

COASTAL OBSERVER

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Delegation catches up on filling vacant seats

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The board of the Georgetown County Water and Sewer District will be back at full strength for the first time in nearly four years if Gov. Henry McMaster approves four nominations from local legislators.

The delegation met this week for the first time in two years to fill vacant seats and renew expired terms of eight boards and commissions. "It's been a real challenge over the last 18 months," said state Sen. Stephen Goldfinch, who chaired the four-member delegation.

The long-time secretary to the delegation, Paulette Radcliffe, re-

tired due to illness and a new secretary, Sabrina Todd, had to reconstruct the delegation's history of appointments.

When state Sen. Ronnie Sabb joined the delegation in 2014, "there was a lot of uncertainty as to who was responsible for the nominations for particular seats," he said. "What we have before us now is a road map."

There were still a few detours on the way to making the nominations as the senators and state Reps. Carl Anderson and Lee Hewitt tried to establish a balance between representation for the Waccamaw Neck and the western part of the county.

Goldfinch recalled a deal that **SEE "DELEGATION," PAGE 3**



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

From left, Goldfinch, Hewitt, Anderson and Sabb sign nominations after the meeting.

Delegation splits on party lines over elections board nominee

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

State Sen. Stephen Goldfinch asked state Rep. Carl Anderson three times about Anderson's nominee for the Georgetown County Board of Voter Registra-

tion and Elections. He got the same answer each time: James Sanderson.

The nomination drew an objection from Goldfinch and abstentions from him and state Rep. Lee Hewitt, both Murrells Inlet Republicans. Anderson and state

Sen. Ronnie Sabb, both Democrats, voted in favor of naming Sanderson to the election board. Since they represent 58.44 percent of the county's population, Sanderson's name was forwarded to Gov. Henry McMaster for **SEE "VOTING," PAGE 3**

LAND USE

Rural rezoning raises concern as county considers housing needs

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The concerns are familiar. Traffic, property values, crime.

The location is different. It's a 16-acre tract outside Georgetown.

The property is part of a 65-acre "planned development" that was created in 2008 as the future site for Georgetown Memorial Hospital. The hospital, part of Tideland Health, wants to change the zoning to allow up to 90 multi-family units on the 16 acres.

Residents in nearby Wedgefield Plantation have raised concerns on social media. Phones started ringing at the Georgetown County planning department after the public notice of the rezoning went out last week, said Judy Blankenship, a senior planner.

The rezoning comes as county officials are looking for ways to encourage residential and commercial growth outside the Waccamaw Neck. A housing needs assessment prepared by Bowen National Research will be presented today to city and county officials and property developers.

The rezoning at the hospital property, formally known as the Weehaw Campus Planned Development, fits the criteria that the housing needs assessment found for development in the western part of the county.

"It's not government-subsidized housing. It's not Section 8," Blankenship said.

SEE "HOUSING," PAGE 4



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Breaking through the darkness

Easter morning draws hundreds of people to the south end of Pawleys Island for a worship service by the Pawleys Island and Georgetown Presbyterian churches. Above, the Rev. Louis Im-sande delivers the benediction as Dustin Ashenfelder gets a photograph of the sunrise.



PAWLEYS ISLAND

Owners say a court bar on easements could end suits

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The owners of three ocean-front lots on Pawleys Island are not ready to drop lawsuits challenging the town's efforts to condemn easements for beach renourishment even though a judge quashed one attempt and the town withdrew another.

"They've called the tune here, and I think it's fair to make them do at least one dance with us," Barry Stanton, an attorney who represents himself and two neighbors in the suits, told a judge last week.

He raised the possibility that the owners could seek sanctions and damages from the town, but said a bar on future condemnations on the three properties would end the litigation.

The town began condemnation proceedings last summer to obtain easements from Stanton, Frank Beattie and Sunset Lodge LLC that it says are needed to allow the Army Corps of Engineers to participate in a \$14.8 million renourishment project that was completed last March. The Corps will install vegetation and sand fence along 1.4 miles of beach at the south end. That will make that portion of the island eligible for federal funds to repair significant erosion damage and conduct future renourishment.

The property owners challenged the condemnation, saying the procedure was flawed and the town was seeking easements that were no longer necessary because the project was already completed. The Corps told the town last month that it will move forward with its share of the work on 110 other south end parcels whose owners signed easements.

A Circuit Court judge ruled in favor of the three property owners in January. Judge Michael Nettles said the defects in the condemnation process required it to be quashed.

SEE "PAWLEYS," PAGE 2



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Judge Ben Culbertson noted at the hearing that the island's south end had been cut in two by Hurricane Hugo and said owners challenging the easements face the same risk.

HIGHWAY 17 | The corridor study

Package of improvements up for county approval

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

More traffic signals, fewer left-turn options and extending the concrete median could be the keys to avoiding the expansion of Highway 17 to six lanes along the Waccamaw Neck.

Those were some of the findings of a corridor study by AECOM commissioned by the

Grand Strand Area Transportation Study, which oversees transportation planning in the region.

Ryan Eckenrode, a senior traffic engineer with AECOM, gave an overview of the study during a virtual public meeting last week.

The corridor study will now be presented to County Council and then to the GSATS policy committee, which schedules projects that are put forward by

local government for funding.

Even if there are specific things within the study that council members don't like, they are likely to move it forward, said Mark Hoeweler, the executive director of GSATS.

"All they would be doing is limiting their options in the future" if the council voted against it, he added.

The study proposes projects

over the next 20 years that would cost \$53.3 million at today's prices.

Within the next five years the study recommends making all the signals on 17 adaptive to traffic volume, installing a signal for northbound traffic at the intersection of Bypass 17 and Business 17, installing a left turn lane on Petigru Drive at Highway 17, **SEE "HIGHWAY," PAGE 2**

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Kickball: Pride is on the line as teachers take on students in Waccamaw Middle School fundraiser.

SECOND FRONT

Easter festival: A frosty morning didn't chill enthusiasm for an Easter egg hunt at All Saints Church. **PAGE 4**

Schools: Chairwoman not running for new term on charter board. **PAGE 8**



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