the fiscal year that starts Jan. 1. The town doesn't **SEE "PAWLEYS," PAGE 4**



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Sand, sea and fog | Like Pawleys Island's famous spirit, the Gray Man, Daniel Thrift, above, of Marinex Construction emerges from the fog at the edge of the town's beach renourishment project. It has placed 236,000 cubic yards of offshore sand on the south end and is due to reach Third Street on the north end by March.



Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

Michael Caviris, director of special needs, looks around the auxiliary gym at Waccamaw High during the dedication.

SCHOOLS | The bond issue

Gym dedication marks midpoint of capital plan

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

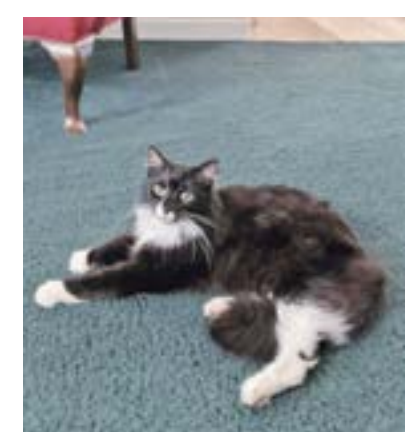
School district officials and school board members gathered at Waccamaw High School on Monday to dedicate one of the largest symbols of the \$165 million bond referendum approved by voters in 2016: the new auxiliary gym.

"I had an idea, I had a vision," said Superintendent Randy Dozier. "I didn't know it would come out this well."

But the dedication really only marks the midpoint of the district's capital improvements. As of November, \$80 million in projects had been completed. Many of those won't qualify for ceremonies like this week's because they are renovations. **SEE "SCHOOLS," PAGE 3**

All four of the county's high schools got auxiliary gyms, tennis courts and polyurethane running tracks inside the stadiums. Waccamaw High also got several new classrooms, an expanded weight room and new bleachers in the stadium. Waccamaw Intermediate School got an auxiliary gym and a new band room. Waccamaw Elementary School got an upgraded HVAC system and a new roof. Waccamaw Middle School got an upgraded HVAC system and a partial roof replacement.

"This has been an outstanding program for us," said School Board Member Richard Kerr. "It's important for the community. Whether we like it or not, athletics bring the schools together; **SEE "SCHOOLS," PAGE 3**



Judy Groves

Sylvester at home.

PETS

Sylvester brings family's 5-week search to a close

BY JOSHUA FORD
FOR THE OBSERVER

Like a magician, Sylvester the cat keeps appearing and disappearing.

His latest appearance is an early Christmas present for the families that have loved him for almost a decade.

Five weeks after wandering off from a house in Litchfield Country Club where he was placed for adoption, Sylvester showed up this week at his former home in Ricefields.

A neighbor spotted Sylvester on Monday in the driveway of the home of his late owner, Jack Haugh. Sylvester had lived there by himself, with daily visits from Haugh's daughters, since Haugh's death in August.

Sylvester was placed with a family in Litchfield Country Club for a trial adoption, but wandered **SEE "SYLVESTER," PAGE 4**

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Marching toward Christmas: Parades at Murrells Inlet and Georgetown herald the arrival of the holidays. **SECOND FRONT**

Environment: Student climate protester hopes to build on Swedish model for changing policies. **PAGE 7**



Veterans: Pat Waters only spent 15 days with his grandfather, Gen. George Patton, but they changed his life - and changed his name. **PAGE 11**

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