

Group debuts plan for new town with no property tax

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A group that has spent two years developing a plan to form a new town on the Waccamaw Neck made its first public presentation this week, highlighting its goal to take control of land planning and unveiling a budget that will yield a \$1.2 million surplus without a property tax.

“This has been a big question since Day 1,” said Andy Hallock, who leads the Pawleys Litchfield Municipal Study Group. “What’s going to hap-

pen to my taxes?”

Speaking to the annual meeting of the Litchfield Beaches Property Owners Association, Hallock said that state law prohibits new municipalities from imposing a property tax.

“If you walk away with one thought about property taxes, incorporation does not equal increased taxes,” Hallock said.



Andy Hallock

The largest share of revenue for the proposed town, \$1.3 million, will come from a state tax on insurance premiums that is returned to cities and towns by the S.C. Municipal Association.

The study group has only provided information through emails and social media posts since announcing itself last summer.

“We were going to control the message,” said Hallock, who was the only member of the group identified publicly before the weekend meeting. Since they didn’t think the public knew much about incorpo-

ration, “there was an opportunity for it to be demagogued.”

Jim Register, a Willbrook resident and treasurer of the Litchfield Beautification Foundation, presented the financials for the proposed town.

Other members of the study group are Walter Wilkinson, Doug Wurst, Bill Ringer, Kary Saleeby, Bill Taylor and Cindy Person, who is the chief counsel for Keep It Green Advocacy.

They are now collecting signatures on a petition to present to the S.C. Secretary of State’s Office asking to hold a vote on incorporation. That could hap-

pen by the end of the year, Hallock said. The group hopes to have the signatures of 15 percent of the “qualified electors” this summer.

The proposed town, which would have a population of 16,400, will cover the area from Brookgreen Gardens south to DeBordieu.

Since the name “town of Pawley Island” is already taken, the incorporation ballot will offer several choices for the name of the new town, if it passes. For now, the study group refers to it by ZIP code: the town of 29585.

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Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

Harper Hering cheers for Jack Thomas during the Waccamaw High School senior walk at Waccamaw Elementary School last week.

CLASS OF 2025 | Waccamaw High

Taking their future in stride

BY MADISON SHARROCK
COASTAL OBSERVER

Two years ago, Rashard Blocker couldn’t imagine graduating from high school. His freshman and sophomore years at Waccamaw High School were a struggle.

“I was on a pretty rocky boat. Hanging with the wrong crowd, not coming to school,” he said. “I knew I had to change it up.”

Blocker is only the second of five siblings to graduate. He was among 221 members of Waccamaw’s Class of 2025 who were due to cross the stage at Warrior Field and into a new chapter of their lives last night. Blocker plans to enroll in Horry-Georgetown Technical College.

This year’s seniors received over \$5 million in scholarship offers.

Megan Buffkin is the first in her immediate family to work toward a four-year college degree, which made her the perfect candidate and recipient of the Helping Hands scholarships, where she received a new HP laptop and over \$1,000 for her studies.

“I’m glad that there’s benefits for those who are first-generation because we are considered low income,” Buffkin said.

She said her dream is to attend the Savannah College of Art and Design to pursue 2D animation.

Moreen Rogers received the Delta Sigma Theta Academic Scholarship. She will be

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Gage Lovell turns the senior walk into a senior run.

LAND USE

Golf course rezonings advance with pledge for future tweaks

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A zoning change for two area golf courses moved forward this week with amendments that will further restrict future development if the courses close.

Georgetown County Council Member Bob Anderson said there could be further “tweaks” before the change to the Litchfield Country Club and Founders Club courses receives final approval next month.

“What I’m asking you all, and you all out there in TV land, is to give us a little time to fix this,” he said, referring to the audience and residents watching the council’s livestream.

While a hearing on the rezoning drew a standing-room-

only crowd, a call from the citizens group Keep It Green for a similar turnout at this week’s council meeting didn’t have the same result.

The two courses are currently zoned “residential 10,000-square-foot,” which allows houses on quarter-acre lots. That is the same as the surrounding neighborhoods. The county created a “neighborhood amenity” district for the courses that allows one house on every five acres.

That will result in a maximum of 24 new homes on each course, said Holly Richardson, the county planning director.

A provision that would have allowed the clustering of homes on lots of at least one acre was cut before the measure

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GEORGETOWN

Environmental groups offer support to residents in fight over biomass plant

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Of the two dozen people who showed up for a meeting to talk about a proposed biomass energy plant in Georgetown, five were from conservation groups. Another five were reporters.

The rest were fewer in number than organizers hoped to draw to the 240-seat Soul Saving Station in Georgetown. It stands in the shadow of the International Paper Co. mill that closed last year.

Last week’s meeting was planned as a follow-up to one held earlier in the month at church. The 60 people who attended were eager to learn more about the biomass plant and its impacts on the county in general and the city’s West End neighborhood in particular.

Everett Carolina, a former County Council member who organized the meetings, said the Memorial Day weekend took its toll on attendance.

“We will be making an effort to mobilize the community,” he said. “We have to get the word out.”

When they do, conservation groups said they will be there to



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

The paper mill rises behind a vacant home in the city’s West End.

help oppose the facility.

The plant was first pitched to local and state officials in a closed meeting that followed a Chamber of Commerce breakfast with state lawmakers in January. State Sen. Stephen Goldfinch, a lawyer, is also representing the partners who

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