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Litchfield group wants to 'harvest' sand from inlet

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Property owners at Litchfield Beach are seeking state and federal permits to take sand from 26 acres along Midway Inlet to place on the beach in front of their gated community.

The Peninsula Property Owners Association wants to remove up to 75,000 cubic yards of sand from the inlet in two renourishment cycles over five years. Some of that sand is from a 2022 project that pumped about 450,000 cubic yards of offshore sand to the beach in front of the development, according to the application.

"The proposed project

would recycle sand back to the project area to maintain a healthy beach while reducing the potential for excess sand to extend the spit into Midway Inlet," the application states.

The project was designed by Coastal Science and Engineering, which designed the 2022 project and last year completed an assessment for the town of Pawleys Island of the jetty on the island side of Midway Inlet.

The permit proposes that most of the sand will be dug or scraped from the edge of the inlet closest to Pawleys Island. It includes an optional "harvest area" for sand closer to Litchfield Beach "for a secondary channel to be excavated that
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Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

The Peninsula community proposed digging sand from 26 acres along Midway Inlet at the south end of Litchfield Beach.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Elliott takes gavel with focus on zoning

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Clint Elliott took over as chairman of Georgetown County Council this week saying he wants the ability to direct the agenda to focus on issues such as the update of the zoning ordinance.

He replaced from Louis Morant, who served as chairman for four years after Elliott's predecessor in Council District 1, John Thomas, was unable to muster support for a second term. Elliott is midway through his first term on council, as Morant was when he was elected chairman.

Elliott said he talked with Morant about the chairmanship.

Morant said Elliott didn't have to twist his arm.

"I'm a team player," Morant said.

The most important thing Elliott learned from watching Morant was "patience," he said.

"He's one of my favorite people," Elliott added.

Council Member Stella Mercado was elected vice chairman, the position held by Lillie Jean Johnson, who didn't run for re-election to council last year. Mercado represents District 6. This is the first time representatives for the Waccamaw Neck have held the two top spots on the council.

The chairman doesn't have any more authority than the other six members, but he does



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Clint Elliott, left, and Louis Morant swap seats after this week's vote on the County Council chairman.

get to set the agenda and keep it moving.

"You're an arbitrator more than an advocate," Elliott said. "You set the agenda and direct it."

His priorities are adopting a wetlands ordinance and revising the zoning ordinance to meet the goals of the county comprehensive plan, which was updated last year several years behind schedule. Elliott and Mercado drew criticism during that process from constituents who said the updated land use plan will increase residential density.

"The tough part is not tak-

ing the grief, but things that weren't true or half-truths and distortions," he said.

Changing the zoning code will make a difference.

"We're zoned for what nobody really wants," Elliott said. That makes it hard to withhold approval for projects that meet the ordinance. "All we do in denying it is cost the taxpayers a lot of money" in lawsuits, he said.

Elliott said he has already met with attorneys at the S.C. Environmental Law Project, which provided the county with a draft wetlands ordinance. The
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ENVIRONMENT

Utility files suit to fund filtering 'forever chemicals' from drinking water

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The level of toxic "forever chemicals" in the Waccamaw River is nearly three times the maximum level for drinking water set by the federal government last year.

Georgetown County Water and Sewer District has filed suit against the chemical manufacturers, including 3M and DuPont, and a dozen of their customers in the region seeking compensation for upgrading its treatment plants to remove those chemicals, the addition-

al cost of operating those facilities and for damage to its reputation. It also seeks punitive damages.

The chemicals are per- or poly-fluoroalkyl substances, known generally as PFAS. They are used to create products that are resistant to water and stains, such as fabrics and non-stick cookware.

"Because of their persistence and bioaccumulation, PFAS discharged into the Waccamaw River and its tributaries decades ago are still present in GCWSD's water supply and
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ECONOMY

Officials map out future for shuttered paper mill

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Efforts to find a new use for International Paper Co.'s closed mill in Georgetown are moving forward following a meeting last week that drew more than 30 stakeholders to a conference room at Pawleys Plantation.

"I'm cautiously optimistic about getting this proper-

ty redeveloped in the next 18 months," said state Sen. Stephen Goldfinch, who arranged the meeting following the annual legislative breakfast hosted by the Chamber of Commerce.

Although the talk behind closed doors was conducted under confidentiality rules that apply to economic
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CHURCHES | Pawleys Island Community

Theft of trailer only made food ministry stronger

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Michele and Jeff Herwig found their calling four years ago when they started cooking and serving free meals to people in Pawleys Island.

Eventually they expanded their ministry across the bridges.

They used a utility trailer that was converted into a food trailer.

"My husband and I love to cook and eat and feed people," Michele said. "We can feed 100 people and it's not a big deal. So we just take our talents and our heart to serve."

"We're not trying to win

brownie points with God," Jeff said. "We're just doing what we know is right."

In September, someone stole the Herwigs' trailer from the parking lot of Pawleys Island Community Church, where the couple are parishioners and use the kitchen to prepare the free meals.

"I was in shock," Jeff said. "It was a terrible feeling."

"It was a heartbreak. Why would you do this to this great community?" Michele said. "We're just trying to help people. We're just trying to help people like Jesus would."

The trailer was stolen around 5 a.m. on a Wednesday, which is the day the Herwigs



Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

Preparing shepherd's pie are, from left, Renee Wente, Bevin Herrman and Michele Herwig.

serve folks at Baskerville Food Pantry on the campus of Holy Cross Faith Memorial Episcopal Church.

The couple was visiting family in Maryland when they received a phone call about the theft.

Michele's first thought was of the people who would not get a meal that day.

"It was heartbreaking," Michele said. "They're close enough to us that we can pray with them. They look forward to hanging out."

The volunteers who help the Herwigs packed up the food in their vehicles and went ahead and served anyway.
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