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TOP SC NEWS

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Does Georgetown want biomass plant to replace paper mill?

Here's what a survey of residents shows

BY LAUREN LEIBMAN
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GEORGETOWN — Tom Swatzel, a former Georgetown County Council member, says the city is at a crossroads.

It can redevelop the Liberty Steel and International Paper properties with mixed-use development and public access to the Georgetown waterfront — or once again fill the skies with smoke from heavy industry.

The newly formed organization, Citizens for Georgetown, with Swatzel as its chairman, is advocating for the former.

“In no way do we want to trade one smokestack for another,” Swatzel said.

Citizens for Georgetown is a coalition of residents, business owners and community leaders, according to its website. Swatzel said he started the group when community members began asking for his help in advocating against heavy industry on the waterfront, including a biomass

power plant proposed for the IP property.

Swatzel was previously involved in redeveloping the Murrells Inlet MarshWalk.

This week, Citizens for Georgetown commissioned a community survey to gauge resident opinions on the redevelopment of the Liberty Steel and IP properties.

It sent a survey to 1,300 Georgetown voters, and 352 people responded, Swatzel said.

The survey asked residents if they would support a biomass plant and if they would like to see mixed-use development with clean industry on the waterfront instead of heavy industry.

Roughly 70 percent of participants said they would oppose a biomass plant and about 20 percent of people said they would support it. A little over 10 percent said they were unsure, and one person skipped the question, according to survey results.

State Sen. Stephen Goldfinch, R-Murrells Inlet, has said he expects a biomass plant deal to be finalized in



JANET MORGAN/STAFF

Citizens for Georgetown recently commissioned a survey to gauge community opinion on redeveloping the International Paper and Liberty Steel mill properties.

the next three to six months. He's argued the plant makes more sense than mixed-use development because the property has housed heavy industry for nearly 90 years and is likely contaminated.

IP announced in October that it would close its 87-year-old Georgetown paper mill, leaving roughly 700 workers and some 200 contractors without jobs. Goldfinch maintains a biomass plant could help replace those jobs and create opportunities for

local loggers and developers.

State and local officials also expect the Liberty Steel mill property to be redeveloped soon.

Liberty cut 50 jobs at the site last year, then idled the mill four months later. The company also sold some of its equipment to a North Carolina company that makes wire-reinforcing products.

After being idled, the mill stopped receiving power from public utility Santee Cooper because its electric furnace

and rolling mill were not in use, a company spokesperson previously said.

Santee Cooper is now seeking more than \$7 million from the company's owner after the mill missed payments in November and December, leaving it with past due balances of more than \$334,000, court records show. The lapses prompted Santee Cooper to terminate a five-year agreement with the company and to ask the court to enforce a section of its contract that requires Liberty to pay the utility the total of the minimum monthly bills that would have been collected during that period.

State and local leaders have been meeting with a developer interested in purchasing the Liberty Steel mill site. The developer intends to create mixed-use development on the property that could include affordable housing, parks, entertainment spaces and waterfront access, according to state Rep. Lee Hewitt, R-Murrells Inlet.

The majority of survey participants said they would prefer similar mixed-use de-

velopment on the IP site, the results show.

Swatzel said the outcome of the survey aligns with what he's heard from community members.

“People overwhelmingly want a new vision for the Georgetown waterfront that has no stacks and, you know, benefits the entire community,” he said.

Swatzel said he would like to see high-paying advanced manufacturing jobs and tech companies move onto the paper mill property. Although he doesn't have any particular businesses in mind, he said he'd like local leaders to begin recruiting such companies.

It could take many years for the property to be ready for restaurants, retail and other development, but Swatzel said it would be worth the wait.

“The important points about this survey, the results, are that overwhelmingly people don't want the biomass plant,” he said. “People don't support elected officials who support a biomass plant, and people want a new vision for Georgetown that does not include heavy industry.”

News shows

ABC's "This Week" — ABC reporters and contributors discuss President Donald Trump's first 100 days back in office and other events. **10 a.m.**

NBC's "Meet the Press" — Trump. **10 a.m.**

CNN's "State of the Union" — Sens. Mark Warner, D-Va., and Ron Johnson, R-Wis.; Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, D-Pa. **10:30 a.m.**

CBS' "Face the Nation" — Sen. Tammy Duckworth, D-Ill.; Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio; Oksana Markarova, Ukraine's ambassador to the United States; Katherine Maher, CEO of NPR, and Paula Kerger, CEO of PBS; H.R. McMaster, a former national security adviser. **9 a.m.**

"Fox News Sunday" — Reps. Jodey Arrington, R-Texas, Jason Smith, R-Mo., and Jim Himes, D-Conn.; Ken Martin, Democratic National Committee chair. **9 a.m.**

SC Lottery: 5/3/2025

Midday Evening Powerball

PICK 3: 0-5-2 **PICK 3:** 5-6-4 **N/A**
PICK 4: 5-6-1-6 **PICK 4:** 8-9-0-6 **POWERBALL:** N/A
POWERPLAY: N/A

Palmetto Cash 5

4-6-18-28-40

Numbers are not official until verified by SCEL and its independent accounting firm.

FRIDAY'S MEGA MILLIONS: 14-37-40-41-68

Congressional honor bestowed upon only all-women's battalion in WWII

Many of the honorees from South Carolina

Staff and wire reports

The Congressional Gold Medal this past week was bestowed to the “Six Triple Eight,” a predominantly Black, all-female unit that served in Europe during World War II and which featured a number of women with ties to South Carolina.

Chief among them was Charity Adams Earley, who



Adams

grew up in Columbia and served as commander of the only all-Black Women's Army Corps unit to serve overseas in the war. In 1945, she became the first African-American woman promoted to the rank of an officer in the WAC, first as major and finally as lieutenant colonel.

Only two members of the 855 who served in the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion are still living. The group was credited with solving a growing mail crisis during its stint in Birmingham, England. They cleared out a backlog of about 17 million pieces of mail in three months, shuffling through twice as fast as projected.

They processed about 65,000 pieces of mail in each of three daily shifts and created a locator card system to ensure mail was delivered to each unit and service member.

The battalion later served in France briefly.

“This ceremony reflects one of the highest and most cherished traditions of our republic, one that's roots stretch back all the way to General George Washington,” House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-Louisiana, said April 29 before a crowd inside Emancipation Hall at the Capitol Visitor Center in Washington, D.C. More than 300 descendants of the women who served in the battalion were in attendance.

“The Six Triple Eight are great American patriots, loyal to a nation that, for far too long, failed to return the



U.S. ARMY/COURTESY OF THE U.S. ARMY WOMEN'S MUSEUM VIA AP

Army Maj. Charity Adams (center front) inspects members of the 6888th battalion in formation in Birmingham, England, in 1945. The Women's Army Corps battalion made history as the only all-female Black unit to serve in Europe during World War II.

favor. And I'm glad to say that's changing, and we're doing that here today,” he said.

Johnson presented the medal, the highest civil honor bestowed by Congress, to Earley's son and daughter. The honor had been in the works since 2022, after both the Senate and House voted unanimously in favor of the recognition.

“I don't know if any of the letters between my mom and dad passed through the hands of the Six Triple Eight, but I do know that the work they did made it possible for millions of young men like my dad to keep up the fight,” said U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kansas, a co-sponsor of the medal legislation. “When these women returned home, there was no parade to greet them. No onlined the streets to thank them for their service. That ain't right.”

Palmetto State ties to the 6888th battalion

There were more than 30 members of the battalion with connections to South Carolina, according to the website Women of the 6888th. Detailed biographical information on many proved difficult to uncover. Here is what is known about some of them:

■ **Alva B. Bacote**; born in 1921 in Darlington, Bacote in 1943 volunteered for the Women's Army Corps.

■ **Lucile M. Balloon**; born in South Carolina in 1924, she joined the service in 1942. Following the war, she moved to Florida, worked as a school teacher and raised a family in Madison. She died in 2010.

■ **Willamae Boatwright**; born in 1923 in S.C., she enlisted in the Army in 1944 and served a two-year stint. She later lived in Saluda and died in 1998 in Northampton, N.C.

■ **Ermene Sanata Faulk (Patterson)**; born in 1921 in Ehrhardt, Bamberg County. She registered for military service in 1942. Later, she was a school teacher in Chicago, having earned a doctorate at the University of Illinois. She died in 1990 in Port Saint Lucie, Fla.

■ **Lucille Miller Hairston**; born in Greenville in 1916, Miller registered for military service in 1943. She died in 1995 in North Carolina.

■ **Wilhelmina Lorenza Holmes**; born in 1916 in Anderson, she registered for military service in 1944. She died in 1957 in Charlotte.

■ **Hazel Stanford Jackson**; born in 1920 in Hartsville, she registered for military

service in 1943. She died in 2014. She is buried at the National Memorial Cemetery at Quantico, Va.

■ **Novella Ernestine Jackson**; born in 1916 in Edgefield County, she registered for the military in 1943 and started her service at Fort Jackson, Columbia. She died in 2001 and is buried in the Mount Canaan Baptist Church Cemetery in Trenton, Edgefield County

■ **Ruby L. Lipscomb**; born in 1920, she lived in Spartanburg County and registered for the military in 1943. She was a medical aid in the Women's Army Corp. She died in 1970.

■ **Vivian Alice Mazyck**; born in 1916, she lived in Seneca and registered for the military in 1942. She was listed as a college student or graduate of Claflin College at the time of her service, which began at Fort Jackson. She achieved the rank of sergeant. She died in 1959 and is buried in Seneca.

■ **Carolyn Blondell Poole**; born in Saluda in 1919, she registered for the military in 1943. She later lived in California. She died in 2011 and is buried in Mission Memorial Park in Seaside, Calif.

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