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50 cents

Goldfinch urging state to oppose Baruch claim to marsh

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The public will be barred from using North Inlet under a suit filed last year by the Belle W. Baruch Foundation to establish ownership of marsh land adjoining Hobcaw Barony, according to state Sen. Stephen Goldfinch. He is urging the state attorney general's office to oppose the claim.

"The lawsuit said Hobcaw and its foundation shall exclude everybody from using the inlet," Goldfinch said. "We're talking about deepwater creeks."

Property owners at DeBordieu, on the northern boundary of Hobcaw Barony, are also con-

cerned.

"Most definitely," said Blanche Brown, general manager of the DeBordieu Colony Community Association. "DeBordieu people have been using North Inlet for fishing and shelling for 50 years and have spent millions of dollars maintaining the canal and creek for access."

The Baruch Foundation filed suit in November in Circuit Court seeking a declaration that it owns the 8,000 acres of marsh that surround 8,000 acres of high ground at Hobcaw. It traces the ownership to colonial era grants from the kings of England. "They together establish, in each grant and its accompanying plan, the

grantor's clear intent to convey the land and marsh contiguous to the land between the mean high water mark and mean low water mark," the suit states.

The suit notes that the state of South Carolina also has a claim to the marsh, which is considered public trust property.

"Our position is still the same," said George Chastain, executive director of the Baruch Foundation. "There are no changes to North Inlet."

Goldfinch said the Baruch Foundation asked the state Department of Natural Resources to create a shellfish management plan for North Inlet that would
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Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

The Baruch Foundations says access to North Inlet won't be affected by the suit. Sen. Stephen Goldfinch disagrees.

TOURISM

Shift of \$23,300 from marketing to park project draws complaints

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Tourism officials are not happy about Georgetown County Council's decision to shift \$23,300 in accommodations tax funds from marketing to a park project in the town of Andrews.

"Any decrease in [our] budget presents a challenge," Beth Stedman, president of the Chamber of Commerce, told the county's Tourism Management Commission last week. The chamber provides staff for the commission.

Mark Stevens, the chamber's tourism director, said the county can't get more people to come here if it spends less money on marketing. "That's not going to work," he said.

Accommodations tax money, which is raised from a 2 percent state tax on short-term rentals, is awarded annually for tourism-related projects. The county had \$974,648 on hand to dole out for 2019.

In December, the county's Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee discussed and voted on 16 grant requests totaling \$1.08 million.

The commission always gets the lion's share of the money since it is the marketing arm of
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SCHOOLS

| Waccamaw Intermediate

Founding principal takes new job

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

When Principal Tim Carnahan met with the teachers of Waccamaw Intermediate School before it opened in 2008, he gave them some advice: love the kids like they're your own.

Twelve years later Carnahan is leaving the school to become principal at Lexington Elementary near Columbia.

"It's hard to walk away, it's been a hard decision for us," Carnahan said. "We have a peace

Principal Tim Carnahan explains his decision to Lauren Ratz, left, and Jessie Hammel, who wrote letters to him asking him to stay.

Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

about [it], but at the same time it's sad."

Although the principal that Carnahan will replace at Lexington Elementary retired last week, the exact date of Carnahan's departure from Waccamaw Inter-

mediate is not set.

"It gives me a longer time to say goodbye to everybody," Carnahan said.

Carnahan has spent his entire 28-year career with the Georgetown County School District. He was a teacher and assistant principal at McDonald Elementary School, assistant principal at Sampit Elementary School, and principal at Pleasant Hill Elementary School before moving to the district office, where he spent a year helping to plan, design
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MURRELLS INLET

Townhouse project raises concerns over traffic

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Leon Rice and Mike Wooten both live in Wachesaw Plantation.

Rice sees traffic back up at the intersection of Wachesaw Road and Bypass 17 every day.

Wooten sees less traffic on Wachesaw Road now that improvements on other area roads give drivers more options.

Rice is president of Preserve Murrells Inlet. Wooten is president of DDC Engineers, which prepared the plan for 143 townhouses in the second phase of Waterleaf off Wachesaw Road.

The Georgetown County Planning Commission last week approved the project over objections from Rice and members

Traffic backup

Wesley Road at Bypass 17 is currently rated F in its level of service, the worst rating.

70

The current morning wait time in seconds.

111

The projected wait in 2022 without the townhouse development.

150

The projected wait in 2022 with the 143 townhouses.

Source: Stantec

ELECTION 2020

Library relaxes limits on political activities

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

At the start of a year that includes a special election, two primaries and a general election, the Georgetown Library System has loosened its restrictions on "electioneering" inside its branches.

The library board voted last week to allow candidates to pass out campaign literature during events inside meeting rooms as long as that literature doesn't solicit donations or volunteers.

"I feel very strongly that freedom of speech has different [forms]," said library director Dwight McInvaill. "As a library, we support freedom of speech."

Karol Anderson, chairwoman of the county Republican Party, asked the library board to change the policy last November.

"It would be great if they could hand out their materials," she told the board last week.



Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

Soliciting votes during a GOP club straw poll at the Waccamaw Library in 2016.

vaill that he revise the letter that people receive when they reserve a room for a political event. The letter will be very specific about what can and can't be done, McInvaill said.

A survey by McInvaill of 46 of the state's library systems found that 69.5 percent prohibit electioneering, 24 percent allow electioneering but not solicitation, and 6.5 percent have no meeting rooms. Only three counties have no restrictions.

An Horry County library ran into a problem when its meeting room was used by a political campaign as a base for volunteers phoning for support and donations for a candidate.

The library policy still prohibits the distribution of bumper stickers and signs, and the display of signs anywhere on library property at any time.

"We would never solicit for

[candidates]," Anderson said.

"I think this would be a happy medium," McInvaill said.

Although the board didn't vote to change the policy, it did approve a request from McIn-

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Head of the class: 2019 was a tough year for A.J. Kohut, the Waccamaw High resource officer and the county's deputy of the year.

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of Keep It Green, who asked the commission to curb high-density development that is changing the character of the community.

The development is on 19.4 acres between Wesley Road and Old Kings Highway. It will connect to the 240-unit apartment complex in the first phase of Waterleaf. Both phases, owned by Graycliff Capital Development of Greenville, are rental units. The property is zoned "general residential," which allows multi-family development.

"It's on the books. The property is appropriately zoned," Boyd Johnson, the county planning director, said. The commission's review was limited to ensuring the project followed the requirements of the county development regulations. "You can't say, for example, it's too dense," Johnson added.

The project density is 8.3 units an acre, once space for streets and wetlands is deducted.

"The proposed density should be cut in half," Rice said in a written statement to the commission. "The planning board should not allow the highest density possible."

Wooten noted that the regulations allow about 25 more units on the site. "This project is a lot less dense than it could be," he said.

Wooten also pointed out that 69 percent of the property will remain pervious surface, able to absorb stormwater. The county
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