

# COASTAL OBSERVER

Vol. XLIII No. 19

Pawleys Island, South Carolina ~ October 17, 2024

\$1.50

## Sales tax campaign is race to answer voters' questions

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Walt Ackerman has lost count of the number of presentations he has made about the two sales tax initiatives on the November ballot.

Mark Hawn estimated he has attended about 30. That's

more than the number of meetings held by the Capital Project Sales Tax Commission that he chaired and that came up with the ballot question for one of the initiatives.

With early voting beginning next week and two and a half weeks before Election Day, Hawn said at a forum this week

at the Waccamaw Regional Recreation Center he is concerned about getting the word out.

"We need to be an informed voting community," he said.

The capital project sales tax would add a penny to the state's 6-cent sales tax to fund 22 infrastructure projects around the county at a cost of \$74 million.

The tax would be imposed for eight years.

Any extra revenue collected would be applied to 19 contingency projects that total \$51 million.

All the projects are listed on the ballot.

"The ballot is just super-long," said Ackerman, the coun-

ty's director of Administrative Services, who worked with the commission.

Under state law, no public funds can be used to advocate for or against the referendums. Ackerman has spoken to private groups and at public forums to explain the measures.

SEE "TAX," PAGE 4



Photos by Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

Fencing is installed between wooden pilings that form a breakwater as part of the living shoreline at Morgan Park. Below left, the material stacked along the shore. Below right, Nolan Williams, at left, and Shannon Merino check on progress.

ENVIRONMENT | Winyah Bay

## Bringing the shoreline back to life

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Five years after Morgan Park in Georgetown was chosen as the site of a living shoreline, the work is almost complete.

Zulu Marine Services of Savannah is putting on the finishing touches this week.

"Everything went well," said Shannon Merino of Zulu. "It's gone as planned."

Morgan Park, which is adjacent to East Bay Park, overlooks the upper part of Winyah Bay where the Sampit River meets the waters of the Pee Dee and Black rivers.

Living shorelines use plants or other natural elements — sometimes in combination with harder shoreline structures — to stabilize estuarine coasts, bays and tributaries.

Robinson Design Engineers picked the materials for the project

with the confluence of the area's five rivers in mind.

"The type of living shoreline we're doing here is kind of new for South Carolina," said Nolan Williams, who helped design the project. "It's some slightly different methods that haven't been done."

Williams said the goal was to "mimic" natural processes and help the ecosystem heal itself.

"Here we're relying on

SEE "SHORE," PAGE 3



ELECTION 2024

## Early voting ready to start across county

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Voting for the general election has begun.

The county has received 1,998 applications for absentee ballots and mailed out 1,600 ballots. So far, 670 have been returned.

Early in-person voting begins Monday at four sites around the county. Four years ago, during the pandemic, nearly half of the votes came from absentee or early voting.

"The absentee process thus far has been a good one," Aphra McCrea, the county's director of Voter Registration and Elections, said last week. "We've seen absentee ballots go to Canada and come back, all within a week.

Mail is picked up twice a day at the elections office.

"The USPS has done a tremendous job as far as mail handling goes," McCrea said.

More than 7,000 absentee ballots were sent to voters in



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

The Waccamaw Rec Center is one of four sites.

the 2020 presidential election.

The deadline to request an absentee ballot application is Oct. 25. Voters can stop by, call or write to the elections office to request an application.

Absentee ballots must be received by the elections office by 7 p.m. on election day, which is Nov. 5.

Early voting this year will be Oct. 21 through Oct. 26 and Oct. 28 through Nov. 2 from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"I think people like early

SEE "ELECTION," PAGE 2

EDUCATION | School report cards

## Waccamaw schools at the top as district sees mixed results

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

There were 232 schools rated "excellent" in the report cards released this week by the state Department of Education.

Three of those are in Pawleys Island: Waccamaw Intermediate, Waccamaw Middle

and Waccamaw High.

The high school scored a 69, the highest of all the schools in the district.

The percent of Waccamaw students who earned a grade of C or better in end of course testing in English 2, U.S. History and the Constitution, algebra 1 and biology was better than the

state and the district.

Waccamaw's graduation rate dropped two points from last year to 92 percent. The district average is 88 percent; the state's is 85.

Carvers Bay High has a score of 56, which is average. Georgetown High (50) and Andrews High (45) are below aver-

age.

Waccamaw Middle's score of 68 is 1 point better than 2023.

Seventy-one percent of Warriors met or exceeded expectations in English/language arts. In the state it was 54 percent; in the district 47 percent.

In math, 64 percent of Warriors met or exceeded expecta-

tions. It was 43 percent in the state; 37 percent in the district.

Georgetown Middle (37) and Rosemary Middle (36) are rated as average. Carvers Bay Middle (33) is rated as below average. Georgetown Middle's score is 11 points better than last year.

On last year's report card,

SEE "SCHOOLS," PAGE 4

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE



**A gold medal finish:** Crowds pack Front Street on Melissa Jefferson Day to honor the Olympian.  
Second Front

**Waccamaw High:** Suit alleges school failed to protect child from abuse on cross country team.  
PAGE 6



**Wooden Boat Show:** Students float ideas for cardboard boat competition.  
PAGE 10

Obituaries ..... 2  
Crime..... 7  
Opinion ..... 8  
Crossword ..... 12  
Classifieds ..... 13  
Sports ..... 14  
**Online**  
coastalobserver.com

