

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

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Meet *Peter & Starcatcher's* Giddy Villain



New Education Spending Report



Caravel's First Title Since 2012

photo link: NCC Chamber of Commerce

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TOWN SQUARE LIVE





BY BETSY PRICE

He's big. He's bad. He's Black Stache, a pirate captain with a huge black mustache he's had since he was 10.

And **Michael Doherty**, the actor who plays in him **Delaware Theatre Co.**'s "Peter and The Starcatcher," has the merriest time cracking up the audience as the play's vainglorious villain they can't get enough of.

"I love how unapologetic he is," said Doherty. "There's something about playing a villain and playing someone who says and does despicable things that is incredibly liberating, because it's so far from my existence."

PERMISSION TO PLAY: MEET 'PETER & STARCATCHER'S' GIDDY VILLAIN

He prances and preens, wiggles and waggles, looms and leers in a role he says harks back to older theater traditions.

"There's a lot of vaudeville, British Music Hall and British Panto references to it," says Doherty. "There's something about those older styles that kind of lends themselves to a more, you know, presentational style."

Vaudeville, British music hall and British pantomime all involved presenting a mix of songs, speciality acts and comedy, often bawdy and often breaking the fourth wall to speak and react to the audience.

"Starcatcher," he said, "feels at times more akin to stand-up comedy than your typical live theatrical performance, where the fourth wall is very much intact."

He's able to throw in ad libs here and there and said he delights in trying to throw the actor playing Peter off track with a few of them.

"When you see in a script that a character is licensed to break the fourth wall, or improvise, it gives the actor a lot of power and it's this rare and very generous thing that I think a playwright can do for an actor. It's such a gift," Doherty said. "You're not getting in the way by sort of going for it and putting your all into it. It's what the piece wants."

BECOMING PETER, THE PLAY

The play by Rick Elice is based on the novel of the same name by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson. It's a

prequel to "Peter Pan," the beloved musical that told the story of the boy who didn't want to grow up.

Delaware Theater executive director Matt Silva said he chose "Peter and the Starcatcher," which runs through Dec. 24, as the holiday show because he thought it would delight audiences, create a sense of community and appeal to a wide range of people.

"It's a show that I think has heart and at the roots of the show, it's really about this childlike wonderment and a sense of play," Silva said. "We all have that, whether we lose some of it, but we're reminded of that and so I think it's something special for the holidays." In just the first week, he said, they've seen patrons as young as four and as old as 94.

While the show stars Gabriel W. Elmore as the boy with no name, Amanda Jill Robinson as Molly Aster and Doherty, it's largely an ensemble piece with actors assuming several roles, including the doors and walls of two ocean-going ships. They provide soundscapes, repeat jokes and quick costume changes.

Doherty often plays in the background of the ensemble, just another sailor rolling a cigarette and stomping it out, before his star turn.

A VILLAIN WITH DEEP FEELINGS

Playing Black Stache was a natural stretch for a guy who describes himself as "indeed an extrovert."

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NATIONAL PARK GRANT WILL HELP WINTERTHUR RESTORE GATE HOUSE

BY BETSY PRICE

Winterthur Museum, Gardens and Library will match a \$125,000 historic preservation grant from the National Park Service to restore its Old Gate House. It's the only Delaware institution to receive any money from the grant.

Located on the western edge of Winterthur along Kennett Pike (Route 52), the Old Gate House is a prominent and recognizable part of the estate. Designed in 1902 by Robeson Lea Perot, a Philadelphia architect, the two-story colonial/neoclassical revival building served as the main gate entrance to Winterthur. It was also the residence for the gatekeeper and his family until 1961. Today, the gatehouse serves as offices for some of Winterthur's development staff.

Winterthur applied for the grant and was required to match it with non-federal funds. The grant money comes from \$25.7 million allotted to Save America's Treasures, in partnership with the National Endowment for the

Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

WINTERTHUR HERITAGE

Winterthur is the former home of Henry Francis du Pont (1880-1969), a renowned horticulturist and antique collector. Famed as one of the people to first embrace American antiques and decorative arts, du Pont spent his life managing Winterthur's estate and its farm and perfecting its gardens.

At its peak, the estate had 12 temperature-controlled greenhouses, a 23-acre orchard, a 5.5-acre vegetable garden and a four-acre cutting garden. It also had a butcher shop, sawmill, tannery, post office, train station and a dairy barn where du Pont bred and raised award-winning Holstein cattle. Ninety-nine cottages housed 250 members of Winterthur's staff and their families.

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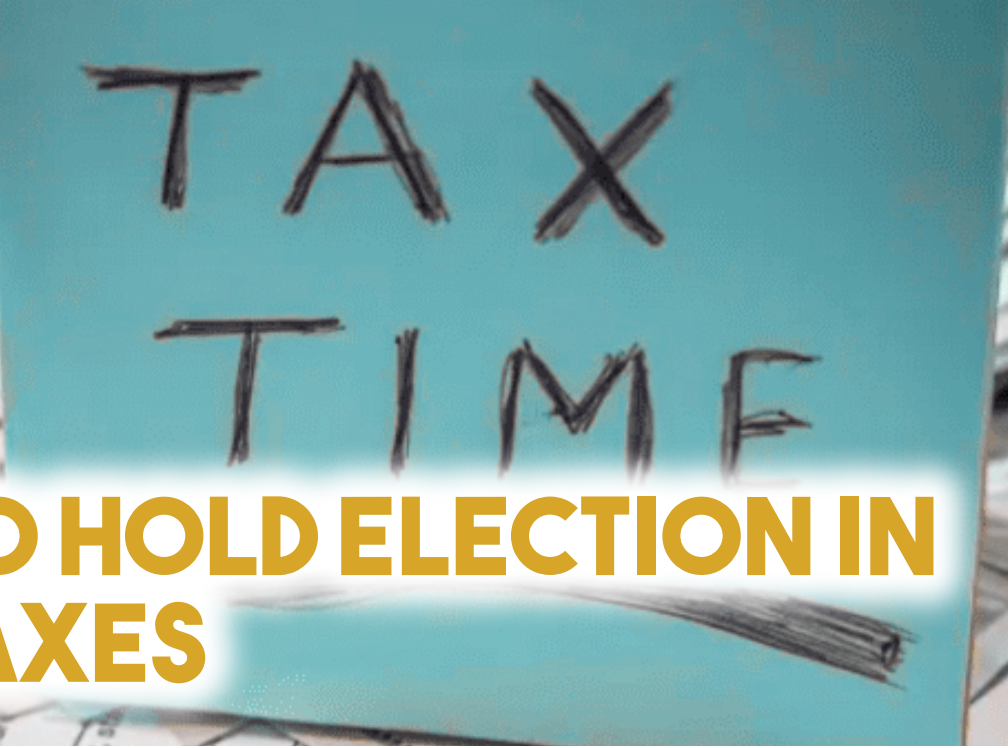
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BRANDYWINE TO HOLD ELECTION IN FEB. TO RAISE TAXES

BY JAREK RUTZ

The residents of Brandywine School District will have the opportunity to vote for or against a raise in taxes at a special election on Feb. 13, 2024. The district is seeking to raise \$15,625,549 of local revenue “to support ongoing district operations.”

If passed, those that live in the district will have their local school taxes increased a total of 45 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. The average assessed value in Brandywine is \$72,701, so the average homeowner would see a \$181.75 increase in taxes for fiscal year 2025 and a \$145.40 per year increase in fiscal year 2026 and beyond. Here are some of the ways the district will use the potential revenue boost:

- Continued operations and operating cost increases
- Continued safety and security initiatives including additional constables
- Continued staff retention and recruitment including salary and employment costs and maintaining building-based substitutes

- Maintaining curricular and other instructional programming for students, including gifted, international baccalaureate, AVID and alternative education
- Maintaining extra-curricular programming including visual and performing arts, athletics and clubs
- Technology maintenance and repair including chromebooks and interactive classroom boards

The polls for the special election will be open on Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eligible voters do not have to be a registered voter for general elections, but must be a U.S. citizen and a Brandywine resident of at least 18 years of age. **Absentee ballots** are also available.

The Brandywine board of education is expected to discuss the election at its monthly meeting Monday night, which starts at 7 p.m. and can be watched **HERE**.

Polling places are Brandywine High School, Carrcroft Elementary School, Claymont Elementary School, Concord High School, Forwood Elementary School,

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Brandywine is just one of several districts holding special elections in the coming months to raise local revenue. Others include Appoquinimink, Red Clay Consolidated and Colonial school districts. Appo’s referendum is Tuesday.





ANIMAL SHELTERS START TO FOCUS ON HELPING PETS STAY AT HOME

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Humane Animal Partners, an animal shelter that has been serving Delaware for 150 years, is embracing a newish concept among shelters nationwide: pet retention. Instead of admitting every animal in need to the shelter, the nonprofit works with people to help them keep their animals in their homes. Sometimes, that involves resources, such as a food pantry, veterinarian care and funding for expenses. Sometimes, it involves conversations.

“It could just be advice relating to their pet’s behavior,” said Patrick Carroll, CEO of the nonprofit, established with the 2022 merger of the **Delaware SPCA** (founded in 1873) and the **Delaware Humane Association** (founded in 1957).

“We’re mirroring human social services, with a goal of keeping them in the home,” he said in an interview, following a recent speech before the Wilmington Rotary about the merger and the concept.

The nonprofit also uses a slogan: “happier together.” “Obviously, we will still take animals into adoption” if that’s the last resort, he said.

Faithful Friends founder Jane Pierantozzi said the animal shelter, now based near New Castle, has followed the retention philosophy since its 2000 founding. Its Pet Lifeline—counselors, behavioral advice and other support—offered valuable services when it didn’t have a lot of shelter space.

Pet retention is “modeled after social services and is a

better choice than a more expensive and stressful intervention,” she said. “Shelters are necessary, but they’re a place of last resort.”

Faithful Friends has begun other programs to help people and their animals stay together. It’s partnered with the New Castle County Hope Center for multiple services to help clients with their pet care, and it’s set up banks of pet food and pet care in low-income areas, where pets are more at risk of abandonment.

“All pets deserve a loving home, but some already have them,” she said. “Nationally, animal welfare has just picked up on this social service concept, in the last few years actually, of working to help people who love their pets keep them by offering a range of support services,” she said. “Delaware has been ahead in this movement because of our leadership.”

Carroll said all of Delaware’s animal shelters are considered “no-kill,” which means that 90% of the animals that they take in are released alive, to adopting families, to foster homes or into “fospice,” which is foster and hospice care for animals at the ends of their lives.

Humane Animal Partners is on track to log 2,200 adoptions this year, a decline from the past. Adoptions of large dogs are down, he noted, suggesting that people are leery of their cost of care and the hard work that could be involved in handling behavior issues. It is not efficiently tracking statistics on pet retention, he said, adding that’s a goal for 2024.

Carroll said he wants to “get more involved in housing issues that are barriers to pet ownership,” such as laws on limits on pets by landlords.

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THE WAREHOUSE ADDS MENTAL HEALTH ROOM, IMPROVES GYM

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The Warehouse, which calls itself Delaware’s first community center for teens and by teens, has opened a support room for mental health and overhauled its gym.

“I’m excited we are opening two spaces that really reflect teen priorities,” Anthony Green, Warehouse teen executive board president, said in a statement. The Warehouse is at 1121 Thatcher St., on the East Side of Wilmington.

“People our age are asking for more mental health support and they are always looking for the best opportunities for sports and recreation,” he said. “These spaces will help us recruit more teens and give our members more ways to grow.”

SEAN’S ROOM AT THE WAREHOUSE

The space focused on mental health is called Sean’s Room and is named after Sean Locke, who took his own

life in 2018. SL24 Unlocked the Light foundation already runs Sean’s House in downtown Newark. Both are places where people ages 14 to 24 can speak to trained peer counselors about their mental health and wellness.

In Sean’s Room, “youth can meet with trained peers, decompress and unpack feelings and issues they are experiencing,” said foundation Executive Director Zach Ryan.

The gym is named The Mac, for former Wilmington Mayor William T. McLaughlin and financially supported by the Mayor William T. McLaughlin Fund. The Mac features a new floor, scoreboard, color scheme and televisions, plus space for recreation, intramural sports and events.

“My father believed in always giving a helping hand because he received so many helping hands in his life,”

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said Bill McLaughlin, president of the fund’s board. “A longtime champion of the kind of mentoring, guidance and assistance that helped him achieve his dreams, dad was determined to share his dreams with future generations.”

The Warehouse, which was founded in 2018, said it has registered more than a third of Wilmington’s young adult population. It is affiliated with REACH Riverside and the Kingswood Community Center in serving Wilmington’s East Side.



photo link: Visit Delaware



Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

WILMINGTON'S OFFICE-TO-HOUSING CONVERSIONS ADD ENERGY TO CITY

BY PETER OSBORNE

Chris Buccini bristles when he hears people talk about sky-high **vacancy rates** and slow demand in downtown Wilmington.

“When I look at the Northern Delaware market, we have probably had our best year ever,” says one of the three founders of **Buccini/Pollin Group** (BPG). “We’ve always been a big corporate town with companies like DuPont and MBNA, so we have some big blocks of corporate space that have been vacant in the past few years but are either being repurposed, or [buyers/big tenants] are taking a second look.”

Some of that repurposing includes converting the space from office to residential and those changes are helping turn the city into more of the liveable, walkable space that proponents have long advocated and sought.

“Creating a density of residents downtown helps increase the foot traffic to support local businesses and we find that as more people are on the streets, the more comfortable people feel,” says Sean Park, director of the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development. The influx of new residents adds to city wage tax revenue and encourages additional development, he said.

“Downtown Wilmington is a 25-year-old overnight success,” Chris Buccini says he tells people. “I think it’s healthier today than it’s been in half a century. It’s a disconnect to say otherwise.”

BOLD GUESS ABOUT DOWNTOWN HOUSING

Adding more apartments in downtown Wilmington has been underway for two decades. Between 1999 and 2017, BPG purchased DuPont’s five-property headquar-

ters buildings, including the Nemours, DuPont and Brandywine buildings, and two parking garages. It has rebranded the complex as **Market West** and added the I.M. Pei building at 1105 North Market to the mix.

Heading into 2000, Chris and his brother Rob predicted demand for 5,000 apartments in downtown Wilmington based on an unscientific assumption that 10 percent of 50,000 downtown workers would be interested in living in a vibrant, affordable downtown. Rob Buccini said Tuesday that BPG-owned residential units will be at the 5,000 number within the next 18 months and then at 6,000 units shortly thereafter.

“The first apartments we ever did in Delaware were at the Nemours Building,” Chris Buccini says.

There, BPG repurposed 85 furnished corporate apartments into smaller unfurnished apartments.

“We just delivered the first 92, and we’ll be at a total of 250 units by next September and 350 in 2025,” he says.

As a result, the Nemours conversion to a mixed-use complex reduced the available office space from the original 800,000 square feet first to 450,000 square feet of office space and now to just 150,000 square feet earmarked for coworking and flexible space.

UPSIDE TO LOSING DUPONT, MBNA

Buccini concedes the loss of DuPont and MBNA has been a negative in many ways for downtown.

“But for the long-term sustainability of the city of Wilmington, it’s the greatest thing that could have happened” because MBNA and DuPont were islands within the city, he says.

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FELTON FARM TO OFFER STATE'S FIRST CUT-IT-YOURSELF FLOWERS NEXT YEAR

BY BETSY PRICE

It's not visions of sugarplums dancing in the heads of Chris and Ashley Sylvester right now. It's visions of the flowers they will share with the public next spring when they open what they say will be Delaware's first U-cut flower farm.

"This will be the first time that customers will actually be able to come to the farm for themselves," Ashley said. Many have asked to visit after seeing their flowers sold in area farmers markets, and she wants them to be able to come to relax and experience nature.

"Everything's kind of getting eaten up around us as far as land and development," she said. "So to have a 13-acre pocket of land, where people can come and really experience nature and tranquility is kind of the exciting part for us."

The new offering will be the latest step in the evolution of **Spectrum Farms**, where Chris grew up. The couple bought the farm from his mom with the idea of keeping the property in the family, being surrounded by family and enjoying a more rural lifestyle. Chris's brother lives across the street on their grandfather's farm, and their mother lives nearby.

Ashley and Chris had full-time jobs, he in engineering and she in human resources and had no intention of actually farming the property when they bought it. Gradually, though, they began moving toward agritourism, a growing business sector that brings the public to farms and maker spaces for recreation, entertainment, education and products produced locally. It's not where either intended their careers and lives to go.

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JOLLY TROLLY, MARGARITA CRAWL AMONG WINNERS OF TOURISM AWARDS

BY PAM GEORGE

Tourism is big business in Sussex County, DE, and the proof is in the numbers, according to Matt Parker, chair of [Southern Delaware Tourism](#) and a financial planner. In fiscal year 2023, Sussex County generated \$2.7 billion in visitor spending, he noted at the Annual Tourism Awards Luncheon, held Dec. 15 at [Lighthouse Cove Event Center](#) in Dewey Beach.

“This is real money and a real impact,” Parker told the room of tourism industry members and government officials.

“For every dollar spent, another \$1.20 goes right back into our local economy—dining out, going to the beach, camping, enjoying the great outdoors,” he continued. Moreover, tourism saves each Delaware \$1,608 in taxes a year, he added.

AWARDS SALUTE

The luncheon did more than toot tourism’s horn. It saluted movers and shakers who contribute to the county’s success. For instance, take Chef Dru Tevis, the keynote speaker, who is part of the number one visitor activity: dining. Tevis is the pastry chef for [SoDel Concepts](#), a Rehoboth Beach-based hospitality group with restaurants from Milford to Fenwick Island. The colorful chef garnered national attention last year when he won the “Holiday Baking Championship” on the [Food Network](#).

Tevis said he was proud of the area’s dining scene. “I know from personal experience that there’s nothing anyone else is doing in food across this whole country that we aren’t doing right here,” he said.

CHEERS, CRABS AND SHOREBIRDS

This year’s award winners exemplified the same passion and attention to detail. [Rehoboth Beach Main Street](#) collaborated with [Dano’s Tequila](#) to create the first Margarita Crawl, which received the Best New Event Award. The June 3, 2023, event included 15 restaurants offering two-ounce pours and complimentary appetizers. The event joins the Gumbo Crawl and Community Unity Dinner as a vital Rehoboth Beach Main Street fundraiser.

Meanwhile, the Best Event honoree started in 2000 as a distinctly Delaware festival. Organized by the [Milton Chamber of Commerce](#) and [Friends of Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge](#), the [Horseshoe Crab & Shorebird Festival](#) attracted 7,000 local attendees from 15 states in 2022.

“This event, without a doubt, is a true economic driver, as well as a supreme tourist attraction...for southern Delaware,” said presenter Bonnie Hall, immediate past chair of Southern Delaware Tourism. The festival is on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend.

FUN ON WHEELS

Carol Everhart, a Southern Delaware Tourism board member and longtime president and CEO of the Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center, presented the Best Attraction Award.

“I’ll give you two clues: it rolls and is happy,” she said. “Got any ideas? How about Jolly Trolley?”

Everhart said the world’s original [Jolly Trolley](#), which started in 1970, was the first transportation service in Rehoboth and Dewey Beach.

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photo link: Visit Delaware



Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



322 BBQ/HILL DONUT CO. FINDS FANS IN BRANDYWINE HUNDRED

BY PAM GEORGE

It's not often that you see a restaurant sign promoting barbecue, steaks, donuts and pancakes. So, when **322 BBQ** and **Hill Donut Co. & Pancake House** opened in Brandywine Hundred in October, many were confused.

Would the combo succeed? It's a reasonable question, given that Rosenfeld's Deli/Big Fish Market did not last a year in the same Plaza III location. But judging by the crowded parking lot, particularly in the morning, the business—which includes a butcher shop—is off to a good start.

"The brunch and donuts have caught on like a firestorm," says chef-owner David Wiederholt. The north Wilmington location is his third. The other two are in Swedesboro and Mullica Hill, NJ. Delaware gives 322 BBQ a distinct advantage.



FINE DINING TO BARBECUE

Wiederholt, a Culinary Institute of America graduate, has an impressive resume peppered with well-known Philly restaurants, including Bleu, Neil Stein's groundbreaking establishment.

From 2010 to 2013, he was executive chef and operating partner at The Capital Grille. But in 2014, he started David & Sons Meats in Swedesboro with a silent partner in the meatpacking industry. "The butcher shop fell into place," Wiederholt said.

With his culinary background, he soon added barbecue to David & Sons Meat Shop & More. Since the name confused some customers, the shop morphed into 322 BBQ. (U.S. 322 crosses New Jersey and through Swedesboro and Mullica Hill en route to Atlantic City.)


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Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



ADDING \$500M+ MORE INTO EDUCATION LIKELY MATTER FOR LEGISLATURE

BY JAREK RUTZ

A long-awaited report released from the American Institutes for Research on school funding has shown that Delaware needs to allocate anywhere from \$590 million to \$1 billion more into education. That’s between a 27% and 46% increase from the multi-billion dollar investment the state already has in public education, which is typically about a third of the state budget.

THE REPORT

Drew Atchison, a senior researcher at the [American Institutes for Research](#), presented to a crowd of educators, advocates, parents and legislators the findings from the report, which cost Delaware \$700,000. One of the main recommendations of the report is to transition to a weighted funding system, rather than the current resource-based system that converts student enrollment into “units” and bases part of the funding on the experience level of teachers.

Some problems arise from this, including the fact that students with disabilities, English language learners or low-income students do not receive the additional funding to support their specialized needs.

The report focused on three areas: adequacy, equity and wealth neutrality with emphasis on transparency, flexibility and stability. In its recommended weighted system, each student receives a base amount of funding and then gets a multiplier if they are low-income, an English language learner or have a disability. Then, there is an effective weight—an adjusted weight accounting for the proportion of students for which a given weight applies.

For example, a low-income weight of 1.81 for a school where 31% of students are low-income results in an effective weight of 1.20, whereas a school where 70% of students are low-income would have an effective weight of 1.51.

The state of Maryland uses single weights for economic disadvantage, students with disabilities and English learners, multiplied by the base amount. New Jersey uses multiple economic disadvantage weights differentiated based on concentration, with the base amount differentiated by grade level.

Another issue with the current funding formula, Atchison noted, is some districts cannot raise local funds as much as others because of lower property values and a higher population of impoverished families. The state usually funds around 70% to a district or local share of 30%. But richer districts utilize more local funding—about \$2,000 more per student on average.

Because Delaware’s current resource-based formula follows teachers more than students, low-income districts tend to have the least experienced teachers for a variety of reasons. Atchison and other advocates have said there’s a direct correlation between the amount of money invested in education and student outcomes.

And while Delaware historically has been in the top 15 states of funding per student, the outcomes fall much short of the state’s goals to have 76% of students proficient in English language arts and 70% proficient in math by 2030. Just 40.76% of students are proficient in English language arts and 30.91% are proficient in math, according to the Delaware Report Card.

Also, more than one out of five students are chronically absent, which means they miss 10% or more of the school days in an academic year.

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DELAWARE SCHOOL FUNDING: BASICS



How Does Delaware Fund Schools?

REPORT: STATE SHOULD PUT MORE \$\$\$ INTO SCHOOLS, ALLOT BY STUDENT NEED

federal sources. In Delaware, state funding

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Department of Education on Monday released a heavily anticipated independent study of Delaware’s education funding system that, among other things, the state should put more money into education, allocate money according to student need and allow districts flexibility in how that money is used.

The \$700,000 study by the American Institutes for Research was a part of the recent education funding litigation settlement. It required an independent evaluation of the state’s education funding system, the DOE release said. It’s more than 400 pages. The executive summary alone is 12.

The goal of the study was to analyze current education funding policies and make recommendations for improvements with a focus on equity for all students.

The work included a comprehensive analysis of existing funding, comparative analysis with other states and feedback of stakeholders. See the [report](#) yourself.

The study made the following recommendations:

- Increase state investment in public education.
- Distribute more resources according to student need.
- Improve funding transparency.
- Allow more flexibility in how districts use resources.
- Regularly reassess property values.
- Simplify the calculation of the local share provided to charter schools.
- Implement a weighted student funding state funding formula.

The Vision Coalition of Delaware, Delaware Department of Education and American Institutes of Research held an in-person launch of the assessment today Tuesday at Delaware Technical Community College’s Terry Campus in Dover.

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NEW OPT-IN VIDEO CALL OPTION LETS 911 SEE EMERGENCY LIVE

BY BETSY PRICE

Starting Monday, New Castle County 911 operators will be able to ask callers if they would be willing to let 911 see what they're witnessing through real-time video. If so, 911 will text a link to the caller that allows that person to livestream video of a scene through a phone camera. The choice to turn on the camera phone and provide video is the caller's, county officials emphasized. It will never be required, officials said Friday during a demonstration of the system.

Allowing 911 operators to see what's going on could save lives, pinpoint the exact location of a caller in need, give emergency crews a better idea of what's going on and save them time for response, and even help police officers tell the difference between victims and perpe-

trators before they reach a scene. The video will be stored in the digital cloud and may be used in a prosecution, officials said.

"I think we all can imagine many, many different types of emergency incidents where video in addition to audio adds information that can and we are confident will save lives," said County Executive Matt Meyer. "It's crazy to me that I can call my sister and brother, who don't live in Delaware, and have a video call set up instantly. But when it's time to call 911...residents haven't been able to use that technology."

"Most people know the emergency communications division depends on our callers for critical scene information," said Acting Chief of Emergency Communica-

tions Donald Holden. "This new video feature will save lives. Without a doubt, this will save us this time."

The demonstration showed a caller who said someone was breaking into cars in a parking lot. In reality, it was a county employee filming another employee in a county parking lot. But after the caller activated the link he was sent, a screen popped up and the 911 operator could see a figure of a man walking from car to car and trying to open doors.

In the demonstration, the caller seemed to be hiding behind a vehicle as his phone tracked the man walking from car to car. 911 operators will not put callers at risk or ask them to track someone, Holden said.

Not every caller will be asked to provide video.

NOT ALL 911 CALLS

"We will look at the type of incident and if we think video will be valuable, we will discuss that we really would appreciate that," Holden said.

He pointed to an alleged shooting at Christiana Mall. It would have been valuable to have video from that scene, especially if they could have spotted the alleged shooter, he said. Even so, 911 would not ask anyone to do anything that would put the caller at risk, he said.

When 911 first started taking calls by text, many people wanted to provide photos, Holden said, but emergency services didn't want to go down that road because they couldn't be sure what they would get or whether the photo would be helpful.

New Castle County handles half of the state's emergency service calls, Holden said. It will be the only call center in the state and one of the few in the nation to have the video capability.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

photo credit: Christina School District



Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

APPO REFERENDUM FAILS, PRELIMINARY VOTING RESULTS SHOW

BY JAREK RUTZ

In a narrow outcome, the residents of **Appoquinimink School District** voted against all three questions on the ballot of Tuesday's referendum, which would have raised taxes \$435 per year for the average homeowner if successful.

"Obviously there is a lot of disappointment in the room tonight," said Appo Superintendent Matt Burrows in a statement after the preliminary results were made public Tuesday night. The district was also holding its monthly school board meeting Tuesday night and in the last five minutes, Burrows made the announcement that the referendum had failed. His comments were brief and he expressed his disappointment before the district released his statement following the meeting.

Burrows stated the district is growing and will continue to grow. Appo's enrollment has grown by 17% in the last five years, making it the fastest-growing district in the state.


"Without support for new buildings, we know we will have overcrowded classrooms and an increased need for modular learning spaces," he said. "This isn't what we want for our students."

In his statement, he pointed out the majority of this effort to raise local revenue was "focused on our amazing educators and staff." He said without the additional funds, Appo can't stay competitive with other districts.

"Teachers are our greatest resource and we can't afford to keep losing them to other districts," he said. "The voters have spoken and now we must continue to operate with even less. There's no question that our students, teachers and families all suffer as a result of this decision."

The election results are unofficial and will need to be certified by the state in the coming days.

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\$26.5 MILLION EASTSIDE STEM HUB TO OPEN IN ONE YEAR

STAFF WRITER

Those passing the crossroads of North Claymont Street and Todds Lane in the Riverside neighborhood of Wilmington this past year have probably noticed a fleet of excavators, metal beams, and lots and lots of dirt.

That's because **EastSide Charter School** is making significant progress on its construction of a new \$26.5 million hub for Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The STEM hub broke ground in February and is a year away from opening in January 2025.

"Initially, we had to phase this project because we weren't sure we were going to get enough funding for our entire vision," said Nick Medaglio, director of finance at EastSide Charter. "Once we did get enough funding, we were able to greenlight everything and things started to move."

The needed funding finally became completely available in July, he said. And although he estimates the project is about 25-30% complete, most of the hub's

foundation is complete and the construction team will soon be building vertically.

"We're gonna start going vertical with steel over the next month or so, which is going to make it feel like and look like a lot more work has been done, even though there's already been a lot of groundwork that's been done," Medaglio said.

Just like any construction project, Medaglio said some of the challenges and delays have been caused by the rising costs of materials as well as poor weather conditions. The 24,000-square-foot space is completely externally funded by a number of community organizations.

"This is all being funded, not by the school, but by **First Community Foundation**, which is the nonprofit that owns our land and the building," Medaglio said. "They are doing all the fundraising for it, and we've cobbled this together with the help of other major grants."

Grants include \$4 million from **Chemours**, \$1 mil-



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lion from **Barclays** US Consumer Bank, \$3 million in federal funding and \$5 million in state funds.

"The Chemours STEM Hub at EastSide will be an amazing opportunity for anyone in Delaware to have an opportunity to learn about STEM and engage in internships with companies that will be offering job opportunities," said Aaron Bass, chief executive officer of EastSide. "We know that STEM is the number one driver of our state and we wanted to make sure that all Delawareans are able to have access to great careers."

Along with classes, the hub will feature a maker's space with professional machinery, a 3D printing lab, computer coding labs, experimental science labs, and a music and TV studio.

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UD CLIMBS 31 SPOTS TO NO. 47 IN U.S. COLLEGE R&D

BY JAREK RUTZ

The University of Delaware is climbing the national rankings for best universities for research and development. The [National Science Foundation](#) recently released its [Higher Education Research and Development Survey](#) findings, which ranks the Blue Hens 47 out of 626 academic institutions across the country for non-medical school research and development expenditures. That caveat is because UD does not have a medical school.

Last year, the school was ranked at 78. With the 31-spot leap in the standings, UD is now in the top 8% nationally for research and development activities. UD is sandwiched between the University of Utah at 46 and Rockefeller University at 48. It also lands just five spots below Stanford University. Johns Hopkins University is at the top of the rankings.

UD ranked 78 in total research spending (52 among public universities), up from 109 (73 for public). The university reported research and development expenditures of \$368 million, up 59% from the previous year's \$231 million expenditure. Research and development expenditures are essentially investments, sometimes funds provided by external sponsors like federal and state grants, or funds from the college itself, to support investigators with a variety of research needs.

“The University of Delaware is deeply committed to advancing innovation and problem-solving,” university president Dennis Assanis said. “This latest ranking reflects the drive and ingenuity of our faculty, staff and students, as well as the significant investment UD is making to support their critical work—from our world-

class core facilities to our successful research development programs.”

In this fiscal year alone, UD has been awarded 520 research proposals. Some of the research toppings include high-interval training to recover walking after a stroke, and recycled textile and apparel manufacturing.

Since 2018, UD has hired 460 faculty, providing start-up funds to help new researchers establish their labs and procure the equipment needed for their work.

It also provides tuition remission to support graduate students who contribute to research projects with their advisers through a university fellowship or graduate assistantship.

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The level of funding available through local revenue sources varies across districts more so than state and federal sources.

Note: Per-pupil information calculated by dividing total revenue by total student enrollment based on September 30 unit count. Vocational technical teachers serve and support students in grades nine through 12 who are engaged in vocational technical career programs. Vocational technical school districts and charter schools are funded differently than traditional school districts.

BY BETSY PRICE

A mounting sense of anticipation surrounded Tuesday’s release of a **report** making suggestions about how to improve Delaware’s school funding system to make state education more equitable.

The assessment—which the state paid \$700,000 for—was conducted by the national research firm American Institutes of Research. It sprang out of the settlement of a 2020 lawsuit that charged Delaware’s 1940s funding system was shortchanging children with learning disabilities, English language learners and those from low-income homes.

In short, the problem with the state’s unusual funding system is that money doesn’t follow the students. It essentially follows teachers, with the state funding local classrooms by unit rather than giving school districts money by child or the needs of the children in a school district. That makes it harder for schools to provide for

REPORT ON SCHOOL FUNDING CHANGES TO BE RELEASED TUESDAY

special attention and programs some students need to succeed, critics say.

Schools also receive local and federal money, but a lot of the federal money is funneled through the state and comes with stipulations for the way it’s spent. The system is called a resource-based allocation, and Delaware is one of seven states that use it.

The report is expected to focus on how the funding system can support all students while maintaining the strengths of the current system, which many say is local control of education. Part of what it will do is compare Delaware’s formula to other states’. The report won’t be short and will likely take a few hours to read and digest, say those familiar with the process.

Even so, the Vision Coalition of Delaware, Delaware Department of Education, and American Institutes of Research held an in-person launch of the assessment Tuesday at Delaware Technical Community College’s Terry Campus in Dover.

Expected to speak at the launch are Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Holodick, American Institutes researcher Drew Atchison and Bettina Twardy Riveros, chief public affairs officer and chief health equity officer of ChristianaCare.

No one expects all recommendations to be adopted. They come as Gov. John Carney moves into the last year of two terms as governor. But it also comes as Delaware has a majority Democrat legislature. The Senate is able

to pass anything the Democrats want to do, but House Dems still need a few votes from Republicans to pass bills that require constitutional changes.

Among other things, the Vision Coalition says the report is expected to:

- Research and understand the existing funding structure as established in Delaware Code and supported by the Annual Appropriations act.
- Assess state and local funding categories and include findings around advantages and disadvantages of the current public school funding structure.

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Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



CARAVEL RUNS TO SCHOOL'S FIRST TITLE SINCE 2012

Dylan Delcollo won the 132-pound championship with a 10-6 decision over Brooklyn Gordy of William Penn. At 157, pounds Malcolm Roy won a 4-1 decision over Alex Diluzio of Caravel Academy.

Hayden Moaney and Cael Dinigris rounded out the title run for the Seahawks. Moaney won at 195 with a pin over Smyrna's Teagan Gratowski and Dinigris won one of the night's most exciting matches with a 4-2 decision over Eli Juarquin-Torres of William Penn at 285 pounds.

Caesar Rodney captured three championships with Cole Moffett taking home the 120-pound title with an 8-5 decision over Ian Alfree of Smyrna. The 175-pound class featured cousins Owen Dixon of Caesar Rodney who won a close 4-3 decision over Jesse Dixon of Smyrna.

The Riders' Trevor Copes captured the 126-pound championship with a 9-1 major decision over Delaware Military's Gavin Mundy. Copes was also named the tournament's Most Outstanding Wrestler.

William Penn also crowned three individual champions starting with consecutive wins by Eric Holmes who trailed Piero Papili 10-0 at the start of the third period before recording a pin at 4:49 in the 138-pound bout. Nick Hendricks followed at 144 pounds with a 12-7 decision over Juan Carlos Santos of Conrad.

Conrad crowned a champion of its own at 113 pounds as freshman Tommy Arms won a 7-0 decision over Milford's Alex Sharkey and Caravel's Brock Rhoades won the 215 pound championship with a high-coring 13-8 decision over Greg Lockett of Milford.

Many of Delaware's top wrestlers will head to the University of Delaware's Carpenter Center on Saturday and Sunday to compete in the Beast of the East. There will be a girls division on Friday night.



BY GLENN FRAZER

Fourteen teams throughout the state converged on Milford Central Academy on Saturday (Dec. 9) for the 64th Milford Invitational Wrestling Tournament. When the dust settled, the Delaware Military Academy Seahawks emerged with the team title, scoring 463.5 points to finish ahead of William Penn (415.5) and Caesar Rodney (400). Smyrna and Milford rounded out the top five.

Delaware Military crowned six champions beginning with the first final of the night when Cole Perrin won a 5-2 decision over Caesar Rodney's Ben Donato at 106 pounds. The Seahawks picked up another title later in the night when Perrin's brother Charles defeated Hunter Durham of Milford 7-0 at 150 pounds.



DELAWARE LOOKS TO STAY HOT AFTER FIRST BIG EAST WIN IN PROGRAM HISTORY

BY NICK ALESSANDRINI

It was a great night for the 302 Dec. 5 when the Delaware Blue Hens notched their first Big East Conference win in program history with an 87-80 win over Xavier (OH) in the Queen City of Cincinnati. Jalun Trent, one of many new faces in the blue and gold this season, was named Coastal Athletic Association Player of the Week Monday morning. Trent paced Delaware with a career-high 27 points (10-of-16), seven rebounds and six assists in the victory over the Musketeers. The Hens improved to 6-3 in the regular season and second in the CAA ahead of conference play set to begin in January. Check out the X (formerly Twitter) post of the team celebrating in the locker room after their win over Xavier.

It was a tough road stretch for the Hens as they dropped the final two games in the Bahamas and the first game back in the states, losing a close one to Ohio in Athens


after leading late in the game. Delaware had the lead in all three games in the second half, but could not finish down the stretch, resulting in some tough losses on the road. The Hens were able to respond with a big win over Xavier and will look to stay hot as they continue the road trip (longest in D1, over 35 days) in Moon Township, PA, to take on Robert Morris.

Delaware native Jyare Davis leads the team in scoring this season, averaging 18 points per game. Fellow captain Christian Ray paces the team in rebounds, almost averaging a double-double with 8.4 points and 8.4 rebounds per game. It has been a strong start for the Coastal Athletic Conference with wins over #12 Kentucky (UNCW), #18 Villanova (Drexel) and now Xavier (Delaware).



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Sports

DELAWARE STATE BASKETBALL OFF TO THE BEST START IN THE LAST 20 SEASONS

After the Hornets' fourth straight win Thursday night over Virginia-Lynchburg University at Memorial Hall, the team improved to 6-6 in the 2023-2024 season. The team's best start over the last 20 seasons has the Hornets sitting at the second spot in the MEAC standings ahead of conference play, which starts in January. They have been led this season in scoring and rebounding by senior Martaz Robinson who's averaging over 18 points and six rebounds per contest. Robinson was named the MEAC Player of the Week for last week. Delaware State is also listed at No. 3 for the **HBCU D1 MBB Preconference Top 10**.

After a tough loss Saturday to 9-1 Longwood 62-61, Delaware State dropped to 6-7 and will now head on the road to Winston Salem, NC, to take on the 6-3 Wake Forest Deacons out of the ACC. The Hornets are off to their best start in the last 20 seasons and they are playing great basketball in Dover. For more information and to keep up with Delaware State basketball, visit the university [website](#).



BY NICK ALESSANDRINI

In the summer of 2021, Stan Waterman was hired to be the head coach at Delaware State. He left a successful tenure at Sanford High School, where he won six basketball state championships. Del State had gone 3-16 the season before his arrival and after a few years, the Hornets are now turning things around in Dover.



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BY PATRICK GARYANTES

2023 Delaware Gatorade Baseball Player of the Year Tyler August announced a major move last week on where he plans on playing baseball in the summer of 2024. It was announced on X (formerly Twitter) that August will play with two-time defending Cape Cod League champions, the Bourne Braves, for the 2024 summer season, via Codball.

The move seems to excite the 6'2', 220 lb. pitcher as he told Delaware Live Sports, "When coach Mamula (Uni-

TYLER AUGUST SIGNS WITH BACK TO BACK CAPE COD LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

versity of Delaware head coach Greg) told me I had a chance to play there (Bourne) I was ecstatic and knew it was an opportunity I can't pass up."

As mentioned, the Bourne Braves won both the 2022 and 2023 Cape Cod championship, something that August also feels makes the invite a fit. "Playing for any team in the Cape is a great opportunity, but I want to compete for a championship everywhere I go and playing for Bourne gives me that opportunity."

The Cape Cod League is easily the most prestigious college summer league in the country. The league was formed in 1923 and produced over 1,600 MLB players, including 350 active big leaguers, according to its [web-site](#). The league is an invite-only set up. There are 10 total teams that play a 44-game regular season and three rounds of playoffs that are best-of-three series. The League is so popular it has even been featured in Hollywood with the classic 90s romantic comedy, *Summer Catch*, which stars Freddie Prinze Jr., Jessica Biel and Matthew Lillard.

Playing in this famous league is something that is familiar to the August family, as Tyler's father, Brian also played, something that Tyler is taking as a challenge. "It's cool to play in the Cape Cod League like my dad did back in his college days. It will be fun to see who has a more successful summer there."

August just completed his first fall season at the University of Delaware, which he says was a learning

experience for him, "it took me a little time to get acclimated to the pace of play and new strike zone". August said, "After two weeks of inter-squad I began to find my footing and started to feel like myself again."

When asked where he felt the most improvement in his development, August cited improvements both on the mound and in the batter's box. "I really developed my slider this fall with more movement and velocity. My fastball has gotten better with spin rate and overall shape."

The DMA alum continued, "hitting was definitely difficult in the beginning. You want to try and show the older guys what you can do by trying to do too much, but once I started to do what I'm used to doing, I figured it out."

Lastly, we asked August what he's noticed has been the biggest difference from high school ball to the college game. "Nobody chases bad pitches (in college) and none of the pitchers just walk the house. They are just very disciplined in every aspect of the game."

August will begin his college career officially on Feb. 16, as the Blue Hens open the 2024 season in Jacksonville to take on North Florida for a three-game series. They open up at home on Feb. 20 against cross-state foe, Delaware State University. It will be fun to follow August both for the Hens in the spring and the Bourne Braves this summer!

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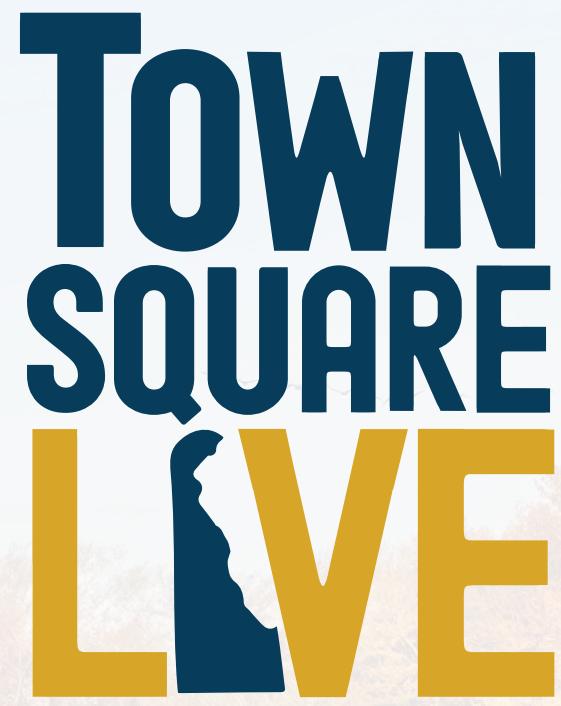
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