

COASTAL OBSERVER

Vol. XLIII No. 8

Pawleys Island, South Carolina ~ August 1, 2024

\$1.50

SALES TAX

Unfinished project looms over new referendum

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

There were five items on the ballot when Georgetown County voters were given the chance to adopt a capital projects sales tax in 2014. One never started. One is still not complete five years after the penny sales tax expired.

"One thing we heard from every single group as the commission went out was, 'What are you going to do to prevent a project from not coming to fruition as it did in the last go-round?'" said Walt Ackerman, the county director of Administrative Services, who helped the six-member Capital Projects Sales Tax Commission create the ballot for the November referendum.

The project they had in mind is the shell of a municipal complex that sits on a weed covered lot behind the town hall in Andrews. It is the subject of a lawsuit brought by the town three years ago challenging the way the county allocated revenue from the prior sales tax.

County Council last week voted to put a new capital projects sales tax before voters in a referendum during the November election after receiving assurances that the process this time will include more oversight of the entities that receive the funds, estimated at \$10 million a year over eight years.

Those entities will have to sign a funding agreement drafted by the county and its bond attorneys. The money received from the sales tax will be disbursed when the entities responsible for the projects provide invoices. Subsequent payments will be made when they show that prior invoices were paid.

SEE "SALES TAX," PAGE 2



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

School doors open | Marymac McGill, above, settles into her kindergarten class at Waccamaw Elementary, helped by her parents Margaret and Chase McGill, who was once a student there. Arthur Cody, left, tips his hat in his pre-K class. Below, Heaven, left, and Nevaeh Melton check out their kindergarten class.



LAND USE

Hearings will review stormwater plans for two developments

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County never held a public hearing on a stormwater permit before January. Now it has two scheduled this month, and a third is likely.

The hearings are a measure of the increased attention being paid to drainage and flooding issues, but also part of a growing frustration with development that is filling in undeveloped parcels on the Waccamaw Neck.

A hearing on Aug. 12 will take public comment on the permit for Magic Oaks, a residential development with 27 lots on 8.3 acres between Pawleys Creek and Highway 17. On Aug. 21, Sweet Grass West will be up for review. It will have 46 townhouse units and three single-family lots on 8.2 acres off Petigru Drive.

Both projects face opposition. The rezoning for Magic Oaks, which created a "flexible design district" on property SEE "HEARINGS," PAGE 3

ROADS

Community group endorses roundabout at Waverly intersection

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A community group has endorsed a plan to install a roundabout at the intersection of Waverly Road and Petigru Drive in spite of concern that it will lead to the removal of an oak tree on one corner.

"If they can work around that tree, there would be no issues with the roundabout," said Vincent Davis, president of the Pawleys Island Civic Club.

He submitted a letter in support of the project to the Grand Strand Area Transportation Study, an intergovernmental group that allocates federal funds for projects in a three-county region. Funding for the roundabout was placed at the top of the list of intersection improvements by the GSATS policy committee this spring.

The goal is to replace the offset intersection of the two roads.

The \$1.15 million for the project was first allocated in



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

An oak at the corner is a community landmark.

2017, but community opposition to removing the oak caused the plan to be scrapped. Examinations by an arborist at the time and again this year showed the oak is in good, but declining, condition. It is a neighborhood landmark whose trunk served as a community notice board. The flyers for long-forgotten events have gone, but the nails that held them still cover the bark.

The civic club initially opposed the revived roundabout SEE "ROADS," PAGE 3

SAFETY | Sheriff's office beach patrol

Keeping one eye on the surf and the other on the sand at 6 mph

BY MADISON SHARROCK
COASTAL OBSERVER

Head nods. Two-finger salutes. Beanie Babies. It's not a parade, it's just a low maintenance day for the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office Beach Patrol.

Capt. Chuck Weaver, the commander of Beach and Marine Patrol, gets the same amount of attention in his utility vehicle as he would if it were a parade float. Beach-goers of all ages wave, smile and acknowledge him as he goes by.

"I feel like we have a very good relationship with our community as a whole," said Commander John Prevatte of the Marine Patrol.

On utility task vehicles, or UTVs, and four-wheelers, the patrol keeps one eye on the water and another on the shore.

Deputy Ken Davis of the beach patrol said the vehicles reach 6 mph at the maximum.

"If we're going fast, we're not gonna be able to see," he said.

Each deputy is also a life-guard and emergency medical



Riley Lehman/Coastal Observer

The beach patrol hands out Beanie Babies donated to the sheriff's office to kids along their patrol route in Garden City.

responder certified.

The team alternates officers, times on the beach and location to avoid a "tunnel vision" perspective because every day isn't a parade.

For instance, Prevatte was operating the drone that

searched the shore when a Waccamaw High School student drowned last month. Tragedies like that reinforce their duty to educate the public about rip currents, such as how to spot one and how to escape.

"It's definitely something to

be aware of," Prevatte said.

Rip currents are channelized currents of water flowing away from the shore. They commonly form near structures such as piers.

The beach patrol reminds anyone who goes into the ocean

to stay calm – rip currents don't pull people under, the swimmer just gets too tired to fight back.

"Swimming in the ocean is a lot different than swimming in a pool or even a lake," Deputy Porter Magnuson said.

Swim parallel to the shore to escape a rip current. If that doesn't work, draw attention to yourself by waving for assistance from a trained professional.

The beach patrol also looks for violations of county ordinance and state laws, such as glass bottles, indecent exposure and unleashed dogs.

"Like most of our deputies, we're not here to ruin anybody's good time or anything," Prevatte said.

"People can be difficult, no matter what," Magnuson added. "It just all depends on the situation."

The Georgetown deputies are equipped for any situation, especially those that require teaming up with local firefighters. In a compartment on the back of their vehicles, they carry an automated external SEE "PATROL," PAGE 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Built on faith: Teens are the hands and feet of Christ for homeowners. **SECOND FRONT**



WHS volleyball: New coach leads boys in Year 2. **PAGE 13**



Library: After 14 months of work, the Georgetown Library is open again. **PAGE 8**

Obituaries	2
Crime.....	5
Opinion	6
Crossword	10
Classifieds	11
Sports	12

Online
coastalobserver.com

