

COASTAL OBSERVER

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50 cents

Duplexes win approval and threat of legal action

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A citizens group is considering legal action after Georgetown County Council voted this week to approve a zoning change to allow 10 duplex units on property where up to six single-family homes are currently allowed. The 6-1 vote on the project known as Waverly and Kings followed pleas from area residents to deny the change because it increases residential density.

"The next step for us is to seek legal counsel to explore our op-

tions, because politics as usual in Georgetown County must stop," the group Keep It Green said in a statement after the meeting.

The group has rallied opposition to the project since it was proposed in August with 14 townhouses in three three-story buildings on the 3.3 acres at the corner of Waverly and Kings River roads. The property is owned by Calvin Gilmore, whose home is on the opposite corner of the intersection. He put it up for sale conditioned on the buyer's willingness to preserve the trees on the site.

Bruce Watts, who designed



Traffic at the intersection was an issue for opponents. A deputy directed traffic that detoured around an accident on Highway 17.

the project for the buyers, reduced the number of units to 10 units in five buildings and re-

duced the building height to a story and a half following a Planning Commission hearing in Au-

gust. They will be clustered in the center of the property, leaving a 40-foot wide buffer of trees around the perimeter and 2.4 acres undisturbed. The commission deadlocked 3-3 on the rezoning. County Council remanded it for a second hearing on the revision. The commission voted 3-2 to recommend approval. Two members were absent.

Keep It Green members have argued that the change from "residential half-acre" to "flexible design district" zoning violates the county zoning code because it

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A rendering of changes proposed for Highway 17 at Pawleys Island in a traffic study.

HIGHWAY 17

Test driving changes via animation

BY CHARLES SWENSON
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A proposed redesign of the main intersection in the Pawleys Island business district will replace left turns with U-turns as a way to reduce accidents and keep traffic moving. The new look for the Waverly Road / North Causeway intersection is contained in a study of the Highway 17 corridor on Waccamaw Neck that started last year.

The draft of the study also

proposes three new traffic signals, closing 12 median cuts, adding three roundabouts on side streets and the extension of the raised median along Highway 17 in the Pawleys Island area. It is an update to a 2003 study that has guided land-use regulations and led to the construction of the raised median in the Pawleys business district. Like the earlier study, the update includes a recommendation for expanding the highway from four to six lanes.

But the new proposals come

with animated renderings that show what the new features will look like. They can be viewed at gsats.org.

"It will give you a feel for the corridor and where you are along the corridor," said Mark Hoeweler, executive director of the Grand Strand Area Transportation Study, which is funding the \$100,000 corridor study.

A draft of the update by AECOM, a global engineering firm with an office in Columbia, is up

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FLOODING | A community at the crossroads

County looks at policy change for private streets

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The hurricane that brushed the coast in August was more memorable for its name, Isaias, than its impact. Yet it was not until six days after the storm that mail service returned to Bent Tree Lane, where the glassy surface of the standing water reflected blue skies but hid potholes of unplumbed depth.

"Everybody who's seen this road says it's the worst road in Pawleys," said Mike Zavacky. "It's like being on the moon."

The private road serves a 16-lot subdivision at the corner of Martin Luther King Road and Parkersville Road. Most of the residents along the road would like Georgetown County to take it over, but they have been told it doesn't meet county standards despite its 50-foot right-of-way.

They have also been told that the flooding that they have seen increase in the last five years would be helped by a county drainage project along Mar-



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

tin Luther King Road. While the first phase has been completed, the work that would aid the Bent Tree residents has been delayed because two property owners upstream won't provide drainage easements, according to county

officials.

County Council Member Steve Goggans wants to find a way to fix what he calls "orphan roads." "It's been a real issue in the community," he said.

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EDUCATION

Standardized tests show district students lost less ground than expected

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Students in Georgetown County schools didn't lose as much ground as some educators and parents feared after spending a third of the last school year out of the classroom, according to results of standardized tests in reading and math.

In grades three through eight, 47 percent of students met growth standards on the Measures of Academic Progress given in September. That was down just a tenth of a point from 2019.

In math, the district scores were 9.1 points lower than 2019.

The MAP tests are given three times a year. The first round results are usually the lowest because of the "summer slide" that follows the end of the school year. Students left their classrooms March 13 and finished the year with remote learning due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The state legislature required students in kindergarten through ninth grade take MAP tests during the first two weeks of school. In the county, 65 percent took the tests virtually.

"COVID-19 and the closure of schools in the spring created significant challenges for teachers

and students across our state," Superintendent Keith Price said. "We were asked to pause new learning and focus our time on review activities and class remediation. The loss of focused instructional time on new learning, individualized interventions, and effective remediation opportunities contributed to this drop in mathematics achievement."

Comparisons are not available for students in kindergarten, first grade and ninth grade, since this is the first year the district has used MAP at those levels.

Seventh- and eighth-graders at Waccamaw Middle and Coastal Montessori Charter schools outperformed the district average in both reading and math.

"My teachers could not be working harder. In a lot of areas we've been flying it," Waccamaw Middle principal Jamie Curry said. "Every one of my teachers is doing the very best they can. And they're going to continue to do it."

While Waccamaw Middle's reading scores were comparable to 2018 and 2019, math scores showed a slight decrease.

"We're going to look at it and do the best we can with what we

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ELECTION 2020

First-time candidates enjoy learning experience in school board race

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

As their first campaigns for public office draw to a close, the candidates for Georgetown County School Board in Districts 1 and 6 have enjoyed the process.

"It seems to have gone pretty well," said Lynne B. Ford, a candidate in District 6. "I've met a lot of great people and heard a lot of good feedback."

"I think it went great," said Vincent Davis, a candidate in District 6.

As president of the Pawleys Island Civic Club, Davis helped register 60 people to vote.

A third candidate in District 6, the Rev. Ronald O. Thomson Sr., wasn't available for comment this week.

"It's been an enjoyable experience," said Patti Hammel, a candidate in District 1. "I met lots of people via the phone I wouldn't have met."

Hammel's opponent, Amanda Darden, said it's been a humbling, yet rewarding experience.

"I have seen, through this campaign, all the phenomenal things that are going on in Georgetown County, all the great people that are doing things that maybe our community doesn't know about," Darden said. "It's been a real eye-opening experience to be out there."

The humbling experience for Ford was when people told her that they had voted for her or were going to.

"It's showing by their actions that they believe in me and they are supporting me," Ford said.

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