



The Beaufort Gazette

Sheriff's office investigating Beaufort County personnel

BY MADISON ROTH
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In an unusual move, the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office said Monday that it is currently investigating county government personnel at the request of the county administrator.

After receiving inquiries from "multiple media outlets," the sheriff's office confirmed Monday that it is involved in investigating county personnel at the request of County Administrator, Michael Moore.

It is unclear who the target of the investigation is. Beaufort County Sheriff's Office spokesman Daniel Allen said

there is no further information that can be released at this time.

The news comes a week after the county released the results of an investigation into the conclusions officials reached about former Chief Financial Officer Pinky Harriott before she resigned under pressure five months ago.

Coastal flooding continues in Hilton Head area

BY HAYDEN DAVIS
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Coastal flooding will continue to impact Beaufort County through Wednesday.

The National Weather Service (NWS) Charleston office issued a coastal flood advisory for Monday as high tide pushed over the minor flood stage for the third day in a row. NWS said it expects more coastal flooding Tuesday and Wednesday, according to a weather briefing.

This week's flooding is because of a combination of weather and astronomical factors, according to the NWS. Here's when to expect flooding and the forecast for this week:

COASTAL FLOODING

Beaufort County is stuck between two weather systems, one high pressure and one low, according to the briefing. The result is a persistent wind from the northeast that pushes water towards shore and creates floods during high tide. Sunday also had a full moon, and tides are at their highest during full or new moon phases.

The NWS expects coastal flooding at high tide Tuesday at 9 a.m. and Wednesday at 10 a.m., the briefing said. Both tides are forecast to reach the minor flood stage, but the tide Tuesday morning may peak at the moderate flood stage.

The NWS will likely issue coastal flood advisories on both days. They are issued when flooding is forecast to reach the minor flood stage, and the NWS recommends drivers prepare for delays as road closures are possible. Drivers should not drive around barricades or through flood water, according to Monday's coastal flood advisory. Residents living near shorelines should take action to protect flood-prone property.

THIS WEEK'S WEATHER

The weather would be perfect if not for the windy conditions and coastal flooding. High temperatures are forecast in the

SEE FLOODING, 4A



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Alex Brown, a Hilton Head Town Council member, says St. James Baptist Church property will be preserved as green space after the church is torn down, including this massive live oak tree.

Hilton Head congregation plans new church to avoid air traffic

BY KARL PUCKETT
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Despite its deep roots at 209 Dillon Road near the Hilton Head Island Airport, the historic St. James Baptist Church is pulling up stakes and moving two miles away.

A new 11,975-square-foot church will be constructed at 9 Union Cemetery Road. It will have a 25-seat sanctuary and 120-seat fellowship hall.

The move marks a new beginning

for the 140-year-old church. But the decision, says church member Herbert Ford, was still agonizing.

"You are asking a congregation to uproot its history," Ford told the Island Packet and Beaufort Gazette.

Airplanes continually fly over the little stucco church, which sits at the intersection of Dillon and Beach City roads. The former Cherry Hill School, a one-room frame school, sits across the street.

The church also sits in the shadow of Hilton Head Island Airport, and the

proximity is prompting the move.

In 2018, the airport finished a 700-foot runway addition. Making the runway longer allowed larger planes to land there, but it also extended the federally mandated "runway protection zone" over both St. James and the Old Cherry Hill School across the street.

The congregation voted to move six years ago, Ford said.

Ford voted against moving, but he

SEE CONGREGATION, 3A

Bluffton restaurants earn Michelin recognition

BY HAYDEN DAVIS
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One of the world's most prestigious international restaurant rating guides awarded honors to two Bluffton eateries in its new guide to the American South.

Okàn, an African Diaspora-inspired restaurant led by a nationally-recognized chef, received Michelin's Bib Gourmand award, according to a news release from the restaurant.

Michelin's Bib Gourmands are awarded to restaurants that offer delicious food at affordable prices. Okàn is one of only four South Carolina restaurants with the

honor.

Michelin also added Radici Italian Chophouse, also in Bluffton, to its 2026 guide.

Here's what makes Bluffton's two Michelin Guide restaurants worthy of the recognition.

OKÀN TAKES HOME A BIB GOURMAND

Okàn opened its doors in 2023 as the realization of co-owner Matt Cunningham's vision to make Bluffton a place known for culinary excellence, according to the news release. To do that, Cunningham recruited chef Bernard Bennett, an already accomplished chef from the

Chicago area.

Bennett crafted a menu that can be described as a culinary journey of African-inspired cuisine. Dishes from West Africa, the Caribbean, South America and the Lowcountry can all be found.

The African inspiration is in the name too. Okàn is the word for "heart" in the West African Yoruba language. Okàn sources its food from local farmers and fishermen, including Gullah-Geechee farmers.

"We set out to tell the story of the African Diaspora through food, with honesty and care, and to do it right here

SEE RESTAURANTS, 3A



Photo courtesy Okàn

Chef Bernard Bennett, James Beard Foundation semifinalist, cooking at Okàn.



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