

COASTAL OBSERVER

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County faces fourth suit over land use decisions

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A fourth lawsuit in 14 months – and the second this year – seeks to overturn Georgetown County’s approval of a 12-unit duplex development at Pawleys Island even as the county moves forward with a change in the rules that led to that approval.

The suit filed last week in

Circuit Court claims the county approval process violated state law by delegating the final decision to the County Council. The duplexes are planned for 2 acres on Petigru Drive that are zoned “general residential,” but which the county’s future land-use maps designate as “medium density.” The net density of the duplexes (once land wetlands and roads are removed) is 7.7 units an acre. Georgetown

County considers more than five units an acre to be “high density.”

The Planning Commission recommended the county deny “site plan approval” for the duplexes because the project exceeds the medium density limit. County Council voted to approve the project.

The suit filed by Keep It Green Advocacy on behalf of neighboring property owners

and three citizens groups, says state law doesn’t allow County Council to give site plan approval. The law allows the Planning Commission to delegate plan review to “designated staff.” Georgetown County did that until 2008, when it required that plans for multi-family projects with more than 10 units or more to be reviewed by the commission and the council. The goal was to make sure

the public knew about projects before construction began.

A proposal up for review by the Planning Commission tonight would return the plan review to staff, but retain the public notice requirement. It would require that notices be mailed to property owners within 600 feet of a site proposed for more than 10 multi-family units.

“It needs to be amended
SEE “SUIT,” PAGE 4

SCHOOLS

Montessori director plans to step down

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

After 40 years as an educator, including the last two as Coastal Montessori Charter School director, Rosemary Gray is retiring.

“It has been an honor and privilege to work with our CMCS families,” Gray wrote in an email sent to parents. “Thank you for being so involved in your children’s education. Because of your support for them and for the school, they will continue to thrive academically and socially.”

Gray was hired in December of 2020 to replace Gene Nicastro, who was hired in March of that year and then fired in November after a disagreement with the school’s board about resuming in-person classes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nicastro was hired to replace Nathalie Hunt, who resigned in January of 2019 after a disagreement with the school’s board about a staff survey of her job performance.

Chip Henneey, who was interim director for more than a year after Hunt quit and briefly after Nicastro was fired, remains the assistant director at the school. He was finalist for the director’s job when Nicastro was hired.

The school’s board released a statement congratulating Gray on her retirement.

SEE “CHARTER,” PAGE 3



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

At the finish line

Cub Scouts from Pack 323 watch a heat in the Pinewood Derby at St. Peter’s Lutheran Church. The 22 cars, from kids and adults, included the Cheese Puff, right, which won Best Design for Frederick Maples III. He said his mom helped. Below, George Russell, a Tiger, learns that he was second overall.



LITCHFIELD BEACH

HOAs agree to land deal, but owners object

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The HOA at Inlet Point South supports a zoning change that will create two buildable lots on the site of a disused sewer treatment plant. But homeowners say they all object to the change in the middle of their gated community on the south end of Litchfield Beach.

“All of these homes within this small circle that is going to be affected are against this,” said Wade Mullins, an attorney whose family owns property in the development.

County Council this week gave the second of two readings to an amendment to the “planned development” zoning for Inlet Point South that allows two additional lots. The property is owned by the Peninsula at Inlet Point Owners Association, a community of 33 lots that also belong to the Inlet Point South Owners Association, which contains 26 lots.

The Peninsula association received the property from the Litchfield Co. for \$5 to build a sewer treatment plant. The Peninsula development on the southern end of Litchfield Beach is in the federal Coastal Barrier Resources System and couldn’t be served by the public utility that receives federal funds.

The Peninsula association
SEE “LOTS,” PAGE 4

PAWLEYS ISLAND

After trees, historic homes may be up next for protection

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The town of Pawleys Island is one vote away from protecting trees from being cut for development. It now wants to protect something older: its nine houses on the National Register.

The strategic plan adopted by the Town Council in 2020 talks about the need to protect the character of the island. Mayor Brian Henry said the tree ordinance and the Architectural Review Board created in 2021 were part of that.

“This is a big one; historical houses,” Henry said. “It would be sad to lose one of these houses.”

The issues are connected. Planning Commission mem-

bers are concerned that two of the National Register houses that are now on the market are on lots that can be subdivided. That could lead to the removal of trees for new construction.

The tree ordinance was initially proposed to apply only to new construction and to be part of architectural review process. But commission members added provisions to prevent clear cutting of property.

The measure that received the first of two readings from Town Council this week requires ARB approval to cut hardwoods with trunks of 5 inches or more in diameter, ornamental trees with trunks of 3 inches and pines with trunks of 10 inches. The measurements are taken at “breast height” of 4

SEE “PAWLEYS,” PAGE 2



The ordinance protects hardwoods, such as the oaks above, with trunks 5 inches or more in diameter.

Protection starts at 3 inches for ornamentals.

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