

THE SUN NEWS



Mayor criticizes rushed renewal of city manager's contract

BY MARIA ELENA SCOTT
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Myrtle Beach's city manager and city attorney will stay on for another year after City Council voted to renew both

contracts in a Tuesday meeting. Their renewals weren't without contention, as some on council argued for a more thorough review process before the summer renewal deadline. "This is a vote against Council rushing this to judgment," Mayor Mark Kruea

said. City manager Jonathan "Fox" Simons has led Myrtle Beach as chief executive since 2021, appointing and setting salaries, removing employees at will, preparing and administering the annual budget, making financial reports and advising



Jonathan "Fox" Simons

council on departments and appointments. City attorney William Bryan Jr. has provided litigation services, oversight and supervision of Myrtle Beach since 2019.

The contract renewals won't include raises for the two high-paid employees. Bryan Jr. makes more than \$213,000 annually, and with the most expensive salary in the city, Simons earns more than \$292,000.

SHOULD CITY COUNCIL EVALUATE PERFORMANCES BEFORE RENEWING CONTRACTS?

Kruea argued the city manager is "the most important position in the city" and said "the ball was dropped" because

SEE MAYOR, 4A



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The Midway canal runs from the Myrtle Beach International Airport to the ocean outfall at 29th Avenue South in Myrtle Beach, SC. It carries storm water out to sea. April 23, 2026.

Study finds high PFAS levels near Myrtle Beach airport

BY NICOLE BLEVINS
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A two-year study found high levels of PFAS, or forever chemicals, are flowing from the Myrtle Beach International Airport to Midway Swash, an onshore drainage creek just north of Springmaid Pier.

The airport is the site of the former Myrtle Beach Air Force Base, which now spans Market Common. The sample found "alarmingly" high levels of

PFAS in water, soil and ocean foam, and was the site of the highest levels of PFAS in the entire Winyah Bay watershed study area.

"You see people or kids playing in there all the time in Midway Swash," Dr. Till Hanebuth of Coastal Carolina University, who led the study, previously told The Sun News. "You don't want to have anyone touching this water."

PFAS, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are a group of manufactured chemicals that take a very long time to dissolve, making them harmful to hu-

man and animal exposure.

The U.S. Air Force used firefighting foam in the 1970s, which is now known to contain PFAS. The Myrtle Beach Air Force Base was designated a Superfund Site by the Environmental Protection Agency after it closed in 1993. The transformed site was awarded a Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse Award in 2019. A 2020 Department of the Air Force study showed high levels of PFAS in surface water, groundwater

SEE PFAS, 4A

High court overturns Murdaugh murder convictions

BY NOAH FEIT AND JOHN MONK
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The South Carolina Supreme Court has unanimously ruled to overturn the 2023 double murder conviction of disgraced attorney Alex Murdaugh.

In its 27-page, 5-0 ruling Wednesday, the S.C. Supreme Court said the jury tampering actions of former Colleton County Court Clerk Rebecca "Becky" Hill denied "Murdaugh his right to a fair trial by an impartial jury."

Murdaugh's case will now return to circuit court where he is now eligible for a new trial. He is accused of killing his wife, Maggie, and younger son Paul at the Murdaugh rural estate in Colleton County on the evening of June 7, 2021.

"Both the State and Murdaugh's defense skillfully presented their cases to the jury as the trial court deftly presided over this complicated and high-profile matter. However, their efforts were in vain because Colleton County Clerk of Court Rebecca Hill placed her fingers on the scales of justice," the ruling said.

"... Although we are aware of the time, money, and effort expended for this lengthy trial, we have no choice but to reverse the denial of Murdaugh's motion for a new trial due to Hill's improper external influences on the jury and remand for a new trial."

The S.C. Supreme Court's ruling ended months of speculation among true crime fans, lawyers and everyday folks whether Murdaugh's conviction would be overturned.

It also raised new questions, unanswered as of Wednesday afternoon:

- When will a new trial take place?
- Will Murdaugh's attorneys or the prosecution ask for a change in venue, or location?
- Who will be the judge? Trial Judge Clifton Newman has retired.

SEE HIGH COURT, 6A

Grand Strand beach community is site of new HGTV show

BY TERRI RICHARDSON
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The new season of HGTV's "Battle on the Beach," set in Garden City, will premiere next month.

The coastal community was the set-

ting for filming of the TV home decorating show, which began in March and focused on three beach homes along the Atlantic Ocean.

The seven-episode season will have a two-hour premiere at 9 p.m. on June 1, according to a press release from HGTV.

During this season, HGTV stars Sarah Baeumler of "Rock the Block," Mika Kleinschmidt of "100 Day Dream Home" and Ty Pennington of "Rock the Block" mentor a two-person team of renovators as they vie to transform beachfront vacation properties into "stunning waterfront escapes" that will sell for top dollar, the release said.

Over seven weeks and armed with \$100,000, the teams will overhaul the homes while navigating design challenges, including repurposing discarded roadside finds in their homes and swapping partners for the chance at additional prize money.

Husband-and-wife renovation duo Tristyn and Kamohai Kalama from the

SEE HGTV, 9A