

COASTAL OBSERVER

Vol. XLIII No. 13

Pawleys Island, South Carolina ~ September 5, 2024

\$1.50

PAWLEYS ISLAND

Talks over inlet's future raise 'some optimism'

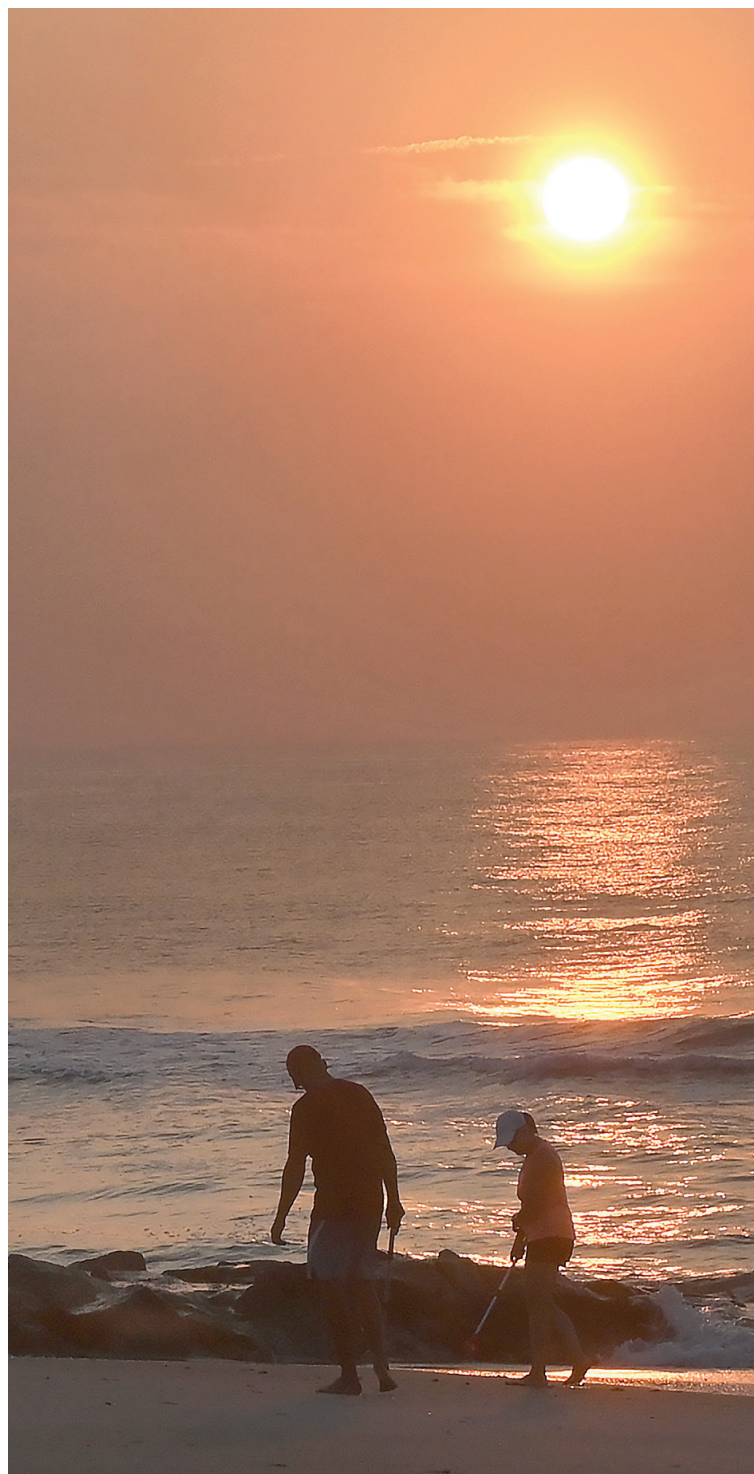
BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Negotiations are continuing between the town of Pawleys Island, state agencies and property owners at Prince George who say that a 2020 beach renourishment project on the island caused erosion along their shoreline.

"There's some optimism that both sides are getting closer to a solution," Mayor Brian Henry told Pawleys Island Civic Association members at their annual meeting over the weekend.

The town project placed 1.1 million cubic yards of offshore sand on the island's beach, with most going to the narrow south end. The work received permits from the state Department of Health and Environmental Control and partial funding from the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

In 2022, Bud and Melesa Watts, owners of 1,065 acres at Prince George and the two northernmost beachfront lots, filed suit in Circuit Court saying that renourishment sand carried in the current had caused Pawleys Inlet to migrate south. The Prince George Community Association and other
SEE "PAWLEYS," PAGE 4



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Beachcombers explore around the exposed rocks of a groin on the south end of Pawleys Island. An annual survey of the island's beach showed that it has more than enough sand to be considered a "healthy beach" and has 60 to 70 feet of dry sand at high tide. Below, beach grass planted after a 2020 renourishment covers a dune on the south end.



Beachfront holding steady in annual survey

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

There's more sand on the beach at Pawleys Island now than at any time in recent decades, according to the draft of an annual assessment prepared for the town.

Four years after the town completed a renourishment project, the beach has stabilized and has more sand than the minimum needed for a "healthy beach."

"This means the dry beach along much of Pawleys Island is now 60 to 70 ft. wide, with significantly greater widths along the Midway and Pawleys Inlet shorelines," says the study prepared Coastal Science and Engineering.

A \$14.8 million project,
SEE "BEACH," PAGE 4

LAND USE

Developer claims citizens group behind lawsuit filed by others

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The developer of 27 lots on Pawleys Creek is seeking damages from a citizens group that it claims is behind a lawsuit challenging Georgetown County's approval of the project.

Keep It Green is using the lawsuit filed in June against Magic Oaks LLC, the county and two others to try to "hinder and delay this residential development as they have attempted to do with numerous other developments in Georgetown County," according to a counterclaim filed last month in Circuit Court.

Keep It Green was not a plaintiff in that suit.

Neighboring property owners of the 8.3 acres between the creek and Highway 17 brought suit after the county rezoned the tract as a "flexible design district." The property had been zoned "general residential" and "general commercial."

It was shown on the county's future land use maps as "conservation preservation," which doesn't allow development.

The suit argued that the county should have changed the zoning to comply with the land use maps. Its failure to do so made the change to the flex district zoning void, according to the filing.

The suit also argued that the rezoning of the commercial tract would put the adjacent Village Shops "planned development" out of compliance with the zoning ordinance because it prevents taverns and nightclubs within 300 feet of a residential district.

And, it claimed that a change to the Magic Oaks project to place a public kayak launch on the north side of the property should have been reviewed by the Planning Commission.

The plaintiffs - Micky Stikas, Elizabeth Martin, Don and
SEE "SUIT," PAGE 3

Neighbors raise questions about stormwater system

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Capturing stormwater from a proposed residential development on Pawleys Creek in an underground system has the potential to increase pollution, neighbors told county officials at a hearing last week. The creek has been closed to shellfishing for generations because of high bacteria levels.

"Their water quality appears to be in compliance," said Robert Turner, manager of Georgetown County's Stormwater Division.

Magic Oaks LLC is seeking approval of a stormwater system that will collect runoff in a series of chambers contained in gravel-lined trenches under the street in the 27-lot subdivision between Highway 17 and Pawleys Creek. The county's approval of the development as a "flexible design district" is being challenged in court by neighbors who say the 8.3 acres should have been zoned "conservation preservation" to conform with the county's future land use maps.

The system, called Storm-



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Stormwater from Magic Oaks will flow into Pawleys Creek from an underground collection system.

tech chambers, will hold the water until it can soak into the ground or run into Pawleys Creek, depending on the volume of rain. The county granted Magic Oaks a waiver to its requirement that runoff after development be no higher than the runoff before development because of its location on the

SEE "STORMWATER," PAGE 3

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN | A different take on density

Anderson will push for zoning changes based on people, not houses

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

While his constituents raised concerns about the number of new homes that could be built on the Waccamaw Neck under a new land use plan, County Council Member Bob Anderson said he started thinking about density in a different way.

"We're looking at this as if it's all about dwellings. It's not about dwellings, it's about peo-



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

ple he estimated to be living in the area at the peak of the tourist season.
"They are using our roads, our stores, our churches," Anderson said.
The land use element in Georgetown County's comprehensive plan, which was updated in July over Anderson's lone objection, uses U.S. Census data to measure growth, but doesn't factor in the seasonal shifts driven by the tourist economy.
The peak summer popula-

tion that Anderson calculated for the Waccamaw Neck is 26 percent greater than the latest census estimate for the county as a whole, 63,594.

"The Waccamaw Neck is bigger than what shows up on the census," Anderson said.

The land use plan does acknowledge the seasonal shift. Among the ways the county can preserve its culture and character, according to the plan, are creating a tourism management plan, weighing the impact

of short-term rentals and making sure transportation infrastructure is sized for peak seasonal demand.

Population is another of the 10 state-mandated elements of the comprehensive plan. The county's population element doesn't try to assess the number of seasonal visitors. It only includes estimates of tourist spending. But it says, "the effect on services such as police, fire and emergency will need to

SEE "DENSITY," PAGE 8

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Summer's last blast: Laser light show delayed from July 4 shines on Labor Day weekend.
Second Front

WHS sports: Boys volleyball team seeks leaders in its second season.
PAGE 12



Sales tax: City projects upgrade infrastructure while preparing for growth.
PAGE 4

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

