

COASTAL OBSERVER

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Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Participants look at marsh and shore birds from the Murrells Inlet jetties.

TOURISM | Hammock Coast Birding Festival

Follow the flock

Event keeps an eye on a demographic that values resources

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A bird no bigger than a fist flitted through the marsh grass before settling on the rocks that define the entrance to Murrells Inlet. A dozen pairs of eyes followed its journey, aided by binoculars, spotting scopes and camera lenses of enormous size. They hoped to solve a mystery: Nelson's sparrow or salt marsh sparrow.

Even Scott Hartley wasn't sure. He pulled out his phone to consult a birding app, but said he would have to check with someone who knew more than he had gleaned during his 27-year career with the North Carolina State Parks or the dozen

SEE "BIRDS," PAGE 4



Cecelia Greenwood, right, came from Colorado for the festival. A sparrow, above, posed a challenge for the birders.



PUBLIC LANDINGS

Council lifts ban on commercial activity for small charter boats

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Small fishing charters and tour boats are clear to use Georgetown County's public boat landings under new rules approved this week after months of debate. But County Council rejected efforts by a 40-passenger tour boat to use the Campbell Marine Complex in Georgetown.

After hearing from fishing charter captains who use the Murrells Inlet Boat Landing, the council decided against limiting the size of their boats to 30 feet because several said their boats are just a few feet

SEE "BOATS," PAGE 3



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Charter captains say they aren't the ones taking up space at the Murrells Inlet Boat Landing.

SALES TAX

Don't tell Parkersville that Waccamaw Neck gets all the resources

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

People around Georgetown County say that when it comes to capital projects, Waccamaw Neck is the area that gets all the projects.

That isn't what residents in the Parkersville community told the county's Capital Projects Sales Tax Commission last week. Their community needs sidewalks and drainage improvements that have been

promised for years, but never built, they said.

"We were promised for years and years and years," said James Linen, an area resident.

The commission was created last year to solicit projects that can be funded from a new 1-cent sales tax, rank the projects and put together a referendum question for Georgetown County Council to place before voters in the November election. The six members have

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PAWLEYS ISLAND

'Zoom bomb' shatters decorum at Town Council meeting

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Between discussion of elevator maintenance and road resurfacing a shrill voice wanted to know what Pawleys Island Town Council was going to do about tunnels under synagogues. Another questioned if the town budget addressed the issue of sending Blacks back to Africa, using a racial slur.

The "Zoom bomb" that shattered the routine of the monthly council had Administrator Dan Newquist scrambling to find the mute button in the Zoom settings as three rows of residents sat looking at the wide-screen TV over the council table from the audience. He finally turned down the volume on the TV and the brief crisis of manners was contained.

SEE "TOWN," PAGE 2

SCHOOL BOARD | Public comment period

How much comment is enough – or too much?

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

The Georgetown County School Board continues to consider changes to its policy on public participation in meetings as members continue to raise concerns.

Chairman Bill Gaskins last month raised the possibility of imposing a time limit of 30 minutes on the public comment section of meetings.

Gaskins also expressed concerns about multiple speakers expressing the same ideas or complaints.

As the board's policy cur-

rently stands, each speaker is limited to three minutes, but there is no limit on the number of speakers.

Lindsay Ann Thompson, the district's attorney, brought a revised policy to last week's board meeting which included a 30-minute time limit and an encouragement that people wishing to make similar comments choose a spokesperson.

Board Member Lynne Ford was concerned that people who wanted to speak on the same subject might not know one another and therefore would feel like they were "giving up" their right to speak if someone else



Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

The board saw public comment rise in the pandemic.

was chosen to speak.

Board Member Robert Cox agreed.

"A lot of speakers that come

here are not here with a group. Some are," Cox said. "We don't know that when people sign up we don't know whether they

came in here early or talked the day before."

"We can't police it," Gaskins said. "We can encourage it."

Board Member Patti Hammel was concerned about the 30-minute limit. She said if too many people speak on the same topic and take up all the time, there might be someone with a different concern who does not get to speak.

"I think everybody's concern, if there's more than one concern, ought to get to be heard on the night they bring it to the board," Hammel said. "I think our chairperson ought

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A faith that would not die: Hobcaw celebrates rebirth of church in Friendfield Village. **SECOND FRONT**

Camellias: Annual exhibit fills Murrells Inlet Community Center with blooms. **PAGE 8**



WHS basketball: Seniors lead girls team to dominant win in last regular season game. **PAGE 12**

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