

# COASTAL OBSERVER

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50 cents

## Elections chairman quits over campaign sign dispute

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
AND CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

A neighborhood dispute over campaign signs led to the resignation of the chairman of the Georgetown County Board of Elections and Voter Registration. Dean Smith, a member of the elections board for 15 years, re-



"I didn't want it to end like this," Dean Smith said.

signed Wednesday, two days after Republican Party officials filed a complaint with the sheriff's office saying Smith helped his wife deface a Trump/Pence campaign sign. Rita Smith resigned as the training coordinator for the election commission and as a poll manager. "We regret this lapse of judgment on our part. I do not want

to be a distraction to the conduct of this very important election," Dean Smith said. The Smiths live in Rosecrest, part of the Pawleys Landing neighborhood off the South Causeway. Rita is the president of the homeowners association. Karol Anderson, who chairs the county Republican Party, and Jerry Rovner, who chairs the 7th

District GOP committee, told a sheriff's office investigator that a Rosecrest resident complained to them that Trump/Pence signs kept disappearing from his yard. The resident, who they said wanted to remain anonymous, put up a deer camera in his yard. The camera showed someone take one sign and damage

SEE "ELECTION," PAGE 3

PAWLEYS ISLAND | The mayor and the NAACP

## Henry makes plans for 2021 after protest march

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Pawleys Island Mayor Brian Henry will run for a second term in 2021. The announcement came as Town Council discussed health insurance for elected officials.

Henry has been under pressure from the local chapter of the NAACP to resign since August over a social media post. The group held a protest march on the island over the weekend. It drew about 30 people, of whom 22 made the walk from the Publix grocery on Highway 17 to the beach in front of the Sea View Inn, which Henry owns.

Marvin Neal, the NAACP chapter president, said they would return. He repeated his call for Henry to step down.

But during discussion this week about whether the council members want to join the state health-care plan, Henry said he would decide next October.

"I plan to a.) serve until then, and I plan to run again in November 2021," he said. Henry's post on Facebook linked the shooting death of two people at a traffic accident outside Georgetown to the social justice protests taking place in cities around the country. The victims were white. The man arrested for the shootings is Black. Henry said white people wouldn't riot, "so why do we stand by and allow BLM to lawlessly destroy great American cities and threaten their citizens on a daily basis?"

SEE "MAYOR," PAGE 4



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Marchers head south along the beach during Saturday's protest. It drew 22 people and an equal number of police and reporters.



SAFETY

## Health care provider put inmate lives at risk, says jail director

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The health and lives of inmates at the Georgetown County jail are at risk from the lack of care provided by the firm paid to provide the service, according to a memo from the jail director.

The county is looking for an additional \$255,000 to hire a new health care provider for the jail because the sheriff's office, which is in charge of the facility, will not consider renewing the contract with the current provider, Southern Health Partners.

County Council this week approved a contract with Mediko Correctional Health Care at \$698,283. The budget for health care at the jail is \$443,000.

The county had a five-year contract with Southern Health that began in 2016. The firm's bid for a new contract was lower than Mediko's.

But in the memo outlining the problems with Southern Health, Neil Johnson, director of the Georgetown County Detention Center, said "there will never be an efficient and effective medical service as long as we continue contracting with SHP."

Among six pages of concerns, SEE "JAIL," PAGE 2

LANDUSE

## Groups vow legal challenge to rezoning process

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Three projects that total 307 housing units are up for review today by the Georgetown County Planning Commission. While the circumstances differ, two citizens groups say they share a common feature: their applications are incomplete.

Keep It Green and Preserve Murrells Inlet say the three projects up for review don't have approved stormwater plans as required by county ordinance. They told the Planning Commission in a letter last week that they are prepared to go to court if the county approves plans that don't comply with the ordinance.

"We believe that this practice not only fails to comply with the law, but also deprives the Planning Commission and County Council of the opportunity to have the benefit of all the required information upon which to evaluate a plan before they approve or disapprove, and it further denies adjoining landowners and the public their right of due process," the groups state.

Wesley Bryant, the deputy county administrator and county attorney, said this week that the groups are misreading the ordinance.

The stormwater ordinance refers to "all plans which are subject to approval by the Georgetown County Planning Commission."

"These plans shall not be forwarded to the Georgetown County Planning Commission until the Stormwater Management and Sediment Control Plans have been approved by the Stormwater Division," the ordinance says. Keep It Green and Preserve

Murrells Inlet say that means an approved stormwater plan should be included with the information the Planning Commission receives.

"We have expressed our concerns to the department, and the department has not provided us with satisfactory statutory authority for its practice and seems to rest primarily on the fact that this has been a long-standing practice," the groups state.

The intent of the ordinance is not to require developers to commission a stormwater plan before they get approval for a project, Bryant said.

"You will stifle development in Georgetown County. That's not good planning practice," he said.

Bryant said "plans that are subject to approval" do not include stormwater plans. "The Planning Commission doesn't decide on technical plans," he

SEE "ZONING," PAGE 2

SCHOOLS | Tracking the coronavirus

## District to post own data as cases rise

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The Georgetown County School District will begin releasing its own COVID-19 infection numbers in the next couple of weeks.

"Like a lot of other districts, we've just decided we need to put up our own," said Alan Walters, the district's director of safety. "We're working out the logistics of how that's going to look, how that's going to happen."

The move comes amid complaints about the state Department of Health and Environmental Control website. In some instances, schools are still listed as having cases even though the information dates to August. In others, schools that currently have cases are not listed.

"Once you get on that list, apparently there's no way to get off it," Walters said. "People look at that and they just see a particular school is still on the list, and they don't dig into the details to



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Lessons in social distancing at Waccamaw Elementary.

see that it's not a current problem, it's an old problem."

Seven Georgetown County schools have cases of COVID-19, according to the most recent DHEC report, released last week.

Waccamaw Elementary, McDonald Elementary, Maryville Elementary and Rosemary Middle, have cases among faculty. Waccamaw High and Georgetown High

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