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Analysis shows zoning code allows 25,000 more homes

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

If the Waccamaw Neck develops under the zoning ordinance in place today, another 25,201 homes could be built before the area runs out of suitable land, according to data from consultants who are updating Georgetown County's land use plan.

But if the area develops as envisioned by the current land use plan, only another 11,456 dwellings would be allowed,

said Jake Petrosky, a community planner with Stewart, a North Carolina firm.

If the area develops as envisioned by the proposed update to the plan, the number of new dwellings would rise to 12,622, an increase of 10 percent, he said.

The numbers were compiled by consultants after the citizens group Keep It Green produced its own study showing the proposed land use plan would increase density on the Waccamaw Neck.



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

The audience applauds a speaker at the council hearing who called on the county to reject the revised land plan.

They estimated that the proposed plan would add over 4,000 residential units to what the current plan envisions.

"The bottom line is, every-

body agrees this increases density. It's unacceptable to the citizens," said Cindy Person, chief counsel for Keep It Green

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LAND USE

Neighbors file suit over creekfront development

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Neighboring property owners have gone to court claiming Georgetown County Council exceeded its authority when it approved a residential development on Pawleys Creek.

The suit filed last week in Circuit Court is the fifth filed within the last two-and-a-half years challenging the county's land use decisions. Three were dismissed by lower court judges and are now on appeal. An appeal in the fourth is pending from the property owner who asked unsuccessfully to be removed as a party to the suit.

The property owners are challenging the rezoning of 8.3 acres between the creek and Highway 17 to a "flexible design district" with 27 single-family homes, a project known as Magic Oaks. The property was previously zoned "general residential" and "general commercial."

The suit said the change was void because the zoning should have been changed to "conservation preservation" to match the property's designation on the future land use maps that are part of the county's comprehensive plan. It argues that state law required the county to rezone the property to conservation preservation to match the land use maps.

"As a consequence of Georgetown County's failure to follow the plain and unambiguous requirements of the [state] Enabling Act and the mandates of its own Comprehensive Plan, the following outdated and conflicted zoning remained 'on the books' for the Magic Oaks parcel that was completely irreconcilable with the Comprehensive plan designation," according to the suit filed by Patrick Hubbard, a law professor at the University of South Carolina, and Cindy Person, chief counsel for Keep It Green Advocacy.

The citizens group Keep It Green, which is among the plaintiffs in the other four suits, is not a party to the Magic Oaks suit. The group endorsed the zoning change that reduced the

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EDUCATION | Keith Price departs

Superintendent sees security as his legacy

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

When Keith Price took over as superintendent of the Georgetown County School District in 2020, the world was in the grip of a pandemic.

"The first year-and-a-half was just consumed with COVID. No one was really thinking about anything but how to navigate through COVID," Price said. "While those were some challenging days, it seems like an eternity ago that we were doing that but it wasn't that long ago."

Four years later, Price is leaving Georgetown to become the superintendent-elect of the Richland 1 School District.

In his previous job, Price was an assistant superintendent for the Richland 2 district, which meant he still had a boss to report to.

"In a way it's similar to an assistant principal and a principal," he said. "A principal can give an assistant principal every duty and responsibility under the sun, but until you're sitting in that chair, you haven't had the full experience."

Being the ultimate decision maker was a new experience, Price added.

"You can get lot of input from all your constituents and from your employees, but very



rarely is everyone in 100 percent agreement about all the things that you're looking to do," he said. "One person has to be responsible for making the ultimate decision."

Aside from the pandemic, Price found the most challenging part of the job was making personnel decisions.

"You work so hard to bring people on to create a family-like environment, culture and

climate and then sometimes things happen - either poor decisions or just a lack of development and growth - and you have to make decisions that impact someone's employment," he said. "Those are the things for me that are always the hardest."

An incident that concerned him was when gunshots were fired in the parking lot of

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Keith Price looks at a fourth-grader's project at the district tech fair in 2022. He started a magnet program for rural schools.

Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

HISTORY | Joseph Hayne Rainey

Honor for historic congressman brings calls to look past partisanship

BY MADISON SHARROCK
COASTAL OBSERVER

Hip replacement surgery couldn't stop Lorna Rainey from paying tribute to her great-grandfather, Joseph Hayne Rainey, in his hometown that he loved dearly.

She was delighted with the turnout at a plaque unveiling ceremony in Georgetown on June 21, the 192nd anniversary of his birth. Lorna said "potential, determination and legacy" are words that can attempt to sum up the impact Rainey left.

The event and the plaque itself sparked protests from Black groups and the county Democratic Party, who claimed they were driven by partisan goals. Speakers at the event said Rainey, a Republican, transcended



Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

Lorna Rainey, left, helps county GOP leaders unveil a plaque to her great-grandfather Joseph Hayne Rainey.

party.

When Lorna Rainey is going through difficult times, she said she thinks of the verbal and physical abuse Rainey

went through as the only Black man in the U.S. House of Representatives. She sees him as an inspiration in her career.

"He's in my DNA," she said.

"I built one of the most successful talent management businesses in the industry, which started with my last \$50 and supplies from an Office Depot."

For the past 10 years, her mission has been to spread Joseph Rainey's legacy. She announced that she secured funding and distribution to create the docu-drama entitled "Slave in the House."

She's planning a premier screening in Georgetown.

"Because of all of you, his legacy lives on," Lorna Rainey said.

Joseph Hayne Rainey, the son of enslaved parents, was the first African-American elected to Congress and took his seat in 1870.

Steve Williams, a local historian and speaker at the event,

shared details of Rainey's life with the crowd of about 100.

After his father purchased his family's freedom, Rainey was a free Black man with an education and a high-paying job. He was forced to fight with the confederates, which went against his core beliefs, Williams said.

Rainey knew his freedom was in jeopardy if the South prevailed, so he escaped to Bermuda with his wife. He made the decision to come back, and helped write the S.C. Constitution in 1868. His furthered his impact by fighting for Native Americans, Asian Americans and Black Americans.

"Rainey was forced to live in a universe of adversity, where his common dignity was

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A river runs through it: First new state park in nearly 20 years coming together nicely.

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