

receive fuel, but it's sometimes difficult to get a passing test. There's a change in temperature with fuel deliveries. You have to let the fuel settle out and regulate. At the marina in the summer, there's lots of gas movement and lots of deliveries."

Pitts, who graduated from the University of South Carolina in 1981 with a degree in Finance and Management, has to be concerned with more than just fuel and garbage trucks. He also is responsible for managing the landscaping contract with a private company that keeps all city property looking good year-round, and for cutting the grass and weeds that thrive on city-owned right of way.

"We usually have to do that every week or every other week, and there are times when we have to sub it out," he said.

Storm water is another issue that falls under the purview of IOP's Public Works Department. Though he gets help from Charleston County, Pitts is still responsible for making sure the city's open ditches and closed draining systems are doing their job – moving rain water along to its ultimate destination and thus avoiding flooding that can damage local homes, businesses and infrastructure.

Though some of that work was once done by county prisoners, Pitts pointed out that a private company, Eadie's Drain & Vacuum Services of Ridgville, now contracts with the city to clean the vegetation out of IOP's open ditches once a year. The company also cleans out the collection boxes and reshapes the ditches when necessary. Pitts decides which ditches need immediate work and which can wait.

In addition to picking up garbage, IOP's Public Works employees also haul away all types of yard debris and other items but not petroleum products, auto parts, electrical products and concrete. They will even take old appliances such as washing machines and refrigerators. Once these "white goods" are picked up, Pitts pointed out that the Clean Water Act requires them to be stored under a roof until they are transported to Charleston for recycling. The federal legislation also added to the city's cost of do-



Donnie Pitts has an office at the IOP Public Works Department, but he does most of his work in his truck.

ing business by requiring a wash-down area for city trucks where the water is contained and then cleaned before being released into the environment.

The Public Works Department, which had a \$1.208-million budget in the fiscal year that ended in June 2017, also

is responsible for keeping the shoreline as clean as possible. Pitts' employees empty the trash barrels on the beach regularly, but they also pick up a large number of items that day-trippers, vacationers and even locals leave behind. Discarded tents, chairs and umbrellas are hauled away in pickup trucks, sometimes at a rate of three loads a week.

"It used to be one load a week during the busiest eight weeks of the summer. Now it's up to three times a week, sometimes two loads, just from the beach," Pitts explained.

Pitts handles all this work with 10 full-time employees, including himself, and between five and 10 temporaries each day. His staff's experience goes a long way toward helping the IOP Public Works Department run smoothly and efficiently.

"When you have a good team, it pretty much runs itself," he said. "There's very little turnover here. Nine out of 10 employees have been here more than 10 years, and one has been with the town for 34 years. The key to success is the quality of men I have working for me."

Born and raised in Clinton, South Carolina, and now a Mount Pleasant resident, Pitts worked in the textile industry until taking a position as grounds and maintenance supervisor for the Isle of Palms Recreation Department in 2001. He was hired as Public Works director in 2004. He and his wife have three sons and a daughter, as well as two grandchildren. In addition to his family and his job, the Exchange Club of Charleston is also an important part of his life. He currently serves as second vice president of the organization and also manages the volunteers at the Coastal Carolina Fair. The club's annual fundraiser donated \$782,000 to 84 local charities last year.

"The Exchange Club is a big part of my life," Pitts said.

And the Isle of Palms Public Works Department plays a big role in making IOP a great place to live and visit. 🌴