

THE SUN NEWS



Former employee of SC city increased pay by \$55k, SLED says

BY KATE ROBINS kate.robins@thesunnews.com

A former City of Loris employee has been accused of increasing his salary by more than \$55,000 a year after he pled guilty in 2025 to stealing tens of thousands of dollars from a local nonprofit. Todd Keith Massey, 40, on Wednesday was charged with grand larceny, value \$10,000 or more, and violation of

ethics, use of official position or office for financial gain, according to warrants from the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division. The year-long investigation was at the request of the City of Loris, whose police department brought charges against Massey in December 2024 for stealing more than \$67,000 from Giving Hope Gardens — a nonprofit that employs adults with disabilities. According to warrants from SLED,

Massey allegedly increased his hourly pay between June 1, 2021, and Jan. 5, 2023, while he worked as clerk of court. Massey started off at an hourly rate of \$16.35, which was approved to be increased to \$16.98 for cost of living adjustments. Massey, SLED says, allegedly increased his rate for 44 consecutive pay periods, ranging between \$22.82 and \$46.26. The increase in hourly rate was not approved or known by Loris City

Council or Mayor Michael Suggs, according to the warrant. “Massey knowingly used his official office, membership, or employment to obtain an economic interest for himself by increasing his hourly pay rate in the payroll system,” the warrant states. Massey turned himself into law enforcement after SLED issued warrants for his arrest on Oct. 6, according to a

SEE PAY, 2A



ROBERT FORD

Venus flytraps are only native to areas within a 75-mile radius of Wilmington, North Carolina. They survive by trapping insects and ingesting nutrients as the prey decomposes.

World’s only wild Venus flytraps in NC, SC are threatened

BY NICOLE BLEVINS nicole.blevins@thesunnews.com

Robert Ford, whose interest in filmmaking has guided him to Emmy and BAFTA awards, also had an interest he never grew out of as a young boy: Venus flytraps. Now the United Kingdom-based filmmaker is creating a feature-length documentary, titled “Flytrap Town,” about the carnivorous plants and the “Flytrap Champions” working to save them. Venus flytraps are only native to areas within a 75-mile radius of Wilmington, North Carolina. Horry County is the only county in South Carolina where the plant can still be found in the wild. “The film is about the leaders of this conservation movement, so it is actually

a character-based documentary,” Ford said. “It’s as much about the people as the plants.” Venus flytraps are commonly portrayed in pop-culture as a type of monster, like in the film “Little Shop of Horrors,” and in video games like Super Mario Bros. Many people grow them as houseplants and in bog gardens all around the world, but in the wild they grow in small clusters with jaw-like traps that are often smaller than a thumbnail. Ford said the wild populations of Venus flytraps have decreased by 93% in the last 50 years. Although they are threatened by development, fire suppression and poaching, they were denied designation as a federally endangered species protected under the En-

SEE THREATENED, 2A



Radius Films

Robert Ford, director of the upcoming documentary “Flytrap Town,” films a flytrap rescue, where Venus flytraps that are threatened by development and relocated to safer areas.

New Conway plan calls for 200 homes, restaurants, grocery store

BY TERRI RICHARDSON trichardson@thesunnews.com

A 67-acre mixed use development that will include homes, restaurants and a possible grocery store is being planned in Conway. The Conway Planning Commission approved Thursday a rezoning request for the proposed development that will be located along Mill Pond Road and Highway 501. The plan calls for 236 multifamily residential units, retail space that includes two anchor stores, four sit-down restaurants, fast-food restaurants, a coffee shop and a gas station/convenience store, according to documents submitted to the plan commission. The development is anticipated to finish construction by the end of 2029. The development is not without its detractors. The commission heard from residents about flooding, traffic and the possible filling in of wetlands. The proposal indicates nearly 5 acres of wetlands would be impacted.

WHAT ARE TRAFFIC CONCERNS Roads affected by the plan include Church Street (U.S. 501), Mill Pond Road, Camelot Street, Richardson Street and Lochwood lane. Residents expressed concern about traffic, and increased dangers of turning on and from Mill Pond Road. The plan says that the intersection of Mill Pond Road and Lochwood Lane will see a “significant” increase in traffic delays, and calls for constructing a second egress lane on Lochwood Lane. The analysis also indicates that the intersections of U.S. 501 and Richardson Street, U.S. 501 and Camelot Street, as

SEE PLAN , 6A

Is a new Amazon drone pad coming to North Myrtle Beach?

BY MARIA ELENA SCOTT mscott@thesunnews.com

Amazon wants to establish a new drone launch and landing pad in North Myrtle Beach, and not everyone is pleased. North Myrtle Beach has received “almost overwhelmingly negative” resident

feedback about the drone pad, including concerns about safety, noise, quality of life, property value, wildlife and the coastal environment, said Planning Division Assistant Director Suzanne Pritchard. Amid local pushback, the North Myrtle Beach Planning Commission will hold a special workshop to review the drone pad request at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday at City Hall.

The online mega-retailer, which operates a fulfillment center in North Myrtle Beach, is seeking to establish a roughly 13,600-square-foot pad in an existing service and parking area at the site. The enclosed pad would include drone launch, landing and divert pads; drone storage containers; turn stations and other equipment. “The commission is not deciding whether drones can fly in North Myrtle Beach or what routes they can take. The FAA regulates the airspace, including drone flight paths and altitudes,” North

SEE AMAZON, 4A