

COASTAL OBSERVER

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Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Karen Yaniga, a town property owner, joins in calling on the mayor to step down.

PAWLEYS ISLAND

NAACP threatens legal action to force mayor to resign

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The local chapter of the NAACP this week turned up the pressure on Mayor Brian Henry to resign following a racially charged Facebook post last month. A protest outside Town Hall drew about 60 people ahead of Town Council's monthly meeting, which was held online, and organizers promised to return every week.

The NAACP threatened a legal challenge to Henry's residency, renewing an issue from last year's town election. Henry changed his residency from a house on the mainland to the Sea View Inn in order to challenge Jimmy Braswell, who was seeking a second term as mayor.

"My statement to Mayor Henry today is to resign now," said Marvin Neal, NAACP chapter president. "We will continue to come until he resigns or the courts remove him. That's a choice he has."

The NAACP successfully challenged the residency of Georgetown County Council Member Austin Beard last year. The county Board of Voter Registration and Elections ruled unanimously that Beard was not a resident of District 5, where he had rented a house, but admitted he had never lived in it. Beard resigned.

"There are many things in question with Mayor Henry right now. He knows we are looking. He knows we are looking at every piece of evidence that we can to have him removed," Neal said.

Henry said he has no plans to resign.

"The island is the reason we moved here 19 years ago, and I recently took an oath to protect its future," he said. "I plan to honor that commitment."

Henry Thomas, an island resident, circulated a petition during the protest calling on Town Council to demand Henry's resignation. "Pawleys Island was embarrassed, ashamed and angry before mayor Brian Henry's recent racial rant," it states.

It seeks signatures from 15 percent of the registered voters, a

SEE "MAYOR," PAGE 3



Scotti and Kim Madison, property owners in the town, hold signs supporting Brian Henry during the protest.

SALES TAX | Spending the surplus

Council members find uses for extra \$1M

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

It didn't take long for Georgetown County Council members to figure out how to spend \$1 million in capital improvement funds. The money comes from surplus revenue from a capital improvements sales tax that was in place from 2015 to 2019.

Council Member Ron

Charlton wants to use the money to upgrade the fire station in DeBordieu.

Council Member Steve Goggans wants to use the money for bike and pedestrian paths.

John Thomas, the council chairman, wants to implement a system that will give fire trucks and ambulances priority at traffic signals.

The 1-cent sales tax was approved by voters in 2014 and

EDUCATION

Phase II: Back to school really means school

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

With the state reporting positive COVID-19 tests at only two schools in the district, students are heading back into classrooms starting on Monday.

"While much work has been done, there is still much to do," Superintendent Keith Price said.

The state Department of Health and Environmental Control is reporting less than five cases of COVID-19 among students at both Waccamaw High School and Andrews Elementary School.

"Our latest DHEC reports still indicate that we are moving in the right direction with regard to our spread of this disease," Price told the school board this week.

The district's hybrid phase has one group of students in classrooms on Mondays and Tuesdays and distance learning on Thursdays and Fridays; and a second group in classrooms on Thursdays and Fridays and distance learning on Mondays and Tuesdays. Wednesdays are flexible days for both groups.



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

School buses will be back on the road next week.

Parents should have received information on what group their child is in from the child's school.

The district is staggering the start time of schools to make sure there are enough buses to transport students.

Elementary school students "SEE SCHOOLS," PAGE 7

BEACH RENOURISHMENT

Judge denies town's bid to end suits over easements

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A challenge to efforts by the town of Pawleys Island to condemn easements on three oceanfront lots for beach renourishment can move forward, a Circuit Court judge has ruled.

But Judge Ben Culbertson told the property owners who are seeking to block the condemnation that even if they win their suits, the town can try again if the current effort is found lacking.

The easements are needed to allow the Army Corps of Engineers to participate in a renourishment project on the island's south end that was completed earlier this year. The partnership will make the town eligible for federal funds to maintain and repair storm damage to the renourished beach for 50 years.

The town obtained easements from the owners of 110 lots on 1.4 miles of beach. Town Council voted to obtain the last three easements through eminent domain. The property owners filed suit to block the move, saying the easements are no

longer necessary because the renourishment work is done and challenging the process.

The town moved to dismiss the suits by Frank Beattie, Barry Stanton and Sunset Lodge LLC, whose principal is Nick Franchina. If allowed to continue their suits, the town sought a \$10 million bond from the property owners to cover any damage to the beach that the town would have to repair without help from the Corps.

Culbertson denied both requests following an hour-long hearing last week.

The state's eminent domain law allows property owners to challenge the process, and stays the condemnation. Once the condemnation notice is filed with the court, the town has the use of the easement and any further legal action is limited to compensation. The town did not offer any compensation, citing appraisals that showed the properties gained value for the sand placed on the beach by the renourishment project.

"It's not a very obtrusive document," Town Attorney David DuRant said of the easements. "All that it is, is the right to go

SEE "BEACH," PAGE 4

LAND USE

Goggans unsure of role as rezoning comes up for vote

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Council Member Steve Goggans is still considering whether to recuse himself from a vote next week on a rezoning that has drawn opposition from area residents.

The project, known as Waverly and Kings, originally called for 14 townhouses. That was scaled back after a public hearing where neighbors and the citizens group Keep It Green raised objections. The current zoning would allow six single-family lots.

The new proposal is for 10 duplex units. They will be clustered on the 3.3-acre site at the corner of Waverly and Kings River roads. That will allow trees on the site to be preserved, said Bruce Watts, who designed the project for a group of investors who have a contract to buy the property from Calvin Gilmore. It will also result in one driveway, on Waverly Road, rather than six driveways.

Goggans' architecture firm "SEE "REZONING," PAGE 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



The path forward: Sidewalk remains weak link in bike route as work continues on new phases.

SECOND FRONT

Arts: Theater group returns to the stage with escapist comedy. **PAGE 8**

Sports: WHS volleyball team sweeps Georgetown to stay undefeated in region. **PAGE 12**



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