

Shark tours prompt county to limit surf fishing

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Surf fishing on Georgetown County beaches will be prohibited during the daytime under a measure approved by County Council this week.

The move comes after complaints about a company in Myrtle Beach bringing people to the county to fish for sharks.

"They're setting up in Garden City and pulling in sharks that are 5 to 6 feet," Council

Chairman Clint Elliott said. "Kids are scared to death to get in the water."

Shark fishing is prohibited in Horry County and the city of Myrtle Beach.

Elliott spoke with the state Department of Natural Resources and was told that its jurisdiction didn't start until farther offshore. The department said it needed to adopt an ordinance that the sheriff's office beach patrol could enforce.

SEE "FISHING," PAGE 2



Surf fishing will be allowed from 7 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. from May through September.

Charles Swenson/
Coastal Observer

WACCAMAW REC CENTER

Beating the heat
Repairs to HVAC follow months of complaints

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

It was hot inside the Waccamaw Regional Recreation Center, where users have complained for months about the faulty air conditioning.

It was hotter on the roof.

"I think the heat index here was like 130 degrees," Patrick Sanders, head HVAC technician for Georgetown County's Facility Services division, said as he watched the gauges on a vacuum pump connected to one of two 30-ton units on the roof.

Those units are for the 14,500-square-foot gym. There are 10 smaller units for the other spaces inside the center. The entire building was closed for three days this week while the gym units were repaired.

While the work coincided with a heat wave, Sanders took it in stride.

"It doesn't matter to me because I want to get these people cool," he said. "We have a lot of older people that come to the gym here."

Age is also an issue for the HVAC system.

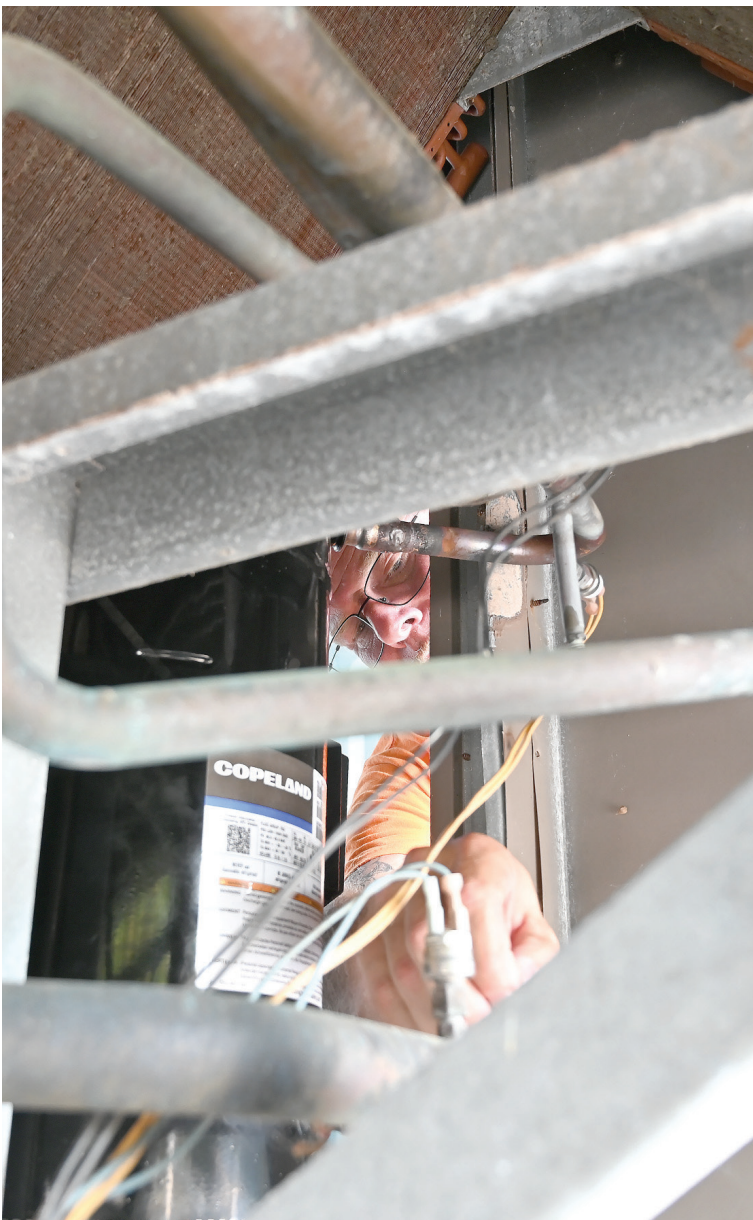
"These are the original units," Sanders said.

The building opened in 2013. The units are designed to last 15 to 20 years, but that doesn't factor in the salt air on the coast or the humidity, he said. "It shortens the life cycle to about 10 years."

Age is also a factor when it comes to repairs. The parts are hard to find.

"Luckily, we were able to find two compressors for this

SEE "A/C," PAGE 3



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Patrick Sanders, above, checks a connection inside an HVAC unit on top of the rec center. He said the units, below, are at the end of their life span.



LAND USE | Magic Oaks

Neighbors renew challenge to stormwater plan on creek

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Plans to manage stormwater at a proposed residential development between Highway 17 and Pawleys Creek have changed. Opposition from neighbors has not.

"Everybody here is kind of in the dark as to these last-minute changes," said Gary Weinreich, a retired environmental engineer.

Magic Oaks LLC, whose principal is Tripp Nealy, is seeking a state permit for its plan to manage stormwater at a 27-lot subdivision just south of the Hammock Shops. The state Department of Environmental Services is also reviewing the project for consistency with the coastal zone management plan.

The project is also seeking stormwater approval from Georgetown County, which held a public hearing on the project in September.

The state held a hearing last

week. County Council Member Bob Anderson, who attended both, was among those who noted that the plans were not the same.

"We're on our sixth review," said Rodney Butler, a watershed specialist with the county's stormwater division.

Cindy Person, chief counsel for Keep It Green Advocacy, who represents neighboring property owners, questioned the purpose of the county's hearing.

"We each have our own stormwater programs," said Shannon Hicks, a section manager, for the state Bureau of Water Quality. "They're both necessary."

Typically, the state standards are the baseline the local ordinances build upon, she added. The state tries to coordinate its review with the local review.

"In this case it didn't line up," Hicks said.

Plans presented at last fall's

SEE "PERMIT," PAGE 3

Zoning changes on golf courses limit redevelopment options

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

A zoning change approved by Georgetown County Council this week will limit future development on the Litchfield Country Club and Founders Club golf courses, but falls short of a request from residents to prevent any homes on the tracts if the courses close.

"We certainly support the need to immediately change the existing R-10 zoning, but the best, most protective and the only true protection against residential development is to not allow it," said Cindy Person, a country club resident and

chief counsel for Keep It Green Advocacy.

Under the new "neighborhood amenity" zoning, the courses could have 24 homes on lots of at least 5 acres.

Holly Richardson, the county planning director, said Litchfield could have been redeveloped for about 400 homes under the previous zoning, which allowed quarter acre lots – the same size as the surrounding neighborhood.

Founders Group, which owns the courses, tried to negotiate a higher density.

Council members confirmed that the rezoning cut density before approving it 5-0.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | Kelly Robertson-Slagle

New director sees familiar problem along with unique opportunity

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The county's largest employer announced it would close, leaving behind a 350-acre site on the waterfront in need of environmental cleanup.

"They were entertaining several different potential purchasers of that property," Kelly Robertson-Slagle said. "It takes the right partner, the right buyer that has the capacity to be able to do that kind of work.

And that really limits the pool."

The fate of the site in Charles County, Md., was still evolving when Robertson-Slagle left as its director of economic development to take the same position with Georgetown County. Now she has three waterfront sites facing redevelopment: the Liberty Steel mill, the International Paper mill – both of which closed last year – and the former state port that sits between them on the Georgetown waterfront.

"I looked at it as a really exciting opportunity and a challenge that I'm up for," Robertson-Slagle said.

She is in the first month of a self-imposed 90-day listening phase.

Robertson-Slagle was among the local officials who listened to an update from IP this week on the status of the sale of its property. A statement from the county said the company confirmed what many

SEE "DEVELOPMENT," PAGE 2



Robertson-Slagle, at right, with Maya Morant, the marketing director for economic development.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Juneteenth: Community celebrates freedom day with a parade.
SECOND FRONT



Tales for tails: Students share stories with wide-eyed audience.
PAGE 8



Churches: Little Memorial Chapel celebrates 100th anniversary with a renovation.
PAGE 12

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

