

COASTAL OBSERVER

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Two school board members sidelined by council districts

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A redistricting map adopted this week by Georgetown County Council separates School Board Member Lynne Ford from her district by the width of a street even as it pulls the rest of the Waccamaw Neck together into three compact districts.

The seven council districts are also used by the school board



School Board Members Pat DeLeone, left, and Lynne Ford were left out of their districts.

for seven of its members. (Two are elected county-wide.) Ford in District 6 and Pat DeLeone in District 2 were drawn out of their districts, but will be able to serve out the remainder of their terms, according to the county attorney.

The county asked the state Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs to help create new district lines following the release of 2020 Census data last fall. The agency produced two alterna-

tives that kept the current council members and school board members in their existing districts. That plan also divided District 2 between the Waccamaw Neck and the Kensington neighborhood outside Georgetown. It moved DeBordieu from District 2 to District 4, which includes the city of Georgetown.

Council members rejected those changes and met with Stephen Williams, the county's GIS

manager, to revise the maps.

The final decision on the districts rests with the council, which isn't required to consider the impact on the school board.

Under the amended map adopted by the council this week, DeBordieu is back in District 2, which no longer crosses the Waccamaw River. District 1 doesn't extend beyond Murrells Inlet. District 6 runs from Murrells

SEE "DISTRICTS," PAGE 4



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

The house was completely destroyed by the early morning fire.

MIDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE

First fatal fire in over a decade claims lives of Litchfield couple

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

When Kim Fox awoke to the sounds of car alarms going off before dawn, she saw an orange glow in the bedroom of her home in the Litchfield Breezes neighborhood.

When she looked out the window, she saw the house belonging to her neighbors, Herman and Sherry Pauley, engulfed in flames.

"It was a long couple of hours just watching it burn and hoping and praying that we'd see Herman and Sherry coming down the street and that they would be OK," Fox said. "But the longer it went on the more we realized

that was not going to happen."

Herman, 72, and Sherry, 71, died in the fire last Thursday. It was the first fatal fire for Midway Fire and Rescue since November 2008.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

"They were just really wonderful neighbors and friends," Fox said. "The sweetest people I've ever met, always wanting to help."

The Pauleys's daughter, Amber Hicks, managed to escape the blaze, and took refuge at Fox's house while firefighters worked to extinguish the fire.

"The house was all wood, so it didn't take long for the house to burn down," Fox said. "It did take

the fire department awhile to get it out enough to where they could start doing some searching."

Firefighters searched through the wreckage all day for the couple's remains. They were recovered before the sun set.

Autopsies this week confirmed that the Pauleys died of smoke inhalation, Georgetown County Coroner Chase Ridgeway said.

PAUL DIAZ WAS delivering papers for the Coastal Observer at around 5:20 a.m. when he saw a red glow across from the Litchfield Restaurant. Diaz called 911 to report what he thought was a brush fire in the Holy Cross-Faith SEE "FIRE," PAGE 2

LAND USE

They said they would sue, now they have

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A group of area residents has gone to court to overturn Georgetown County Council's rezoning of property along Highway 17 to allow smaller lots for residential development.

The suit was filed last week in Circuit Court by Keep It Green Advocacy, a nonprofit law firm that spun off from the citizens group Keep It Green.

Keep It Green is joined by three couples that own property in The Colony and that community's homeowners association in asking the court for a declaratory judgment that the county violated its own ordinances and procedures in approving the zoning change for 14.8 acres owned by Benjamin Goff. The zoning was changed from "residential half-acre" to "residential 10,000 square feet." The county also changed its future land-use map to designate the parcel "medium density" rather than "low density."

The council's vote angered residents who had signed a petition and sent emails to the county in opposition. Some left the council's second reading threatening to sue.

The Colony tract "planned development" zoning was changed by the county in 2013 to allow lots as small as 8,000 square feet. That also required a change in the land-use maps from low to medium density.

The suit claims the county was wrong to compare the Goff request to The Colony without noting that the lots adjacent to SEE "SUIT," PAGE 3



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Cindy Person, a leader of Keep It Green, resigned from the group to lead the public interest law firm Keep It Green Advocacy.

Nonprofit law firm has its origins in rezoning fight

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Keep It Green started as a slogan on a bumper sticker and became a movement. It is now led to the creation of a nonprofit law firm.

Cindy Person, a long-time leader of Keep It Green, stepped down to become the director and chief counsel for Keep It Green Advocacy. She is now representing the group and seven other plaintiffs in a lawsuit that seeks to overturn the rezoning of property on Highway 17. SEE "LAW," PAGE 3



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Discarded furniture fills a ditch outside Hasty Point, part of the Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge.

ENVIRONMENT | The fight against litter

Grant helps launch county cleanup effort

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A \$25,000 state grant will jump start Georgetown County's efforts to clean up roadside trash.

The funds from Palmetto Pride will pay for a three-member, part-time litter crew. They will tackle roadsides where safety could be a concern for the volunteers that the county also hopes to attract to the effort, said Maureen Mulligan, the county environmentalist.

County Council this week approved the \$48,730 action plan for 2022 that will include track-

ing litter and illegal dumping, organizing cleanups, recruiting volunteers, educating elementary students and posting anti-litter signs.

The Environmental Services Division will coordinate the effort with other agencies and nonprofits. "We don't want to be repeating services other people are providing," Mulligan said.

"I see litter flying out of trucks all the time," Council Member Steve Goggans said.

The effort will involve the sheriff's office, said Ray Funnny, the director of Public Services. "We have a good relationship

with the sheriff's office," he said. "He has given some of our drivers tickets as well."

The litter plan has been in development for a couple of years, Funnny said.

Last year, Environmental Services spent \$1,273 on supplies for 10 cleanups that netted 15,000 pounds of trash. Without volunteers, the labor cost would have been about \$100,000, said Michelle LaRocco, head of the division.

The county hopes to have the litter crew hired by the end of February and start recruiting volunteers in the spring.

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