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Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



Community

DSO'S 23-24 SEASON: GUEST CONDUCTORS, JOHN WILLIAMS SALUTE

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Symphony Orchestra's 2023-24 season will feature traditional classical programs interspersed with Hispanic and Latin-inspired works, a celebration of the music of John Williams and a chamber concert devoted to African music. Along the way, three guest conductors will handle baton duties when Music Director Laureate David Amado isn't on the podium to open and close the season.

"It's not only diverse with the people involved but also diverse in the musical selections," said Executive Director J.C. Barker. "Our goal is to reflect the community, not any one niche of the community."

The community was kind to the symphony last year. DSO's last two spring classical concerts sold out. One was a tribute to movie music. The other was a celebration of

Amado's 20 years as musical director before he moved to emeritus position, and he gave the audience Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. The numbers of those attending the Sussex County concerts doubled this year, and the Spring downstate concert also sold out.

"Audiences are back," Barker said. "I think it's indicative of a new community attitude and enthusiasm about the symphony, and I think that momentum will continue through this season."

The 2023-23 season will feature five Classics Series concerts at the Grand Opera House, with two repeated in Sussex County at Cape Henlopen High School in Lewes, and three Chamber Series concerts, with one returning to the Hotel du Pont's Gold Ballroom.

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BIG PLANS: CREATING JESTER ARTSPACE IN BRANDYWINE HUNDRED

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The people creating the **Jester Artspace** have big plans for a small(ish), long-abandoned building. “It’s slow going,” said board president Alan Baseden, who grew up across Grubb Road from the old farmstead that they are renovating, with the help of New Castle County. “A lot longer than I expected.”

When the building gets its certificate of occupancy, Baseden hopes that it will provide “art for all. A place to make and see art, sophisticated but not lofty art.”

The group was founded in 2015, and since then they have received enough grant funding to open the building. Right now, their greatest need is in getting volunteers to work on their punch list.

In **2016**, they signed a 20-year lease with the county that covers the 1,373-square-foot building and 1.4 acres

that will include a sculpture garden and an outdoor gathering area. The county is spending \$1.3 million on the project, with also includes walking trails on 26 acres, Delaware Public Media **reported** in 2021. The lease doesn’t include cash rent, since the county is satisfied by their plans as public service.

“The county agreed that they would restore the house envelope and that we would fit out the interior,” a handout posted on the building says. “Their restoration work is now complete and the house has been handed off to us.”

“One of the sticking points is energy efficiency,” Baseden said. “Those historic stone walls have been left exposed, so it automatically fails. Everyone is involved in a good-faith effort to resolve this.”

JESTER ARTSPACE

The property is “a rare intact farmstead in Brandywine Hundred,” the Artspace **quotes** the New Castle County Historic Review Board. “An example of the early development of the hundred, before the suburbanization that occurred in the 20th century.”

They’ve found the building on an 1849 map, belonging then to Robert Johnson. Baseden theorizes that it could date to as early as 1799, when Grubb Road was rerouted, jogging toward the then-new Naamans Road, instead of running straight into Concord Pike. He theorizes that stones from a wall that used to line Grubb Road could have been used for the building. Parts of the wall can still be seen on Grubb, and more stones can be seen on the 26-acre Jester property.

The land was owned by the Day family from roughly the Civil War to World War II. Francis and Eleanor Jester owned it from 1953 until 1974, when it was sold to the county. The land was later used by Hy-Point Dairy.

Farmhouses like the Jester place “tell a story of Brandywine Hundred that doesn’t get told,” Baseden said. “Everyone wasn’t a du Pont. They scratched out a living on rocky soil.”

The Jester Artspace has received about \$200,000 in funding, primarily from four Wilmington-based foundations: the Welfare Foundation, the Longwood Foundation, the Crystal Trust Foundation and the Crestlea Foundation. He expects that funding to cover the costs of the work needed to open.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

RAMP CLOSURES, LANE CHANGES THIS WEEK AT I-95, ROUTE 896

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Department of Transportation says work on the Interstate 95 and Route 896 interchange will mean closure of the ramps from and overnight lane changes starting Wednesday, July 5. That includes closure of the ramps from northbound and southbound Route 896 onto southbound I-95 for clearing and utility work, overnight lane closures on northbound Route 896 for drainage work and overnight lane closures on Route 72 for demolition shield installation.

Here's what's planned:

I-95 RAMP CLOSURES: Daytime ramp closures on Wednesday, July 5 and Friday, July 7 from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. for both northbound and southbound Route 896 onto southbound I-95.

I-95 LANE CLOSURES: Overnight lane closure on southbound I-95 Wednesday, July 5, from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., north of the Route 896 interchange.

Route 896 LANE CLOSURES: Overnight lane closure Wednesday, July 5 and Thursday, July 6 from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., northbound Route 896 between Old Baltimore Pike and I-95 interchange.

Route 72 LANE CLOSURES: Overnight lane closure Wednesday, July 5, from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., between Scottfield Drive and Peoples Drive. Flaggers will direct traffic.

For additional information for the I-95/SR 896 Interchange Project, please visit 95896improvements.com.



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WILMINGTON POLICE TO HAND OUT WHEEL LOCKS FOR KIAs, HYUNDAIS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Owners of Hyundai and Kia vehicles will have yet another opportunity to obtain a free steering wheel lock to prevent car theft. As the trend of Hyundai and Kia models being stolen continues, the Wilmington Police Department will give away the locks Saturday, July 8 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the parking lot of ShopRite, 501 S. Walnut Street. New Castle County Police hosted an event May 15 to make sure some Hyundai and Kia vehicles had the safety devices.

The Wilmington Police locks will be given away on a first-come, first-served basis. Those looking to take advantage of the giveaway must be Wilmington residents and arrive in their vehicle. Cars are eligible if they are a 2011 to 2021 Hyundai or Kia model with a key start ignition that has not received the anti-theft software upgrade from the manufacturer.

New Castle County Police offered these additional tips to protect your car from theft:

- Lock your doors, as part of your 9 p.m. routine. “At 9 every night, you should lock all vehicles, residences, garages, windows, gates and sheds; secure or bring inside your tools, bikes, keys and other valuables; and activate exterior lights, security cameras and alarm systems,” according to Family Safety and Health.
- Remove your keys and spare keys from the vehicle.
- Ensure the wheel lock is properly installed.
- Make sure all windows are closed.
- Park in well-lit areas.
- Park near surveillance cameras.
- Install an audible alarm or motion-activated in-car camera.
- Install an additional tracking device.
- Don’t leave valuables in your car.
- Don’t leave your car running unoccupied.
- Be alert.



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NCCO LIBRARIES GET FED GRANT FOR IMMIGRATION PROGRAM

BY JAREK RUTZ

New Castle County Libraries will get \$20,000 through a federal grant to create programming around a memoir about immigration, assimilation and culture. The 15 branches in the [New Castle County library system](#) will use “The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir” by Thi Bui as inspiration for the program.

“Thi Bui’s graphic memoir ‘[The Best We Could Do](#)’ was selected for its poignant portrayal of immigration, assimilation, culture and the lasting effects that displacement can have on a family,” said Matt Meyer, executive of New Castle County. “The book’s evocative illustrations draw the reader in and bring Bui’s story to life.”

The National Endowment for the Arts’ [Big Read](#) initiative aims to broaden understanding of the world and local communities and residents through shared reading experiences.

“The Big Read program will allow our community

members to engage with important topics while considering how historical events and issues of cultural and self-identity shape our present and future,” Meyer said.

New Castle County Libraries is one of 62 organizations in America picked to receive a 2023-2024 National Endowment for the Arts Big Read grant. The programming will take place between September and March 2024.

A total of \$1,075,000 will be allocated to the 62 organizations as part of this year’s Big Read grant, which invests in nonprofit organizations to develop innovative programming around a contemporary book.

“We are immensely grateful to the National Endowment for the Arts for their generous grant to Delaware, which will allow New Castle County to engage our community in meaningful conversations and inspire artistic responses,” said Jessica Ball, director of the [Delaware Division of the Arts](#).

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Since 2006, the National Endowment for the Arts has funded more than 1,800 Big Read programs, providing more than \$25 million to organizations nationwide. More than six million Americans have attended a Big Read event, over 100,000 volunteers have participated at the local level.

Created by Congress in 1965, the endowment is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide. Its goal is to advance equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice by fostering and sustaining an environment in which the arts benefit all Americans.

“Through ‘The Best We Could Do,’ we hope to deepen our communities’ understanding of the immigrant experience and the resilience of families seeking a better future,” Ball said.





1ST STATE CALLED 2ND BEST ON 5G (AND IT'S FAIRLY CHEAP)

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware is the second-best state for 5G cellular coverage, some number crunching of federal data concludes. But it has second-worst availability of broadband with speeds of at least 1,000 megabits. And online access is relatively cheap in the First State.

Internet access is a must-have for many families, and it's in the news with President Biden in June announcing a \$42 billion plan, called the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program, to expand high-speed internet access. Delaware is getting \$107,748,384.66 in BEAD funding, the lowest of any state.

That could be roughly justified because the state is so small and has so few people, but neither geographic size nor population completely explains disparities in fund-

ing. Maryland and New Jersey, for instance, are getting roughly 2.5 times as much as Delaware, but their populations and areas are four to nine times higher. Texas is getting the most, more than \$3 billion. Washington, D.C., and three territories are getting less than Delaware.

Across the United States, almost all residential locations have access to broadband speeds of at least 50mbps. But streaming and gaming and households with multiple devices spur the desire for faster and faster speeds. And many people—and governments—consider fast internet access to be essential. That's why the federal government has a website called **Internet for All**.

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Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY JAREK RUTZ

Don Gordon, a senior vice president of Bank of America, put his day job on hold for 15 months to help thousands of Delaware State University students land full-time jobs. Bank of America's **Leader on Loan** program pairs key bank leaders with local nonprofit organizations and educational institutions with the goal of establishing sustainable growth in a specific community.

Spending over a year away from his day-to-day job, Gordon said he not only had the opportunity to give back to the community and create pathways for success for young Delawareans, but he discovered some things about himself.

BANK EXEC HELPS DSU STUDENTS FIND FULL-TIME JOBS

“I learned a lot about some of the skillsets I haven't had the opportunity to use in a long time,” he said. “There's a lot of value and experience to share with young people that are going to be going through those same experiences I've gone through and just letting them know what to expect and some of the changes in corporate America from when I first started my career.”

At DSU, a top-rated Historically Black College and University, Gordon spent most of his time working in the Office of Career Services. Along with one-on-one meetings with students to help with career development, Gordon organized career fairs and also spent time in classrooms to help walk students through the opportunities that the career services office has to offer.

Gordon's tenure marked the program's first expansion into Delaware.

Luis Santiago was the other Delawarean to pilot the Leader on Loan program. Santiago worked with the Delaware IT Industry Council where he supported the development of a robust and flexible IT talent training system while strengthening the diversity of IT talent by enhancing the opportunities for under-represented populations and rural communities in Delaware.

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CONTRACTORS: PREVAILING WAGES BILL WILL RAISE STATE COSTS

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would increase the prevailing wage for contractors making products offsite is unlikely to be heard in the House after the legislature passed the 2024 fiscal year's budget on June 28.

Senate Substitute 1 for Senate Bill 102, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, would require laborers making products away from a building site to be paid a prevailing wage, just like construction workers on the site. The law would apply to people working on plumbing, electrical systems, mechanical insulation work, ornamental iron work and commercial signage.

A prevailing wage is something the Delaware Department of Labor **requires** companies to pay to people working on construction jobs costing over \$500,000. It's different based on the type of job and which county it's in. For example, an asbestos worker in New Castle County would need to be paid \$27.88 an hour, \$34.33 in

Kent County and \$49.97 in Sussex County. It's unclear why a Sussex worker would be paid so much more.

Edward Capodanno, president of Associated Builders and Contractors of Delaware, said that they're opposed to prevailing wages in general because he thinks the market should decide what people get paid.

"For us, it's more of an issue of fair market value and allowing the market to bear what the wages are," Capodanno said. "We've always been opposed to prevailing wages, even for the people installing the work because we believe that the market should bear what people are paid and that the state shouldn't mandate what we pay our employees."

The bill's fiscal note says it will cost \$15,200 in one-time funding and \$163,866 in ongoing funding for the 2024 fiscal year, \$204,858 for the 2025 fiscal year and \$207,955 for the 2026 fiscal year, all from the appropriated special fund.

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Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY SAM HAUT

Since this year's General Assembly session opened in January, hundreds of bills have passed, from marijuana legalization to climate change regulations. Plenty are still waiting for the second half of the 152nd session of the Assembly, which begins in January. Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, said Republicans had several tax bills that they are going to introduce at the start of next year's legislature that didn't get heard this year.

"We have four or five that are all going to be prefilled as soon as we get back into session, and that's going to be our primary focus," Ramone said. "But we're gonna watch the money...We're realistic. We're not going to ask for tax reductions if there's no money, but I have a strong feeling that we're going to have monies that we could focus towards those who need it most."

Ramone didn't name the tax bills to which he was referring.

Senate President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola, D-Newark, said he expects [Senate Substitute 1 for Senate Bill 2](#), [House Bill 155](#) and [House Bill 215](#) to be among the bills that will be back. SS 1 for SB 2, sponsored by Sen. Elizabeth Lockman, D-Wilmington, would require Delawareans to get a permit before they can buy handguns. It passed the Senate 15 to 6, but it didn't get out of the House Appropriations Committee before the 2023 session ended June 30.

BILLS, ISSUES THAT WILL BE BACK BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HB 155, sponsored by Rep. Krista Griffith, D-Fairfax, would create more penalties if firearms aren't properly stored. While it passed both the House and Senate, an amendment change in the Senate requires it to be passed again in the House.

HB 215, sponsored by Rep. Stephanie Bolden, D-Wilmington, would change Delaware's primary date for statewide office elections from the first Tuesday after the first Monday in September to the fourth Tuesday in April, the same day as the primary for the presidential election. That bill passed the House but didn't pass the Senate with three voting no and 18 not voting. It will still be live in 2024.

Bills from 2023 that are not passed in 2024 will have to be re-introduced for the 153rd session, which begins in January 2025. Sokola said all three of those bills will need greater discussion by the legislature before they are able to pass, including moving the date of the state primaries.

"A lot of us want to move it up," Sokola said. "But a lot of us are really concerned about the idea of a lame duck legislature with people who lost in primaries...because you can have people who all of a sudden are not going to be serving and they may be doing things that they wouldn't otherwise do if they were still going to be serving."

Ramone said Republicans didn't get very many bills passed but are happy for the few bills that they did get passed.

"[I]t's like 20 to one. They'll let one of ours run and 20 of theirs, and I think most of the ones that they let run, we did our best to minimize the unintended consequences," Ramone said. "Obviously I'm very happy that we finally got through the EV initiative on the House side. I think the amount of people that are frustrated and disappointed with this initiative from the secretary are astounding."

That electric vehicle bill, [House Bill 123](#) sponsored by Ramone, would require the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to get approval from the legislature before it restricts the sale of gas-powered vehicles.

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PARAMEDICS, FIREFIGHTERS, VET GROUPS GET \$71.9M IN GRANTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The state Senate voted Friday night to send a \$71.9 million grant package to Gov. John Carney to bolster fire companies, ambulance services, senior centers, veterans organizations and other community groups. The Grants-In-Aid bill for fiscal year 2024 includes:

- \$22.7 million for organizations that provide benefits to Delawareans in the areas of health, substance-use disorder treatment, the arts, tourism and community services. This is a 10% increase from last year.
- \$16 million for ongoing paramedic operations in all three counties, plus an additional \$1 million for each county to improve or enhance paramedic options.
- \$10 million in statewide support for fire and ambulance companies to ensure maintenance and operation of trucks, ambulances and rescue boats. This is a 20% increase from last year.
- \$9.9 million for services, programs at senior centers

- \$3.9 million for the county seats of Wilmington, Dover and Georgetown.
- \$3.2 million in \$50,000 allocations to each fire company and public service ambulance company in the state.
- \$608,000 for veterans organizations in all three counties. This is a 20% increase from last year.

Delaware’s Joint Finance Committee creates the annual Grants-In-Aid legislation, which allocates funding to dozens of nonprofits across the state that are engaged in everything from treatment for substance-use disorder and behavioral health counseling to arts programming, historic preservation and emergency services.

“The Grants-in-Aid bill provides much-needed funds to our volunteer fire companies, senior centers and nonprofit organizations that offer vital services to residents up and down the state,” said Rep. William Carson, D-



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Smyrna and chair of the Joint Finance Committee. “These organizations and groups fill a huge need in Delaware. Without them, seniors, Veterans, and people in need would have fewer options available to them for various services.”

House Bill 197, this year’s grant package, includes funding for 18 new nonprofit agencies and community organizations that were not included in last year’s legislation.

“This legislation will provide much-needed support to our nonprofit community and do a lot of good for a lot of people,” said Sen. Trey Paradee, D-Dover and vice chair of the Joint Finance Committee. “From homeless shelters to community arts organizations, these groups provide critical services to some of our most vulnerable neighbors and give us an unbelievable return on our investment.”





WORST KEPT SECRET: LONGHURST IS NEW HOUSE SPEAKER

BY SAM HAUT

On June 30, speaker of the House Pete Schwatzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, choked up several times as he announced that he would be stepping down and that **Rep. Valerie Longhurst**, D-Bear, will succeed him as the new speaker. It will be the first time a woman has been elected the Speaker of the House in Delaware.

With Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long presiding over the Senate, it also will be the first time that women have presided over both legislative chambers at one time. Schwatzkopf called it a historic night for the state.

LONGHURST'S ELECTION

Longhurst thanked Schwatzkopf for the attention he had paid to her and for singling her out for leadership. She broke down into tears and said, "I love you, Pete. You're a great man."

The House recessed to have dinner and returned to pass **House Resolution 25**, officially naming Longhurst as speaker. After House Resolution 25 passed unanimously, Schwatzkopf called her to the dias amid booming applause. As she took the oath, lots of cameras were aimed at her.

Schwatzkopf said he has a gift for her, a gavel. "It's the hammer that Gov. Ruth Ann Minner had," he told Longhurst, when Minner was lieutenant governor. "Congratulations and carry that thing and beat everybody in the head with it," he said, to great laughter.

In accepting the job, Longhurst pointed out that the Delaware legislature was 300 years old, but it was only a century ago that women won the right to vote. The House will now for the first time have all-female leader-

ship, including Majority Leader Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle, the first person of color elected to leadership, as majority leader and Rep. Kerri Evelyn Harris, the first LGBTQ member of House leadership, as minority whip.

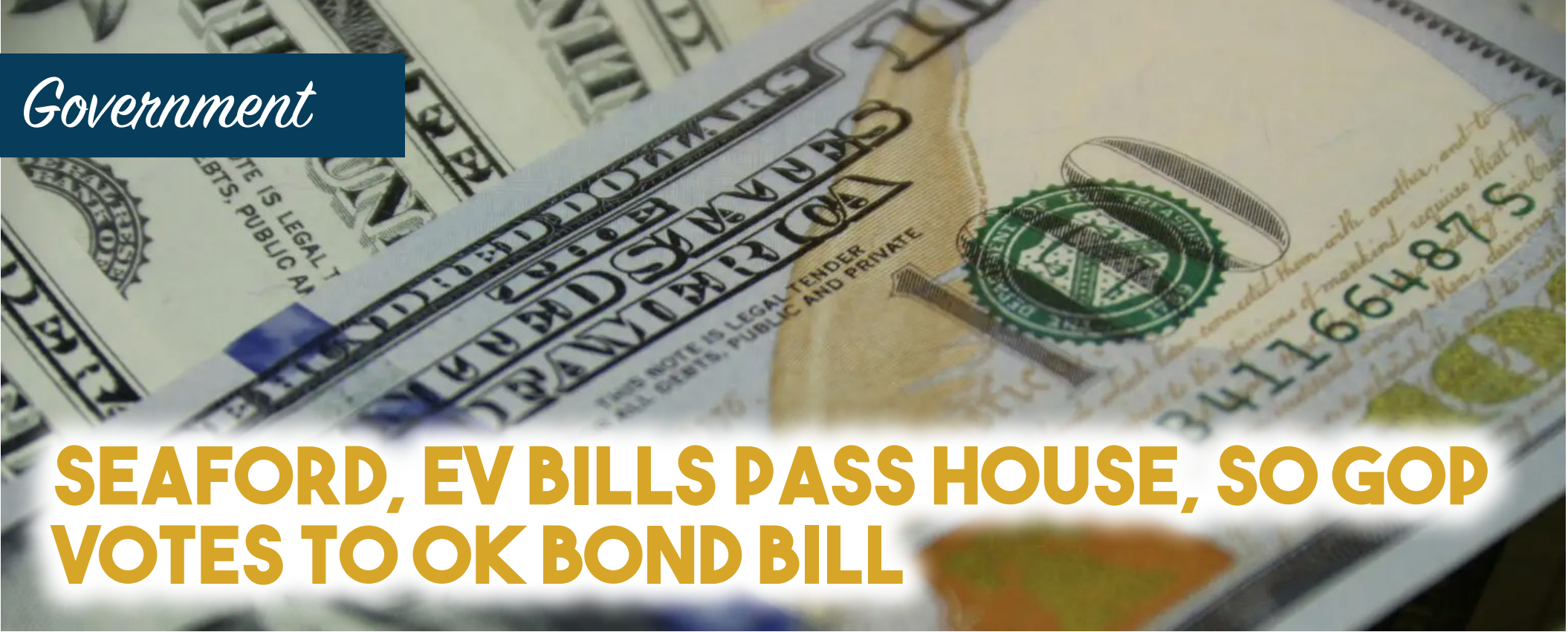
Minor-Brown delighted in being the first to call Longhurst "Madam Speaker," and led the House members in picking up a white rose and handing it to Longhurst with a hug. Minor-Brown also noted that as she was being elected majority leader, the U.S. Supreme Court was announcing its decision to end affirmative action at colleges and universities.

"But even in this historic moment, as we celebrate the first woman speaker and a majority-minority leadership team," Minor-Brown said, "we can't lose sight of the fact that we're living through the second wave of the civil rights movement... But while those challenges lie ahead, we know that there's hope. And this right here in this chamber gives us hope."

Harris said the legislature does something every session to make Delaware more equitable.

"Delaware is starting to heal the wrongs of this nation," Harris said. "Every time a general assembly is elected into office, over the last several years, we've seen change. Every time there's a leadership vote, every time we pass legislation that protects women's health care, that makes sure that there are more civil rights, to make sure that people are getting a second chances when they've made a mistake, that makes sure that we are a nation of the people, a state of the people."

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



SEAFORD, EV BILLS PASS HOUSE, SO GOP VOTES TO OK BOND BILL

BY SAM HAUT

Republicans returned to the House June 30 to vote in favor of the bond bill after the House passed the change to Seaford’s charter and another bill on electric vehicles.

House Substitute 1 for House Bill 121, sponsored by Rep. Daniel Short, R-Seaford, will approve a charter change for the town of Seaford allowing an LLC that owns a business in town to have a single vote in municipal elections, even if the owner lives outside the city. The bill passed 34 to 6 and now makes its way to the Senate for consideration.

The House Republicans had walked out June 29 after the Seaford bill failed when they were under the impression that it had the votes to pass. It meant there were not enough votes to pass the capital improvement budget bill. After the June 30th vote, Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, said he appreciated House Bill 121 passing.

“We were very grateful that our colleagues were able to rerun the bill despite some of the antics that went on within the last 24 hours,” Ramone said. “And we’re also very grateful for those of you who chose to support... Rep. Short’s initiatives, very kind and very much appreciated.”

Speaker of the House Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, apologized after Ramone’s comments.

“I would like to offer you guys an apology because I messed something up yesterday,” Schwartzkopf said. “We should have never had our organization meeting during caucus time. We should have come in earlier, that’s my call, my mistake. We should have done it on either Wednesday or Thursday before caucus. I’ll accept that responsibility.”

The House also passed 21 to 20 **House Bill 123**, sponsored by Ramone, which would require the Department

of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to get approval from the legislature before it restricts the sale of gas-powered vehicles. Republicans have been pushing for the **legislature** to restrict DNREC in some way after a new regulation was announced that would have Delaware follow California rules and require all new vehicles sold in Delaware to be zero-emission vehicles by 2035.

House Bill 123, which was introduced on April 20 and had previously not gotten enough signatures to be approved by the House Natural Resources & Energy Committee, will now make its way to the Senate for consideration.

Ramone said June 30 that he doesn’t know if House Bill 121 or House Bill 123 will pass the Senate. Friday is the last day of the 2023 General Assembly session.

Senate Bill 160, sponsored by Sen. Jack Walsh, D-Stanton, would allocate \$1,409,448,938 to address capital improvement projects across the state and is this year’s bond bill. It now makes its way to Gov. John Carney for his signature.

Joe Fulgham, communications director for the House Republican Caucus, said the discussion about getting House Bill 121 and the bond bill passed ended up including House Bill 123.



SENATE PASSES \$1.4 BILLION FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT

BY SAM HAUT

The Senate has approved \$1.4 billion in capital improvement projects, along with a bill that would ban the LGBTQ panic defense and a bill that adds more funding for the suicide crisis hotline.

Senate Bill 160, sponsored by Sen. Jack Walsh, D-Stanton, would allocate \$1,409,448,938 to address capital improvement projects across the state through this year's bond bill. Walsh said the bill will have a positive impact across the entire state.

"Putting people to work and preparing brick and mortar projects here that definitely all our committees should be proud," Walsh said. "I think it's a great package of bills that benefits all of our communities throughout the state."

Sen. David Wilson, R-Lincoln, said during the June 28 debate that he was happy to be a part of the process and

feels the whole state benefited from the bill.

"At the end of the day, it's about Delaware," Wilson said. "And it's about a good bond bill, and I can honestly say that I'm proud to be a part of it this year because we worked together for what was good for New Castle, Kent and Sussex."

The bill includes:

- \$354.2 million to complete road projects statewide.
- \$200 million for new school construction projects in the Appoquinimink, Brandywine, Colonial, Milford, New Castle County Vo-Tech and Sussex Tech school districts.
- \$177 million for deferred maintenance, roof replacement and other capital improvement projects at state facilities.

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photo credit: William Penn High School

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Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



13 STUDENTS WIN AWARDS AT NATIONAL SKILLS COMPETITION

BY JAREK RUTZ

Thirteen First State high schoolers were recognized among 16,000 participants in this year's SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference in Atlanta. Students, including 41 Delawareans, participated in events involving construction trades, video broadcasting, graphic arts, automotive trades and leadership skills. Three students secured top 10 finishes in their specialty and 11 students received SkillPoint awards, which represent achievement in demonstrating proficiency and workplace readiness in a student's occupational specialty.

Delaware was recognized by the [National SkillsUSA](#) office for having the largest high school membership percentage increase and the largest overall membership percentage increase for the 2022-2023 school year.

Here's who earned top 10 finishes:

- Vincent DeLuca (Delcastle) finished top 10 in HVAC specialty.
- Kaiden Brown (Delcastle) finished top 10 in Aviation Maintenance Technology specialty.
- Noelle Evans (Delcastle) finished top 10 in Screen Printing Technology specialty.
- Clinton Bertollo (Delcastle) finished top 10 in Sheet Metal specialty.

Here's who earned SkillPoint certificates:

- Noelle Evans (Delcastle) for Screen Printing Technology specialty.
- Clinton Bertollo (Delcastle) for Sheet Metal specialty.

- Abigail Rife (Delcastle) for T-Shirt Design specialty.
- Claire Austin and Sophia Cooper (both Polytech) for Audio-Radio Production specialty.
- Jackson Garret (Polytech) for Cabinetmaking specialty.
- Rebekka Cullen (Sussex Tech) for Pin Design specialty.
- Kiara Davis, Pipe Drace, Ciara Gustin (all Sussex Tech) for Video News Production specialty.
- McKinley Stokley (Sussex Tech) for Video News Production specialty.

SkillsUSA is a career and technical student organization that aims to empower its members to become world-class workers, leaders and responsible American citizens. Its vision is to produce the most highly-skilled workforce in the world, providing every member the opportunity for career success.

The SkillsUSA National Championships are career competition events showcasing the best career and technical education students in the nation. Through an investment from business and industry partners of about \$36 million, the event occupies a space equivalent to 31 football fields or 41 acres.





10 GRADUATES WIN TUITION MONEY FOR AGRICULTURE ACHIEVEMENTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Aidan Bell, a recent graduate of Laurel High School, was pushed into taking an agriculture elective class he barely had interest in during his sixth grade year. Six years later, he was awarded \$7,000 through the first ever Mountaire Farms Farm to Table Scholarship, which he will use to pursue a degree in agriculture and natural resources from the [University of Delaware](#).

“I just fell in love with agriculture,” Bell said. “I’m beyond blessed and beyond honored to receive this award. The scholarship will go to great use for college since it covers pretty much an entire year of school for me, so it definitely helps out a lot financially.”

[Mountaire Farms](#) is an agricultural food production and processing company providing work for almost 10,000 people at facilities in Arkansas, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina.

The company awarded \$30,000 in Farm to Table Scholarships last week to help support graduating seniors

who are pursuing careers in agriculture, culinary arts or related fields that support food production and feeding the world.

The money was given to 10 First State students. Winners received \$2,000 for college, while two—Bell and Samantha Teoli of Indian River High School—were awarded an additional \$5,000.

“It meant everything to get the second scholarship, although the first one was great enough, but to get the extra money to go towards my school and education to help me reach my goals meant the world,” Teoli said.

Teoli, who’s attending [Walnut Hill College](#) in Philadelphia in the fall, is pursuing a degree in culinary arts. She hopes to one day open her own restaurant.

Bell and Teoli were selected as the overall winners, with the additional \$5,000, for their outstanding accomplishments and leadership.

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photo credit: Nick Halliday



Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



DIAA FOOTBALL REALIGNMENT FOR 2023 SEASON

BY JASON WINCHELL

The calendar just turned to July and that means the new DIAA football season is getting closer. This is the third year of the new class system in Delaware, but this year will have a different look as some schools have switched classes. The football committee wanted to add one team to Class 3A to make it 12 teams. Then they wanted 18 teams in Class 2A instead of 21 teams, then 16 teams in 1A instead of 14.

Let's take a look at the teams that switched classes this year starting with the team heading to 3A. Saint Mark's is the team moving up to 3A in September and I think they will be just fine playing in the top class. They have six home games and face Caesar Rodney (CR) and Cape as their two crossover opponents. They have two tough 2A teams on the schedule still and finish the season with Middletown and Sallies. Moving them up brought back the Sallies vs Saint Mark's football rivalry.

We have two teams moving up from 1A to 2A this year, as the two-time defending 1A champs Laurel

Bulldogs are joined by the Odessa Ducks. The Bulldogs were familiar with some 2A teams as they were 4-0 against those teams last season. They have a solid defense and will be playing in the same district as Delmar, Woodbridge, Milford, Sussex Tech and Lake Forest. They also have Sussex Central and CR on the schedule.

The Ducks will have their first senior class this season and are coming off a solid season. Their schedule is loaded this year with Middletown and Appoquinimink of Class 3A and then district games against Archmere, Friends, Howard, Tower Hill and Mount Pleasant. Their two-year state tournament runs in their first two football seasons was impressive, but making the 2A tournament this year would be quite the feat.

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COLBY REEDER INVITED TO SAINTS ROOKIE CAMP

STAFF WRITER

Colby Reeder, brother of Troy Reeder who is a member of the Minnesota Vikings, could join his brother as an NFL player. Colby (16) would also be the third active Salesiaum alum in the NFL with his brother Troy (14) and Minnesota Viking teammate Brian O’Neill (14). Colby earned an invite to the New Orleans Saints rookie camp with a chance to earn himself a spot on its 53-man roster.

Colby started his college career at the University of Delaware where he was a four-year contributor. Reeder played in 35 games for the Blue Hens as he amassed 173 total tackles, 86 solo and 87 assisted. He added 22 tackles for a loss, 8.5 sacks and four interceptions. He was named the ECAC All-East Defensive Rookie of the Year

and CAA Defensive Rookie of the Year. Then was selected to the 2021 Fall CAA Commissioner’s Academic Honor Roll and All-CAA Third Team.

In 2022, as a graduate, Colby only had 10 days to choose who he was going to play for and decided to go play for the Iowa State Cyclones of the Big 12. Reeder made eight starts, missing four games due to injury. In those eight games, he ranked seventh on the team with 38 tackles, including 4.5 for a loss. He had 1.5 sacks and five quarterback hurries to go with three takeaways, which led the team, with two interceptions and also recovering a fumble.

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DIVINCENZO TURNS DOWN PLAYER OPTION

BY PATRICK GARYANTES

Former Salesianum standout, Donte Divincenzo, turned down his \$4.7M player option with the Golden State Warriors on June 27, which officially enters him into unrestricted free agency which began Friday, June 30, at 6 p.m.

The “prove it” season with the Warriors should work out for Divincenzo. After an injury-riddled 2021-2022 campaign, Donte played in 72 games last season for the Warriors and averaged 9.4 points, 4.5 rebounds, 3.5 assists, and 1.3 steals per game, while shooting nearly 40% from three-point range in 26 minutes per game. He proved to be one of the more reliable reserve players for the defending champs.

Clearly, Divincenzo and his group feel he has outplayed the \$4.7 million tag he was set to earn for this upcoming year and the stats and market are in his favor.

A few destinations that have surfaced as potential

landing spots for the former Villanova star include landing back with former Nova teammates Josh Hart and Jalen Brunson in New York with the Knicks, according to Jake Fischer of Yahoo Sports. Ian Begley of SNY also has linked Divincenzo to the Knicks, but has also listed Minnesota, Chicago and Detroit as teams who will target him starting June 30.

The Knicks are a logical fit. New York is a train ride away from home, close to Villanova, and as mentioned, two former teammates are key pieces to the nucleus in New York, including his former college roommate, Jalen Brunson. The only questionable spot about the Knicks from Divincenzo’s perspective could be head coach Tom Thibodeau’s coaching style. He tends to lean heavily on playing his starting five and using a short bench. The Knicks are the best positioned of these options to compete for a playoff run, but if minutes and more opportunity are Divincenzo’s priority those other teams may be more tempting.

For those of the local fans hoping that the 76ers would pursue Divincenzo, who undoubtedly provides multiple things that the Sixers need (shooting, athleticism, defensive flexibility, high IQ, shot creator), they have not been linked to the 26-year old guard. Things can change quickly in the NBA so there’s still a chance a return to Philly could happen. For the time being, throw your GM hat on and add him to the team in your NBA 2K Dynasty team!



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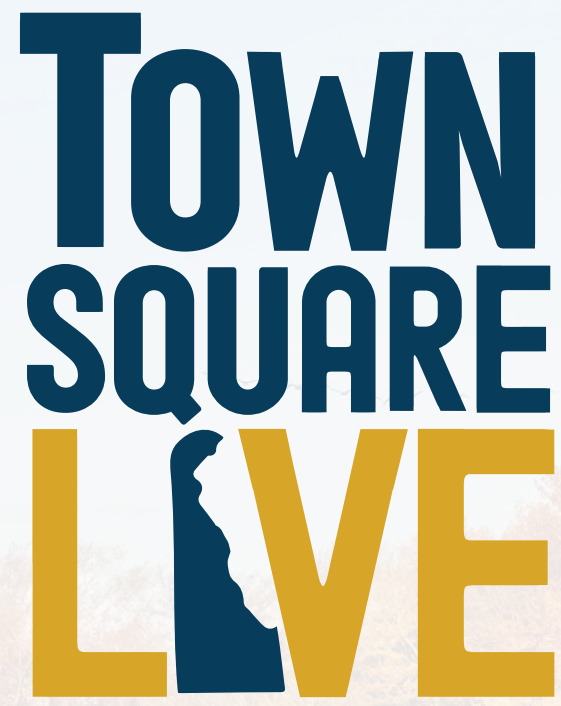
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