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50 cents

Economist sees slow recovery as jobless top 15%

By SARAH L. SMITH
COASTAL OBSERVER

Despite the latest figures showing over 15 percent of Georgetown County's workforce is unemployed, there is hope for the local economy, an economist says.

Retail sales have started to recover after a drop in 2008, and there is the potential for county residents to find work in neighboring areas, said Don Schunk, a research economist at Coastal Carolina University.

"There are some signs of hope. You look at Boeing coming in and you look at large announcements from the upstate," he said.

While the jobs are not in Georgetown County, residents can still benefit if they work in other counties and bring their checks back to Georgetown, he said, showing a chart that placed Georgetown County residents in jobs as far south as Charleston and as far north and west as Loris, Conway and Florence.

But, he said, "I don't think we should expect a sharp turn around."

Manufacturing was a large part of the county and state economy until the early 1990s. The number of manufacturing jobs has continued to fall since 2000.

"It's tempting to say that it's just the re-

cession, but there is something larger at play," he said.

Schunk credits two factors. There is more automation in factories, so parking lots get smaller while the buildings get bigger, he said.

Work is also outsourced.

While it's easy to look at the decline and say, "just find another business and take manufacturing out," Schunk said the county's economy won't rapidly improve unless manufacturing is part of it. Retail sales and jobs do not make up for those lost positions or the amount of money people with manufacturing jobs put into the local economy.

"Communities across the United States are dealing with this," he said. "It's not a ghost town issue."

Unemployment in January was 15.3 percent, up 2.3 percent from January 2009, according to the S.C. Employment Security Commission. There are now 4,819 people out of work, nearly 1,000 more than a year ago, and 400 more than in December.

Schunk estimates that another 10 percent has stopped looking for jobs, making the effective jobless and under-employed rate closer to 25 percent.

On top of the loss of manufacturing, SEE "ECONOMIST," PAGE 4



Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

Pygmy whale strands at North Litchfield

An adult pygmy sperm whale that stranded on North Litchfield Beach had a heart condition, scientists learned. The 1,100-pound whale was still breathing and moving around when it came ashore around 7 a.m. Saturday. "You've got a large, dying animal that's hit the beach. There are limited options," said Rob Young, coordina-

tor of the S.C. Marine Mammal Stranding Network. It died around noon and was taken to a lab in Charleston for study. Most of what is known about the offshore species comes from strandings. "It's a rare opportunity to see one of these creatures," Young said. It had an enlarged heart, and died of natural causes, he said.

Recreation plan

Signed contract means work can finally begin

By JACKIE R. BROACH
COASTAL OBSERVER

After two months of negotiations, Georgetown County has closed a deal that will have four design firms work cooperatively to plan new recreation facilities throughout the county.

A contract was signed Wednesday afternoon, said County Administrator Sel Hemingway.

The contract is between the

county and one firm, SGA Architecture of Pawleys Island, but that was just to "simplify things" and make administration easier, said Steve Goggans, principal of SGA.

"We needed an overarching, coordinating entity that could coordinate all the data, surveys and evaluations, and set up the charrette," he explained.

The other firms — Woolpert of Charleston, Wood + Partners of Hilton Head and DDC Engineers

of Myrtle Beach — will subcontract through SGA. But they'll "be in every way equal," Goggans said.

With negotiations out of the way, Goggans said plans are to get started on the first stages of the work immediately. He estimates the firms are six to eight weeks away from being able to begin the charrette, which is the actual design of the projects.

"We understand the county wants things done fast," he said.

"One of the first things we want to do is construct an overall schedule."

The first few weeks will be given to data collection, including boundary and wetlands surveys, soil studies and environmental audits, he said.

All the consultants will then visit the sites and meet with county staff to confirm the design program and reaffirm County Council's SEE "RECREATION," PAGE 2

Pawleys Island

Town buys corner lot for \$375K in deal to expand park

By CHARLES SWENSON
COASTAL OBSERVER

Buying a corner lot on Myrtle Avenue at the North Causeway will give the town of Pawleys Island options, Mayor Bill Otis says.

Town Council this week approved the purchase of the McCarley family home for \$375,000. The deal will close April 10.

"There should be no hitches, since we're paying cash for it," said David DuRant, the town attorney.

The money will come from state accommodations tax funds.

The property was listed by Pawleys Island Realty for \$678,000 after the death last year of Mary Ann McCarley, a North Carolina artist. The difference between the listing price and the sale price will be recorded as a gift from McCarley's heirs to the town.

The house was built in the 1940s as a store and bar. There is a National Register plaque on the house, but DuRant said there is no evidence the property is actually listed. "Our concern was whether there were any historic preservation easements," he said.

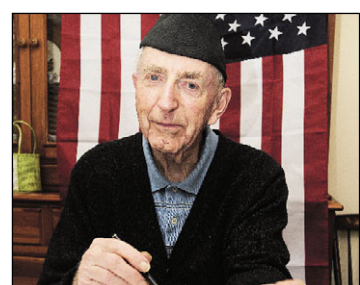
The town will tear down the building and incorporate the 6,000-square-foot lot into the Nature Park at the east end of the North Causeway. Otis estimates that will cost about \$25,000.

The town leases the park for \$1 a year from the Pawleys Island Pavilion Co. Otis was a member of the pavilion company until he resigned after being elected mayor. He doesn't believe the town will ever acquire the rest of the park site.

But the lot is down the street from Town Hall, and could be used if anything happened to that structure, Otis said.

"There are lot reasons long term why it's good," he said. "It just opens up options you didn't have before."

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Memories of War: After struggling with images for 65 years, Roger Johnson started writing. **SECOND FRONT**

Environment: Local business owner says no to plastic bags. **PAGE 5**

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On the Internet
www.coastalobserver.com

Substitute teachers: One day at a time

A foot in the classroom door for people changing careers

By SARAH L. SMITH
COASTAL OBSERVER

When the economy slowed and unemployment rose, people turned to Georgetown County's largest employer, the school district.

Applicants for substitute teaching jobs rose from 66 to 99 last year, fueled by the numbers of people looking for opportunities to retrain for new careers or launch teaching careers.

Rosalyn Vereen, 30, decided to work on a degree in early childhood education when her 12-year-old son started coming home from school and acting out his day in his room.

"I'd love to make a difference like that in a child's life, so I'm going to Winnsboro Tech," said Vereen, a Georgetown resident.

Shalonda Sherald, 22, of

Hemingway, also wanted to start a new career. She serves in the National Guard, but wants to become a teacher.

"I have a bachelor's degree in psychology and was interested in guidance, but after an internship in a school guidance office, I decided I wanted to teach," she said.

Unless they have a bachelor's degree in education or a related field, prospective substitutes must take a training class, said Shanika Stafford, the district's substitute coordinator.

Potential substitutes attend a month-long course to learn about policies, procedures, classroom management and lesson planning. The class meets for three hours each week.

Substitutes with teacher training from other states often take SEE "UNEMPLOYED," PAGE 3



Tanya Ackerman/Coastal Observer

Hot coffee lands driver in creek

The driver of a truck that splashed down in Pawleys Creek last week ran off the South Causeway because he spilled hot coffee in his lap, according to Pawley Island Police. The driver told police he looked down and ran off the road. He climbed out onto the roof and was brought to shore by Midway Fire and Rescue workers. See more photos from the week at coastalobserver.com.