



The Georgetown County Chronicle



A monthly e-newsletter produced by Georgetown County, S.C., for its residents and visitors.

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Calendar

March 4 – Georgetown County Board of Zoning Appeals, 5:30 p.m., Howard Recreation Center.

March 9 – Georgetown County Council meeting, 5:30 p.m., Howard Recreation Center.

March 18 – Tea and Poetry Series continues with Marjorie Wentworth. See page 6.

March 18 – Georgetown County Planning Commission Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Howard Recreation Center.

March 23 – Georgetown County Council meeting, 5:30 p.m., Howard Recreation Center.

April 2 – County offices and facilities are closed for Good Friday.

Volume 9, Issue 6

February 2021

County rejects ransom demand, rebuilds instead

Four weeks after a ransomware attack brought down everything from email capabilities to network file access, operations in most Georgetown County departments are getting back to normal.

The county's IT staff, working in conjunction with cyber security experts brought in by the county's insurance provider after the hack, has worked at a rapid pace to make it happen.

"It might not seem that fast to people who have been waiting for their computers to come back on, but they've basically been moving at the speed of light over in IT," said Walt Ackerman, Georgetown County Director of Administrative Services and Human Resources. His efforts since the attack have been largely redirected to working as a liaison between IT, other county staff, and other agencies involved in investigating the attack and restoring county systems.

"Under normal circumstances, all they have accomplished would probably have taken six or seven months," Ackerman said.

Some of the steps taken, such as moving the county's email to a cloud-based system, were already in the works, but had to be moved up dramatically in response to the cyber intrusion, which occurred on Jan. 22. The county immediately called in the State Law Enforcement Division and reported the incident to its cyber insurance provider.



An investigation revealed the criminals responsible for the attack gained access to the county's system via a phishing email. It was a "very sophisticated attempt," which would have fooled most people, county officials were told. Further details about the ransom and the perpetrators are not available at this time as the investigation remains open. The county did not pay the ransom.

While much has been accomplished already, there is still a lot to do get the county's network completely back up and running. Email has been restored for several hundred staff members and facilities with the largest groups of staff can once again access files on the county's shared network. Additionally, most computers are back up and running. Those machines iden-

See "Ransomware," Page 3

Sheriff's Office raises \$20K with inaugural Polar Plunge event



Mother Nature did her part for the Georgetown County Sheriff's Office's inaugural Polar Plunge at the Litchfield Inn on Feb. 6. It was cloudy, windy and never topped 50 degrees during the event, ensuring that the approximately 50 participants who ran, skipped and dove into the Atlantic got the full Polar Plunge experience. The event raised \$21,820 for the Special Olympics.



Coast RTA looking for input as it plans to expand service

The area's regional transit agency, Coast RTA, is preparing to expand its service offerings in Georgetown County. But first, it's looking for some input from local residents on which routes would provide the most benefit for potential riders.

The survey can be accessed at <https://coastrta.com/georgetown-survey/>.

Currently, Coast RTA provides service to Georgetown County via Route 16 and Route 16 Express. The Route connects both urban and rural parts of the county, along Route 17 and 701. Areas of interest for the new route include Andrews, Sampit, North Santee, the industrial complex on Highway 521, Georgetown's West End, Maryville and North Fraser Street.

Coast RTA recently reported to Georgetown County Council that it is also in the process of establishing a vanpool service for its users that allow small groups of users to drive themselves to work using a vehicle provided by Coast RTA. The program would be employer-sponsored, with expenses paid or split by the employer and employees. Any major employer would be eligible and the service would provide a new way to get groups of employees from rural areas to work in a cost-efficient and time-efficient manner.

Coast RTA is also looking to hire more drivers, the agency told County Council members.



New routes in Georgetown County and a vanpool service are on the way, according to Coast RTA. The agency is trying to attract new riders and more hire drivers.

Grants will help with flood mitigation

Georgetown County has received a \$3.47 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. The funds will be used to make stormwater system improvements to protect businesses in the eastern Andrews area from severe flooding.

Additionally, the City of Georgetown also received a grant of \$3.36 million for stormwater improvements in the city's Historic District, bringing the total amount of funds received for improvements within the county to \$6.83 million.

This will be a big help as the county and its municipalities work to improve infrastructure in areas that are regularly hard hit by flooding during storm events. The county will provide required matching funds for both grants.

New flight school now open at Airport

CHS Flight School had an open house this month for its new operation at the Georgetown County Airport. The school will allow members of the public to become licensed pilots.

For those who aren't quite sure if learning to fly is for them, a Discovery Flight can be booked for \$99 to help them make the decision. Discovery flights allow students to get in the air and take the controls to get a feel for what is involved in flying.

They school offers "pay as you go" pricing. Flight school is perfect for hobbyists or to prepare students for careers in aviation.

For more information, call (843) 478-4334 to chat with an instructor. The airport is located at 129 Airport Road, in Georgetown.

Get the Chronicle

At Georgetown County, we want our residents and property owners kept abreast of what's going on inside their local government. That's why we created the Georgetown County Chronicle. It's a vehicle for information about county services and events, important messages from county officials and behind-the-scenes glimpses at how government works.

You can find the Chronicle on our website at www.gtcounty.org or through our social media accounts. If you'd rather have it delivered to your inbox, e-mail jbroach@gtcounty.org with the subject line "send me the Chronicle."

That's also the place to send questions and comments about this newsletter and its content. We welcome your feedback and suggestions.

www.gtcounty.org

Spending of sales tax funds put on hold following request for more public input

Third and final reading of an ordinance that would have allocated \$7 million of remaining funds from an expired one-cent sales tax was put on hold this month.

At its Feb. 23 meeting, Council heard from about a dozen residents, most from Council District 4, who asked for more public input on projects. At issue in particular seemed to be allocation of a little over \$1 million for improvements to the Georgetown County Library's main branch on Cleland Street. Displeasure was also expressed over \$650,000 for a recycling center in the Big Dam Swamp community. Speakers at the meeting said they wanted consideration instead for projects including roads, drainage and parks.

No time limit was set on the deferment, but Council will continue the conversation again at its March 9 meeting, after conversations between county staff, the S.C. Department of Transportation and other key parties can be scheduled.

The four-year sales tax was approved by voters in 2014 to pay for projects including more than 100 road projects, dredging in Georgetown and Murrells Inlet, construction of fire substations in rural areas of the county and completion of a new police and fire complex in the Town of Andrews. Those

projects have been completed, with exception of the Andrews complex and Georgetown dredging. Funds for those projects remain available and have been set aside. That leaves about \$10 million in excess funds raised by the tax to be allocated. County Council had given two readings to a list of 20 projects totaling \$7 million and planned to consider more projects once those were complete and any overruns could be factored in.

The original list of projects under consideration and now deferred for further discussion is as follows:

- Emergency Vehicle Traffic Control System, \$1 million
- DeBordieu Fire Station plan, \$199,870
- Waverly Rd. multimodal pathway, \$1.85 million
- Sewer system expansion along Powell Rd. to Mount Zion, \$294,080
- Basketball court for S. Island and walking trail, \$231,200
- Tennis courts for N. Santee, Sampit parks, \$334,872
- Resurface tennis courts at S. Island Rd., \$33,750
- Lighting and signage on trails in N. Santee, Sampit, Andrews and Lambertown, \$88,098
- Pleasant Hill NW Park basketball court and

playground, \$82,864

- Library improvements at main branch, \$1.17 million
- HVAC systems at N. Santee Center, \$18,000
- Big Dam Swamp Recycling Center, \$650,000
- St. Luke Community Center, \$100,000
- Choppee Complex auditorium renovations, \$426,323
- Dunbar park improvements, \$61,500
- Lanes Creek park improvements, \$45,800
- Sandy Island landing shelter, \$6,000
- Plantersville park improvements, \$45,000
- Sewer expansion from Choppee to Carvers Bay, \$289,302
- Oatland, St. Paul and Pee Dee park improvements, \$70,800.

Funds raised by a Capital Project Sales Tax must be spent according to strict guidelines outlined by state law.

Residents interested in this topic can watch the full discussion from the Feb. 23 meeting online at [YouTube.com/gtcountysc](https://www.youtube.com/gtcountysc). The county livestreams all County Council meetings on its YouTube Channel and also posts the videos for residents to watch later. Council's next meeting will be March 9 at 5:30 p.m. at Howard Auditorium, 1610 Hawkins St., Georgetown.

Ransomware

Continued from Front Page

tified as having been infected have either been scrubbed clean or will be replaced entirely due to the persistence of the malware they were infected with. County internet access has not been restored and will not be until IT staff is 100 percent certain that all traces of the virus have been eliminated from the system. Staff continues to utilize hotspots and similar devices for online access in the meantime.

The county's GIS system also remains down and will be one of the next big projects for the IT Department. Hopes are the GIS system will be back up the first week of March.

**65 OR OLDER?
IT'S YOUR TURN.
TIME TO GET YOUR
COVID-19 VACCINE.**

Call 1-866-365-8110
or visit scdhec.gov/vaxlocator
to find a vaccine location.

THE COVID-19 VACCINE

HAVE YOU MET libby?

You can borrow e-books and audio books for **FREE** at your Library!

Just contact your local Georgetown County library branch to setup a PIN. Then download the Libby app to start reading or listening on your device. It's that easy!

Four years in the making: Library director publishes first book

This February was “a nail-biting time” for Georgetown County’s Library Director, Dwight McInvaill. After 40 years of laborious research and interviews, organizing hundreds of family letters and photographs, and then putting ink to paper, he found himself finally waiting for the first copies of his first book to arrive, hot off the presses.

As if 40 years hadn’t been long enough to wait, he would have to wait some more as the Tennessee plant where the book was published was temporarily closed due to COVID-19. Then, a week later, it closed again due to ice and snow. The new arrival date was set for Feb. 24, less than a week before the book is to officially hit the shelves and just three days before McInvaill’s first book signing in Charleston.

McInvaill was handling the delay with remarkable calm, all things considered.

Titled “Alice: Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, Charleston Renaissance Artist,” the book tells the story of a woman McInvaill remembers as something of a third grandmother to him as he was growing up in Charleston. She was a close friend to his parents, Harry and Talulah, and wrote them more than 400 personal letters during the years of World War II and the following decade. It is these letters that were the primary inspiration for McInvaill’s writing.

“There are hundreds of these beautiful letters, in which she writes about her art and her views on life,” McInvaill said. “She was a leader of the artistic and cultural revival in Charleston now known as the Charleston Renaissance. She really helped bring Charleston back to life, so to speak.”

McInvaill compares Charleston at that time to something akin to Silicon Valley for artists of all types.

“They were all creating, side by side,” he said. “It was this continuing, bubbling interchange of creativity.”

It was in this environment that Smith and her set introduced Sunday teas, a weekly event during which she and other artists would open their studios to the public to share their passion. They would serve teas, cookies and various Southern specialties. The blue laws of the day guaranteed there would be no sales during the events – but sales weren’t the purpose of the teas anyway. They were strictly about art appreciation.

“They drew in quite a crowd; an international crowd, in fact,” McInvaill said. “People came from as far away as China.”

McInvaill was just 23 when he decided to write a book about Smith, a woman who had a

lasting impact on him and the way he would see the world as an adult. He approached Smith’s family and they were supportive, but asked him to wait, so he did. But he started then with the planning process – gathering materials and recollections, which he would add to over the next four decades. Among the items he collected were details about Smith’s friends and visitors, who would leave calling cards at her home at 69 Church St., one of the most beautiful of the city’s many historic homes.

“People in that etiquette-conscious age would leave their cards on a silver tray when they came to visit her,” McInvaill recalled. “Among her visitors were some of the most elite in the country.”

President Theodore Roosevelt’s daughters, for example, were frequent visitors to Smith, as were the then head of the National Geographic Society and his wife.

Smith came from a distinguished family. Her ancestors helped build Charleston, dating back to the early planting days. The McInvaills were not of the same social stature, but Smith didn’t care about such things.

“When I was growing up, due to a variety of circumstances, my family was not well off economically,” McInvaill recalled. “But because of our deep friendship with her, [Smith] left my family a large collection of her watercolors when she died in 1958, so I grew up in basically an art gallery and really took that for granted. I thought everybody had beautiful paintings on the walls. It was a wonderful way to grow up.”

Smith was known for her incredible Low-country scenes, which depicted the area as it was at the time, before development came. “Myrtle Beach was a gorgeous locale with marshes and rows upon rows of sand dunes, high pine trees in a broad sky and



Dwight McInvaill



Artist Alice Ravenel Huger Smith is the subject of McInvaill’s first book.

beaches that stretched on forever,” McInvaill recalled.

The McInvaill family became acquainted with Smith during World War II. McInvaill’s father was in the Navy and got to know Smith through his best friend, a fellow soldier at the Charleston Naval Base who was engaged to be married to Smith’s niece. The association got Harry McInvaill an invitation to dine with Smith and her sister. Harry shared some of the poetry he had written and the sisters were taken with him, sparking a lifelong friendship. They were so close, that when Harry proposed to his future wife, Talulah, it was at 69 Church St., and when he was shipped to the Pacific, Talulah stayed with Smith, who taught her watercolor lessons.

When Harry was decommissioned in 1946 and made his way back to Charleston, Smith opened social doors for the family that allowed them to buy “the Pink House,” where they partnered with Smith as art dealers for about a decade before Harry’s growing family led him back to the military, where he could earn a larger income.

It’s the latter part of Smith’s life and the letters she wrote to his parents that McInvaill’s book initially focused on. He went from research and planning to writing about 12 years ago.

“It had to be done in the evenings and on the weekends, because of course I have a full-time job, and one that demands not just 40 hours a week, but often 60 hours a week to do it well,” McInvaill said. “Sometimes I would just do a paragraph and work on that for a day.”

See “McInvaill,” Page 5

Truman Winns named county's Manager of the Year

Truman Winns was recently recognized as Georgetown County's Manager of the Year for 2020. He is the IT Manager for the Georgetown County Library system and has worked for the county for the last 14 years.

Winns joined the library staff at a young age as an Interactive Gaming and Technology Assistant in the spring of 2006 when the library opened its Carvers Bay branch and introduced the library's gaming program. He has worked his way up the ranks to his current position. He has served in that role for six years.

His position serves both the Library system and the county's IT Department. As one of his duties for the IT Department, Winns provides tech support for County Council meetings. When the COVID-19 pandemic came along and the county started holding virtual meetings and livestreaming meetings, Winns was part of the team that helped create and enact the policy and procedure for that, ensuring members of the public could still watch and participate in meetings remotely.

As the pandemic wore on, more county events and programs went virtual. Winns was a key figure in making sure the library and council could continue operating through virtual means and deliver quality, professional material for the public. Additionally, Winns is part of the library's Grants Planning and Implementation Team. In the last year, his accomplishments include managing a complete upgrade and redesign of the public library system's entire network infrastructure, as well as coordinating the design, purchase and implementation of IT hardware, software and systems at the new Southern Georgetown Community Library branch. He also:

- Installed a security camera system in the library's main branch in Georgetown,
- Provided courier service between library facilities during the pandemic,



Truman Winns, center, is pictured with County Council Chairman Louis Morant, right, and Human Resources Director Walt Ackerman.

- Configured the AV system that allows for livestreaming of library programming,
- Empowered residents through the implementation of self-service print stations, and
- Administered public and staff training on new virtual reality systems at the library.

Winns also oversees a budget of \$285,00 and directed \$180,000 in IT purchases for the library system's major IT infrastructure upgrade over the last year.

"During a critical year of major technological advances combined with unexpected pandemic uncertainties, this manager has been a godsend due to his intelligent, focused, and flexible nature," Library Director Dwight McInvaill said in his nomination letter.

McInvaill

Continued from Front Page

It wasn't until he showed early drafts to friends that the book expanded to encompass Smith's early life. It was then he picked up a pair of co-authors: Smith's great-niece Ann Gaud Tinker and great-great-niece Caroline Tinker Palmer. They helped bring Smith's voice to the first part of the book with records their family had, including Smith's reminiscences. They arranged the selection within the framework McInvaill had already created, and the final work was born.

Events celebrating the book's launch are scheduled to take place across the Lowcountry throughout this year, including talks, signings and art exhibits,

in Charleston, Florence and other locales.

A Moveable Feast is also planned at Kimbel's at Wachesaw on April 30. Tickets are available classatpawleys.com. A past lecture McInvaill gave on Smith at the Georgetown County Library is also available to view on the library's YouTube Channel.

McInvaill's book is an 11x11-inch coffee table book and will sell for \$60 with all proceeds benefiting the Middleton Place Foundation and its educational programming. Copies are available for sell at shop.MiddletonPlace.org or your local book store. McInvaill encourages those interested in a copy of the book to buy from and show support for independent book sellers where possible.

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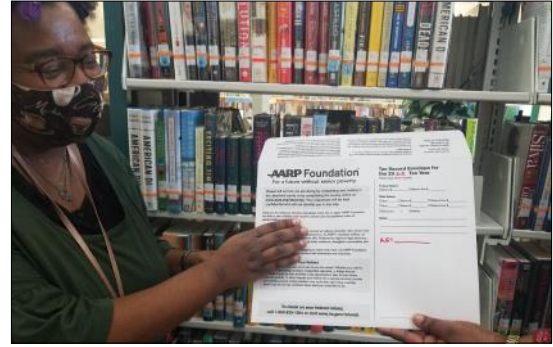


Packets available to help residents with taxes

The ongoing pandemic will prevent AARP volunteers from being on hand at the Georgetown and Waccamaw Libraries to help residents with taxes this year. But help is still available, thanks to free tax help packets from the AARP Foundation.

These packets can be picked up at the libraries and are filled with information to help residents do their taxes online. The packets also offer information on how to connect with an online volunteer who will help residents prepare their tax returns.

For more information, visit your local library branch.



The Waccamaw Library and the Poetry Society of S.C. are pleased to announce the



2021 Litchfield Tea and Poetry Series



Monthly presentations through April, each featuring thought-provoking poets.



Presented for free in a virtual format due to COVID-19. Watch on [Facebook Live](#) or [YouTube](#).

March 18



Marjory Wentworth held the position of Poet Laureate of S.C. for the past 17 years. She is the New York Times bestselling author of "Out of Wonder," "Poems Celebrating Poets;" coauthor of "We are Charleston: Tragedy and Triumph at Mother Emanuel," and more. She is a seven-time Pushcart Prize nominee, and teaches courses in creative writing and social justice at the College of Charleston.

Immediately following Wentworth's reading, there will be an open mic session. All who attend are invited to read one of their own poems.

April 15



Dr. Jo Angela Edwins is professor of English at Francis Marion University and has published chapbook "Play" and poems in several journals and various anthologies. She has received poetry awards from the Poetry Super Highway and the S.C. Academy of Authors, and is Poet Laureate of the Pee Dee.



Ed Madden is author of four books of poetry and a memoir in poems about his father's last months in hospice care. He is also a professor of English at the University of S.C. His poems have appeared in "Crazyhorse," "Los Angeles Review," "Poetry Ireland Review," and more. He is Poet Laureate for the City of Columbia.

Jayroe named Employee of the Quarter

Brigitte Jayroe, a data entry clerk with the Georgetown County Building Department, was recently recognized as Georgetown County's Employee of the Quarter for the last quarter of 2020. Jayroe has been employed with the county for five years. She started work with the county in 2016 as a part-time employee and was brought on full-time in the summer of 2017.

It's rare to find an employee who openly enjoys their work as much as Jayroe seems to, said Holly Richardson, director of Georgetown County's Building and Planning departments.

Jayroe's day-to-day tasks include greeting the public at the permit counter, acting as receptionist for the Building, Zoning, GIS and Stormwater Divisions, and assisting customers with their permit applications, from data entry to collecting fees and scheduling inspections. She does all this with a smile and a friendly demeanor that has made her the go-to person for many customers.

Jayroe is dedicated to her job and serving county residents, as well as all who do business in her area of the old courthouse, Richardson said. "She understands her responsibilities and greets coworkers and everyone who calls or enters our lobby as if they were old friends. She makes people feel comfortable when forms and red tape tend to make them uncomfortable or even upset at times. Her people skills are second to none and we often receive phone calls and emails from customers complimenting her positive attitude and expressing their gratitude for her patience and helpfulness."

Jayroe says her motto is "Treat others as you would like to be treated" and she puts those words to action daily.

As the county limited public access to facilities due to COVID-19, Jayroe has regularly walked to the parking lot to assist contractors and homeowners with paperwork and plans. She continues to go out of her way to assist customers.

Despite an already full plate, she has expressed a desire to learn more about the permitting process and is eager to take on additional tasks, including dealing with more complicated permits and permit fees.

Jayroe's enthusiasm for her work is unparalleled, according to colleagues. She is a joy to work with and actually can often be heard talking about how much she enjoys her job.



Brigitte Jayroe

Georgetown County, South Carolina County Government

Numbers to know

(All begin with area code 843)

Animal Control, 546-5101

Assessor, 545-3014

Auditor, 545-3021

Clerk of Court, 545-3004

County Council, 545-3058

Coroner, 546-3056

Elections, 545-3339

Finance, 545-3002

Parks & Rec., 545-3320

Planning and Zoning, 545-3116

Probate Judge, 545-3077

Register of Deeds, 545-3088

Sheriff, 546-5102

Treasurer, 545-3098

P.O. Box 421270
129 Screven Street

Phone: (843) 545-3063
Fax: (843) 545-3292



Library opens new Southern Georgetown branch

The Georgetown County Library system celebrated the opening of its newest branch with a ribbon cutting ceremony and facility tours on Feb. 11.

"This is the realization of a long-term dream, decades in the making," Elizabeth Connelly, a library board member, told attendees at the event.

The new Southern Georgetown County Library branch will serve members of the Sampit, Santee and Lambertown communities. Unfortunately, several key members of the effort to build the branch did not live long enough to see it completed, including David Brittain, who was recognized during the ceremony.

An outdoor pavilion, to be funded with grant money, will be constructed in the future.

"I once read somewhere that bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services and great libraries build communities," said County Council Chairman Louis Morant. Library branches have acted as community centers around the county for decades and this new branch will assuredly do the same, helping to build and bond the community going forward, he added. The library stays on the forefront of new technological trends and remain relevant and highly utilized in this day and age.

"This library is an investment in the future of our children," said County Council Member Everett Carolina. "It's more than bricks, mortar, books and shelves, but will be a gathering place for ideas. Our goal is to make this library a central hub, providing an open environment to access the world of knowledge through mentoring and networking."

Library director Dwight McInvaill talked about the library system's incredible staff and thanked members of the Georgetown Library staff for helping to stock books and get the library ready for opening. He also highlighted Sharea Drayton, who is the new library's branch manager, and who had the honor of cutting the ribbon on the new facility.



Branch Manager Sharea Drayton is pictured at the circulation desk following the ribbon cutting.



The children's area at the new library branch.



Visitors check out the stacks in the adult section.

The new library is approximately 9,000 square feet, including a community auditorium, and is located at 4187 Powell Road.

