Technical college building doomed by uncertainty

By MICHAEL HALL
The Brunswick News

A failure to spend money quickly enough and confusion about the acquisition of land for an Altamaha Technical College campus in Glynn County may have prevented the project from happening on time.

College administrators had planned to construct the first building of what would eventually be a multi-building campus in Glynn County. But just days before the end of the General Assembly session last week, the legislative conference committee reiterated $4.3 million in bond money for the Altamaha Tech project to a campus of Coastal Georgia Technical College in north Fulton County.

A final approval of the Altamaha Tech project was complicated by questions as to how much land was being acquired for its campus, according to Randal Morris, chairman of the Altamaha Technical College board.

"There was an understanding at the (Technical College System of Georgia) that there was more than 30 acres set aside for the campus," Morris said.

The Glynn County Detention Center at its current site on Boca Raton Road and adjacent to the Glynn County Public Works compound.

Kudzu
Identified on U.S. 17 near Glynn Parkway
Source: photo by Robert Morris

Japanese honeysuckle
Identified in Brunswick

Chinaberry
Identified on Dogwood Causway

Red sesbania
Identified on Work Street in Brunswick

The Brunswick News

The Environmental Protection Agency has approved land adjacent to a federal superfund site in Glynn County as a new jail and sheriff's office.

Glynn County is purchasing the 35-acre tract, a portion of the polluted LCP Chemical Company site, from World's Most Beautiful
cities (WMC) for $475,000. The agency agreed to pay the company's legal fees, which is reported to be $78,000.

The site for the new 60-bed detention center is south U.S. 341, south of Community Road and adjacent to the Glynn County Public Works compound.

IPG Architects, based in Valdosta, has completed the design and engineering for the jail, the construction of which is expected to start next year.

The Environmental Protection Agency oversees the Superfund site, the "Ready for Removal" case in March. The county officials received the information by letter, according to the announcement, that follows the approval of the jail site plat Tuesday by the Federal Migration Commission.

"It's a way for us to know what species are, or could become, a serious problem," Leonard said.
Dredge: Early warm weather is a factor

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The strandings pose a concern for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which oversees dredging in the Brunswick and Savannah harbors. Typically, dredging is completed during winter to avoid risks to sea turtles, said Billy Birdwell, spokesman for the Savannah District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"This has normally been a dredging time for us, and an important time for us," the weather, just got warm earlier than usual and we're having warmer weather than usual," Birdwell said.

Because early warm weather has brought an early arrival of sea turtles, dredging has been stopped in the Brunswick harbor and the contracts with Maseron Construction of Jacksonville for the work has been terminated. Termination of contract because of an environmental concern is not unusual, Birdwell said.

Safeguards are employed to protect sea turtles during dredging and to encourage them to leave dredging areas but not all turtle injuries can be avoided. "They were doing their job in the way they were supposed to do it," Birdwell said of the contractors company.

The corps says a small number of injuries to sea turtles are permitted during a project before it must be stopped. Birdwell could not provide a specific number, but said the threshold is less than 10.

Dredging was first discontinued in early March and then resumed, but it could not be continued because of growing concerns about the safety of the sea turtles. The window in which dredging is allowed was closed (April 15).

Putting the dredging on hold until later this year keeping sea turtles in November, could cause a problem for shipping because of all the Montana. There is a trade-off we have to give between commerce and protecting endangered species," Birdwell said.

No problems were reported during the dredging of the Savannah harbor, Birdwell said.

The Georgia Sea Turtle Center in Tybee Island this year has rehabilitated six sea turtles that sustained injuries from dredging. "They had to be euthanized," Steven Nelson, a certified veterinarian technician at the center, said this year has brought the most dredging-related injuries the center has encountered. "The most common injuries have been blunt force trauma and crushing wounds," Nelson said.

"It's like going through a vacuum," he said. "Think about a pen or a quarter going through a vacuum and a propeller being at the end of that vacuum." Four sea turtles are being rehabilitated at the center for injuries related to dredging. Nelson suspects that because the animals were healthy before they were injured, they will continue to improve and will be released.

Three species of turtles have been involved in the strandings: Kemp's Ridley, loggerhead, and green turtles. Each is classified as endangered or threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Plants: Invader risk to marsh

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Although the plant is only in about 25 acres in Glynn County, DNR is in its second year of a three-year eradication to remove all phragmites from the area. It is becoming more prevalent as it moves south from Savannah, carried by wind and weather, Leonardi said.

"Most of the invasions are considered to be detrimental to the economy or the ecosystem," Leonardi said.

Phragmites can decimate a marsh, while other invasive plants have the potential to ruin pine tree crops, a major piece of the southeast Georgia economy.

Many invasive plants are unknowingly used in gardens. Leonardi hopes to cut down on their numbers by offering people native alternatives, because native plants promote a healthier ecosystem, he said.

Leonardi will present a program about invasive plant species during a native plant sale from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. April 13 at Ashley County Center in Darien.

Utility: Idea arose past year

Continued from 1A

ers on the board to increase the number of citizens, Harvey is reintroducing the idea of a public information officer for the utility board's meeting today.

"We're looking for someone like (Glynn County spokesperson) Candice Temple is for the county," Harvey said. "We have the job structured similarly to that, for what we want, but some other duties as well." Among those duties would be to produce community newsletters.

Harvey first raised the idea of hiring a public information officer in November, after he said the utility board needed help putting a positive spin on its job. That statement followed months of public criticism of the utility commission for obsolete billing, rate increases to equalize rates between city and county customers, the purchase of an abandoned motel to be razed for a new headquarters and reactions to the utility board's criticism of its private contractor that operated water and sewer systems on St. Simon Island.

"We're not doing this to put a spin on our meeting, but in order to help people see the facts so that they understand what we do and how we do it," Harvey said. "We want to be more open to the public, and this will help us do that." Harvey said commissioners have not set a salary for the position, but that it would be $30,000 to $40,000.

The water-sewer commission meeting will be at 3 p.m. today at the commission's headquarters, 200 Gloucester St., Brunswick.

Former Sen. George McGovern hospitalized

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Southeast Georgia Health System and Southeast Georgia Physician Associates Pulmonary Medicine Welcome Kevin M. Fussell, M.D.

Southeast Georgia Health System is pleased to welcome Kevin M. Fussell, M.D., to its staff. Board-certified in pulmonary and critical care medicine, Dr. Fussell has joined Southeast Georgia Physician Associates — Pulmonary Medicine, a strategic affiliate of Southeast Georgia Health System.

Dr. Fussell earned his medical degree from the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta and completed his residency at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tenn. There, he also served as chief resident in medicine at the Veterans Administration Medical Center and was a fellow in the division of pulmonary/critical care medicine. Prior to joining the Health System, Dr. Fussell was in a private pulmonary/critical care practice in Winston-Salem, N.C.

He currently serves as the chairman of the board of Water Water Relief, an Atlanta-based organization that plans and installs water purification systems in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.