

photo link: Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library

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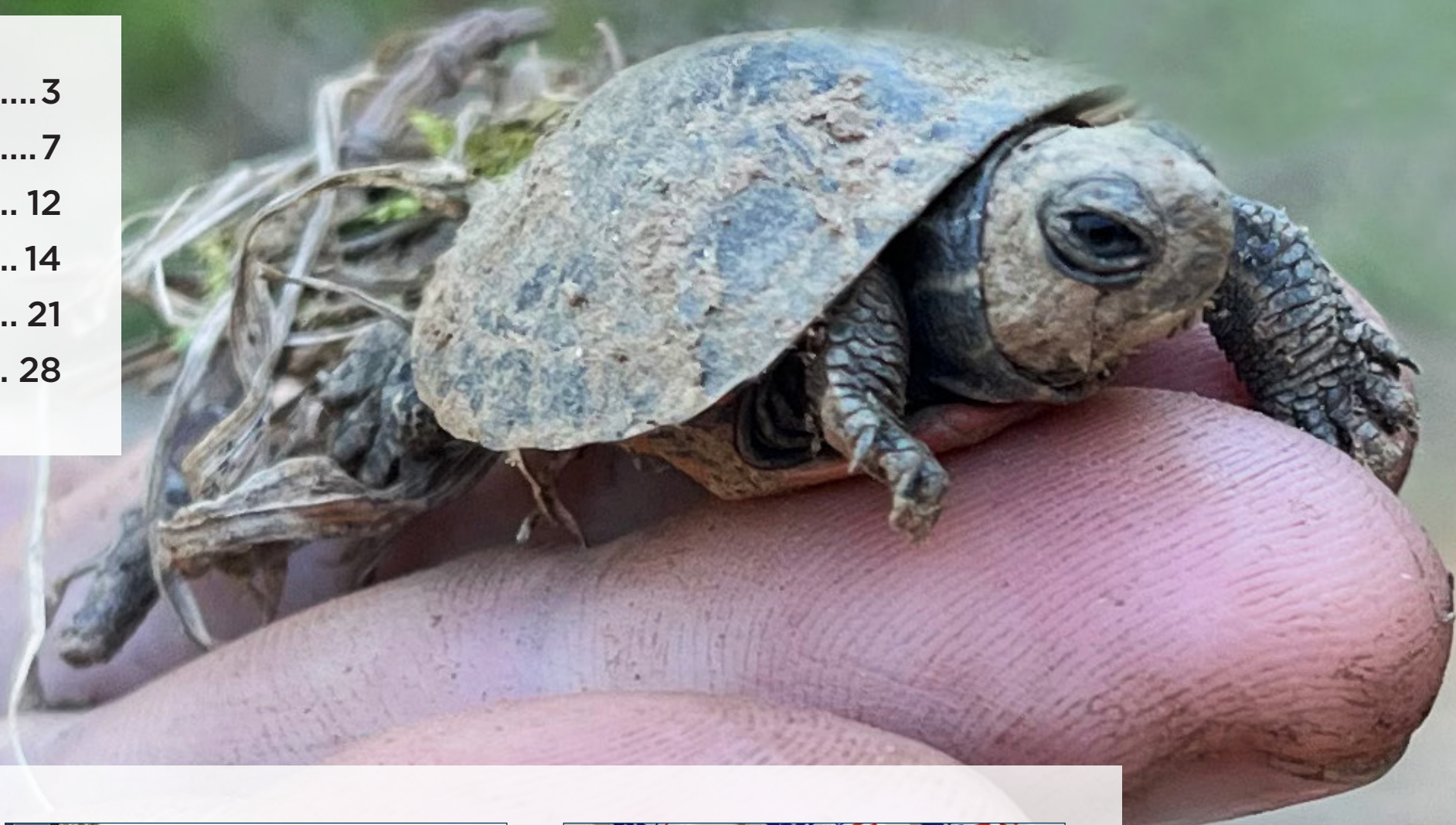
April 27, 2023  
Vol. 4, Issue 17





# Contents

Community .....	3
Business .....	7
Food & Dining .....	12
Government .....	14
Education.....	21
Stay Connected .....	28



Avelo Airlines to Add Routes and States



How to Subsidize EV Charging Stations



Voter Guides for School Board Elections May 9



photo link: [George Abbott](#)

*Community*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**







# BELLEVUE STATE PARK ANNOUNCES SUMMER CONCERTS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

“Time to dust off your lawn chairs,” Bellevue State Park said on Facebook in announcing its summer concert series. “Can’t wait to share some delicious food and toe-tapping tunes,” the Brandywine Hundred park continued.

Most concerts are 6:30 p.m. Sundays and Thursdays—with some dates skipped—and are included in park admission. Fans able to walk or bicycle into the park can hear the concerts for free.

Here’s the lineup:

- June 4: Diamond State Concert Band
- June 11: Jeff Zimmerman Band, country
- June 15: Singer-songwriter John Flynn
- June 18: De Tierra Caliente, Latin
- June 22: Flatland Drive, bluegrass
- June 15: The Launch, tribute to Queen, Styx & Boston
- June 29: Somethin’ Like That, classic rock
- July 2: Basic Cable, tribute to the Golden Age of TV
- July 6: Blues & Gold, a US Naval Academy band, blues
- July 9: The Resistors, classic rock

- July 13: The Core, Eric Clapton tribute
  - July 16: Spokeky Speaky, roots reggae
  - July 20: Seven Rings, Irish
  - July 23: Chorduroy, rock, blues and soul
  - July 27: Vintage Blue, bluegrass, country and southern rock
  - July 30: The Big House Band, party
  - Aug. 3: Jimmy and the Parrots, Jimmy Buffett tribute, 6 p.m.
  - Aug. 6: Malarkey Brothers, Celtic
  - Aug. 13: Exit 93, rock, blues and R&B
  - Aug. 20: 287th, patriotic
  - Aug. 24: Cruisers, the US Navy band, contemporary
  - Aug. 27: Newspaper Taxis, Beatle tribute, 6 p.m.
- Featured food trucks include Cajun Sno, Copperfield Kettle Corn, Donut NV, Gotta Lotta Gelata, Koi on the Go, Mitch’s Chicken, the Polish Connection, Sweet Josephine’s, Turbo Mexico Cuisine and Uncle John’s.



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## DELAWARE RANKED WORST FOR SAVINGS RATE

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware is among the most financially challenged states, a website has concluded after crunching six factors relating to personal finance. **Uplift Legal Funding**, which gives lawsuit loans to plaintiffs in need, looked at these stats (followed by Delaware's figures):

- Consumption of annual income (97.4%).
- Percentage of income saved (2.6%).
- Household debt-to-income ratio (1.5).
- Personal bankruptcy rates (166.1).
- Saving-related Google searches per 100,000 residents (372).
- Debt-related Google searches per 100,000 residents (341).

Delaware ranked fourth overall, behind Montana, Maine and Missouri. It ranked first for annual average consumption of income and worst for savings (a gimme, since the two figures add up to 100).

Some factors were observed to have small increments among the various states. Exceptions include bankruptcy (Maine's rate is just 59, the third-lowest in the country) and debt-related searches (Montana's rate is 550, second-highest in the country).

The release used data from the **U.S Bureau of Economic Analysis**, the **Federal Reserve System** and **Google Keyword Planner**.



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# STATE CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE USE OF LIBRARY PRIVACY KIOSKS

BY SAM HAUT

The state plans a marketing campaign to encourage more residents to use Social Service Kiosks that now exist in some libraries to access medical and other private services. The soundproof booths are located in 13 different libraries across the state.

Health and library officials hoped they would help some of Delaware’s more disadvantaged populations get the help they needed to participate in telehealth services, online job interviews or legal appointments.

But the booths haven’t gotten a lot of use, said Leesa Kellam-Sheppard, with the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services. She believes most people aren’t aware they exist and hopes the advertising campaign will drive people to the booths.

The campaign is expected to last at least two to three months and use billboards as well as social media and radio ads that will target Hispanic and Haitian Creole

communities. Some of a four-year, \$2 million grant to address substance use disorder and behavioral health care will be used for the campaign.

“There’s a need, because in Sussex County you have a transportation issue,” Kellam-Sheppard said. “And sometimes maybe they don’t want to go to certain doctors offices because of the stigma. So that’s just another way that they get the care they need.”

Gail Bruce, director of the Laurel Public Library, said she said people occasionally use the booth installed there in 2021, but she thinks most people shied away from it because of COVID-19.

“People were still hesitant to use even that, at that time,” she said.

A social worker who comes to the library twice a week sometimes uses it with clients if an issue is private, Bruce said. Mostly, though, the social worker will talk with



people in the library.

The library also has a tele-service navigator who comes twice a week to help people with green cards, food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid or other social services.

Most community members feel more comfortable talking outside of the booth, she said. Bruce also thinks that so many people already have access to electronic devices, the booths aren’t as useful as planners hoped they would be. A lot of people now have at home phones, internet access and even devices that have been provided through schools, she said.

“It’s probably just a little combination of everything,” she said.





photo by Mailchimp / Unsplash

The image shows a laptop on a wooden table in a living room. The laptop screen displays the Mailchimp website. The website header includes the Mailchimp logo, a phone number (+1 800 315 5929), and a 'Log in' link. The main headline reads 'Outperform your last campaign'. Below this is a diagram of an email automation flow: 'No Abandoned Carts' (Subject: You left something behind) leads to 'Float left in their cart', which leads to 'Wait 1 hour', which leads to 'Gets reminder email'. A central graphic shows a yellow float with a pink box and a blue box, with the text 'BIG ON FLOATS'. Below the graphic is the text 'Don't let this one float away!' and a 'Shop now' button. To the right of the diagram is the text 'Sell more with email automations' and a 'Sell more' button. Below this is a paragraph: 'Generate more orders with our prebuilt automations: remind abandoned cart shoppers, reengage lost customers, or cross-sell your products. Marketers have seen, on average, 4x more orders with our Customer Journey Builder than with bulk emails.'

*Business*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# RETAIL THEFT CONTINUES TO PLAGUE DELAWARE BUSINESSES

BY SAM HAUT

While retail theft continues to increase in Delaware, according to state police records, it doesn't seem to be happening at the level reported in some cities.

"I am not aware of any widespread looting or any type of cases where there's just been storming, just an overpowering into an establishment," said Jason Hatchell, public information officer for the Delaware State Police.

At least one retail official says her stores see organized looting by groups. Julie Miro Wenger, executive director of the Delaware Food Industry Council, which represents grocery and drug stores with a total of 12,000 employees, said that most of the retail theft they're seeing is from organized groups.

"We're not talking about individual shoplifting to be able to feed their families," Miro Wenger said. "We're certainly talking about folks that are coming in an or-

ganized fashion that are going through our stores and are aggressive and blatant and have taken to stealing shopping carts full of product."

She said she couldn't cite any specific incidents

Retail theft in Delaware in 2023 is on pace to be higher than in recent years, state police records show. State police have had reports of 1,059 incidents of retail theft or shoplifting this year, he said. In 2022, it had reports of 3,319, up from the 2,477 incidents in 2020.

Those numbers, however, don't include incidents dealt with by municipal police departments in Wilmington, Dover and Seaford, Hatchell said.

Police and business officials say that it's possible more theft is occurring, but with hiring problems in police departments, manpower is often steered to more serious crimes.

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# AVELO AIRLINES TO ADD NINE ROUTES TO FOUR STATES IN JUNE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Avelo Airlines was supposed to start expanding its destinations from Wilmington Airport in a year or two, but instead, it nearly tripled its routes in less than 90 days of service.

Local, state and airline officials held a press conference Thursday morning to announce that the airline is adding nine new nonstop destinations spanning five states: Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia: Charleston, SC; Myrtle Beach, SC; Greenville/Spartanburg, SC; Nashville, TN; Raleigh/Durham, NC; Wilmington, NC; Savannah, GA; Melbourne/Cocoa Beach, FL; Daytona Beach, FL.

Since arriving at Wilmington Airport less than three months ago, Avelo has flown more than 25,000 customers.

“This is about the three C’s,” said Thomas Cook, executive director of the **Delaware River and Bay Authority**. “Avelo has cost friendly fares, Avelo has excellent customer service...and finally, this airport is convenient.” The added routes will bring addition of a second Boeing 737 to the airport, and the airline is hoping it will bring more jobs to Wilmington by adding at least 35 jobs at the terminal as well as at least 100 crew members. The new plane fits 189 passengers.

Flights to these destinations begin June 22, with one-way fares starting at \$29. In addition to the new routes, Avelo has five existing destinations from Wilmington to Florida, which are Orlando, Tampa, Fort Lauderdale, Fort Myers and West Palm Beach.

New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer said that he and others were skeptical of Avelo’s commitment, since other airlines have come and gone. The quick expansion mitigated his doubts, he said.

“I don’t know if any airline has announced what Avelo has announced today,” he said. “I don’t know if they’ve come and said we’re doubling down, or I guess quadrupling down on Wilmington.”

Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki pointed out that this isn’t just for Delawareans flying south, but it’s also for people from other states to fly into Wilmington to stay in the First State. He’s excited that the airport will help people avoid the hassle of a larger airport.

“Going to Philly is work, going through Philadelphia is just hard,” he said. “Everything about it including getting there and checking your bag and then getting out to where you’re going, it’s a workout.”

For all the divisions in America, Purzycki said the entrepreneurial spirit of a project like this shows how close-knit the community of Wilmington is. “It’s a blessing to be here,” he said.







**BY KEN MAMMARELLA**

Fisher's Popcorn of Delaware has chosen Frankford for a new \$4.85 million facility that will more than quadruple space for its manufacturing and wholesale operations.

The company's current production facility in Fenwick Island is 2,000 square feet, and the new 17-acre site on Route 20 is almost 10,000 square feet. The additional space will include two kettles and a large packaging machine that will handle 30 to 35 bags per minute.

Fisher's Popcorn of Delaware has 22 full-time employees staffing its manufacturing, retail, wholesale and e-commerce operations, all in Sussex County. The company plans to create 20 wholesale jobs at the new site over the next three years.

Fisher's was founded in Ocean City, MD, in 1937, and a branch of the founder's family in 1983 began operating Fisher's Popcorn of Delaware, independent from the original company. Still family-owned and operated, Fisher's Popcorn of Delaware has shops in Fenwick,

# FISHER'S POPCORN PICKS FRANKFORD SITE TO EXPAND

Rehoboth Beach and Bethany Beach. The company also sells its products online and in more than 2,000 grocery stores across the United States.

Fisher's officials presented to Delaware's Council on Development Finance an application for a Jobs Performance Grant of \$60,000 and a Capital Expenditure Grant of \$145,500 from the Delaware Strategic Fund to support the company's investment in construction, fit-out costs and new equipment. The grants were approved, and distribution of grants from the fund depend on the company meeting various commitments.

"This expansion will enable us to bring the classic flavors of the Delaware beach resorts to more people around the country while adding quality jobs in Sussex County," said Vice President Russell Hall, who runs the company's wholesale and e-commerce divisions. "The grant assistance from the state is a key component to making this happen."

Delaware Prosperity Partnership in 2022 began helping Fisher's Popcorn explore how it could continue to grow in Delaware.




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# DELAWARE RANKED 5TH FOR CELLPHONE FRIENDLINESS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware is the fifth-friendliest state for cellphones, a new list concludes. Maryland and New Jersey top the list, with Pennsylvania at No. 10.

The list crunched data from the Federal Communications Commission, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the Tax Foundation and Opensignal to see which states had the best cellular internet speeds, phone service, 5G coverage, taxes (meaning lowest) and programs.

Delaware has the second-greatest 5G access, ranking 9.87, behind only New Jersey, with a perfect 10. Delaware has the third-lowest local wireless tax rate, 6.73%, and local internet speeds are the seventh-highest in the nation. However, Delaware ranks below average for phone service and state broadband grants.

Each category could earn 10 points, with Delaware's total score at 31.54 out of 50. If the scores were grades, Delaware and 46 other states would flunk, and only Maryland, New Jersey and Illinois would pass.

"Access to cellular devices and the internet has become necessary to do our jobs," said Andreas Voniatis, founder of [Artios.io](https://www.artios.io), a startup consultancy that created the list. "So it's important to understand which states offer the best internet access, phone coverage and support to residents and businesses."



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# Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# 10 NEW OR IMPROVED SPOTS IN DELAWARE FOR OUTDOOR DINING

BY BETSY PRICE

Even before COVID-19, Delaware diners upped the demand for outdoor dining options, and alfresco spaces have become essential to many restaurant designs. Not surprisingly, space affects the size and style of the seating. Here are 10 to consider:

## Quoin Rooftop

**The Quoin Hotel & Restaurant** in downtown Wilmington covers a lot of bases. The renovated Romanesque brownstone sports a below-ground cocktail lounge—the Simmer Down—a boutique hotel and a bar. But the talk of the town is a rooftop lounge with sunset views.

## Lewes Oyster House

This will be the first full season for this new hotspot in the heart of historic Lewes. Because the old brick Walsh Building fronts the sidewalk, there's not much space for seating. Nevertheless, the owners fit four

tables that can hold three people each. Select diners can see and be seen.

## Starboard Claw

Dewey Beach visitors and residents have watched the construction of this new restaurant, which occupies the old Hammerhead's space and an adjoining lot.

"It's been a long, long road, but we're getting to the finish line," says Keith "Toastie" Kirk, a partner.

The restaurant, which should open this spring, has second-floor terrace seating, and the menu includes hard-shell crabs, Bethany Blues ribs and Ed's Chicken recipe. (Ed's Chicken & Crabs burned down in 2016.)

## Brew Haha! at Avenue North

The newest location in the Delaware-based coffee chain is off Route 202 and sports a 1,400-square-foot outdoor area with lush landscaping that rivals the popular Trolley Square patio.

## Kid Shelleen's Charcoal House & Saloon

While Brandywine Hundred residents are happy to have a new Kid's in their backyard, they're even more pleased with the attractive, enclosed patio. There is already a fire feature, but if all goes as planned, a small bar will be in the covered space in June.

## The Chancery Market Food Hall & Bar

This is the first summer for the outdoor area at this Mid-Town Brandywine food hall a 1313 N. Market St.—aka the "old Hercules."

The 10,000-square-foot plaza's design is a collaboration between the Delaware Horticulture Center, Sasaki Associates and Ruppert Landscape. Plantings include native plants, shrubs, perennials and grasses. In addition to general seating, private areas are enclosed by knee-high walls. Each section has tables with metal runners for ice, so guests can keep drinks cool in the summer.

The Challenge Program, a Wilmington organization that teaches construction and life skills to youth, made the furniture.

## The Garden at Bardea

The area between **Bardea Food & Drink** and **Bardea Steak** is now a city courtyard with seating, fire features and leafy plantings. Last year, the new urban terrace wasn't fully utilized, acknowledged Scott Stein, co-owner of the Bardea group's restaurants. "This season, we're going to open it up as its own concept with a unique menu and a cohesiveness between both restaurants."

The partners also have plans to open a wine and pasta bar across the street in the fall.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)





photo by Charlie Megginson

LEGISLATIVE HALL

*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**





## DELAWARE PLANS HOW TO SUBSIDIZE ELECTRIC CHARGING STATIONS

BY SAM HAUT

Delaware is developing plans to increase the number of stations to charge electric vehicles, installed by private entities and partly subsidized with \$15 million in federal funding.

Breanne Preisen, with the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy, said the funding will cover 80% of the cost, with station owners covering the remaining 20%.

According to the federal [Alternative Fuel Data Center](#), there are 145 charging stations in Delaware, the ninth-lowest in the country, with the least in Alaska at 59. Preisen hopes more charging stations will incentivize more people to buy electric vehicles and reduce what's called range anxiety—that drivers don't have enough charge to get to their destination.

“We put the charging stations there. People are going to get more EVs. More EVs means more charging. It's a constant back and forth,” Preisen said.

“The idea is to get more electric vehicles on the road from an air quality standpoint. To get more zero emission vehicles on the road, and to do that, if we don't have the infrastructure to support that.”

The federal funds come from the November 2021 passage of the Infrastructure Bill. They stipulate that charging ports be compatible with any electric vehicle (Tesla is notorious for Tesla-only stations), offer fast charging and be on important routes, such as Route 113, Route 13, Route 1 and Interstate 95.

Charging stations have three levels. Level 1 chargers take about an hour to charge for each five miles of range in a car's battery. Level 2 chargers take about an hour to

charge for each 25 miles of range. Level 3 chargers (also called fast chargers) take about an hour to charge for each 100 to 200 miles of range.

Fast charging is usually at stations along major highways. Level 2 chargers are placed in community settings like parks or libraries. Level 1 chargers work from regular house plugs, although Level 2 chargers can be fitted into houses.

Preisen said DNREC would send out requests for proposals in the coming months for companies looking to create more electric vehicle charging stations. The [National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan](#) that the state released at the beginning of year said proposals were due in March.

### WILMINGTON, NCCO ON CHARGING STATIONS

John Rago, the deputy chief of staff with the mayor of Wilmington, said that the city has been working with a company called Energetics to develop plans.

Brian Boyle, a senior policy director with New Castle County, said the county has bought 13 electric vehicles, installed 24 Level 2 charging stations and received a \$500,000 grant to buy more vehicles and charging stations. Sites with the charging stations include the Government Center, 87 Reads Way, New Castle Corporate Commons; the Conner Building, 187A Old Churchmans Road; Brandywine Library, 1300 Foulk Road, Brandywine Hundred; and Bear Library, 101 Governors Place, Bear.

Preisen helps administer the state's rebate program, launched in 2015, for installing Level 2 charging stations. It has grown from about one application each month to three. But some businesses are still hesitant.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)





**BY SAM HAUT**

Medicfill for Delaware's retirees will remain in place until June 30, 2024, with rates to be determined in May, a key committee decided unanimously on Monday.

The special plan covers retired state employees. The state's controversial idea to move them into Medicare Advantage was stopped by suit last fall from a group called Retirees Investing in Social Equity Delaware.

The Medicfill plan was set to end Dec. 31, 2023, but the State Employee Benefits Committee voted to extend it another six months because—as Claire DeMatteis, secretary of the Delaware Department of Human Resources, said—it still falls under the critical need statute.

“When we implement and enact this critical need exception, we need to show, by law, that the situation could not be reasonably seen or guarded against,” she said. “So as we sit here today, we can say that we reasonably can't guard against the fact that we won't have a Medicare or Medicare supplement or a Medicare Ad-

# STATE RETIREES' HEALTH PLAN EXTENDED

vantage or a combination of both in place for July 1.”

Paying for health benefits is a costly issue affecting a lot of people, which is why this meeting drew two of Delaware's six officials elected nationwide and two members of the governor's cabinet. The committee also voted to re-establish two subcommittees, one on finance and the other health policy and planning.

The full committee also made some changes about the subcommittees, including allowing for combined meetings between the two subcommittees, clarifying who can be appointed to the subcommittees, requiring meetings happen at least once per quarter, and removing a member requirement for the subcommittees.

Delaware Treasurer Colleen Davis said that she doesn't feel that subcommittee members should be required to put themselves forward in roll call votes.

“I just feel it's not really a fair thing to do to...members of my staff who are public servants, just like every state employee,” she said. “But hasn't necessarily stepped forward to be in the public view in the way that an elected official or some cabinet secretaries have stepped forward to do...I may just run out of staff that are willing to step forward.”

During the public comment section, Lynda Hastings said that she's worried that June 2024 wouldn't be in Medicare's traditional open enrollment period. Cerron Cade, director of the state Office of Management and Budget, said that the state can extend Medicfill rates again, that the extension is done to give the court case time to get resolved, and that they understand the

concern about open enrollment period.

Insurance Commissioner Trinidad Navarro said earlier in the meeting that he's heard concerns about the open enrollment period and that if retirees are taken off health insurance in June, they would have a special enrollment period.

## VOTE ON MEDICFILL DRUG PRICES FOR RETIREES

The committee is scheduled to vote at its May 22 meeting on prescription drug prices for those on the Medicfill. Prices at pharmacies are now \$8 for generic drugs, \$10 for brand formulary drugs and \$50 for brand non-formulary drugs. All those prices are doubled for mail-order drugs. Specialty drugs have a copay based on their tier.

The first option would increase the cost of drugs purchased at the pharmacy to \$10 for generic, \$32 for brand formula, and \$60 for brand non-formulary, with each cost doubled for mail-order drugs, and keeping the same price for specialty drugs. This option would save the state on the group health insurance plan \$600,000.

The other three options would keep the original cost for drugs purchased at pharmacies and through the mail, but increase the cost of a 31-day supply of specialty drugs to a max of \$50, \$75 and \$125, with those costs doubled for a 90-day supply.

These plans would save the state an estimated \$1 million, \$2.7 million and \$3.4 million respectively. The first option would increase costs for everyone, and the fourth option would increase costs for the least number of people, 778.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)





# LEGISLATORS, ACTIVISTS HEAR BENEFITS OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

BY BETSY PRICE

The idea of creating an inspector general for Delaware united multiple advocacy groups that sponsored a Zoom forum on the benefits of such a job.

On Monday, 71 people attended a virtual forum hosted by the Delaware Coalition for Open Government and Delaware Press Association. Also sponsoring the call were Common Cause Delaware, Delaware Poor People's Campaign, Delaware Public Preschool Coalition, the League of Women Voters of New Castle County, Lead-Free Delaware, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, Network Delaware, New Jersey Society of Professional Journalists and RISE Delaware.

While a bill hasn't yet been introduced during this legislative session, Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, had a copy of the bill with her. Sturgeon said she's speaking to leadership about when they will introduce

the bill and has been told they want to make sure they have the votes needed to get it through the Senate.

Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, said the people in his caucus that he's spoken to have been supportive.

## INSIGHT FROM LOUISIANA'S INSPECTOR GENERAL

Stephen Street, Louisiana's inspector general, said that it's important for any inspector general legislation to have protections against political meddling.

"And no matter where you land, you're going to upset some people," Street said. "It's just the way it is. And so the IG is there with those protections to be able to wade in and do that job that no one else in a state government position can do."

Street said that this protection was important as in the process of his investigations, there were attempts by the legislature to remove him, but were unsuccessful

because of the protections in place. Removal of an inspector general in Louisiana requires a majority vote in the House and Senate, plus approval by the governor.

Sturgeon said Delaware's bill would bar people from being an inspector general who had held elected office or had a high-level cabinet position within the past three years.

Sarah Bucic, co-chair of Lead-Free Delaware, said that an inspector general is needed to make the public aware of relevant issues, like lead levels.

"Having an inspector general would place the responsibility on the state for correcting their own missteps and misstatements and misuse of funds," Bucic said. Lead poisoning "would be a perfect issue where if you invest in prevention, you would get so much back. So I think it would be incredibly effective."

Smith—who last year had sponsored a failed inspector general bill—said an issue with [House Bill 405](#) was a worry that an inspector general would conflict with the attorney general and state auditor. He's addressed that in his new bill, which is only slightly different from last year's bill. According to the fiscal note for the bill, it would have allocated about \$1 million a year for staffing.

While he didn't comment on the call, Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow said in the Zoom chat that he would look to support the bill any way he could.





# SENATORS: ANIMAL ABUSE LAWS COULD PREVENT OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Two bills that aim to prevent animal abuse unanimously passed through the Senate floor Tuesday.

**Senate Bill 71**, sponsored by Sen. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown, would require law enforcement agencies, the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families and the Department of Justice to report suspected animal cruelty to the Office of Animal Welfare.

The reports would only be required if an employee of the aforementioned agencies discovers an incident of abuse while performing their job in child welfare cases.

SB71 also provides immunity to people who, in good faith, report suspected animal cruelty.

“Research over the past 35 years has identified significant correlations between animal abuse, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, elder abuse and other forms of violence,” Hansen said. “Animal abuse is often

an indicator or predictor of crime and considered a warning sign that other family members in the household are not safe.”

Animals are often threatened or harmed as a way to control or psychologically abuse a human victim, she said. “Witnessing animal cruelty causes psychological trauma to children,” she said, “and negatively impacts their development.”

SB 71 now heads to a House committee for consideration.

**Senate Bill 70**, sponsored by Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City, also passed the Senate unanimously Tuesday. The bill would formally recognize abuse to a companion or service animal as a form of domestic abuse when the abuse is used to harm or control the human victim who has an attachment to the animal.



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It also clarifies the definition of abuse, which it outlines as engaging in cruelty, inflicting a physical injury or engaging in a course of alarming or distressing conduct. The act also provides authority for courts to include provisions in a protection from abuse order that grant a petitioner exclusive care, custody or control of a companion animal and order a petitioner to stay away from the companion animal.

“Before someone harms a spouse or a child, they’re very often beginning the violence against the most vulnerable member of the family,” Poore said, “and that would be the cat, the dog or any other animal in that household.”

SB 70 heads to a House committee for discussion.





# HOUSE LOOKING TO CODIFY RULES ON REMOTE PARTICIPATION

BY SAM HAUT

When the Delaware House began meeting in January, it adopted temporary rules for operations. **House Resolution 3** governs how the House operates, from how bills are voted on to how parking spaces are allocated to each member. **House Resolution 10**, which includes the permanent rules, awaits a vote by the whole House. It received four votes on its merits from the House Rules Committee.

HR 10 would add a section governing how remote participation works, change a rule on roll call votes to account for remote participation and remove the section on emergency operation. Before the resolution can be voted on by the House, it has to decide on the nine proposed amendments, six by Republicans and three by Rep. Sean Lynn, D-Dover.

Drew Volturo, deputy chief of staff for communications with the House Democratic Caucus, said there

isn't much of a difference between temporary or permanent rules, as both can be amended and tend to resemble each other.

Joseph Fulgham, director of policy and communications for the Delaware House Republican Caucus, said the Republican amendments address multiple issues. The most impactful amendments focus on the votes needed to suspend House rules, the elimination of remote participation and when bills get voted on.

## WHAT THE AMENDMENTS ADDRESS

An amendment proposed by Rep. Jeffrey Spiegelman, R-Townsend/Hartly, would require a three-fifths majority instead of a simple majority to suspend House rules.

Fulgham said that's an important change. "It shouldn't just be majority plus one," he said.

Because it is a significant change from how a bill is ordinarily considered that it should carry more weight

in a vote that you should meet a higher degree of consensus, to agree to suspend the rules...He's proposed it before, and it hasn't gained any traction because simple majorities benefit the majority party. And the majority party is loath to give up any kind of numerical advantage.

In 2019, Spiegelman proposed an amendment to House permanent rules that sought a three-fifths majority to suspend House rules. While it was sponsored by 11 other House Republicans, it didn't receive a vote.

Fulgham said that House Republicans are also concerned that virtual participation goes against the state constitution. "Most Republicans in the House believe that we ought to observe what we believe to be the constitutional requirement that representatives and senators be physically present in the Capitol Building to conduct business," he said.

The Delaware constitution states that "The General Assembly shall meet and sit in Dover, the capital of the State; provided, however, that in periods of emergency resulting from enemy attack, terrorism, disease, accident, or other natural or man-made disaster the General Assembly may temporarily meet and sit elsewhere."

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the House has been operating under emergency procedures that allow for virtual attendance. House Minority Whip Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden, proposed an amendment that would only allow witnesses to participate remotely.

Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, proposed an amendment that would end remote participation.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)





# NEPOTISM LAW SHOT DOWN IN WILMINGTON CITY COUNCIL

BY JAREK RUTZ

A Wilmington City Council ordinance that would prevent nepotism failed to pass April 20 after initially garnering strong support in a committee last month. The ordinance got five yes votes, five no and two “pres-ent” votes, meaning it lacked the numbers it needed to succeed.

**Ordinance 0273**, sponsored by Councilman James Spadola, would prohibit members of the council from hiring close relatives of current council members.

A close relative would be considered a person’s do-mestic partner or parents, spouse, children, siblings by blood (whole or half), adoption or marriage.

The legislation was motivated by some issues at the state level, Spadola said, citing convicted former state auditor Kathleen McGuinness, whose charges stemmed from hiring her daughter.

“There’s also a carve out for current employees, so if anybody was elected to city council and their family member was already on staff, that person could remain on staff,” Spadola said.

Councilwoman Shané Darby supported the legisla-tion.

“I’m in full support of this legislation and I think it’s important to put safeguards up to hold us accountable,” she said, “and for us to be ethical in our decisions that we’re making, and how we’re operating as a city council.”

An issue that has been brought up each time the ordi-nance has been presented is the fact that it only applies to the City Council.

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*Education*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# 92 HONORED AS 2023 SECRETARY OF EDUCATION SCHOLARS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Ninety-two First State high schoolers have been named Secretary of Education Scholars. Mark Holodick, secretary of education at the [Delaware Department of Education](#), announced the 2023 honor roll.

“This is such an impressive group of young leaders,” he said. “The honorees have succeeded academically while also serving as leaders in their schools and communities.”

Holodick said the scholars’ success is a result of their own hard work, but also a reflection of the support of their families and educators.

“As they prepare for college, the workforce and military service, I hope that wherever their next steps take them, their paths lead them to careers in Delaware,” he said. “We need them as the future leaders of our state.”

The number of scholars from each school is based on enrollment. The program dates to 1984. School principals nominate students based on their academic records and community service.

The students, joined by their families and school leaders, were honored Monday during a dinner in Dover. A [video](#) showcases the students and what inspired their success. Here are the 2023 Secretary of Education Scholars:

### Appoquinimink

- Ansh Desai – Appoquinimink High School
- Shivi Royal – Appoquinimink High School

- Alexis Skinner – Appoquinimink High School
- Allison Aquino – Middletown High School
- Allison Kish – Middletown High School
- Ella Trembanis – Middletown High School

### Brandywine

- Anand John – Brandywine High School
- Jonathan Pei – Brandywine High School
- Miles Bley – Concord High School
- Meera Ratnagiri – Concord High School
- Eleanor Frank – Mount Pleasant High School
- Zakia Zara – Mount Pleasant High School

### Caesar Rodney

- Abigail Cholewa – Caesar Rodney High School
- Puiyee Kong – Caesar Rodney High School
- Alyssa McClearly – Caesar Rodney High School
- Rachel Smith – Caesar Rodney High School

### Cape Henlopen

- Abigail Betts – Cape Henlopen High School
- Camryn Cunningham – Cape Henlopen High School
- Colleen Flynn – Cape Henlopen High School

### Capital

- Ellisyn Arthur – Dover High School
- Kylee Countryman – Dover High School
- Khushdeep Kaur – Dover High School

### Charter School of Wilmington

- Mia Lu – Charter School of Wilmington
- Nathan Zhao – Charter School of Wilmington

### Christina

- Olivia Agu – Christiana High School
- Jayden Murphy – Christiana High School
- Dante Dill-Smith – Delaware School for the Deaf
- Asia N. Mitchell – Glasgow High School
- Ngoc Khanh Tran – Glasgow High School
- Cheyenne Brown – Newark High School
- Seth Fuhr – Newark High School
- Ketisa Lumiere Donfack Ouwe – Sarah Pyle Academy

### Colonial

- Andrae Amponsah – William Penn High School
- Evelyn Arnoth – William Penn High School
- Carson Brown – William Penn High School
- Lun Kong – William Penn High School

### Delaware Military Academy

- Isaac DiMaio – Delaware Military Academy
- Giada MacNamara – Delaware Military Academy

### Delmar

- Sarah Lopatofsky – Delmar High School
- Dhara Nakrani – Delmar High School

### Early College School at Delaware State University

- Mariana Kebaso

### First State Military Academy

- Natalie Hougentogler

### Freire Charter School

- Shi-anne Reams-Bennett

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)





**BY JAREK RUTZ**

Parents have religiously attended school board meetings this year to share concerns about school safety, with incidents like guns in buildings, fights between children and vaping in bathrooms atop their list of worries.

The **Colonial School District** on Tuesday night hosted a safety summit, featuring law enforcement, a constable and the district superintendent. Watch the full **video** of the summit.

Superintendent Jeff Menzer said the district “hopes this is going to be the first of many interactions with our community around Colonials’ efforts to keep our staff, students and our building safe and secure during and after school and during all of our events.”

The panel included John Barr, Colonial’s safety and security specialist; Carl Bond, Colonial’s lead constable; Sgt. Tracey Duffy, public information officer for the **New Castle County Police**; Sgt. India Sturgis, director of public information for the **Delaware State Police**; and Frank Burton, former Colonial parent and **FBI** special agent.

A common theme during the summit was the impor-

## COLONIAL SAFETY SUMMIT STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

tance of communication in the event of a crisis. A short news clip was played that showed parents storming into a school in San Antonio, Texas, while a chaotic frenzy broke out in the hallways after reports of a school shooter, when there was actually no threat at all.

“We want you to see how important communication is,” Sturgis said, who added that police messaging communicated with the school public information officers so that it can be conveyed to the public in a timely manner but still be accurate.

In today’s social media-driven world, rumors and news will circulate around the community that often aren’t true, which can hinder the police’s ability to conduct a proper investigation.

“We’re obtaining information from the investigators on scene as quickly as we can, so sometimes if you’re following us on social media accounts and you’re not getting information as quickly as you want to, we’re not trying to hide the information from you,” Sturgis said.

Rather, the delay in publishing information on an incident is because law enforcement and the school district are actively seeking accurate information.

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## VOTER GUIDES FOCUS ON MAY 9 SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Several organizations have published voter guides and candidate profiles to help residents make informed choices in Delaware's May 9 school board elections. There are guides from [Citizens for Delaware Schools](#), the [League of Women Voters](#) and the [Delaware ACLU](#).

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on May 9. The Department of Elections [website](#) has contact information for all candidates and requirements for voter eligibility. Forty candidates are listed as having live campaigns statewide on the department's site, with some running unopposed. Five candidates filed and withdrew.

### *Citizens for Delaware Schools*

"Anything we can do to give people one more source of information will help," said Nancy Mercante, co-founder of Citizens for Delaware Schools. "It's not endorsing anybody. It's just simply laying out in their own words their positions on issues."

Citizens for Delaware Schools [profiles](#) 13 candidates,

and each one has an open-ended answer to their positions on academics, parental involvement and rights, school funding and civics education. The profiles also share a candidate's priorities if elected, and why they are running.

While Citizens for Delaware Schools doesn't endorse candidates, it does indicate in its guide if a candidate is aligned to the group's values. The group's mission is to seek out school board candidates who support policies that will provide an educational curriculum beneficial to all students in a safe, supportive environment, and to provide a support network and training to help those candidates conduct successful campaigns.

The nonprofit reached out to all 40 school board candidates in the state, Mercante said, but many did not respond to their survey questions.

"It's always been difficult to find information about the candidates themselves," Mercante said, "And I often find that the questions asked in these other locations

are not always the questions I would ask or questions that voters ask."

Mercante said her organization encourages voters to do their homework, research other voter guides or attend public forums so that they have a better holistic understanding of what a candidate stands for.

### *League of Women Voters*

The League of Women Voters aims to empower voters and defend democracy through advocacy, education and litigation at the local, state and national levels.

In its [voter guide](#), voters can see side-by-side comparisons of candidates' biographies, visions for the future and positions on critical and often controversial topics.

Some issues include providing support for student mental health issues, community calls for removing books and programs and attracting and retaining quality teachers, according to Jill Itzkowitz, Delaware chair of VOTE411, the league's election site.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)





# APPOQUINIMINK BREAKS GROUND ON NEW LOUIS L. REDDING SCHOOL

BY JAREK RUTZ

A historic Middletown school building is getting a \$57.1 million makeover. The Louis L. Redding Building, part of Appoquinimink School District and named after the first Black practicing lawyer in Delaware, will have a new home in two years.

District and government officials on Tuesday broke ground on the new building, which will be right in front of the current **Louis L. Redding Middle School**, on New Street. Students will not need to relocate during construction. Construction will begin this summer, with the new school ready to open in fall 2025.

Michelle Wall, the district school board president, said the new building will carry on the legacy of everything that the school and its namesake stood for. Orig-

inally built in 1953, the school was desegregated in 1969.

Sen. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown, said at Tuesday's ceremony that the building is more than a school. Rather, she said, it's a landmark that represents the history of Middletown.

The new building will offer better access and safety to car and bus drivers.

On Dec. 14, 2021, district voters approved a referendum that called for no tax increase by a vote count of 3,004 yes to 111 no—a 96% margin of approval.

For more than a decade, the district has been asking the state to support the renovation and expansion of Louis L. Redding Middle School.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



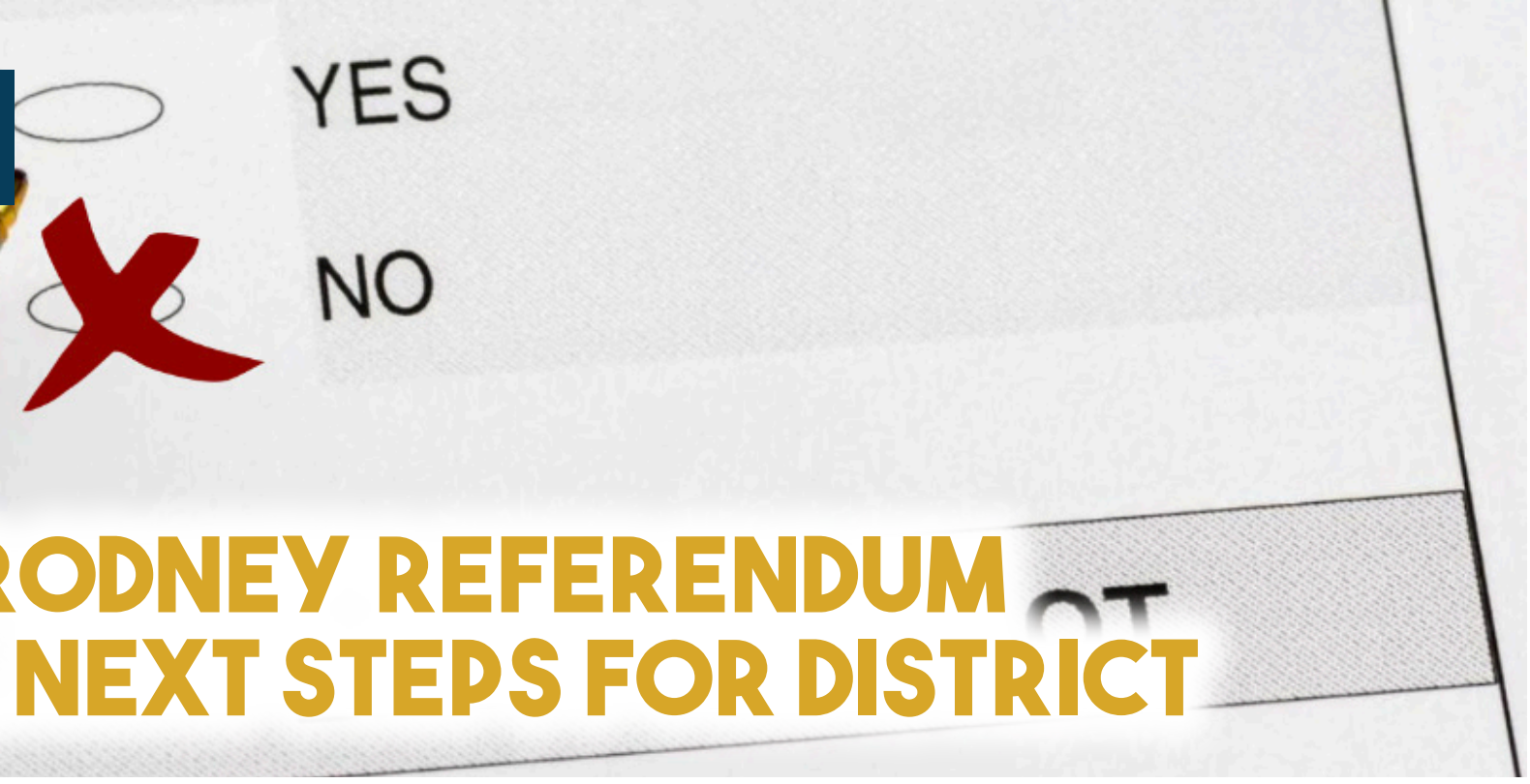
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# CAESAR RODNEY REFERENDUM RESULTS, NEXT STEPS FOR DISTRICT

BY JAREK RUTZ

The **Caesar Rodney School District** plans to go to referendum again after their request to raise school taxes by 27.7%, or \$211 annually for the average homeowner, failed Saturday.

“We believe the results of our recent referendum are not a reflection of our community’s lack of support for the district, rather our need to better clarify needs and the impact on our schools,” Superintendent Christine Alois said. “We will be reaching back out to our Rider family to work collaboratively on next steps.”

Caesar Rodney has stated that the district’s expenses are outpacing its revenue, and the tax hike would help pay for utilities, maintenance, building budgets and initiatives outlined in its 2022-2027 **Strategic Plan**.

Saturday’s referendum was a result of the district being granted an \$11,037,200 Certificate of Necessity grant from the state, but to receive that money, it needs to raise \$4,508,152 in local funds, for a total of \$15,545,352.

The average taxpayer in the district owns a house with an assessed value of \$40,300, so they would have their taxes increased by \$211.58 in 2024 and another \$36.11 in 2025 and 2026.

Here’s how Saturday’s vote turned out:

### Question 1: HVAC upgrade and repair for **Magnolia Middle School**

Final vote: 1,184 (64%) against; 663 (36%) for  
The first question on the ballot pertains to updating the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system at Magnolia Middle School. Voting for this would not have increased taxes at all, Alois said, since the district already has the money to complete it. Still, the majority voted against it.

### Question 2: Operating expenses for **David Robinson Elementary** and Magnolia Middle

Final vote: 1,310 (71%) against; 535 (29%) for  
The second question on the ballot would help fund

operating costs for David E. Robinson Elementary School and Magnolia Middle School, both of which opened in 2022 without operating budgets. Voting for this option would increase tax rates of 0.245 cents in year one, 0.02 cents in year two and 0.02 cents in year three for each \$100 of assessed home value.

### Question 3: General operating expenditures related to district growth

Final vote: 1,331 (72%) against; 524 (28%) for  
The last question on Saturday’s ballot would have an increase in tax rates of 0.28 cents in year one, 0.09 cents in year two and 0.09 cents in year three—again, per \$100 of assessed home value.

The revenue would help the district maintain and expand programs presented in the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, which includes ensuring the district maintains a 1:1 device-to-student ratio. It would also support the local portion of funding for staffing and capital improvements.

### NEXT STEPS FOR CAESAR RODNEY

There is no timeframe at this point for a second referendum. Per the terms of the Certificate of Necessity grant, Caesar Rodney must raise the \$4,508,152 in order to receive \$11,037,200 from the state.

Saturday’s referendum results are expected to be **certified** by the Department of Elections Wednesday, April 26, at 10 a.m.







Education

# DELAWARE STATE GETS \$1.6M FROM US FOR THREE PROJECTS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware State University has received \$1.6 million in federal funding, the state's Congressional delegation announced on Monday.

The funding for the Dover university includes \$866,000 for an agriculture incubator, \$300,000 for a mentoring project for young Black men that will provide summer jobs to 80 Black male DSU students and \$490,000 to establish a Space Center within the existing Optical Science Center for Applied Research.

The University of Delaware is getting \$410,000 on the Space Center project.

"From agriculture to career development to space education, these federal dollars will be instrumental in strengthening DSU's ability to prepare young people for their futures while investing in our collective future," Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester said.



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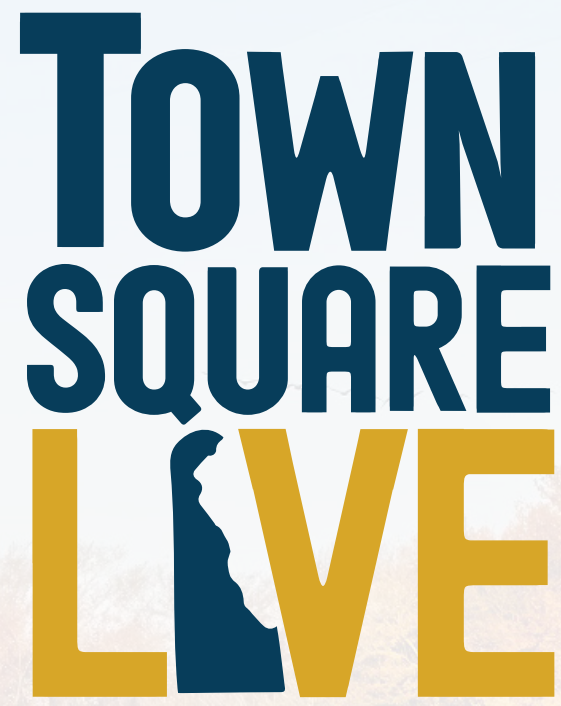


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