

COASTAL OBSERVER

Vol. XXXIX No. 8

Pawleys Island, South Carolina ~ August 6, 2020

50 cents

Officials pedal fast to try to keep bike route funds in county

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Sponsors of a bike path in Murrells Inlet have less than two months to try to keep a federal grant in Georgetown County. The money was set to be transferred to a project in Horry County until state Sen. Stephen Goldfinch raised concerns.

The \$628,000 in federal funds for transportation alternatives was allocated to the city of Georgetown in 2014 for the ex-

pansion of the East Coast Greenway. The project was approved by the Grand Strand Area Transportation Study, a regional body that reviews transportation funding. The city was required to provide a 20 percent match.

Members of the GSATS policy committee were asked last week to approve the transfer of the money to a project in North Myrtle Beach.

Goldfinch, who chairs the committee, asked GSATS staff to come up with an alternative.

"That's a big deal to me to lose a project in Georgetown County," he said. "I prefer to keep that money where it started."

He would like to see it spent on the Inlet to Intracoastal bike route sponsored by Murrells Inlet 2020.

The Georgetown project fell victim to delays and turnover in city government, Mark Hoeweler, executive director of GSATS, said.

"Every time somebody new comes on board, whether that's in

administration or a city engineer, they don't know about the project," he said. "We've got to bring them up to speed and they've got to decide what choices they want to make. It's just been one of those things that we could never get it nailed down."

Other jurisdictions were asked last year if they had a project that could replace the one in Georgetown so the funding wouldn't be lost, Hoeweler said. The money was part of a federal transportation bill and has to al-

located by the end of the federal fiscal year on Sept. 30.

"That's what North Myrtle and Horry County did," he said. "They were totally coming in to save the day at the last minute. I've asked them to be patient while we try to work this out."

Boyd Johnson, the Georgetown County planning director, serves on the GSATS study team. He said he didn't learn that the money was available until earlier this summer. "We were

SEE "BIKES," PAGE 2



HURRICANE ISAIAS

Storm tests island's new beach

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Engineers are at work to figure out how much of the 1.1 million cubic yards of sand pumped onto the beach at Pawleys Island over the winter survived the passage of Hurricane Isaias this week.

The storm cut into the dune created as part of a \$14.3 million beach renourishment project. In a few places on the island's south end, the storm surge broke through where walkways crossed the dune.

But the beach remained wide. And mostly clean.

Isaias was notable for what it didn't leave behind: shells for beachcombers and debris from damaged walkways and stairs.

The renourished beach at Pawleys Island kept the storm surge from washing under the houses on Springs Avenue. "It did what it was supposed to do," Town Administrator Ryan Fabbri said.

SEE "STORM," PAGE 3

Eyes on the storm | Water broke through the new dune at some homes on Pawleys Island, top right. Madelyn Cline, right, moves fast as the tide rises over a walkway at North Litchfield. At bottom right, a visitor splashes through water covering the new beach on Pawleys Island.



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer



LAND USE

Townhouse plan saves trees, but raises density

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A plan to build townhouses on the corner of one of the busiest intersections west of Highway 17 will save trees and reduce traffic impacts, according to the project's designer.

It will also require a zoning change to increase the density from six units to 15.

"It's going to be a tough sell because of the Litchfield tennis courts," said Bruce Watts, who designed the project for a group of investors that have a contract to buy 3.3 acres at the corner of Waverly and Kings River roads from Calvin Gilmore, the country singer and founder of the Carolina Opry. Gilmore has a house across the intersection.

Plans to rezone the former Litchfield Racquet Club for residential development last year led to the formation of the citizens group Keep It Green, which has spoken out against multi-family development.

The Gilmore house is surrounded by live oaks and other trees. "That's how we were able to get the property from him, by promising him it would look like his property," Watts said. "We're going to leave every tree that's not in a building footprint."

Watts added that he is not a partner in the developer, but came up with the concept. He is a builder who created the commercial phase of Mingo in Willbrook and the Da Gullah Way mixed-use development off Highway 17.

The project known as Waverly at Kings calls for three

SEE "REZONING," PAGE 2

PAWLEYS ISLAND

Town takes another look at design code

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Concern over the size of new homes has renewed efforts to create an architectural review board for the town of Pawleys Island. It's an idea that officials have rejected in the past, but which now has support from the mayor and new Planning Commission chairman.

"I just feel real strongly about this," said John Hildreth, the commission chairman. "What in the world can we do to keep the island look."

The commission met this summer for the first time in 16 months to start work on an update of the state-mandated comprehensive plan for the town. The conversation turned to the style of new construction.

The town limits the habitable space of structures to 4,000 square feet. It also limits the amount of impervious surface on a lot to 40 percent. To maximize space "you get this boxy look," Town Administrator Ryan Fabbri said.

The traditional "Pawleys look" has pitched roofs and wrap-around porches. Those are sacrificed to increase the interior space, Fabbri said.

SEE "PAWLEYS," PAGE 2

EDUCATION | Back to school

Signups for virtual classes top 4,000

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

School district officials want everyone to know that the Georgetown Virtual Program is not a revolving door and students enrolled in it should expect to stay until the end of the first semester in January.

District staff will review every request to withdraw a student from the program after school starts on Sept. 8, but Superintendent of Schools Keith Price said approval is not guaranteed.

"It's going to be incredibly difficult to manage," Price told the School Board on Tuesday.

School Board Member Pat De-

Leone said she's already heard from parents who want to withdraw their children from the virtual program as soon as the district fully reopens schools.

If parents are not prepared to make the one-semester commitment, they have until Aug. 14 to withdraw a student without needing the district's permission.

As of Wednesday, 4,062 county students were enrolled.

Doug Jenkins, executive director of human resources, said more than 60 teachers have applied to teach in the virtual program, but that is not enough.

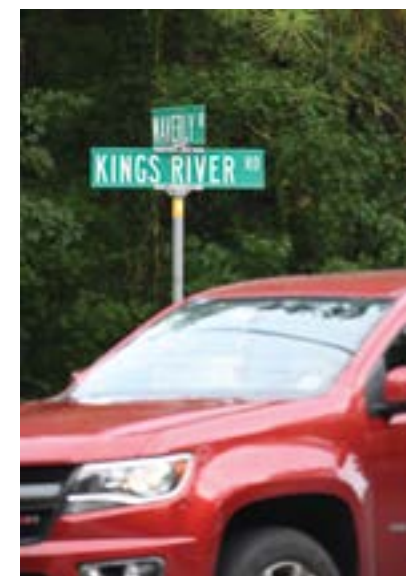
Once the district has the final number of students, it will know how many teachers it needs.

At that time, the district will also separate the students not enrolled in the virtual program into A and B groups in case it implements its hybrid phase, which has students in school two days a week with their group, distance learning two days, and at home on Wednesdays for a flex day.

Fedrick Cohens, the district's executive director of curriculum and instruction, told the School Board that students in the A group will go to school on Mondays and Tuesdays, and students in the B group will go to school on Thursdays and Fridays.

Originally, the district was going to split the groups into

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Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

The intersection at Waverly and Kings River roads is proposed for a roundabout in a new traffic study.

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Growing season: With community garden, nonprofit plans to raise more than vegetables and flowers.

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