

# COASTAL OBSERVER

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LAND USE | Site plan review

## Ordinance change seen as threat to public input

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Faced with complaints that it was stifling public input, Georgetown County last week delayed action on a change to the way it reviews plans for multi-family developments. Although critics say the current process violates state law, they told the Planning Commission that the proposed fix will create other problems.

It would "hamper the ability of the public to oversee and participate in effective land use planning and zoning," said

Duane Draper, who chairs the citizens group Keep It Green, which is one of the plaintiffs in four lawsuits challenging county land-use decisions.

At issue is a process called site plan review. Until 2008, applications for multi-family development on property that was already zoned for that use were reviewed by the planning staff, just like single-family developments and commercial projects.

That was changed to require multi-family projects with more than 10 units to seek "planned development" zoning, which

requires a public hearing by the Planning Commission and approval from County Council. The goal was to provide more public notice of multi-family projects before construction started.

After the state Supreme Court ruled that planned developments must contain a mix of residential and commercial uses, the county revised the process to require that those multi-family plans be reviewed by the commission, subject to a public hearing and approved by the council. Because the **SEE, "PLANS," PAGE 4**

### Citizens group disavows comment accusing county officials of graft

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Among more than 150 pages of comments on a proposed change to the Georgetown County zoning ordinance, one stood out.

"Welcome to the trough Stella," it began.

From there it pointedly accused county officials of taking payoffs and kickbacks from developers along with suggesting

the ordinance change "is a plan that any Communist country would applaud."

It was sent to Council Member Stella Mercado, Council Member Raymond Newton, Council Chairman Louis Morant and to the planning department.

"As part of civil discourse, we need to remain civil. I'll leave it at that," Mercado said.

Duane Draper, who chairs **SEE "COMMENTS," PAGE 4**



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

### Taking to the air over Huntington Beach

A bald eagle swipes a fish from an osprey during the kite festival at Huntington Beach State Park over the weekend. Although the winds were variable, there were steady crowds for both days of the event, which was started last year. Below right, Lindsay Malady and her daughter, Emily, 7, get ready to launch their kite.



LITCHFIELD BEACH

## Attorney clears the air over sewer plant site

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Property owners at Inlet Point South say there is something rotten in the plan to create two new lots in the middle of their gated community.

But it isn't a sewer plant. "There's possibly some H2S odor because of the well," said Ray Gagnon, executive director of Georgetown County Water and Sewer District, referring to "rotten egg" scent of hydrogen sulfide. "It was pretty benign."

That's because the site was never used for sewer treatment as claimed.

Georgetown County Council is scheduled to take a final vote next week on a request from the Peninsula at Inlet Point Owners Association to change the "planned development" zoning at Inlet Point South to add two lots.

One argument made to county officials was that the new lots would be an improvement over the sewer plant that has occupied the property for 20 years.

"I would speculate that looking at a \$2 million house versus an active sewer plant would not be a negative," Dan Stacy, attorney for the Peninsula association told the Planning Commission last month.

Following last week's council meeting, Stacy admitted he was wrong.

"I was fundamentally not understanding how that thing **SEE "SEWER," PAGE 2**

EDUCATION | Magnet schools

## District pitches new opportunities for students in start-up program

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

One of the essential parts of the Georgetown County School District's new Magnet Schools Assistance Program is bringing equity and opportunity to all students.

"It's going to be a wonderful experience for our students; giving them an opportunity to kind of figure out what they like and where they shine, and then how we can help them go where they need to be," said Constance

May, project director of the program. "Whatever direction they choose in life, we want to provide different opportunities for them to be successful."

The five schools in the Carvers Bay area - Brown's Ferry, Plantersville and Pleasant Hill elementary schools, and the middle and high school - will transition to magnet schools starting with the next school year. Each school will have its own theme: creative and performing arts, digital immersion, STREAM (science, tech-

nology, reading, engineering, arts, math), STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math), and early college and career.

"We are hopeful to increase enrollment in those schools, but we'll have to see what comes of the lottery in April," May said.

The new themes - like the arts at Brown's Ferry - will be implemented in all classes.

"The teachers won't be teaching arts in isolation. They're going to integrate with **SEE "SCHOOLS," PAGE 7**



Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

Pleasant Hill Elementary will be a STREAM academy starting with the next school year.

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