

Committee hopes to keep county beach plan on track

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Georgetown County is awaiting state approval of a plan that officials hope will lead to its beaches becoming eligible for federal aid to repair storm damage. When that comes, it is relying on an ad hoc beach committee to help move the plan forward.

"This is a community effort," County Council Member Stella Mercado said. "We need all the people who care about our beaches to step up."

The draft beach manage-



Madison Sharrock/Coastal Observer

Adding to beach access, including emergency access, is among the goals of the management plan.

ment plan calls for beach nourishment, inlet management and increased public access.

John Martin, who chairs the committee that Mercado put together in the winter, is drafting a letter to the council urging it to move forward with the goals in its updated beach management plan.

"These are urgent things that need to be done," he said. "This council is actually doing some of it."

A state law passed in 1990 mandated that local governments in the coastal county adopt a comprehensive beach

management plan. Georgetown County adopted its current beachfront management plan in November 1992, three years after Hurricane Hugo reset the benchmark for destructive storms.

Among the goals was limiting development in areas with high erosion rates, like the south end of Litchfield Beach and Garden City; expanding beach access to leverage state and funding; and keeping the plan itself current with updates every five years.

None of those goals were met. One area that was iden-

tified for public access in 1992 was the south end of Litchfield Beach. It was later developed as the Peninsula at Inlet Point South, where property owners funded a private beach nourishment project in 2023 and are seeking permits to mine additional sand from Midway Inlet for storm repairs.

The county hired Coastal Science and Engineering to prepare a feasibility study for creating an "engineered beach" at Garden City and Litchfield using sand dredged offshore. Once established, the

SEE "BEACH," PAGE 3

BEACHES

Simulator will give kids rip current safety lessons

BY MADISON SHARROCK
COASTAL OBSERVER

A new rip current simulator at Tideland's Health Pawleys Family YMCA is powerful, not just in terms of its speed, but in the way it may save lives.

The YMCA will partner with the Georgetown County School District to teach sixth-graders about rip current water safety called the Rip Current Ready Initiative. The lessons may begin within the next six weeks.

Travis Klatka, principal of Waccamaw Intermediate, said fundraisers are underway to cover the \$70 cost per child. He said the school is looking at the end of October for the students to test out the simulator.

"It's good for the kids and the community," Klatka said.

The YMCA plans to work with other sixth-graders along the Waccamaw Neck after the intermediate school students go through the initiative including Lowcountry Preparatory School and Coastal Montessori Charter School. Their overarching goal is to have each student learn through the Rip Current Ready Initiative before they enter high school.

Ingram Walters, a YMCA



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

The simulator can mimic rip currents found around Midway Inlet, which led to the death of two swimmers on the north end of Pawleys Island this summer.

member, learned about the initiative and wanted to help, so he covered the cost for the first 100 sixth graders to go through the initiative. Another local YMCA member has already expressed interest in covering the cost for the rest of the intermediate school students.

More than \$30,000 has been donated toward the initiative.

Board Member Jarrod Ownbey took a moment to remember Tyrese Haynes, a rising senior who drowned in the ocean off of Litchfield by the Sea last summer. He said this new form of water safety training can save many lives.

"I'm sure we all remember over a year ago, we lost a student in the Waccamaw cluster. I would like to prevent that from happening again," Ownbey said at last week's board meeting.

SEE "YMCA," PAGE 4



Laurie Healan/YMCA

Anna McNeely shows a student how to float out of the current in the YMCA pool

LAND USE

Developer says lawsuit creates risk of defaults

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The developer of 27 lots between Pawleys Creek and Highway 17 says it risks defaulting on its loans if the state Court of Appeals doesn't move quickly on an appeal filed by neighbors who oppose the project.

The neighbors say that's the risk that comes with "speculative land development."

Magic Oaks LLC, whose principal is Tripp Nealy, held an open house for real estate agents on the property in February. Nealy said he was moving forward with approval from his lawyers in spite of a lawsuit challenging Georgetown County's decision to rezone the property as a "flexible design district" to allow the development.

Last month, Zach Crowl of the Bellamy law firm, asked the Court of Appeals to "expedite consideration" of an appeal from a Circuit Court judge's decision that struck one element of the neighbors' complaint: that County Council improperly gave its final approval after the location of a proposed kayak launch was moved. The neighbors, represented by

SEE "SUIT," PAGE 2

ENVIRONMENT | The cost of solid waste

Where the rubber meets the road, the county pays a ton

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

At the busiest time of year, Georgetown County loses \$30,000 a month recycling tires. That's the best case scenario. It may actually lose more.

County Council voted this week to raise the fee it charges to dispose of tires at the landfill, bringing it in line with a state law that took effect in May. But that will still make tire disposal a losing proposition.

"It's kind of a question of what does the county want to do to try to stop the bleeding," said Jay Watson, the county attorney.

The economics of tire recycling is simple. The county charges \$100 a ton to dispose of tires. It pays a contractor, U.S. Tire, \$500 a ton to haul them from the landfill for recycling.

Last year, the county land-

fill took in 781 tons of tires, according to the state Department of Environmental Services. That means it spent \$390,500 to have them recycled.

But the county took in less than a 10th of that amount in fees, just under \$37,000. That's because the county doesn't charge a fee if the person disposing of the tires can show that they paid a \$2 per tire state fee.

Based on industry standards, it takes about 100 passenger tires to make a ton.

The state law changed this year to allow counties to collect a fee of \$150 a ton if the tire fee was paid and \$400 a ton if it wasn't.

That still falls short of the \$500 a ton the county pays to U.S. Tire, and it doesn't account for other costs, said James Dorsey, the county Environmental Services manager.



Tires are stored at the landfill before being hauled off by a contractor for \$500 a ton.

Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

"We have to actually load their trucks. So we pay our manpower, our fuel," Dorsey said.

To help keep costs down, the landfill won't accept tires from people outside Georgetown County, he said. At its

peak, the landfill takes in 300 tons a month.

That led Council Chairman Clint Elliott and Vice Chairman Stella Mercado to do some quick math.

"We're losing 30 grand a

month. We need to look at that," Elliott said.

The county ought to at least break even, he said.

"We don't want to lose money anywhere because we can't

SEE "TIRES," PAGE 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Sharing knowledge: Generations swap insights at school's Grandparents Day. **SECOND FRONT**



The music starts: JB's Celebration Park ready to welcome an audience. **PAGE 8**



Good dogs: Animal center's "mentors" teach dogs skills for new homes. **PAGE 2**

Obituaries 2
Crime..... 5
Opinion..... 6
Crossword 10
Classifieds 11
Property transfers 12
Sports 14
Online
coastalobserver.com

