

COASTAL OBSERVER

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SALES TAX

Lawsuit over funds from '14 vote heads to trial

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Six weeks before collections begin on Georgetown County's 1-cent capital projects sales tax, a lawsuit prompted by a tax that took effect 10 years ago is due to go to trial.

The dispute between the county and the town of Andrews over funds for a new town building dogged the campaign for a new capital projects sales tax this year. State law changed since the first tax was approved in a 2014 referendum and the county adopted procedures to prevent a repeat of the situation with the new tax.

But as the suit heads to trial in Circuit Court next week, the town and the county are accusing each other of breaking the law over the 2014 sales tax. Each side filed a motion for summary judgment, seeking to preempt a trial.

The county "violated laws of this state and have defrauded the taxpayers of Georgetown County, and more particularly to the citizens of the Town of Andrews," the town said in its latest filing.

The county said it complied with the law "and fully funded the Project as it was contemplated by the voters of Georgetown County in the 2014 Referendum."

Any claim by the town is either barred by the statute of limitations or precluded "because it acted unfairly and unlawfully," the county said in its latest filing.

A judge denied motions seeking to end the case from both sides in 2022.

At issue is a project in the 2014 capital project sales tax referendum that provided \$1.5 million for an "Andrews Fire/Police Complex." It was third on the list of five projects totaling \$28.2 million that would be raised over four years.

The top project, \$6 million to match federal and state funds for dredging the shipping channel through Winyah Bay, was dropped when the estimated project cost jumped from \$33 million to \$73 million.

The funds for Andrews was also supposed to be matched by state funds. When those didn't materialize, the county in 2019 increased its allocation from the sales tax to \$3 million.

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Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Staff at Waccamaw Community Hospital react to a rally thanking health care workers as cases of COVID-19 rose in April 2020.

COVID-19 PLUS FIVE

Reflections on a pandemic

Finding lessons from the trauma

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Five years ago this week, a global pandemic hit home in South Carolina when Gov. Henry McMaster closed schools.

Dr. Desmond Young, a pulmonologist with Tideland Health, was on the front lines of fighting the coronavirus.

Young was scared for his family, his co-workers and just in general.

"We didn't know how bad this was going to be," Young said. "No one could have predicted how bad this was going to be."

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 1.1 million people have died of the coronavirus in the United States, including 17,869 in South Carolina.

"It was traumatic for everyone to realize the

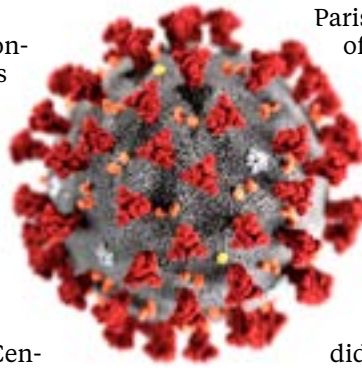
width and depth of this pandemic that quickly unfolded from being a concern to a region like China to a worldwide situation that we quickly got pulled into," said the Very Rev. Paul MacNeil, pastor of Precious Blood of Christ Catholic Parish. "We had parishioners that died of COVID and it really affected us. It was real, and it was sad."

When the governor closed schools on March 15, 2020, he said it would just be for a short period of time. He quickly extended the closure through April. On April 22, McMaster announced that schools would not reopen to finish the school year.

Georgetown County students didn't re-enter classrooms until late September.

On March 23, the first two confirmed cases of the coronavirus were reported in Georgetown County. By mid-June there were more than 100

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LAND USE

Planner will serve without formal vote

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County Council made 13 board appointments this week. Marlajean Hamby wasn't one of them.

Her first term on the Planning Commission expires this month, and although her name was on the council agenda for reappointment it was passed over.

But Hamby, who came to the commission after serving as a leader of the citizens group Keep It Green, will continue to serve.

"I promised Bob I would continue to serve for at least two years," she said, referring to Council Member Bob Anderson, who appointed her in 2021. "I will be 85 then, so perhaps it will be time to retire."

Anderson declined to comment on the appointment.

Hamby said she wasn't aware of the council action, but got some calls after this week's council meeting. In 2022, then-Council Member John Thomas was blocked in his efforts to reappoint Sandra Bundy to a second term on the commission. Bundy served until Clint Elliott replaced Thomas in the District 1 seat. Elliott appointed David Roper to the commission.

Bundy and Hamby were both critical of county planning
SEE "COUNCIL," PAGE 2



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Hamby, left, applauds a speaker urging County Council to reject the update to the land use plan.

NONPROFITS | Fellowship of Christian Athletes

Clemson football coach helps run up the score for fundraiser

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Clemson University football coach Dabo Swinney has advice for high school athletes: chase your dreams and dream big.

"You never know. But I do know this: you can't just dream big," he said. "You have to take some action and do the work. Get knocked down, get back up and keep going. Sooner or later you'll find your sweet spot."

There are a lot of lessons learned from competing, he added.



Dabo Swinney talks to a packed church at All Saints.

Chris Sokoloski/Coastal Observer

"Championships are won when the stands are empty," Swinney said. "Champions are made when nobody is watching."

Swinney was the guest speaker at a Georgetown County Fellowship of Christian Athletes fundraiser at All Saints Church on Tuesday.

On Feb. 6, 1983, a 16-year-old Swinney was "saved" by the

FCA.

"I got really involved in figuring my faith out," he said.

Getting involved with FCA led him to accept Christ and get baptized, Swinney added.

"Really that's been the foundation of my life," he said.

One of the things he likes about FCA is that it meets student-athletes where they are: in school.

"I always tell people, 'I didn't get saved at church. The FCA came to me,'" Swinney said. "A lot of these athletes are

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A duel is brewing: Some gamers at ShushCon find themselves in hot water. **PAGE 8**

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