

COASTAL OBSERVER

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Former tech park site sold to firm with nonprofit ties

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Property at Pawleys Island that was once planned by Georgetown County for a technology park was sold last week to a buyer tied to a nonprofit foundation.

The sale by the Econom-

ic Development Alliance for Georgetown County of 14.4 acres on Petigru Drive came as the state Court of Appeals was due to hear arguments in a lawsuit brought by neighbors and citizens groups to overturn Georgetown County's rezoning of the property in 2022 to allow 90 townhouses on the site.

The Alliance for Economic Development sold the property for \$1.2 million to One Georgetown Realty, an LLC whose registered agent is Darrin Goss, the president and CEO of the Coastal Community Foundation.

The foundation, based in Charleston, had assets of over \$400 million last year, includ-

ing over \$200 million in donor-advised funds.

Goss did not respond to messages seeking comment. Neither did Will Howard, who chairs the alliance, a nonprofit created and supported by Georgetown County.

The 14.4 acres was bought by the alliance in 2016 for

\$950,000, which was financed by a loan from the S.C. Public Service Authority, better known as Santee Cooper.

Cindy Person, chief counsel for Keep It Green Advocacy, which represents the plaintiffs in the suit, said she had heard a sale might be pending, but was

SEE "SALE," PAGE 2



No refuge
from cuts

Chris Sokoloski (above), Charles Swenson (below)/Coastal Observer

Craig Sasser on Yauhannah Bluff on his last day as manager. Below, he tours the refuge ahead of its 25th anniversary.

Manager who built Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge leaves for private sector

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Craig Sasser's life has come full circle.

After he graduated from Furman University, he worked at Kinloch Plantation.

Now he has left the Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge, which he helped start 28 years ago, to manage the 5,800-acre plantation on the North Santee River.

"I always dreamed of going there," he said. "I wanted Kinloch to get back to where it was when I was a kid."

Guerry Green, a Pawleys Island resident, bought the plantation in March from the family of Ted Turner, who founded CNN and used to own the Atlanta Braves.

"It's essentially the equivalent of a privately owned refuge. A lot of it is managed wetlands," Sasser said. "There's no easy acreage to manage but it's a very complicated management. It's kind of me and nature out there and my vision might not be Mother Nature's vision."



After graduating from Furman with a degree in biology, Sasser worked at the Baruch Marine Laboratory for two years, the S.C. Waterfowl Association for six years, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 10 years.

As the South Carolina refuge complex biologist, Sasser was assigned to the Waccamaw refuge project when planning began in 1995.

There was a lot of opposition to the project at the beginning, including from Georgetown County Council members who thought it would hurt growth and the widening of Highway 701 to four lanes and from property owners.

"Through time, and a lot of hard work and a lot of building of trust and community goodwill, a lot of the stuff has come together in a way I would have never imagined," Sasser said. "But also it has helped facilitate land deals and partnerships and trust. So many things just came through time and persistence and doing the best that

SEE "REFUGE," PAGE 3



Thrive Georgetown wants to reach beyond the Waccamaw Neck.

The zoning ordinance, which provides the legal basis for the land use element of the comprehensive plan, was updated at the end of last year following several years of discussion. The citizens group Keep It Green organized opposition to the update, saying it would lead to increased growth on the Waccamaw Neck.

Georgetown County has hired a Florida-based firm, Inspire Placemaking Collective, to help create a unified development ordinance that will

SEE "THRIVE," PAGE 4

GEORGETOWN | Redeveloping the waterfront

Utilities, but not county, part of bid for paper mill property

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Two electric utilities are part of a bid for the former International Paper Co. mill in Georgetown, officials said this week.

Georgetown County, which has an agreement to share information with the utilities, says it is not part of any bid to acquire the site.

But the parties had a different view earlier this spring.

"I want you to understand why we're the best group to

take ownership of these properties," Rob Ardis, chief executive of Santee Electric Co-op, wrote in a customer newsletter in April. "We aren't profit-driven developers looking to 'flip' a property. We want to invest in the place where we live, work and serve."

Ardis said this week that was "written with the blessing of all parties involved."

State Rep. Lee Hewitt last week raised concerns that a bidder for the mill site that he introduced to local officials wasn't aware of the "memoran-

The mill site is only part of the property IP owns in the county.

Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

dum of understanding" the utilities and the county had signed in March. He said learned of it after meeting with Ardis and other officials at Santee Electric.

Hewitt's unidentified bidder has a contract to buy the Liberty Steel mill site on the Georgetown waterfront. The county owns the former state



port facility that sits between the two mills, which ended operations last year.

County Council Chairman Clint Elliott issued a statement

SEE "MILL," PAGE 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Lost and found: Beach patrol in the right place at the right time.
SECOND FRONT

Arts: Sculptor at work on Harriet Tubman figure for Georgetown Library.
PAGE 7



Sports: Junior Legion team helps WHS baseball coach prepare for the future.
PAGE 14

Obituaries	2
Crime.....	5
Opinion	6
Crossword	10
Classifieds	11
Property transfers	12
Online coastalobserver.com	

