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Two 1-cent taxes proving a hard sell to county voters

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County voters have rejected local sales taxes three of the four times they have been proposed. And those were all for 1 cent each.

This year, the county is proposing 2 cents, one for property tax relief and another for capital projects. Even proponents say that is probably a penny too much.

"The question is, 'Why do we need two,'" said Kim Fox, a member of the Small Change,



ON THE BALLOT

Local option sales tax: Provides at least 71 percent of revenue for a property tax credit.

Capital project sales tax: Will fund 22 infrastructure projects totaling \$74 million over eight years.

Big Impact Committee organized to promote the referendums that are on this year's general election ballot.

It's a question the committee has tried to answer in the weeks leading up to the elec-

tion.

Fox, who owns a marketing company and is executive director of the Pawleys Island-Litchfield Business Association, worked to pass a capital project sales tax in 2014. It won 59

percent of the vote and passed in all nine Waccamaw Neck precincts.

"It was very different this time than 2014," Fox said. "I will say it was easier in 2014."

One referendum placed on the ballot by Georgetown County Council seeks a 1-cent local option sales tax that, by law, requires 71 percent of the revenue to be used as a credit against property values. That has the effect of lowering taxes on real estate and business and personal property. The remainder goes to county and municip-

pal government operations unless they decide to increase the property tax credit.

A second referendum is for a 1-cent capital project sales tax. It is estimated to raise \$74 million over eight years to fund 22 priority projects. Of those, eight are water and/or sewer projects in the western part of the county that total \$42 million.

Any additional revenue will be applied to 19 contingency projects, including another \$25.2 million for water and/or sewer projects.

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ELECTION 2024

Early votes in county reach 40%

FROM STAFF REPORTS
COASTAL OBSERVER

A week before Election Day 40 percent of Georgetown County voters had cast early or absentee ballots, according to data from the S.C. Election Commission.

Over 2,000 voters showed up at the county's four early voting centers every day but Saturday, when turnout slipped to just over 1,000.

The Waccamaw Regional Rec Center saw a steady increase in turnout after early voting began Oct. 21. Its busiest day was Monday, with 1,370 votes cast. Over half the early votes cast in the county came from the rec center.

County voters can go to any of the four centers - including rec centers in Andrews and Choppee and the county Office of Voter Registration and Elections in Georgetown - regardless of which precinct they are registered in.

The centers will remain open from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Saturday. Polling will open again on Tuesday at 7 a.m. in the county's 34 precincts and remain open until 7 p.m.

Voters must vote in the
SEE "VOTE," PAGE 9



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

TRADITIONS

Dressing the part in search for treats



Pawleys Island Presbyterian and Pawleys Island Community churches kicked off Halloween with trunk-or-treats over the weekend. Clockwise from top left, George Chick, 2, dressed as a pirate because his Curious George costume was too hot. Parker Copeland, 4, is a fan of Captain Hook. Reese Johnson, 8, lit up the event as a firefly. Localan Zinna, 7 months, in his first Halloween costume: a duck. Carter Rakuskan, 7 months, debuted as a chicken. Tucker Traylor, 17 months, examines treats in his tiger costume.



WACCAMAW HIGH GOLF | Class 3A championship

State title defense comes up 3 strokes short

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Waccamaw High School's girls golf fell three strokes short of defending its Class 3A state title this week.

Mountain View Prep, a charter school in Spartanburg, won the title with a two-day total of 671.

The Warriors finished with 673. Aynor was third with 727.

"We knew we had to play good. We played pretty good, but just a little bit short," Waccamaw coach Todd Rodenbeck said. "We just didn't play our best round and we kind of needed to."

Last year Waccamaw ran away with the title, beating Daniel by 26 strokes.

"I'm proud of the girls," Rodenbeck said. "They had a great season and they had a great two years."

Kayla Holek shot a 162 on the Hackler Course at Coastal Carolina University to lead the

Warriors.

"I think we did really good but it was tough the past few days," Holek said. "I think we did our best and worked hard."

She finished ninth and was named to the All-State team for the second year in a row.

Other Waccamaw scores: Emerson Devers 169, Ella Bischof 171, Elizabeth Ashcraft 171, Victoria Gullo 182.

All five of the Warriors are seniors and they all finished in the top 20.

"I think that we all could have played better but we put our absolute full effort into it, we had a lot of fun and it was a great last experience that we could all enjoy together," Devers said. "A lot of us, with it being the end of the season, have had a lot going on with applying to colleges and senior year, so it's been a bit stressful. I don't think we were all on our A game. But it was a great experience to all have together and it was, at the end of the day, more



Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

The Warriors with their trophy and medals.

fun than anything else and we did our very best."

Rodenbeck will be looking for a lot of the younger players to step up next year.

"We have some girls that have some enthusiasm for the game and we're just going to build off that," Rodenbeck said.

"I think they could definitely have a good future if they are committed to it," Holek said.

"Waccamaw definitely has a bright future," Devers said. "If the girls practice and put in the time they can be a really solid team and have a chance at State as well."

ACCOMMODATIONS TAX

Requests for grants exceed funds by \$1 million

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County is expected to receive about \$1.6 million in accommodations tax funds this year.

Twenty-two entities have applied to the county for a share of that money. Those requests total \$2.59 million.

How to make up the difference was one of the many questions that was raised at a meeting of the county's Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee last week.

Ebony Hughes, who was the acting chairman of the committee in the absence of chairperson Lauren Joseph, reminded the applicants of the shortfall on several occasions. Also missing from the meeting was committee vice chairman Drew Street.

After listening to eight requests totaling \$387,144 for highway median maintenance and other ongoing beautification projects, Hughes questioned whether the organizations are communicating with each other.

"We really need to kind of start being proactive and thinking about ways that we can work together with the different organizations, although separate, so we can kind of make sure that funds are distributed so it's most impactful," she said.

The requests were: Litchfield Beaches Property Owners Association, \$99,408 for beach support; county's Parks and Recreation Department, \$88,956 for trash removal at beach accesses and the bike path; Mainstreet Pawleys Beautification Committee, \$42,000 for Highway 17 median maintenance; Litchfield Beautification Foundation, \$38,000, for highway landscape maintenance; Pawleys Island Highway Beautification Program, \$37,000, for median maintenance; Murrells Inlet 2020, \$36,000 for Bypass 17 maintenance; Garden City Beach Community Association, \$31,200, for median maintenance; and Brookgreen Gardens, \$14,580, for median maintenance.

The Litchfield foundation also asked for \$30,000 for safety equipment.

"We're having some issues in maintaining the aesthetic appearance of Highway 17 in the lower Waccamaw Neck

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Waccamaw High: A new class joins the school's athletic hall of fame. **Second Front**

On the list: Recreation projects included in capital project sales tax priorities. **PAGE 4**



Election 2024: County voters will be rewarded for their effort with an original work of art. **PAGE 9**

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