

# COASTAL OBSERVER

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## Sales tax panel faces tight deadline for reviewing projects

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The mayor of Andrews did the math while a county commission worked out the criteria to review projects for a share of a sales tax that is expected to generate \$10 million a year for capital projects.

"They have 31 days," said Mayor Frank McClary.

He questioned whether that's enough time for the six-member Capital Projects Sales Tax Commission to evaluate and prioritize proposed projects in order to get them

to Georgetown County Council for action in May. Commission members said they share that concern.

The council formed the commission in October to draft a referendum question to put before voters in the November 2024 general election that would add 1 cent to the sales tax for up to eight years. Under state law, the ballot has to list the projects in the order in which they will be completed and show how much they will cost.

The council scrapped a similar initiative in 2020 after the list of proposed projects grew to 134 and

the estimated costs hit \$459 million.

The commission has now met twice and is trying to decide what information needs to be included in project proposals and what criteria it will use to evaluate them. So far, it has agreed in principle that applications must come from the state, regional or local government entities that will actually complete the proposed projects. They must also include cost estimates.

The commission can't evaluate projects that don't have sufficient

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### Council members seek to end sales tax plan over representation

Georgetown County Council is due to vote today on a resolution to stop work on a capital projects sales tax. It follows complaints made last month by Council Members Everett Carolina and Raymond Newton that the town of Andrews isn't represented on the tax commission.

The council meeting was postponed from Tuesday due to storm threats. Its meeting today

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### WEATHER

## Storm gusts hit hurricane strength

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

No major damage was reported from a storm this week that brought winds with hurricane-force gusts and caused schools and government offices to close.

"The impact were less than what were originally forecast," Brandon Ellis, the county's emergency management director, said. "I think that's great. No one got hurt [and] there wasn't widespread damage."

Wind gusts of 76 mph were reported on Pawleys Island and in Winyah Bay on Tuesday and a tornado warning was issued for Murrells Inlet and Garden City.

"It very much came and went," said Dan Newquist, the Pawleys Island town administrator. "We're very thankful."

The town removed its new Mobi mat from the First Street beach access in anticipation of erosion. There was none.

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Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Santee Cooper crews repair a power line at Litchfield. Above left, gulls battle the wind at Murrells Inlet. Left, sand blows into the dunes at North Litchfield.

### PAWLEYS ISLAND

## Offer to talk deepens rift over easements

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Stung by criticism from a property owner challenging the town's efforts to obtain easements for beach renourishment, Pawleys Island Town Council members say they would like to sit down and talk with him.

But those informal offers have only highlighted the rift between the town and the owner, Barry Stanton, a Columbia attorney who is representing himself and two neighbors in cases that are now pending before the state Court of Appeals. They are also seeking state Supreme Court review of an appeals court ruling that upheld the dismissal of one of their suits against the town.

At issue are easements that the Army Corps of Engineers says are necessary in order for it to participate in renourishment projects on the island. The town completed a renourishment in 2020 without federal aid, but later signed an

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### ENVIRONMENT | New rules do more to protect trees

## Town ordinance opens door to state grants for tree planning

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Now that the town of Pawleys Island has an ordinance to protect trees, it can start seeking funds to help manage those trees and plant more. Becoming a recognized Tree City would help, according to a state forestry official.

The town adopted an ordinance last spring that requires a permit to cut hardwoods with trunks of 5 inches or more in diameter and ornamental trees with trunks of 3 inches or more. The protection is limited to trees within the building setbacks, but the ordinance also prohibits clear cutting lots.

"We need to have a little bit more of a holistic community tree program," Administrator Dan Newquist said.

There is money available to create that kind of program, Ann Huyler, an urban forestry specialist with the S.C. Forestry Commission, told the town Planning Commission last week.



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Pawleys Island adopted a tree ordinance after palmettos and an oak were cut on a north end lot.

Through the commission's Technical Assistance Community Grants the town can get help to inventory its trees, create a management plan, promote stewardship and address storm mitigation. Funds are also available through the federal Inflation Reduction Act for a master tree plan created for the town by the Virginia-based

Green Infrastructure Center.

The commission can also help the town get the Tree City designation from the nonprofit Arbor Day Foundation. "You get a leg up on cities that aren't Tree Cities" when applying for grants, Huyler said.

The foundation also provides free trees for Arbor Day.

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## Appeals board denies permit to cut oak for townhouse project

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Members of the county's Board of Zoning Appeals denied a request to remove a water oak to allow two additional townhouses to be built in the Majestic Oaks development in Murrells Inlet.

There are already three clusters of townhouses on the property – and fourth about to be completed – and the request was for one of three additional clusters that are permitted. The proposed building could be moved or one of the units could be eliminated in order to save the tree, according to a report from county staff.

Sam Glass, with Majestic Oaks Development Co. in Floral Park, N.Y., said when they started the project more than a decade ago, they could have built 50 units. They cut back the development, he added, by adding a pool and common areas to "beautify" the property.

The company's goal now is to build 29 units. Fifteen are

completed; five more are under construction.

"We tried every way of going about it in order to remove only one tree," Glass said. "We're asking that because of the economics."

Board member Kenneth Reed asked Glass how many units could be built without removing the tree.

Probably 27, Glass said.

"If you don't get tree relief you'll gonna lose two units?" Reed asked. "Is that what you're saying?"

"Yes. The land cost a lot of money," Glass said. "Remember we were supposed to build 50 units originally. Imagine."

Glass recalled that land cost around \$3 million 15 years ago.

"When you're talking about economic hardship you're talking about that," he said.

The company had to spend \$850,000 on a stormwater and infrastructure system, Glass added.

"The money has to come from somewhere," he said.

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