

photo link: Brandywine Creek State Park

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photo by Hank Davis

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New Vision for Darley House



Debate Over Legal Assisted Suicide—Again



UD to Raise Tuition Even With Large Surplus



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



DARLEY HOUSE ENVISIONED AS HOME FOR CLAYMONT ENTREPRENEURS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

A new chapter is being written for the **Darley House**, a Claymont landmark where illustrator Felix Darley in 1862 **created** an important archetype of the modern Santa Claus.

The state (which owns the half-acre property, on Philadelphia Pike and Darley Road) and the **Claymont Renaissance Development Corp.** (which rents it), are moving forward on plans to renovate the house and enable it to be used as office space or a co-working space for entrepreneurs and startups.

“I hate not seeing the Darley House not used to its potential,” said Brett Saddler, executive director of the CRDC, which focuses on Claymont’s economic development. He is studying the feasibility of each approach.

“Does it make more sense to lease space to startups or develop a co-working space?” he asked, immediately offering this answer: “Whatever would help more with Claymont’s revitalization.”

Unfortunately, the home—built in 1790, with a major addition in 1853—“is in desperate need of repair,” he said. “We are in the process of finally renovating the second floor,” the nonprofit wrote on Facebook. “The walls and ceilings were crumbling, and water was getting in (not to mention critters).”

The **renovations** also entail replacing some lawn and landscaping with two more parking spaces. The parking spaces go before the Claymont Design Review Committee, at its May 24 meeting at the Claymont Library.

Saddler expects extra parking to be approved. The interior work fits within zoning and National Register of Historic Places **guidelines**.

DARLEY HOUSE HISTORY

The Darley House was added to the register in 1973 and is also known as The Wren’s Nest and the Chimneys. It “is a rich architectural creation” in details, the application to the register notes, with Saddler adding that it is a fine example of low Victorian design.

Darley’s work on Clement Moore’s “A Visit From St. Nicholas,” also known as “The Night Before Christmas,” includes a drawing of St. Nicholas and his sleigh racing past the Darley House.

The first floor now has an office, a conference room, front and back parlors, a kitchen, two restrooms and a wraparound porch, Saddler said. The second floor would have room for five offices, he said. The third floor and basement are for storage. The state is paying for renovations and he expects the work to be done by next spring.

The nonprofit will sublease the newly done space to tenants. Saddler gave up his office three years ago to rent it to attorney **Gregory F. Birney**. Saddler now works out of the conference room. The house also hosts weekly art classes and other activities.

Delaware bought the property in 2004 and did major renovations in 2010. In 2020, the CRDC proposed making the second floor an incubator space or apartments. (The house was at one point was operated as a bed and breakfast.) The apartments were not architecturally feasible, a study concluded.

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MARRIAGE PROPOSAL CAPS TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

BY JAREK RUTZ

EastSide Charter School teacher Sinead Johnson thought she was being brought into the auditorium May 12 to receive an award to cap off teacher appreciation week. Instead, in front of her first-grade class and about 30 family members and friends, her boyfriend Keith Rawlings Brown got down on one knee, held out a diamond ring and proposed.

Tears of joy bolted down her face as she said yes.

“This has been a journey for us both and it was tough keeping this secret from my love but seeing the look on her face from the surprise was more than I could ask for,” Rawlings Brown said.

The couple, both 32 years old, have been dating for two years, but have been close friends since they met in college at [Tuskegee University](#) in Alabama.

Johnson has worked at the Wilmington charter for three years, and many of her students—holding strings to mylar balloons that looked like engagement rings, and signs that said Yes and Marry Me—were crying, too, out of awe and happiness.

Rawlings Brown is a small business owner of his own trucking company.

“I knew it would mean a lot to Sinead the way I planned for it to be at her school and involve her students because



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she cares so much about them,” he said. “It brought her and a couple of her students to tears. They love her as much as she loves them and her rapport with them is very inspiring.”

Aaron Bass, EastSide chief executive officer, said this is absolutely the best teacher appreciation moment at any school. He seemed to really enjoy alerting the media to the proposal, making them swear to keep it a secret and making them promise they wouldn’t do a story unless Johnson gave permission. She said yes to that, too.

“This literally is the greatest thing you could ever do for a teacher,” Bass said.



BY BETSY PRICE

The Clifford Brown Jazz Festival set for June 21-24 in Rodney Square, will feature headliners Kamasi Washington, Kem, Cory Wong and **Angelique Kidjo**. The show includes a diverse set of musicians ethnically and musically, as well as a nod to history.

“The 2023 Clifford Brown Jazz Festival has been curated to be similar to a lift that is fully lived,” said Tina Betz, director of cultural affairs and fund developer for the city of Wilmington. “At times celebratory and mellow; triumphant and sorrowful; complicated and straight ahead.

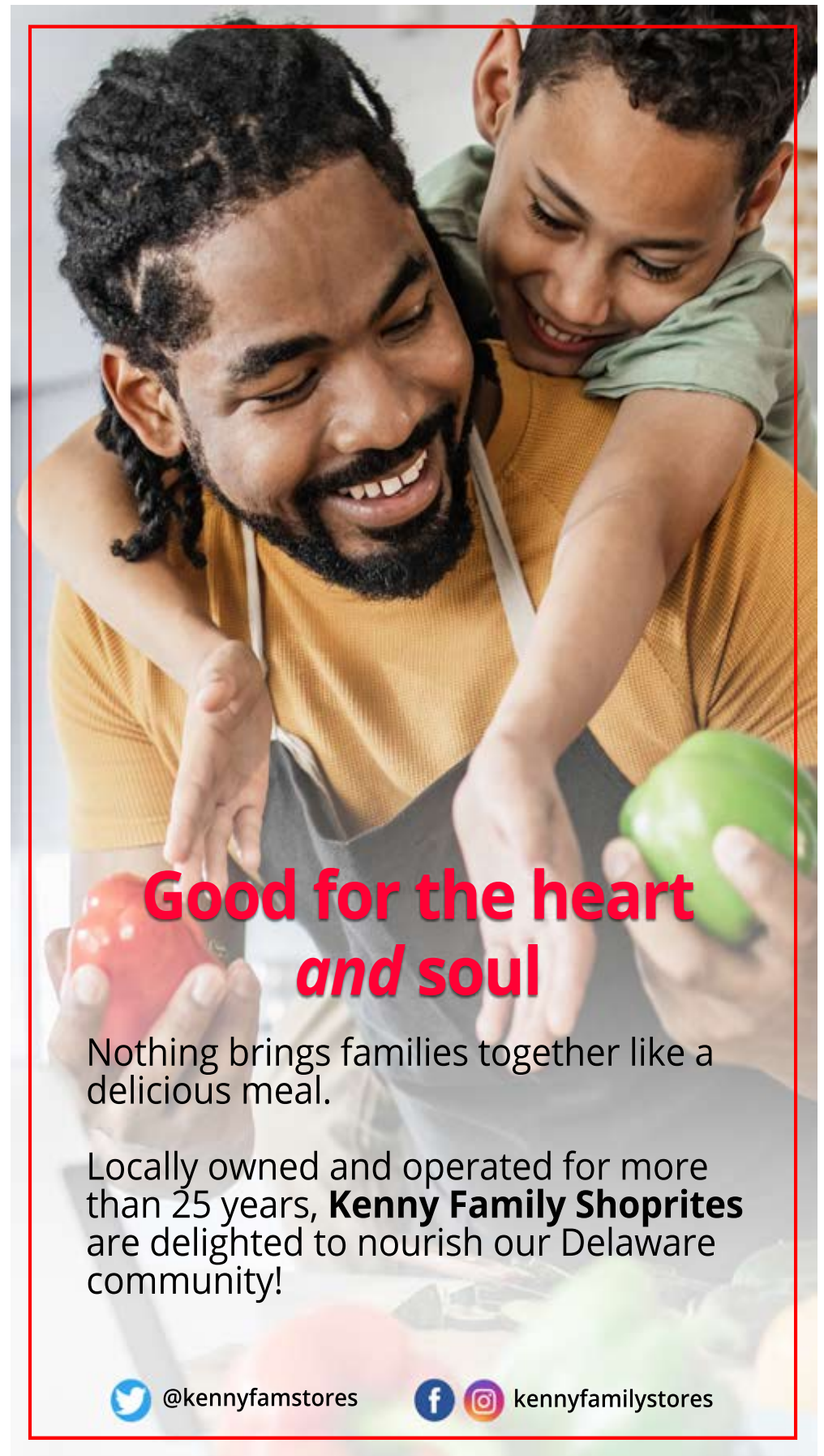
“It’s my hope that the 2023 CBJF lineup exhibits what is the most important element of the jazz genre: It’s an art form that is continuously evolving, which is why it’s one of the world’s greatest creative treasures.”

The largest free jazz outdoor festival on the East Coast, the event sponsored by the city of Wilmington, honors Wilmington native and trumpeter Clifford Brown, known as “Brownie.” He died in 1956 at the age of 25 returning from a show. Even though he only had a few years of recordings, many jazz trumpeters still praise his work and his “Joy Spring” and “Daahoud,” have become jazz standards.

All ages are welcome for the concert, and guests are advised to bring lawn chairs or blankets for seating. The square will be lined with food trucks and vendors throughout the festival week.

This year, the city rolled out the names of the performers slowly over a week.

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FREE CONCERTS AT WILMINGTON STATE PARKS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Wilmington State Parks will host free concerts twice a week this summer. The concerts are 6:30 p.m. Mondays at Rockford Tower in Rockford Park and 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays at the Sugar Bowl in Brandywine Park, south of the Brandywine Zoo.

Here's the schedule:

- Monday, June 12: The Bullets, roots and rockabilly
- Wednesday, June 14: Sug Daniels, folk R&B and soul
- Monday, June 19: Benjamin Wagner, alternative, pop, Americana
- Wednesday, June 21: Fuzzaholics, upbeat funk, soul and pop
- Monday, June 26: Genesis Z & the Black Mambas, energetic soul and alternative

- Wednesday, June 28: Pawnshop Roses, rock and Americana
- July 3, July 5 and July 10: No concerts scheduled
- Wednesday, July 12: Ha Ha Charade, indie pop and surf rock
- Monday, July 17: Lauren & the Homewreckers, alt folk and Americana
- Wednesday, July 19: Tara Hendrix, soul, pop, funk and R&B
- Monday, July 24: Ty Mathis Experience, soul and alternative
- Wednesday, July 26: American Trappist, indie rock
- Monday, July 31: Frantic Noise, singer-songwriter with sass and soul

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- Wednesday, Aug 2: Gooch & the Motion, country, blues and rock
- Monday, Aug 7: Edgewater Avenue, bluegrass, folk and Americana
- Wednesday, Aug 9: ilyAIMY, percussive and acoustic grunge
- Monday, Aug 14: Howl Train, country
- Wednesday, Aug 16: Gretchen Emery Band, rock, soul and R&B

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photo by Mailchimp / Unsplash

The laptop screen displays the Mailchimp homepage. At the top, the Mailchimp logo is visible on the left, and the text "Sales +1(800) 315-5929 Log in" is on the right. The main headline reads "Outperform your last campaign". Below this, there is a diagram of an email automation flow for abandoned carts. The flow starts with a trigger: "No Abandoned Carts" with the subject "You left something behind". This leads to an email: "Float left in their cart". After a "Wait 1 hour" delay, it leads to another email: "Gets reminder email" with the subject "Don't let this one float away!". To the right of the flow diagram is a promotional text: "Sell more with email automations". Below this text, it says: "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." A "Sell more" button is located at the bottom right of this section.

Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



300 PEOPLE PACK DELAWARE DNA LIFE SCIENCES CONFERENCE

BY BETSY PRICE

Two decades ago, a group of Delaware educators, businessmen and politicians founded a biosciences institute to help the state push into that sector of the economy. Gov. John Carney told the 300 people who packed the first Delaware DNA Life Science Conference May 11 that he could draw a line directly from that day to drug company WuXi STA's announcement last year that it will build a 90-acre plant in Middletown. The plant is expected to open in 2025 and employ 500 people full-time within a year.

Biosciences have helped diversify Delaware's economy, "driving job growth and economic development in our state, and nothing is more important than that," Carney said.

Helping to grow the state's bioscience sector was one goal of the Delaware DNA conference sponsored by the [Delaware BioSciences Association](#). It also offered networking, with the hope of leading to more collaborations,

along with breakout sessions on financing, manufacturing workforce and more.

DELAWARE DNA ISSUES

Among the points made:

- While Delaware alone has many things going for it already, it's actually considered part of the Pennsylvania region and many from Philly were in attendance.
- Even so, the greater New York-New Jersey region is considered the No. 1 regional ecosystem dealing with life sciences in the country. No. 2 is the greater Chicago area. No. 3 is the greater Philly area, including New Castle County.
- The industry itself needs to push for more government money to improve infrastructure and train more workers. Right now, the state of Kentucky ranks No. 3 on the list of states that put money toward bioscience, behind Massachusetts and California.

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STATE DIVISION OF SMALL BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS SUPPORT PROGRAMS

BY SAM HAUT

With the Delaware House and Senate **declaring** May Small Business Month, the state agency focused on highlighting ways it can help.

According to **annual reports** by the Division of Small Business, which was established in 2018, there were then 24,782 small businesses in the state. Small businesses are defined as a company with less than 100 employees. That increased to 24,851 in 2019, 24,873 in 2020, 25,282 in 2021, and 27,111 in 2022.

Those numbers come from the U.S. Census Bureau, which publishes data on the number of businesses two years after the fact, so the most recent numbers the division published are from 2020.

During that same period, the number of jobs and wages also increased, going from around 220,000 workers and \$10 billion in wages in 2018 to 239,512 jobs and \$13.8 billion in wages in 2022.

Many times, First State small businesses need the help to continue thriving. According to a **LendingTree analysis** of Bureau of Labor Statistics data, businesses in Delaware have a 22.5% failure rate after one year, the 23rd highest in the country. They also have a 55% failure rate after five years, the third highest in the country, and a 67.8% failure rate after 10 years, the 10th highest in the country.

Laura Wisler, deputy director of the Division of Small

Business, said they can do a lot to help.

“There’s no wrong door, whether they’re coming in federally through the [Small Business Administration], or the SBDC Small Business Development Center,” Wisler said. “We work a lot with the local towns in the main street programs. So if there’s a small business in Main Street, they can also come to us for any kind of help. So I don’t have an exact number. But we do the best we can to expand our net.”

COVID-19 has had a negative impact on businesses, in general, she noted, and that led to some revamping.

“There was a lot of resiliency that came out of that as well,” Wisler said. “Businesses had to think outside of the box and transition...We had restaurants that had to expand their footprint to outdoors and transition to to-go sales. And we had a lot of our small business transition to online and just rethinking to stay alive.”

As part of the **State Small Business Credit Initiative**, Wisler said the division received about \$20 million in federal funding for four programs to help small businesses, with two more installments of \$20 million to be disbursed once the division uses 80% of its first \$20 million. Those programs include:

- The Accelerator and Seed Capital Program involves the division working with up to two fund managers to give money to certain very early or idea-stage start-ups, typically STEM focused and ones with 10 or fewer employees.
- The Early-Stage Venture Capital Program involves the division working with fund managers to provide seed and early-stage venture capital to Delaware-based companies that are most likely STEM focused.

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photo by Spencer Davis / Unsplash



Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



MORE THAN RAW APPEAL: 10 SEAFOOD TOWERS TO TRY

BY PAM GEORGE

Nothing causes a ripple through a dining room quite like a seafood tower—a veritable feast for the eyes. Even from across the room, you can spot the curled pink shrimp, the lobster claw and the glistening oysters lolling on a bed of ice. A staple of high-end dining, seafood towers are also popping up in casual restaurants.

One reason could be America's love of seafood. In 2020, we consumed 2.3 billion pounds, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Raw bars are becoming more common, especially at the beach. The rise of social media could also play a part. Food porn isn't alluring if it isn't attractive, and nothing makes diners grab their phone like a tower's opulent presentation.

Modern versions draw inspiration from different ethnic cuisines. For example, consider ceviche, crudo and sushi. Regardless, the key to a successful tower is a balance of textures and flavors.

FINDING A SEAFOOD TOWER

Just in time for summer, here are 10 restaurants that feature a chilled seafood tower. (Call for prices as seafood costs fluctuate.)

Bardea Steak

Seafood towers are a luxury item, which is why they pair so well with steak. In downtown Wilmington, Bardea's platter includes oysters, shrimp, lobster, yellowfin tuna and halibut.

Tonic Seafood & Steak

With seafood and steak as the star attractions, you better believe this downtown Wilmington has a tower. Ingredients include tuna tartare, jumbo lump crab, shrimp cocktails and six oysters.

Banks' Seafood Kitchen & Raw Bar

Chef David Leo Banks is a culinary master in the kitchen, but he lets customers have it their way at the raw bar, and the options include ceviche and tartare.

Big Fish Grill on the Riverfront

The restaurant has sizes for two or four people, and selections include raw oysters and clams, Gulf shrimp, and steamed and chilled lobster.

George & Sons Seafood Market & Oyster House

The family-run establishment arranges 24 oysters, 12 shrimp and a split lobster on its tower. Want more? The Poseidon includes all that plus ceviche and crudo.

Lewes Oyster House

This Second Street newcomer's two tower sizes are named for landmarks in nearby Cape Henlopen State Park, a former World War II Army base. The Observatory features 12 oysters, tuna tartar and four pieces each of clams, crab cocktail claws and shrimp cocktail. The larger Fort Miles has 18 oysters, tuna tartare, four shrimp, and crab claws—and a split 1½-pound lobster.

The Crab House

The Rehoboth-area restaurant on Route 1 calls its offering a platter, not a tower, but let's avoid splitting hairs. You still get a boatload of seafood, including a dozen shrimp and six each of raw clams and oysters—plus half a chilled Maine lobster.

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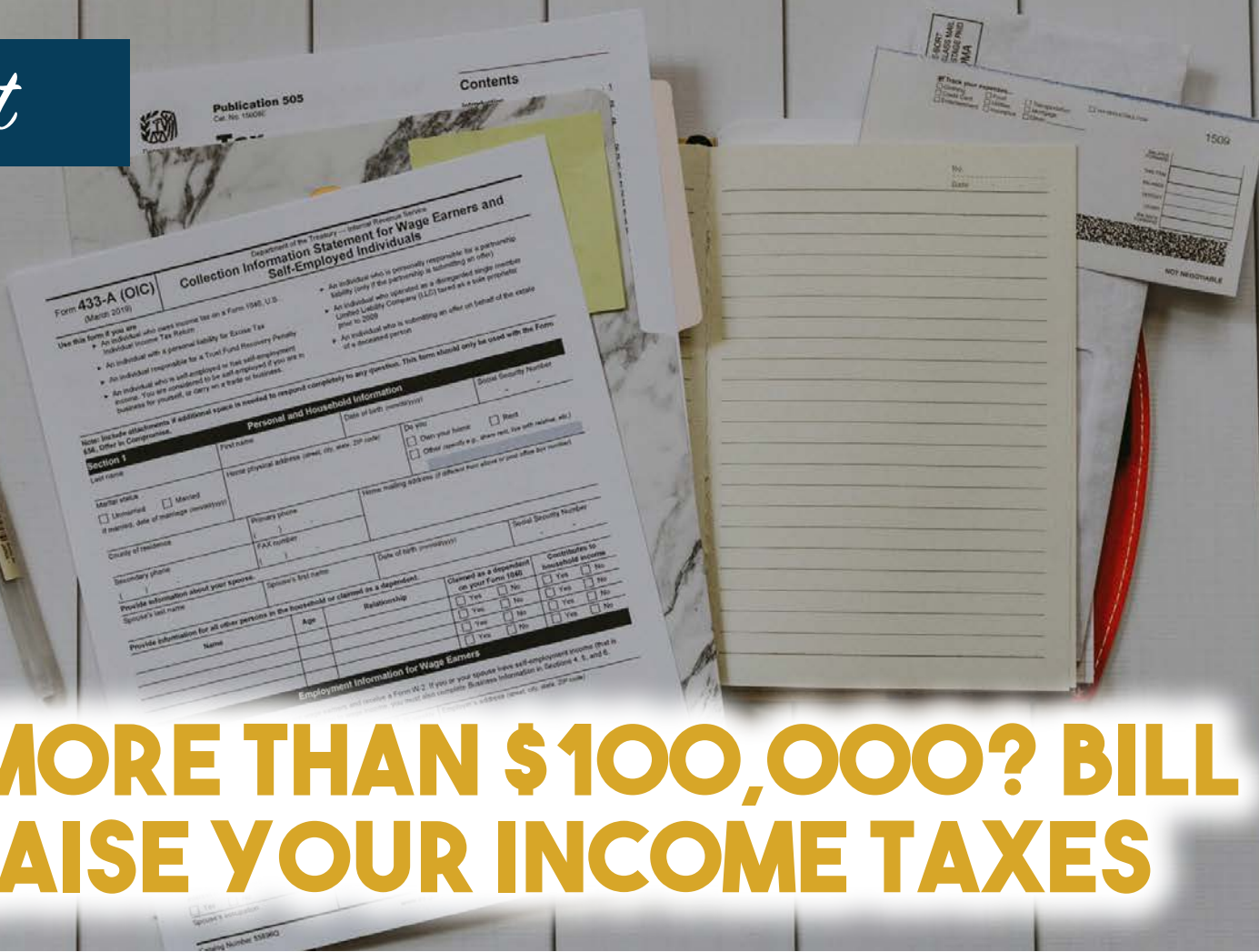


photo by Charlie Megginson

LEGISLATIVE HALL

Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



EARN MORE THAN \$100,000? BILL WILL RAISE YOUR INCOME TAXES

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that raises how much income tax must be paid by those who make more than \$100,000 drew frustration from Republicans Wednesday, but passed to the full House.

House Bill 128, sponsored by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, chairman of the House Revenue and Finance Committee, creates a new tax bracket requiring those who make more than \$100,000 a year to pay 6.9% of taxable income. Right now, anyone making more than \$60,000 pays 6.6%.

It also will slightly lower taxes for those making \$5,000 or less; those making between \$20,000 and \$25,000; and those making between \$60,000 and \$100,000.

The new brackets would be:

- 0% of taxable income less than \$2,000
- 1.9% of taxable income in excess of \$2,000, but not in excess of \$5,000
- 3.9% of taxable income in excess of \$5,000, but not in excess of \$10,000
- 4.8% of taxable income in excess of \$10,000, but not in excess of \$25,000
- 5.55% of taxable income in excess of \$25,000, but not in excess of \$60,000
- 6.6% of taxable income in excess of \$60,000, but not in excess of \$100,000
- 6.9% of taxable income in excess of \$100,000

The current tax bracket, which is in law from taxable years beginning after Dec. 31, 2013 to before Jan. 1 2024 is:

- 0% of taxable income less than \$2,000
- 2.2% of taxable income in excess of \$2,000 but not in excess of \$5,000
- 3.9% of taxable income in excess of \$5,000 but not in excess of \$10,000
- 4.8% of taxable income in excess of \$10,000 but not in excess of \$20,000
- 5.2% of taxable income in excess of \$20,000 but not in excess of \$25,000
- 5.55% of taxable income in excess of \$25,000 but not in excess of \$60,000
- 6.6% of taxable income in excess of \$60,000

Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, said he was against the bill, but eventually voted it through on its merits.

“We’re coming off the third year of record surplus in dollars so I don’t really see the need for it,” he said.

Baumbach told the revenue committee that raising the taxable income above \$100,000 from 6.6% to 6.9% is a “modest increase.”

“This is designed, among other things, to raise some revenues,” he said. “It’s projected to raise approximately \$6.9 million for the upcoming fiscal year, and \$18.1 million for fiscal 25.” He pointed out that his bill maintains the six taxable brackets which the Department of Finances indicated they prefer, as well as having all tax rates under 7%.

Rep. Ron Gray, R-Selbyville, said he would rather the lower income brackets be reduced than increasing the taxable income for those making more than \$100,000. He suggested an amendment, which Baumbach fought.

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POLICE DOGS, ANIMAL SHELTER BILLS PASS SENATE COMMITTEE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Furry friends took over the conversation in the Senate Health and Social Services Meeting Wednesday.

Senate Bill 117, sponsored by Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, aims to protect and treat police dogs who are injured in the line-of-duty. SB 117 would authorize paramedics and other EMS providers to provide medical care to police dogs who were hurt at the scene of an emergency.

“These animals become part of the officer’s family, so it’s very important,” said Jeffrey Horvath, executive director of the **Delaware Association of Chiefs of Police**.

The act also grants civil immunity to paramedics and other EMS providers who provide medical services to police dogs as long as their efforts to assist the police dog were in good faith.

SB 117 makes it clear that in a situation where a human and a police dog need emergency medical care at the same time, the medical services personnel are prohibited from providing care to the police dog over the human, if the care of the police dog would hinder the human’s care.

“My cousin is a police officer, but also has a canine and I’ve watched the transition through getting the dog after it was trained all the way to its death,” said Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City. “Unfortunately, he’s on his second canine police dog, but I know that should anything happen to his partner, he would want everything to take place to save him.”

SB 117 now heads to the Senate floor.

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Senate Bill 129, sponsored by Sen. Jack Walsh, D-Stanton/Newport, updates the Delaware Code concerning animal shelter standards and treatment of animals in shelters to codify best practices, which are already being followed by most shelters.

Walsh pointed out that Delaware is the only state in the country with no-kill laws, which means animal shelters aren’t allowed to euthanize healthy or treatable animals based on time limits or capacity of the shelter. Animal shelters in the First State are, however, allowed to euthanize terminally-ill animals, animals suffering poor quality of life or those considered dangerous to public safety.

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LEGISLATORS CALLED TRAITORS, LAWBREAKERS IN GUN PERMIT DEBATE

BY SAM HAUT

More than 35 people, including National Rifle Association members, shooting survivors, libertarians and gun violence activists spoke passionately about a proposed handgun permitting bill Wednesday.

Senate Substitute 1 for Senate Bill 2, sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth Lockman, D-Wilmington, would require a person to acquire a permit before they can purchase a handgun, but exempting active or retired police officers, and people with concealed carry permits.

William Sharp of Sussex County said that all the lawmakers who vote for the handgun bill are traitors to the country.

“At this time, I have no other options but to charge these individuals who have submitted this legislation with crimes against the people of Delaware and the

Constitution of the United States,” Sharp said. “The first charge is treason. The second is...violation of oath of office.”

Avery Jones, who was at the Christiana Mall during the shooting, said the bill would help to prevent people from getting firearms who shouldn't have them.

“I would love to see psychologists in schools. But yeah, right now we don't have that,” Jones said. “I think that this bill in particular is the most proactive step to keeping firearms out of the hands of individuals that do not need them.”

Larry Mayo, with the Institute of the Constitution, said the representatives don't have the right to pass the handgun bill.

“Can any member of this body produce your permit or license to create legislation outside of your constitu-

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tional authority? Question two, can a court created by Article IV (of the U.S. Constitution) give you that permit or license? The obvious answer to both of these questions is no, which means what you're doing is unlawful. You're not making a law. You're breaking law.”

The House Judiciary Committee voted one in favor and five on its merits for the bill on Wednesday. The bill already passed the Senate along party lines on May 2.

House Majority Whip Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle South, said she wanted to clarify a few things about what the bill doesn't do.

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LEGALIZING ASSISTED SUICIDE SPARKS DEBATE IN DOVER. AGAIN.

BY JAREK RUTZ

Moral, ethical and religious opinions were at the heart of a lengthy debate on assisted suicide that had nearly 40 public commentors in the House Health & Human Development Committee Tuesday.

House Bill 140, sponsored by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, permits a terminally ill adult resident of Delaware to request and self-administer medication to end the individual's life in a humane and dignified manner. The bill was introduced last year, but didn't survive the session.

Under HB 140, both the individual's attending physician or advanced practice registered nurse and a consulting physician or nurse would have to agree on an individual's diagnosis and prognosis and believe the

individual has decision-making capacity, is making an informed decision and is acting voluntarily.

Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, who was against the bill, was among those who thought the bill would prematurely end some people's lives, saying citing religious belief and prayer sometimes prolongs life.

"My father was diagnosed with lung cancer and was given 18 months," Briggs King said. "He lived 18 years."

Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, questioned a major talking point for proponents of the bill, which was that 70% of Delawareans support assisted suicide and that is consistent nationally across surveys. He said the survey question, which asked whether a health care provider honoring a terminally ill patient's request to end his or

her life should be subject to criminal or civil penalties.

"Doctors are not trained in this. Doctors are trained to treat disease," he said. "They're not trained to teach you when to die or how to die."

Rep. Stell Parker Selby, D-Milton, said she received dozens of emails from Sussex County residents that were in opposition to the bill. She said when her mother died, she and her family agreed that she wouldn't go on any machines or have doctors give her anything, and most people in Sussex agree that they want to die without any assistance.

One common form of assisted suicide that was discussed was a powder that is mixed with a small amount of water or other solution that a patient drinks and typically dies within a few hours. However, the powder often causes nausea and patients can vomit it up causing a delayed reaction.

Doctors from out-of-state testified that they give patients medications to treat nausea before giving them the solution to ensure it works as it's supposed to, with a painless death a few hours later. One speaker said 80% of patients who take the solution die within one hour.

Smith and some others pushed the fact that patients must be in the right state of mind while making the decision and even suggested mandating a psychiatric evaluation prior to making a decision.

"The physicians regularly are assessing the mental capability of their patients," Baumbach said.

The idea of assisted suicide legislation has been thrown around in the General Assembly for nearly a decade without success.

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DELAWARE STILL EXPECTS \$963.5 SURPLUS FOR 2024 BUDGET

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware heads toward the final moves in creating its 2024 budget, which starts July 1, with a projected \$963.5 surplus. It will be the third straight year in a row of extraordinary revenues that hit right at \$1 billion, and a turbulent economy it's expected to be the last for a while to reach that stratospheric height.

Revenue estimates rose \$12 million between the March and May meetings of the [Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council](#), which is charged with tracking revenue and expenditures to help the General Assembly create the state budget. But what really caught the attention of Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, a member of DEFAC, was a long discussion about the rising costs of Medicaid.

They are coming as the federal pullback of COVID-19 money and rules means that some people will be kicked

off the rolls, but Delaware has to foot bills once paid by the Feds as the program ratchets down. Costs also are rising because of increased healthcare costs and salaries, said Molly Magarik, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Nationally, about one-third of the country is on Medicaid, and that includes those who live in poverty, kids, people with significant health or disability issues, and older people who need help with their healthcare. Delaware's rolls include 300,000 people in a state of nearly 1 million.

"Our Medicaid numbers are skyrocketing," Pettyjohn said after the DEFAC revenue and expenditure committees met Monday. "We will have to add at least \$48 million in markup."

Markup is how the legislature refers to the work that the Joint Finance Committee does when it sets actual amounts to budget line items. They work off Gov. John Carney's proposed \$5.5 billion budget, up 7.4% from fiscal 2023's. The committee's markup meetings start May 23 and are public. Go [HERE](#) to listen.

This year's 2023 budget was higher than state rules generally require because of the recent surpluses. Delaware has a built-in budget break, which says the legislature can only 98 percent of the budget. But because of a budget stabilization fund, state rainy day fund and more, politicians have been able to put more one-time money into projects like water cleanup, schools, healthcare for retirees and more.

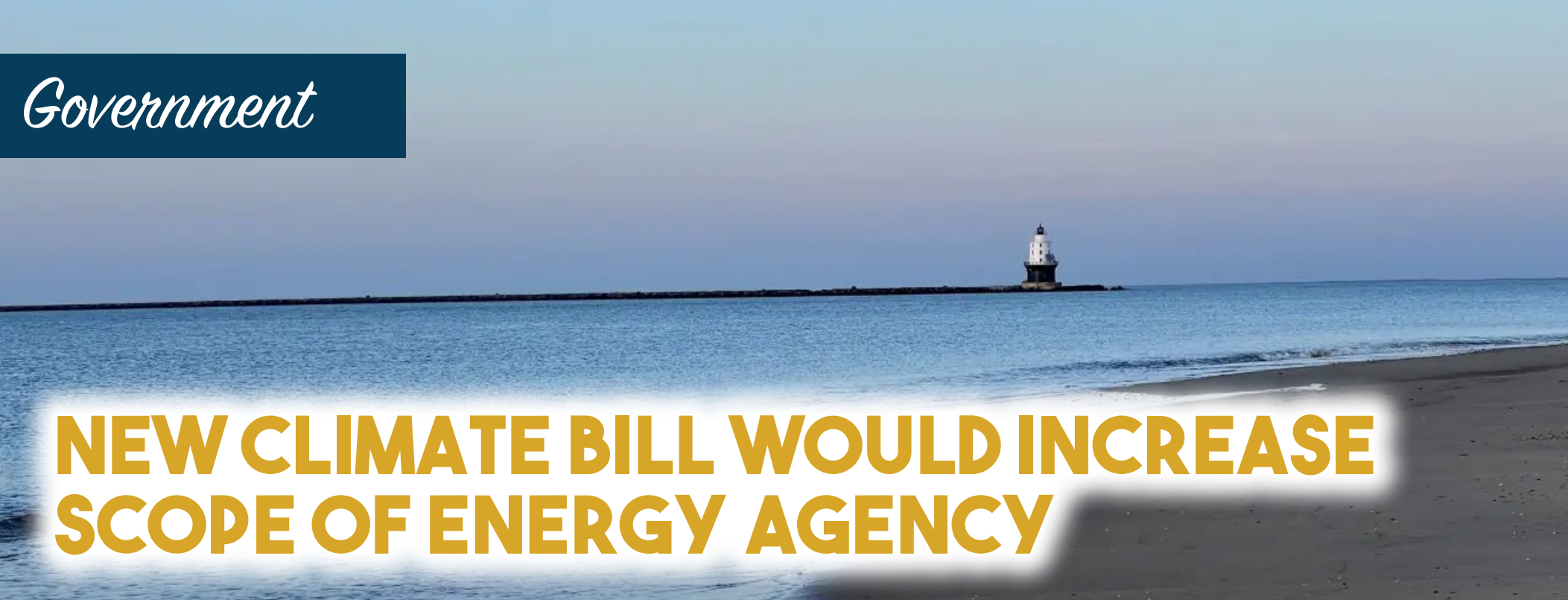
At the same time, the state bean counters have been able to put more money back into the budget stabilization fund, which it raided in 2020 as revenues suffered during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, DEFAC heard, Delaware will be able to put \$511.3 million out of fiscal year's 645.3 unencumbered funds into the Budget Stabilization Fund, which sits at \$402.6 million. That will give the state a total of \$918.9 million and a huge hedge in the turbulent economic times when predictions of recessions wane and wax like the moon each month.

AMONG BUDGET DETAILS

Among the interesting bits of Monday's DEFAC subcommittee and full committee meetings:

- The outlook didn't change much overall, with a few exceptions.
- Real estate transfer taxes have been down about 30% from December through now, ...

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NEW CLIMATE BILL WOULD INCREASE SCOPE OF ENERGY AGENCY

BY SAM HAUT

With several climate bills moving through the Delaware General Assembly, a new bill proposes to increase the scope and power of a DNREC energy agency, sort of a state government version of Tolkien’s “one ring to rule them all.”

Senate Bill 7, sponsored by Sen. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown, would empower the Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy to help oversee Delaware’s greenhouse gas emissions and implement the state’s **Climate Action Plan**. It is an agency under the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, which already is fielding complaints about creating regulations to increase the state’s number of electric vehicles under an executive order from Gov. John Carney. Critics are angry about the vehicles and angry the rules are not the result of legislation.

“Now it’s time for the rubber to meet the road,” Hansen said. “And to do that, we need one agency with the

capability and resources to holistically direct Delaware’s overall energy portfolio, recommend solutions that will meet our goals and coordinate all of those efforts with the complex network of constituencies, advisory groups, regulatory agencies and private companies who have a stake in Delaware’s energy policy.”

Senate Bill 7 would require the state Energy Office to create a new energy plan for the state every five years. The bill also would have the Energy Office to promote energy equity, support the governor’s Energy Advisory Council, serve as a liaison between the state and federal government on energy programs, promote the building of the state’s energy grid, analyze how to make more resources, create more offshore wind farms, find out how to produce more renewable energy in Delaware, and inform the public about what they’re doing.

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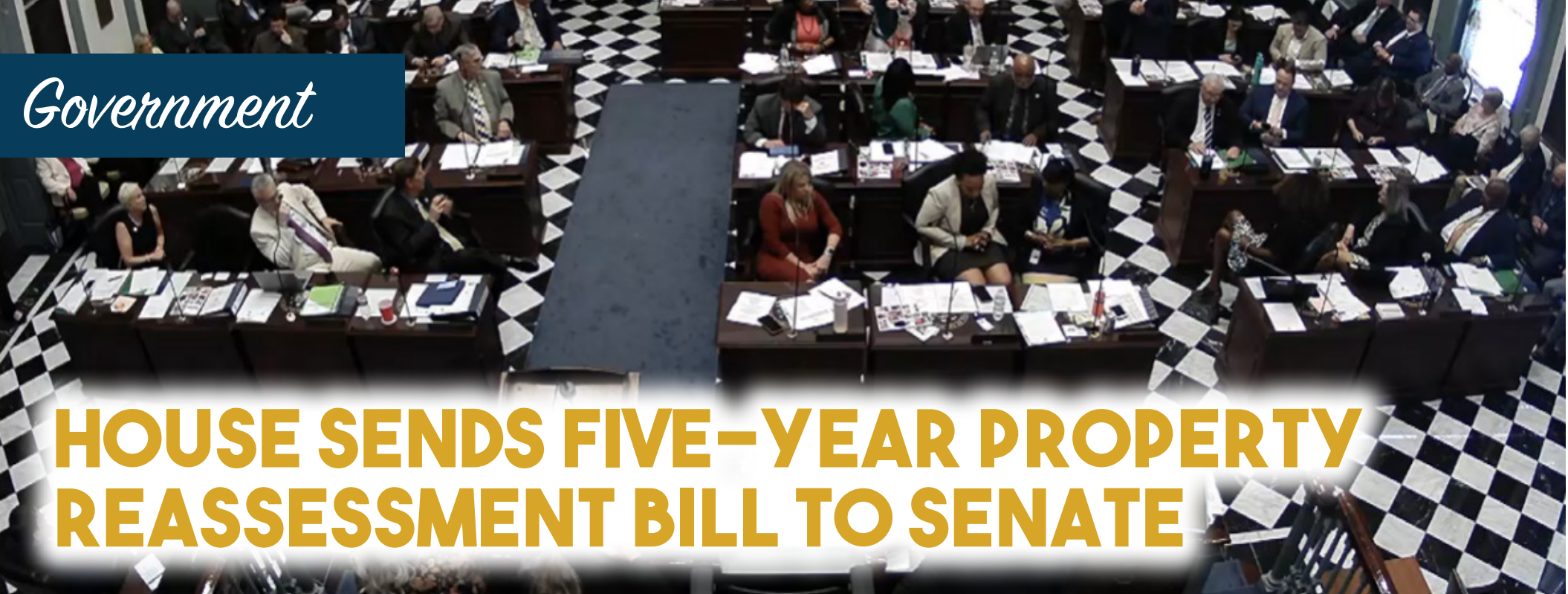



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HOUSE SENDS FIVE-YEAR PROPERTY REASSESSMENT BILL TO SENATE

BY SAM HAUT

Property value must be reassessed every five years, according to a bill passed by the Delaware House May 11 and sent along to the Senate.

House Bill 62, sponsored by Rep. Madinah Wilson-Anton, D-Newark, would require counties to reassess real property values at least once every five years, starting with the next reassessment. That hasn't been done in New Castle County since 1983, in Kent County since 1987, and in Sussex County since 1974. Wilson-Anton said that reassessments are being done in Delaware under a court order, and the bill will make sure that the state won't have to be ordered again to do a reassessment.

House Minority Whip Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden, said he would have preferred there be a rolling reassessment, rather than just one every five years.

"Say for example, 2008 reoccurs and there's a dramatic reduction in property values," Yearick said. "You may capture that based upon that five-year cycle, whereas

rolling reassessment, I think, mitigates some of the risk of that occurring."

Yearick wanted to know who is going to pick up the tab. "The state so graciously was paying for this one," he said.

Wilson-Anton said the state is not picking up the tab, the three counties are and that county council members support the bill.

"I know New Castle County has made it revenue neutral. And so they've really picked up the tab there," she said. Future reassessments would be a county responsibility to pay, she said.

Rep. Rich Collins, R-Millsboro, said he wouldn't support the bill unless they wait for the results of the current reassessment first.

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BILL ON EV CHARGERS IN NEW HOMES PASSES SENATE COMMITTEE

BY SAM HAUT

The Senate Environment, Energy and Transportation Committee on May 10 approved a bill that would require new homes to be built with electric vehicle charging stations.

Senate Bill 103, sponsored by Sen. Sarah McBride, D-Wilmington, would require new single-family homes with building permits issued after Jan. 1, 2024 and multi-family homes with final site plans issued after Jan. 1, 2025 to have electric vehicle charging stations.

Single-family homes would need to have a charging station either in a garage or the home's designated parking space, while multi-family homes would need to have at least 5% of parking spaces equipped for charging electric vehicles.

"The shift to electric vehicles is not ideological, it's

imminent and it's inevitable," McBride said. "Every major automobile manufacturer has announced a transition to electric vehicles. It's not a matter of if it's just essentially a matter of when. This legislation seeks to make sure that Delaware is better prepared for that transition."

McBride said the cost to install the wiring would be a couple hundred dollars for a single-family home, while installing a conduit and wiring would be several thousand hundred dollars.

"I feel like I have to preface this by saying that I'm not opposed to EV at all, in fact there's a bill out there where the state is going to move to a fleet of vehicles...and I signed onto that, so why can't the state take the lead," said Eric Buckson, R-Dover. "So I'm not opposed to

that." He said he is, however, very concerned when the state makes mandates that are outside of its government agencies. Buckson asked McBride if she has spoken with towns and municipalities to see what their opinions are.

McBride said they incorporated feedback they've received from local governments in the form of an amendment to the bill that would remove language about certain electrical requirements and update the definition of multi-family homes. The amendment has not yet been added to the bill, so the exact changes are unclear at this time.

The bill was approved by the committee with five in favor and two on its merits, but because Senate committees don't vote publicly on bills, it is unclear how committee members voted. Voting for a bill on its merits means a legislator doesn't want to go on record for supporting or opposing, but would like it to move forward for discussion in the House or Senate.

Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, asked how the grid would be able to support the extra power that an increase in electric vehicles would bring, and she said in response that it's not the job of the bill to create more electricity.

"I'm not here to argue about the policy changes that might occur on the back end to ensure that the grid is fully prepared for the transition to electric vehicles... but if for instance we're not going where I said we're going, and a byproduct of that is partly because of the grid, demand will be lower then," McBride said. "And this is just to make sure that we're prepared for what will inevitably be an increase in demand."

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UNION DUES BILL PASSES SENATE COMMITTEE

BY SAM HAUT

The Senate Labor Committee on May 10 approved a bill that would give union members a tax credit for their union dues.

Senate Bill 72, sponsored by Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City, would let people claim up to \$500 in tax credit to pay for union dues on state taxes. Poore said union members used to be able to deduct dues from federal taxes so it makes sense for Delaware to allow them to deduct dues from their state taxes.

“This deduction was removed by Congress in 2017,” Poore said. “With that deduction being eliminated several years ago, the least we can do as a state is to offer that same deduction to Delaware union members on their state taxes.”

The federal change was a result of the **Tax Cuts and Jobs Act**, which suspended miscellaneous itemized deductions, which included union dues, until 2026.

Senate committees do not take public votes, but a check of the bill tracker shows Senate Bill 72 received three votes in favor and one on its merits.

Poore said that they will be changing the bill from a tax credit to a nonrefundable tax deduction, lowering the amount of money someone owes in taxes. The fiscal note for the bill anticipates that it will cost the state \$15.4 million in 2025 and 2026 fiscal years, based on an estimated 38,330 union members in Delaware.

Poore said that the fiscal note is based on the bill giving tax credits, but when she proposes a substitute bill for tax deductions, it will cost “significantly less,” though she did not provide any specifics on how much less it will cost or when the substitute will be released.

Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, said he’s uncomfortable voting for a bill that they don’t have the final version.

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Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

UD TO RAISE TUITION 5%, EVEN WITH SURPRISE SURPLUS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The University of Delaware's board of trustees voted Tuesday to raise tuition 5% for the 2023-2024 school year for all graduate and undergraduate students. In the board's semi-annual meeting, it announced the cost hikes were a result of general inflation and increased costs of operations.

For in-state residents, tuition will be \$14,040 a year and for non-residents it will be \$37,680. Those wanting to live and dine on campus will pay another \$15,176 a year. UD will also increase educator's compensation by 4%.

The university has 329 active construction projects, and its capital project budget for next fiscal year will be \$149.8 million. Construction on Building X, \$60 mil-

lion, and east campus utility work, \$17 million, make up a large portion of UD's budget.

UD President Dennis Assanis also announced an unexpected operating budget surplus of \$25 million. He said the school expected a \$5 million surplus. UD's operating margin was between 2% and 3%, slightly higher than expected, although Assanis wants next year's operating margin to be around 5%.

He said the university has hired 90 faculty members for next year, and is still looking to hire 58 additional faculty members by fall. Although UD will have 43 fewer doctoral students next year, dropping from 499 to 455, it will have 353 more students in master's programs, rising from 953 to 1,296.



Its incoming freshman class of undergraduates is expected to be 4,335, a few hundred less than 2022's incoming class of 4,829. Among those, 1,250 of the 4,335 first-years are Delawareans, 997 less than last year's freshman class, and 1,052 of the 4,335 are from minority backgrounds. Assanis did not mention the projected total enrollment for 2023-2024, although this year UD has said it has a total enrollment of 23,257.

Watch the full meeting [HERE](#).





SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS: TURNOUT LOW, BUT RISING IN PLACES

BY JAREK RUTZ

Although last week’s [school board elections](#) had extremely low voter turnout, one education group points out this year’s numbers rose in many prominent districts.

It has been consistently said that only about 10% of eligible voters hit the polls in school board elections. Of the 11 school districts that had races this year, just one, Delmar, hit that mark, with 10.03% voter turnout. Eight districts had less than 5% voter turnout, and four had less than 3%.

Throughout the First State, 480,742 residents were eligible to vote in this year’s elections. Of that, 20,494 votes were cast, only a 4.2% turnout.

In last year’s [election](#), 12 districts had races and not a single district reached 8% voter turnout. And nine districts had less than 4% turnout. Voter turnout statewide was also just over 4%.

Laurisa Schutt, executive director of [First State Educate](#), a local education advocacy group, said although the numbers are low, they are increasing in some districts. Delmar’s participation rose 197.63%, Seaford went up 132.16%, Appoquinimink went up 100.45%, Red Clay’s rose 50.17% and Milford’s went up 1.91%. Christina was also up 42% from their last election in 2021.

Three districts had less participation than in 2022’s election: Caesar Rodney’s voter turnout dropped 9.62%, Smyrna’s fell 58.42% and Laurel decreased 6.25%.

“There was no big conclusion to draw from the districts who had more people voting and those that had less,” Schutt said. “But all in all, that is very, very few people voting on leaders who have really consequential decisions to make for our communities.”

John Marinucci, executive director of the [Delaware School Boards Association](#), said the numbers haven’t changed enough to draw conclusions about the state of education in Delaware.

“School board elections have historically had relatively low voter turnout,” Marinucci said. “The 2023 school board elections turn-out was, in general, similar to previous years.”

The low voter turnout punctuates one of the concerns the School Board Association has with [House Bill 96](#), which would lower the voting age in school board elections from 18 to 16.

“Because most polling places are in schools, 16- and 17-year-old voters would have disproportionately easier and greater access to polling places, should HB 96 pass,” Marinucci said. “Students are already in the schools and would only need to walk down the hall in order to vote, but other voters need to travel to the polling places in order to vote.”

Due to the historically low voter turnout in school board elections, the 16- and 17-year-old votes can significantly sway, if not determine the election, Marinucci said. HB 96 was tabled by the House Education Committee May 3. If a bill is tabled, it means the committee will take no further action on it at the time, but it could be brought up again later.

Schutt suggested that there needs to be more awareness of the elections.

“We need the state or the DSBA or somebody to say there’s a school board election in the state and we need billboards on Route 1, we need billboards on I-95,” ...

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FOOD SERVICE WORKERS, PARAPROFESSIONALS COULD GET RAISES

BY JAREK RUTZ

Food service managers, lunch cooks and paraprofessionals in Delaware schools could soon see a bump in their paychecks. The Public Education Compensation Committee Monday night discussed increasing food service managers' and lunch cooks' pay 2.5% starting in the 2024-2025 school year. It did not vote to recommend the raises, but is expected to at its June 12 meeting.

This would be in addition to the 3% general increase for all educators for the 2023-2024 school year that is included in Gov. John Carney's recommended budget.

Depending on the hours worked, position and number of students a school's cafeteria serves, food service workers would make between \$15.01 per hour or up to \$28,880 a year.

The proposal would cost the state, which funds 73% of a food service manager's pay, \$20,385,412.

The 15-person committee was formed at the beginning of this school year to make recommendations to the state on how to raise pay in the education system to better compete regionally, especially for teachers as the nation battles a teacher shortage.

Notably, the state has been pressured by Maryland, which passed a law that would bring the starting salaries of teachers to \$60,000 by the 2026-2027 school year.

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REVAMPED SUMMER SCHOOL LETS STUDENTS GET AHEAD, STAY ACTIVE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Summer school once summoned images of unhappy students who had failed a class trudging off to classes to make them up while their friends played in pools.

Not anymore.

Schools now offer extensive summer programming for all ages meant to support the whole student academically, emotionally and socially while catching up or accelerating their learning to get ahead of the curve for the next school year.

This change happened about a decade ago, said Mark Holodick, secretary of the [Delaware Department of Education](#).

“The old summer school when I went to school was like, you failed English, you’re taking English again, and it’s going to cost you half the cost of the original credit,” said Jeff Menzer, superintendent of [Colonial School](#)

[District](#). “That notion of summer school doesn’t exist anymore.”

Districts now, he said, offer a wider array of summer opportunities, which range from credit recovery to 12-month learning to academic enrichment to camps that have educational components to them.

“We are especially concerned about students who have experienced learning loss, so we have to use data wisely to target those students who we know are struggling the most, and we find those students to be in our high needs schools and lower income communities,” Holodick said. “So we have to be incredibly thoughtful and strategic about providing them with summer opportunities that they deserve.”

The summer slide is real and students lose significant learning during the summer months, said Kendall



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Masset, the executive director of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#). Summer programming helps keep their brains active in order to enter the new school year without difficulty.

“Kids go away in June and then they forget every single thing that they’ve ever learned,” Menzer said. “Then they come back in August and teachers typically spend several weeks rebuilding some things that students need to be stronger in during the school year.”

If teachers are spending the first few weeks of school as a refresher, that’s a chunk of time during which students aren’t able to grow their knowledge by learning new material.

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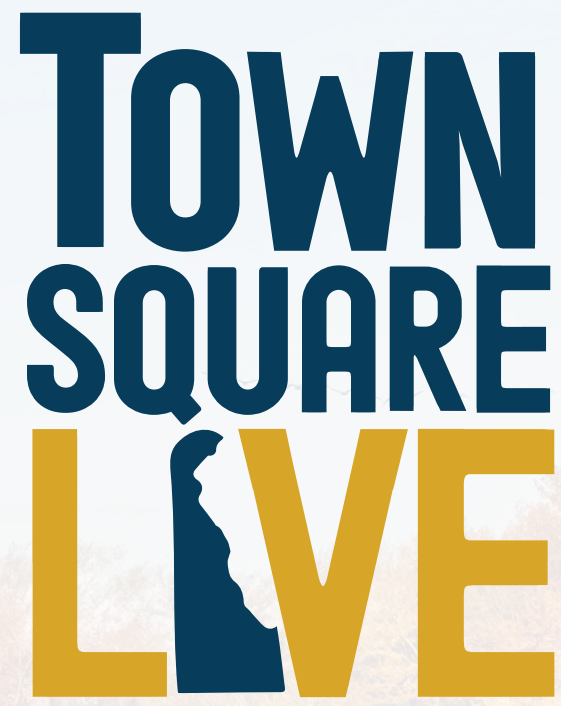
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