

COASTAL OBSERVER

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BUDGETS

First responders will see biggest rises under pay plan

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Law enforcement officers will get the largest share of pay raises included in Georgetown County's new budget. They are at the top of a three-tiered compensation plan that also raises pay for firefighters and emergency medical workers as well as general government employees.

The budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1 does not address Sheriff Carter Weaver's request for eight additional patrol deputies.

"It is a good first step by council in their attempt to make an investment in public safety," Weaver said, but he will continue to **SEE "BUDGET," PAGE 2**



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer
Sheriff Carter Weaver said he will continue to seek additional patrol deputies.

LAND USE

Proposal to increase open space aimed at curbing residential density

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Development of tracts in the high-density residential zoning districts on the Waccamaw Neck would be required to preserve 50 percent of that property as open space under a proposal up for review today by the Georgetown County Planning Commission.

The goal is to reduce future population density, said County Council Member Bob Anderson, who asked the planning staff to draft the plan.

The proposed change to the "general residential" zoning district would apply to tracts of 3 acres or more. It was one of sev-

eral recommendations made by consultants hired by the county in 2019 to study land use along the Highway 17 corridor on Waccamaw Neck.

That study by the engineering firm Stantec made the proposal as a way to improve tree protection.

"It would only apply to green-field sites of 10 acres or more," said Holly Richardson, the county planning director.

There are only seven parcels of undeveloped, "general residential" property on the Waccamaw Neck that are larger than 10 acres, she said.

The staff recommended the **SEE "DENSITY," PAGE 2**



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer
Tracts like this one on Petigru Drive would be affected.



Crowds fill Front Street for the Georgetown Food, Beer and Wine Festival. The weekend event was only one of many signs of change that is coming to the city.

Photos by Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

GEORGETOWN | Changes coming to the county seat

Hearing set to resume on fate of steel mill zoning compliance

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

A week before a decision is expected on the zoning of the Liberty Steel mill property, the head of the steelworkers union called out the chairman of the city's Board of Zoning Appeals for negative comments about the mill.

"We find it extremely unethical and a conflict of interest that chairperson Ede Graves, with a biased opinion against our steel mill, has publicly campaigned over the past few years since she moved to Georgetown to get rid of our steel mill," said James Sanderson, president of United Steelworkers Local 7898. "Clearly, Ede Graves has demonstrated her prejudice and bias against our mill. The USW is of the opinion that Ede Graves isn't capable to conduct this hearing in a fair, honest and impartial manner."

In a discussion on the "That Damn Steel Mill" Facebook page in August of 2020, Graves wrote: "Once and for all, it is time to accept it. The steel mill is NOT now and will NEVER again be a major employer in the town. #SHUT IT DOWN!"

"How can anybody conduct an honest, fair and impartial hearing with [those] type of comments directed to the employees [and] their families here at Liberty Steel," Sanderson said during a press conference on Monday. "She [doesn't] want the steel mill here. She is dead-set against the steel mill. Stevie **SEE "MILL," PAGE 3**



James Sanderson, the union president.

Seafood trail hopes to tap economic benefit from Gullah corridor

BY JAMESIA ST. LOUIS
COASTAL OBSERVER

A local initiative is working to preserve the heritage and culture of the Gullah Geechee people in Georgetown, while also tapping into a potentially billion-dollar tourism industry.

Marilyn Hemingway, the founder and president of the Gullah Geechee Chamber of Commerce, is leading a project known as the Gullah Geechee Seafood Trail.

Hemingway said the trail is an infrastructure that will be put in place to help the promotion and development of African American and Gullah Geechee businesses and communities.

A 2020 report conducted for the federal Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor put the potential economic benefit of tourism in communities at \$34 billion.

"One percent of 34 billion is \$34 million, so we don't even have to get 100 percent," Hemingway said. "We have to put an infrastructure in place and that infrastructure means the Gullah Geechee Seafood Trail needs to be a part of this."

Hemingway led a kickoff for the trail in Georgetown last week.

"The Gullah Geechee Seafood Trail has a foodway and website, so we want people from around the world to come to the Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor," Hemingway said. "Putting heads in beds and foot traffic through doors." **SEE "TRAIL," PAGE 4**



Andrea Johnson, owner of Aunny's restaurant.

Boutique hotel will fill 50-year gap on Front Street

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

By the time mariners start arriving for the Wooden Boat Show in 2023, Georgetown should be home to a new boutique hotel - The George.

"This is not a project that's just good for the investors and the developers, this is great for the city. We're going to leave this place better than we found it," said Christy Whitlock of Pawleys Island, a member of Winyah Hospitality, which is the general partner on the project. "It's very rewarding all around."

When The George opens, it will be the first time in more than 50 years that a hotel will be operating on Front Street, according to Georgetown Mayor Carol Jayroe.

"I think it's a new day in Georgetown and just a new beginning," Jayroe said. "It's a much needed project."

"We have all the natural resources already here, and then the city really came to the table," Whitlock said. "They invested with us, they saw the vision and they captured the vision."

Whitlock and the development group started working on a plan four years after they saw how a boutique hotel helped revitalize downtown Florence. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed, but did not derail, **SEE "HOTEL," PAGE 4**



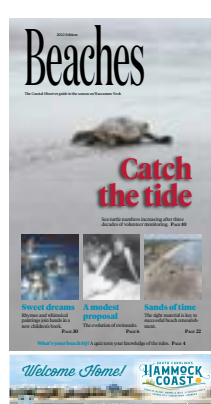
A rendering of The George, now under construction.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Class of 2022: WHS seniors take a victory lap. Also, interviews with the top graduates.

SECOND FRONT



Beaches: The Coastal Observer's guide to the season. **SPECIAL SECTION**



WHS sports: Warriors bring home gold medals from state track meet. **PAGE 15**

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