

COASTAL OBSERVER

Vol. XL No. 27

Pawleys Island, South Carolina ~ December 16, 2021

\$1.00

First drafts of council district maps get cool reception

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Two proposed changes to Georgetown County Council districts shifts voters in DeBordieu into a district centered on the city of Georgetown.

Council Member Bob Anderson, who represents those voters now, hopes to get them back before the new districts are made final next month.

"People in DeBordieu don't

want to be in District 4," he said. "We're working on that."

The seven council districts are being redrawn following the 2020 Census to maintain the constitutional requirement of one-person, one-vote. Since the current districts were implemented in 2011, the population on Waccamaw Neck grew while other areas of the county shrank.

Council District 6, held by Steve Goggans, is the largest district with 10,911 people. Lillie

Jean Johnson represents District 4, the smallest, with 7,621 people.

The goal of the redistricting is to have 9,058 people in each district, with no more than a 10 percent difference between populations of the largest and smallest districts. That difference is now more than 36 percent.

Race is another factor. The federal Voting Rights Act protects the interests of minorities, but the Black population of the county has also declined. It is

now 29 percent of the total, equal to two of the seven council districts. There are currently three Black members of council.

The county contracted with the state Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs to help with the redistricting. The agency provided two draft plans last week.

One maintains a majority of Black voters only in District 7, represented by Council Chairman Louis Morant. The majority is just over 51 percent of the vot-

ing-age population.

District 4 and District 3, represented by Everett Carolina, would have "majority influential" Black population, according to a memo from Fiscal Affairs.

The second redistricting plan keeps the voting-age population of Districts 3, 4 and 7 are just over 50 percent. In both scenarios, DeBordieu is in District 4.

Both proposals also keep North Litchfield in Council
SEE "DISTRICTS," PAGE 5

PAWLEYS ISLAND

Council votes to cut size of town police force

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

The town of Pawleys Island will cut its police force by one officer and reduce coverage to 12 hours a day in order to help build up its reserves for future capital projects. The move will save \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year, according to Administrator Ryan Fabbri.

The decision by Town Council, made as part of the town's annual budget process, is the second reduction to the police department in three years. The council reduced the department from five people to four in 2019 and used the savings to increase pay for the remaining officers. That marked the end of 24-hour coverage.

The town now has coverage 20 hours a day. It relies on the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office to answer calls during the other four hours.

Council members said they would like to see more service from the sheriff's office.

"We are indeed paying taxes for county services," Council Member Rocky Holliday said. "We don't really count on them very often."

Pawleys Island doesn't have a municipal property tax. It expects to receive over half of its \$19 million in revenue in the coming year from state and local taxes on short-term rentals.

SEE "POLICE," PAGE 3



Photos by Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

The whirl of holiday lights

Roddey Sawyer, 5, and Stella Piper Dawson, 6, ride the carousel outside the Kaminski House Museum. It was part

of the Light Up the Lawn holiday celebration last weekend at the 18th century home in Georgetown.



ELECTION 2022

Candidate enters race for District 1 council seat

BY CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

When Clint Elliott was first urged to run for the District 1 seat on Georgetown County Council that would be open at the next election, he talked with his wife, Marodith. She chairs the board of the community group Murrells Inlet 2020.

"We might be able to make a strong impact on how Georgetown County operates," he told her.

Elliott had planned to wait until new council district lines were drawn to announce his candidacy for the seat that John Thomas plans to vacate in another year. Instead, he made his plans public on Monday, a day before County Council announced the first drafts of the new lines.

"We know Murrells Inlet's going to have their own representative," said Elliott, who will run as a Republican.

The first drafts of the proposed council districts put Elliott in District 1.

Stella Mercado, who lives in Willbrook, announced last month that she will seek the District 6 council seat currently held by Steve Goggans. He and Thomas had said they won't seek reelection. The draft maps of the council districts also put Mercado in District 6.

Elliott grew up in the
SEE "ELECTION," PAGE 2

ENVIRONMENT | Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge

Ideas for Hasty Point tract hinge on finding funds

BY CHRIS SOKOLOSKI
COASTAL OBSERVER

Now that Hasty Point plantation has been added to the Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge, plans are in the works to open it to the public.

The first step in the process was to ask the public what they wanted to see on the 772-acre property in Plantersville.

"Hasty Point is such a unique piece of property. It's got a lot of amenities that other refuge tracts do not have," refuge manager Craig Sasser said. "I just felt like this was a unique opportunity for me to really dig a little deeper, get more feedback and just try to find a new opportunity and a new challenge for the refuge."

Sasser's plans include a walking trail for people to explore the woods and go bird watching. He

would also like to create history exhibits and an interpretive center, but that costs money, possibly hundreds of thousands of dollars, all of which he would have to find.

"It's not easy. It means grant writing, it means contracting with consultants," Sasser said. "The sky's the limit, but the sky is the limit if I have to try and figure out how to try to pay for it."

Anything done at Hasty Point has to promote the mission of the refuge or be compatible with it, Sasser added.

Sasser secured several grants to hire Mandala Research last year to meet one-on-one with residents and community groups to find out what they'd like to see at Hasty Point. Laura Mandala then came up with the idea of holding public meetings in the four corners of the county. The meetings



Charles Swenson/Coastal Observer

were held this month and attracted about a dozen residents.

At the meeting in Pawleys Island, Marilyn Hemingway, CEO/president and founder of

the Gullah Geechee Chamber of Commerce, said she would like to see living history exhibits done in a "tasteful and considerate
SEE "REFUGE," PAGE 4

Hasty Point is west of Sandy Island on the Pee Dee River. It was added to the wildlife refuge last year.

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