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GEORGETOWN COUNTY

Budget plan won't raise property taxes

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Property taxes won't rise this year to fund Georgetown County government operations under a draft budget that is up for approval next month.

The county will draw on reserves for the third straight year to balance the general fund and sheriff's office budgets. But Ed Kilcullen, the finance director, said the county didn't want to raise the tax rate because of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the economy.

"I think it's the first time since 2008 that the county hasn't used that capacity," he said.

State law limits the ability of local governments to raise taxes to the combination of the increase in local population and the federal Consumer Price Index. For Georgetown County, that equals 2.53 percent (.72 for growth and 1.81 for the CPI).

The county will use \$333,000 of the \$11 million in its reserve to balance the \$31.3 million general fund. It will use \$230,000 of the sheriff's office reserve of \$733,000 to balance that department's \$15.7 million budget.

County employees will not receive cost-of-living pay raises under the new budget, Kilcullen said. But the county faces higher costs for employee benefits, with workers compensation up

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CORONAVIRUS

Library doors will reopen for patrons with masks

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

The Waccamaw Library will begin allowing patrons inside the building on Monday for short periods as long as they're wearing a mask.

"We've been trying to figure out how to open the facilities. We haven't done so casually," Dwight McInvaill, the Georgetown County library director, told the library board last week. "We don't want people to be scared. We're doing more than the science tells us that we are needful of doing. We want them to be comfortable."

Library branches have been closed to the public since March 18 due to safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, although staff have continued to work.

Beginning Monday, the library will be open to the public weekdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Weekend hours have been discontinued for now.

A limited number of patrons who are wearing masks will be allowed in the building at a time, and will be given a short window of time to browse and check out materials. Computers and video gaming systems will be off limits.

The library will keep a supply of disposable masks on hand for patrons who don't have their own, and all staff members will wear masks in public areas.

"We haven't had a single staff member protest," McInvaill said. McInvaill knows the new mask policy will be unpopular with some patrons.

"To some people, this would be totally wrong," he said.

The library will waive the mask requirement for children 2 and under, and people with breathing issues or special needs.

Patrons who don't wear a mask will be asked to use the

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Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

The Grundoon attracts curious beachgoers after washing ashore at Litchfield on Monday.

LITCHFIELD BEACH

Sailor's night out ends on lee shore

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A weekend cruise from Georgetown to Murrells Inlet ended abruptly at Litchfield on Memorial Day.

The 30-foot Catalina sailboat Grundoon came ashore just south of the Litchfield Inn around 2 a.m., said Joshua Powers, the owner. He lives aboard the boat in Georgetown.

Powers and a friend were sailing to Murrells Inlet on Sunday. They anchored on a shoal about 150 yards off the beach and swam ashore to the inn for drinks. They were back on board around 8:30 p.m., Powers said.

"We were just coming out here for a day or two," he said. "Sometimes I go to a place for a day and end up staying a month or two months."

It was an east wind that developed into Tropical Storm Bertha on Wednesday that extended his stay at Litchfield.

The anchor line chafed as the boat rocked in the surf.

"We were watching last night," a bystander told Powers. "It was bobbing like a cork."

Around 1 or 2 a.m., the line broke. Powers said he awoke to find the boat in the surf. He threw out a spare anchor to keep the boat from drifting farther up on the beach as the tide rose.

Powers called a towing service, which quoted him a price of \$5,000 to get the boat afloat. "I might even try to do it myself if the weather gets right," he said.



Joshua Powers, left, explains to beachgoers how his sailboat ended up on Litchfield Beach on Memorial Day.

NONPROFITS | All 4 Paws

Grant for 'can do' idea will fund vet clinic

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Staff at All 4 Paws Animal Rescue take to the road when it is time to spay or neuter cats and dogs, driving as far as Moncks Corner to use clinic space. So a couple of shipping containers will come in handy.

The nonprofit has received a \$230,000 grant from the Petco Foundation that will allow it to set up a spay and neuter clinic in a pair of 40-foot-long shipping containers.

It will be the first vet clinic developed by Clinics in a Can, which began converting containers into medical facilities in

2002.

"When you step inside one of these clinics you would think you were in a regular clinic or ER," said Mike Wawrzewski, a physician's assistant who founded the company. It was an outgrowth of a Christian mission that built hospitals overseas.

The company, based in Wichita, Kan., has made clinics for an array of human services, including COVID-19 testing. They are intended to go to places with limited resources and infrastructure. This will be the first veterinary clinic.

"It's going to be a fraction of the cost of a big clinic," said

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Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Allison Gillespie and Tom Carter look at a sketch of the clinic, which will fit on an existing slab on the shelter's property.

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