

# COASTAL OBSERVER

Vol. XLIII No. 23

Pawleys Island, South Carolina ~ November 14, 2024

\$1.50

Scarlett Van Bloem and Chloe Davis scan a curbside vote on Election Day. All 38,115 ballots in the county were rescanned this week.

Charles Swenson/  
Coastal Observer



## Sales tax still short after recount

By CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The county spent \$11,000 to rescan each of the 38,115 ballots cast in the general election only to find the local option sales tax still didn't pass.

State law requires a recount in elections if the margin is less than 1 percent.

The county rented a machine from Printelect, a North Carolina company that finished

the process in a matter of hours.

The referendum placed on the ballot by Georgetown County would have raised the sales tax by 1 cent to fund a property tax credit and provide additional revenue for local government. In the preliminary vote count, the measure failed by just 64 votes.

The margin narrowed to 54 votes three days later, when the county's Board of Voter Registration and Elections met to

certify the results and voted to accept nearly three dozen provisional and fail safe ballots.

Voters fill out provisional ballots for a variety of reasons, including if they requested but did not receive an absentee ballot.

Four more "yes" votes were added after the recount, but it was not enough to change the outcome.

A capital project sales tax  
**SEE "VOTES," PAGE 4**

### TOURISM

## Panel trims requests for tax grants

By CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The Georgetown County Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee last week recommended that nonprofits that maintain the Highway 17 median and local beaches should get full funding for their annual grant requests.

The committee also recommended that requests from first responders not be fully funded.

The county will receive nearly \$1.8 million in revenue this year from the 2 percent state tax on short-term rentals. The money can be used to offset the cost of services that support tourism.

The county received applications for \$2.59 million in funding. It was up to the advisory committee to make recommendations to County Council about how much money, if any, each entity should receive.

The Georgetown County Sheriff's Office asked for \$355,379 to maintain its beach patrol.

Committee chairwoman Lauren Joseph made a motion for \$166,514 for staff but no funding for equipment.

"That is something that I think the county can work into their budget, hopefully," Joseph said.

The motion passed.

The Murrells Inlet-Garden City Fire District asked for \$167,781 to support its Marine Safety Initiative.

Committee members Billy Nichols and Suzanne King questioned Battalion Chief Brennan Moore about last year's referendum that allowed

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Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

## Flags stand tall over city's Field of Honor



Ron Kreckman of Murrells Inlet, above, looks through flags at the Field of Honor for two that he and his wife sponsored: one for his brother, an Army veteran, the other for his grandson, a Navy veteran. Dozens of sponsors contributed to the fourth annual event, a joint effort between the Kiwanis Clubs of Georgetown and Pawleys Island. International Paper was also a partner and the display will remain outside its mill until Dec. 14. At left, Waylon Andrews, 10, inspects the flags. Below, Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette was the guest speaker.



### ENVIRONMENT

## Latest change to county's resource plan draws praise from critics

By CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

A plan for preserving and protecting Georgetown County's natural resources is heading back to the Planning Commission for a third time with a goal of reaching agreement with County Council.

The commission first approved the natural resources element in November 2022. During a retreat with County Council the following January, county staff proposed changing goals and strategies that could end up costing the county money or were beyond the county's regulatory authority.

The changes produced a backlash from residents and groups that had contributed ideas for the natural resources plan.

Now it's those changes that have been revised.

"It is a significant improvement," said Duane Draper, who chairs the citizens group Keep It Green. The plan now "sets a higher bar for achieving these aspirational goals."

The council ended up tabling the proposal with the staff revisions in July 2023 so it could work on the future land use plan. That was adopted a year later.

When the natural resources plan re-emerged, the S.C. Environmental Law Project and Keep It Green told the council that the proposed staff changes violated state law, which gives

**SEE "PLAN," PAGE 3**

### GEORGETOWN COUNTY LIBRARY

## Children's librarian has some stories to tell after 50 years

By CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

For decades, Sheila Sullivan was a fixture at the Georgetown Library.

Sullivan, the head of children's services for the county library system retired last week after 50 years on the job.

"I've loved it from the beginning," Sullivan said. "Honestly, this has been my life really even though I have children. I gave a lot of time to the place."

"We're going to miss her," library director Dwight McInvaill said. "There's a bit of melancholy."

When Sullivan started, the Georgetown library was on the

corner of Screven and High-market streets. The library relocated to Cleland Street in 1989.

The building recently went through a year-long remodel and expansion.

"People's reactions are what make me happy," Sullivan said. "That makes it for me; the public's reaction. The kids, the parents and everybody. It's what they see and how appreciative they are. It makes a big difference."

It was Sullivan's idea to have an artist paint murals in the children's area of the remodeled library. Included in one of the murals is a tribute to Sullivan: a picture of an adult duck

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Photos by Chris Sokoloski, left, and Charles Swenson /Coastal Observer

Two honors for Sheila Sullivan: a storytelling duck in a mural, above, and a cake at the ribbon cutting of the remodeled library, right.



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