

COASTAL OBSERVER

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Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Former NYPD officers listen to the reading of names of colleagues who died in the attacks.

9/11 PLUS 20

They won't forget

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The sky was cloudless and serene. "Just like it was then," said Lisa Midwood, a former sergeant with the New York Police Department. She walked to the monument outside the Midway Fire and Rescue station in Willbrook to get a closer look at the short piece of twisted steel beam, part of the twin towers of the World Trade Center that fell in a terrorist at-

tack on that September morning 20 years before. Ceremonies on Saturday drew hundreds of people to the memorial installed on the 10th anniversary of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Their memories were fresh. "We lost a lot of friends," said Maureen Brooks, who once worked for NYPD. She was with John Kopyta, a former firefighter from Long Island. Both wore T-shirts that said "Never Forget." Kopyta was working off duty at a hotel the morning of the attack. He and a fellow firefighter

saw the second 767 airliner hit the South Tower. "What did we just witness?" the friend asked Kopyta. Kopyta ended up working at the site in the weeks that followed. He now works at Grand Strand Regional Medical Center, where he recently showed a 22-year-old co-worker pictures from the site. "His mouth just hung open," Kopyta said. Donna Clark of Pawleys Island was also drawn to the memorial. **SEE "9/11," PAGE 3**

Ethan and Ryan Hixson helped clean up around the Midway memorial and were invited to lead the Pledge of Allegiance by Fire Marshal Mark Nugent.



ENVIRONMENT

County drops jail time as penalty, but keeps tree cutting fines at \$500

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

People who cut trees in violation of a Georgetown County ordinance no longer face up to 30 days in jail, under a revision to the ordinance passed this week. The county's isn't trying to be generous. "It could trigger the Sixth Amendment right to counsel," said Tommy Morgan, the interim county attorney. That would mean that the county might have to pay for a public defender for someone charged with a violation, he added. The revised tree rules reduce the trunk diameter of "grand

trees" that get additional protection from 30 to 24 inches and sets criteria for the amount of existing trees that must be retained on property planned for commercial and multi-family development. "It's a significant improvement over the existing ordinance," said Holly Richardson, the county planning director. What remains unchanged is the fine of up to \$500 per tree that county may impose for violations. Council Members Steve Gogans and Bob Anderson last month asked county staff to look at a stiffer penalty. There is a cap on penalties for violations of ordinances, Morgan **SEE "TREES," PAGE 3**

PAWLEYS ISLAND

Town wants to team up for creek project

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The town of Pawleys Island wants to work with its neighbors across Midway Inlet on a project to remove silt from the creeks. "Maintaining the creek is something we all know is vital," Mayor Brian Henry said. It is one of four priorities in a strategic plan adopted by Town Council in 2020. The board of the Litchfield Beaches Property Owners Association has been gathering information about dredging in Clubhouse Creek, which enters the north side of Midway Inlet. Henry suggested the town work with the association. "We've got to start some-

TRANSPORTATION

Region expects to double federal funds for roads

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

If the U.S. House of Representatives passes a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill later this month, Georgetown County could see millions of dollars more for road projects than it usually gets. The county is part of the Grand Strand Area Transportation Study, which chooses which road projects get federal funding. GSATS coverage area also includes Horry County and part of Brunswick County, N.C. GSATS currently gets \$7.6 million a year for projects. That amount could double, according to Mark Hoeweler, its executive director. The Senate approved the infrastructure bill - which includes \$110 billion for roads and bridges - in August. The vote in the House is expected around Sept. 27.



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Residents look at proposed improvements to Bypass 17. Another factor in funding will be the results from last year's census. GSATS expanded to include parts of North Carolina after the 2010 Census. Federal funding for infrastructure is based on population numbers, and Hoeweler said Horry and Brunswick counties **SEE "ROADS," PAGE 2**

SCHOOLS

District considers bonuses to encourage vaccinations

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County School District employees may get a cash bonus for getting a COVID-19 vaccine. The school board could consider the proposal next week. The bonuses could be paid for using money from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) passed by Congress, said Lisa Johnson, the district's assistant superintendent for finance. The payouts would be \$250 for full-time employees and \$150 for part-time and temporary employees who have worked 75 hours between July 1 and Nov. 12. Substitute teachers could qualify for a \$100 bonus if ESSER will cover it. Lindsay Ann Thompson, the district's attorney, said substitutes may not be covered since they are third-party contractors. In order to be eligible, employees would have to be vaccinated before Nov. 12. The district also updated its administrative rule covering COVID-related leave to give em-

ployees a maximum of 20 days off with pay if they can't physically report to work because they are in quarantine, are experiencing symptoms or are caring for a child in quarantine. At a meeting last week, School Board Chairman Jim Dumm questioned whether the district could decline to pay COVID leave for unvaccinated employees. "Other districts have done that and it is legal," Thompson said. "That's something we might look at," Dumm said. "It's another way to incentivize people to get the vaccine." "As the next two vaccines become officially approved, rather than just emergency use authorization approved, there will be some clearer guidance on how that can work," Thompson said. Dumm encouraged district employees to get vaccinated as quickly as possible. "The statistics that I've seen is that Georgetown County is a little ahead of the state average, but the state average stinks," Dumm said. "We just stink a little bit less." **SEE "DISTRICT," PAGE 4**



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

A shoal in Midway Inlet at high tide has raised concerns.

where," he said. "Maybe the first thing is to get a study." That's what regulators told the POA. That would determine the scope of the project, its feasibility and its cost.

Pawleys Island dredged almost 40,000 cubic yards of sand from portions of Pawleys Creek at each end of the island in the winter of 2007-08. It was pumped **SEE "CREEK," PAGE 3**

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