

COASTAL OBSERVER

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MURRELLS INLET

Plan to upgrade boat landing brings call for more dock space

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County's plans for a \$1.5 million renovation of the Murrells Inlet Public Landing to go along with the realignment of the access road were stopped dead in the water by state lawmakers who say the landing's biggest need is more dock space.

"It's horrible down there in the summertime. There are fist fights," state Sen. Stephen Goldfinch said. "We've got to

come up with a solution."

The county took ownership of the landing from the state in 2017. This year, the county realigned the access road to the parking lot so it no longer bisects the campus of Belin Memorial United Methodist Church. That \$517,290 project used up money provided by the state when the landing was transferred plus another \$150,000 in local accommodations tax.

The county wants state funds to replace the three boat

ramps and the courtesy docks along with some additional paving. With engineering and permitting, that is estimated to cost \$1.4 to \$1.5 million.

At a meeting last week between County Council and delegation members, Will Sullivan, the assistant to the county administrator, barely had time to introduce the topic before Goldfinch asked about the courtesy docks.

There is one on each side of the boat ramp. Once boats are launched, the boaters tie up to



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

State Sen. Stephen Goldfinch and Council Member Bob Anderson exchange ideas about the landing.

the docks while they park their vehicle and trailer.

Christian Stevens was aboard a 25-foot SeaPro that

was tied up Sunday afternoon after a day of fishing. It was there about 15 minutes before it was

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EDUCATION

School board cautious about shift in prayer at meetings

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

After a member of the Georgetown County School Board requested a discussion of ways to incorporate "voluntary" prayer into meetings, five board members said they have concerns.

"I feel that, we as representatives for thousands of children, we have an obligation to let them know that we stand with our Lord and Savior," Eileen Johnson said at a board meeting last week. "I am not ashamed of that."

Johnson was elected to the board in November.

At a board retreat, some of her fellow board members said they preferred the moment of silence, which the board observes after the Pledge of Allegiance.

"I'm a Christian. I pray every time we have a moment of silence for guidance of the board," Board Member Scott DuBose said. "I don't know why we couldn't all do that versus having a person up there. I just think it's going to invite controversy we don't need and money we don't need to spend."

"I am a proponent of prayer from the rooftop to the basement," Board Member

SEE "PRAYER," PAGE 2



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Is that snow? Better check twice | The Shine Bright Christmas festival at Pawleys Island Presbyterian Church always has "snow," but this year it was cold enough for the real thing. It also made hot chocolate and s'mores a hot commodity as folks gathered for the Christmas tree lighting.

TOURISM

Council restores funds to fire district safety projects

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Projects to increase safety on the water and during motorcycle rallies in Murrells Inlet will get full funding after Georgetown County Council rejected cuts proposed by an advisory committee.

The money from the state's 2 percent tax on short-term accommodations will fund a \$167,782 marine safety initiative and \$44,669 in additional medical coverage by Murrells Inlet-Garden City Fire District during bike weeks. Both projects had been trimmed by the county Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee.

Council Member Clint Elliott said he and Council Member Stella Mercado reviewed the committee's recommendations for \$1.75 million in grants. They restored full funding for the safety projects since they are targeted at visitors.

"I was a little surprised," Battalion Chief Brennan Moore said. "I was a little nervous about the whole situation once the committee recommended [funds] just for staffing."

But Elliott said if they are recurring programs, the fire district needs to find funding through its annual budget, which gets revenue from a property tax in the district.

SEE "TAX," PAGE 3

PAWLEYS ISLAND | Capital project plans

Town will reach across the water for ideas about preserving creek

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The town of Pawleys Island is ready to take another look at Pawleys Creek.

"We've got to decide if the issue is the creek filling in or is it the health of the creek," Mayor Brian Henry said.

Shoaling in the creek has been a concern of island property owners for decades. The Pawleys Island Civic Association commissioned a study in 1980 that found that shoaling was a natural process.

But the persistent concern

led the town to include the creek as one of four focus areas for its strategic plan in 2020.

Town Council agreed this week to form a committee of island property owners and those who live outside the town on the west side of Pawleys Creek to consider the scope of a creek study. There is \$46,000 in the town budget for Coastal Science and Engineering, the firm that designed the island's beach renourishment project, to look at the creek.

That work will fit into the sea level rise adaptation plan

SEE "CREEK," PAGE 3



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Sand continues to flow in and out of Pawleys Creek after a 2007 dredging project.

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