

# COASTAL OBSERVER

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Clemson design center explores new uses for Georgetown port

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Generations of residents have been separated from the Georgetown waterfront by commercial and industrial uses along the Sampit River. A group of architecture students from Clemson University have come up with ideas for reclaiming a portion of that space now that it is owned by Georgetown County. "It's been a site the community has

never been able to access," said Dan Harding, director of Clemson's Community Research and Design Center. "What happens when that site comes back into the public domain?"

That's what the students and faculty were asked to find out, using an \$80,000 federal grant that the county received last year. It was the first step toward determining a new use for the 45-acre state port facility that was turned over to the

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Georgetown County

An aerial view shows the state port, at right, and the steel mill behind in full operation. The last ship docked at the facility in 2016.



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

**Winter storm blankets coast** | Darl Zuch saw a snow shovel at Lowe's. "You never know," she said. She has seen three snowfalls since moving from Massachusetts to Pawleys Retreat 12 years ago. This is the first time she got to shovel it. Zuch measured nearly 3 inches on her driveway and wanted to clear it before it turned to slush and froze. The snowfall was a little higher on the beachfront. At Litchfield Country Club, below right, it was enough to turn boogie boards into sleds. It also prompted drivers, left, to use caution on Highway 17.



## PAWLEYS ISLAND

### Town drainage study models a wetter future

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The engineers knew that Pawleys Island had a problem with flooding, otherwise they would not have been there. What surprised them, they said, was how much the water rises over the town's streets.

"The 2023 average high tide was only about 6 inches lower than the middle of the road by the chapel," said Rhyne Phillips, project manager for the firm SeamonWhiteside, which is creating a master drainage plan for the island. "No wind, no other forces."

He conceded that "2023 was a bad year" for storms and that the road "might be a little high-

er than that."

But a model that the firm has put together shows that over the next 50 years, even good years will be bad for flooding.

Phillips and Aaron Akin, a water resource manager, compiled data about tides, rainfall, storm surge and sea level rise in an interactive map that town officials are reviewing and due to make public. There are 16 different scenarios that can be overlaid on a current map of the island.

A demonstration for Town Council last week showed two: an extreme high tide and a heavy rain on the north end that had standing water in the

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### Council takes first step toward acquiring three beach easements

BY CHARLES SWENSON  
COASTAL OBSERVER

The town of Pawleys Island is moving forward with plans to obtain easements from three beachfront property owners for a federal beach renourishment project. Town Council last week approved a contract to get the three lots on Springs Avenue appraised.

The appraisals are required if the town goes to court to condemn the easements that the Army Corps of Engineers says are required for a project to

place offshore sand on the island's south end to replace sand that was lost to Hurricane Ian in 2022.

The property owners successfully challenged a condemnation in court in 2020. The easements, which were provided by 110 other property owners, were not required for a renourishment project completed earlier that year because it was funded by the town and the state.

The town later entered into an agreement with the Corps

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## CHURCHES | St. Paul's Waccamaw

### Congregation grows after departure from United Methodists

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI  
COASTAL OBSERVER

Six months after it left the United Methodist Church, St. Paul's Waccamaw is thriving.

Membership has grown so much that there are now three services every Sunday: two traditional and one modern.

"I think people are looking for a church that is willing to unapologetically stand on the Scripture," said the Rev. J.R. Virgin, pastor at St. Paul's. "They're going to say, 'this is what the Bible says and this is how we understand it.' We are going to be very clear about that."

St. Paul's, which was founded in 1986, officially joined the Global Methodist Church on July 1. In doing so it became



The Rev. J.R. Virgin delivers the sermon in the sanctuary at Sunday's early service, where attendance has grown in the last six months.

Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

one of the thousands of congregations to "disaffiliate" from the United Methodist Church in the last five years.

"I thought the transition went very smoothly," Virgin said. "The new denomination is very similar theologically to the previous denomination. We're still rooted in Wesleyan theology."

Although Methodism dates to the teachings of John Wesley

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