

photo link: Delaware Children's Museum

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Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



NINE APPOINTED TO NEW CASTLE COUNTY ARTS COMMISSION

BY BETSY PRICE

An artist, a landscape architect, the head of the Delaware Art Museum and a downtown nonprofit executive who's led the installation of outdoor art, are among nine people who have been appointed to the New Castle County Arts Commission. The new county board was inspired by the Philadelphia's **1% for Art** program, which requires new city construction or major renovation projects to include site-specific public art in the amount of up to 1% of the total budget.

Championed by New Castle County Council members Dee Durham and Valerie George, the commission is designed to enable all community members to actively engage in development and promotion of public art activities.

"I couldn't think of a more passionate group of individuals to compose New Castle County's first Arts

Commission," said Matt Meyer, the New Castle county executive, in a press release. "We are excited to get this group's work underway to help us explore the possibilities of public art in New Castle County."

THE FOUNDING ARTS COMMISSION MEMBERS

Molly Giordano, executive director of The Delaware Art Museum. She joined the museum in 2010 as the manager of Marketing and Public Relations, where she directed the 100th Anniversary "Art is..." rebranding campaign. Her role involves building alliances with similar-sized arts and cultural non-profits to strengthen opportunities and collaborate with joint and diverse exhibitions showcasing at the museum.

Benet Burton, manager and co-director of public art focused projects from the Delaware Art Museum and the Winterthur Museum. He also collaborates on exhi-

bition projects, working with communities on public art goals, and developing and implementing The Public Art Stewards Training Program.

Anna Wik, a registered landscape architect. She has extensive educational and practical background in landscape architecture. Wik is currently an associate professor of landscape architecture at the University of Delaware in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences. She has a passion for community engagement, sustainability, and not only the present and future of our green spaces, but also the lessons taught by our historic gardens and natural resources.

Jean Dahlgren, president of Delaware College of Art and Design. During her more than 30 years in higher education instruction and administration, Dahlgren has developed expertise in growing a student body, creating dynamic curricula and fostering strategic partnerships. She has spoken nationally and internationally on topics related to achieving excellence in art and design education.

Valerie White, owner of the non-profit Bellefonte Arts LLC. White provides space for local artists to display their works while also offering instructional classes in a variety of media. She regularly participates in Wilmington's monthly Art Loop, which showcases the work of local artists. White has a passion for the arts and her work with Bellefonte Arts significantly increased recognition of local artists and helps them derive income from their work.

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GIRL SCOUTS SELL NEWARK HEADQUARTERS, CAMP SANDY PINES

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The Girl Scouts of the Chesapeake Bay have sold their Newark headquarters and Camp Sandy Pines in Maryland as part of their controversial plan to downsize. The headquarters on Old Baltimore Pike was sold to a limited liability company. Camp Sandy Pines near Fruitland was sold to a former Girl Scout and her husband.

The Scouts in August of 2022 announced the decision to sell four properties, “due to rising operational costs and deferred maintenance over the past decade.” They announced the decision to sell and the two sales on a page called “long-range property planning.” CEO Claudia Peña Porretti was asked to update the long-range property planning.

The headquarters was sold for \$1.925 million, according to [Redfin](#). The buyer, according to county records, is Owls Nest Properties LLC Silver Spring Series. When the headquarters — which the Scouts call their Newark

Resource Center — opened in 2016, Stephen M. Mockbee, founder of the Bancroft Construction Co., [called](#) it a \$6.5 million project with a 17,000-square-foot building on seven acres. It includes trails, a store, storage areas, offices and spaces that can be used by families and community partners. Porretti said in an email, posted on their [website](#), that the Scouts will work out of the Newark office through the end of June.

The 48-acre camp was sold to Gina Gargeu and Jim Yannatelli, who plan to continue to operate it as a camp. The outdoors “gives children the chance to detach, come to nature, be with themselves, look at the person in front of them, instead of what’s on their computer screen,” she told WMDT. The camp, which is zoned residential, was listed for \$815,000.

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DO MORE 24 BREAKS DONOR, DONATION TOTAL RECORDS

STAFF WRITER

More than 20,000 donors gave more than \$2.3 million to Delaware nonprofits during Do More 24 Delaware, which ran for 24 hours, ending at 6 p.m. March 8. The number of donors and the total amount of donations both broker records. Every zip code in Delaware was represented, the organization said Friday evening.

Organized jointly by United Way of Delaware and Spur Impact, the 24-hour fundraising marathon invited the public to support the nonprofit organizations that mean the most to them by donating at [DoMore-24Delaware](#). By setting up individual giving pages, participating nonprofits were able to take advantage of more than \$350,000 in matching gifts, cash prizes and incentives donated by more than two dozen sponsor organizations from across the state.

“Delaware’s nonprofit organizations serve as the backbone of our communities, bolstering our economy, uplifting individuals and extending a helping hand to those in need,” said Dan Cruce, chief operating officer of United Way of Delaware. “Today, through the collective power of giving, the people of Delaware once again demonstrated just how much the nonprofits of our state are valued.”

Since the March 2020 event, when United Way and Spur Impact joined forces, Do More 24 Delaware has raised more than \$9.5 million for Delaware nonprofits.

“Today was a great reminder of the incredible impact nonprofits have on communities throughout Delaware,” said Charlie Vincent, executive director of Spur Impact. “Thousands of people returned the favor by giving their



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financial support to their favorite causes and sharing their social capital as well.

“We are appreciative to be able to play a small part in applying the work of these nonprofits and growing the culture of philanthropy in Delaware for the next generation of leaders and volunteers.”

Do More 24 Delaware was supported by sponsors across the state, including Barclays US Consumer Bank, Discover Bank, Carl M. Freeman Foundation, the Delaware Division of the Arts, Crestlea Foundation, Delaware Community Foundation, Laffey-McHugh Foundation, Longwood Foundation and Welfare Foundation.





YOU'LL PROBABLY PAY MORE FOR BEACH PARKING THIS YEAR

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

Rehoboth, Dewey and Bethany beaches are increasing parking rates this summer, with Rehoboth and Dewey officials citing increased health insurance costs and other expenses. Parking rates for Lewes and Fenwick Island rates will not change. Here's the situation in each Sussex County beach community.

REHOBOTH BEACH

Citing a \$4.4 million deficit in the city's proposed \$37 million budget for fiscal 2025, the Rehoboth Beach Board of Commissioners voted last month to raise the hourly parking meter rate, parking permit fees and rental tax rate.

"These increases are necessary to ensure that we have a highly functioning, appropriately resourced government that provides the outstanding level of service our residents and visitors have come to expect," said Mayor Stan Mills. "We are attempting to spread the burden of

these increases among city stakeholders, so that both our visitors and our residents are vested in and investing in Rehoboth's future," he said.

The 2025 budget is \$2 million more than the current fiscal year, due largely to raises for city staff and a 17% increase in state health insurance costs.

"We don't take our fiscal responsibility nor our responsibility to our team lightly. We have to invest in our most valuable assets, our employees," he said. "(Maintaining Rehoboth's) reputation as a clean, safe and welcoming destination requires significant capital investment as well."

Permits for parking will be up about 30%. Commissioners increased the gross receipts rental tax rate from 6% to 7%, effective on all rental agreements entered into on or after April 1. Commissioners are expected to consider increases to the property tax rate and wastewater rates at their March 15 meeting.

Paid parking runs from May 15 to Sept. 15.

- Hourly: Up \$1, to \$4
- Daily: \$25
- Three-day weekend: \$60
- Weekly: \$120
- Seasonal from Aug. 1 (non-transferable): \$150
- Seasonal from Aug. 1 (transferable): \$165
- Seasonal (non-transferable): \$295
- Seasonal (transferable): \$325
- Scooter (seasonal): \$55

DEWEY BEACH

Dewey Beach's new Town Hall and police station and the state's 17 % increase in health insurance costs were reasons City Manager Bill Zolper cited for increasing parking fees.

"Nobody wants to pay more for anything, but we're kind of stuck. This is our only real way to raise revenue," he said.

While Rehoboth can increase rental and property taxes to meet fiscal demands, Dewey has no property tax and the town charter locks rental taxes in at 3%.

Health insurance costs hit hard on the town budget, Zolper said. Dewey has 27 full-time employees, 13 of which are police not on state insurance. The town pays 100% of the health insurance cost for the remaining 14 and their family members. Most towns pay 80% of employee insurance costs and cover 20% for their families, he said.

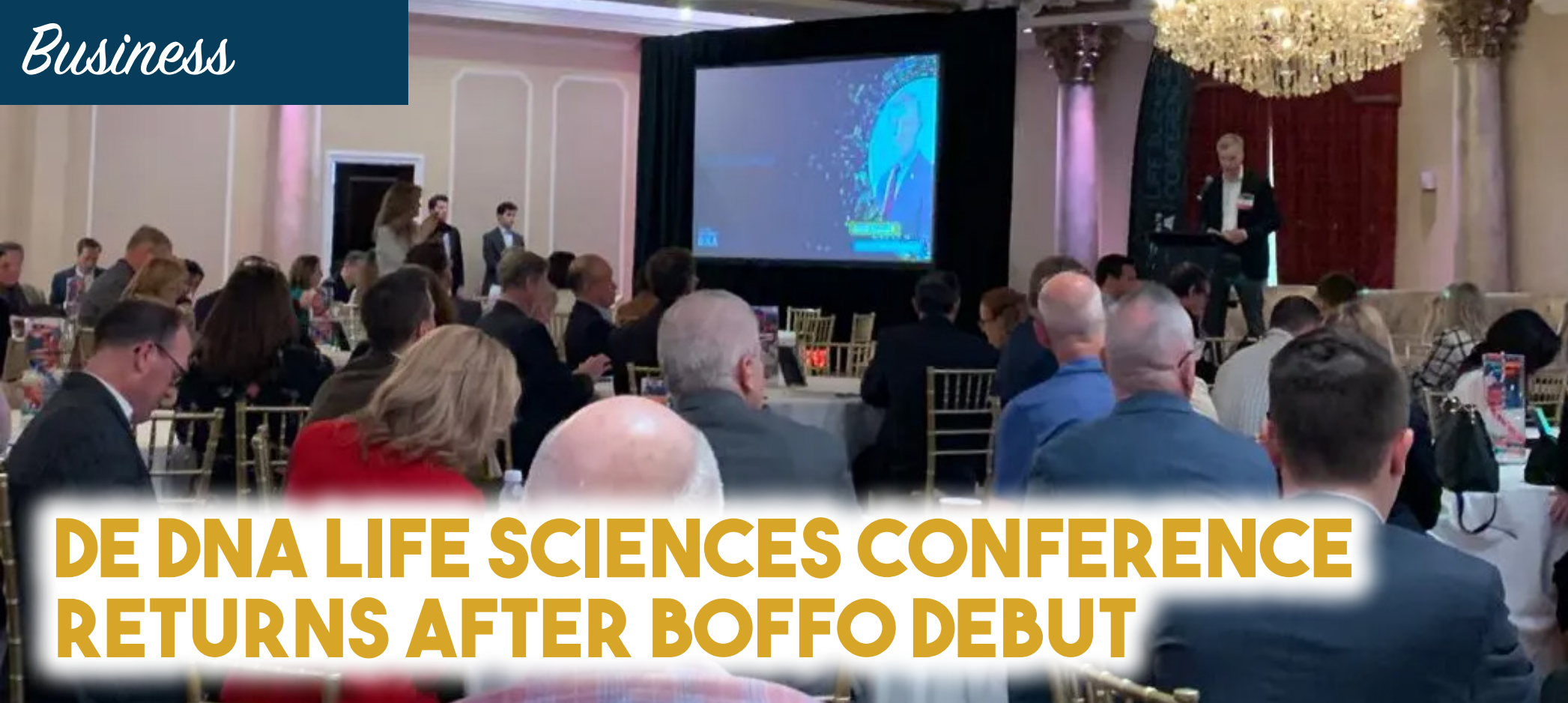
"To run the town and provide services we have to increase revenue somewhere," Zolper said. "Parking is really the only way to increase revenue in town."

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Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



DE DNA LIFE SCIENCES CONFERENCE RETURNS AFTER BOFFO DEBUT

BY BETSY PRICE

A wildly successful state biosciences conference returns this year with **Delaware's DNA** on May 9. Sponsored by **Delaware BIO**, last year's conference was notable for its energetic vibe, notable speakers and visible networking.

"That was the first time we'd ever put on a full day event like that, focused on really highlighting and showcasing the depth and breadth of the Delaware life sciences ecosystem," said Michael Fleming, president of Delaware BIO.

It has a mission to act as a catalyst for innovation in the biosciences, a sector of the economy important to Delaware's economic future for both jobs and manufacturing. Delaware DNA is believed to be the region's largest bioscience conference and about one-third of the attendees were from eight other states.

This year's program, dubbed Delaware's DNA: 2024 Life Science Conference, will take place May 9 from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the University of Delaware's Clayton Hall in Newark. Fleming says topics will range from the state of the industry, where the life sciences sector is from an investment standpoint, what kind of risks and challenges bio companies face, hot trends and what new technologies and science are transforming the sector and the development of new medicines and other products. The 2023 version attracted 300 people, including local and regional life science executives, investors, new businesses, researchers and policymakers with sessions that included a mix of panels, breakout sessions and presentations.

One remarkable thing about the panels was that peo-

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ple didn't shy away from topics, including dealing with younger workers who didn't share the Baby Boomer view of what working meant, and speakers didn't mind presenting differing opinions. There was even some humor. After Gov. John Carney opened the conference last year, one panelist told the crowd that when he was in college he had dated a woman from Delaware. She had broken up with him to date a guy named Carney. That made him kind of nervous, he said.

Gluing it all together was a conference app that allowed attendees to contact each other directly to set up meetings. "Ultimately, we're trying to appeal to the broadest possible audience." Fleming said.

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MATT HALLS TOILET TABLE: 'YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED' IT

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Matt Hall has an idea that is so unusual that Amazon has to create a category for his invention. Yet it's an idea that might appeal to the 90%-95% of people who bring cellphones into the bathroom. It's Matt Halls Toilet Table, which ToiletTable.com describes as "the table you didn't know you needed."

That's not a typo in the name, said the inventor, a Brandywine Hundred resident. It's branding. He originally wanted to call it just the Toilet Table, but the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office rejected that as being too generic. There's no apostrophe because "I didn't want to take possession of it, since I'm going to sell it."

Matt Halls Toilet Table is now available in only one color (white) and style, but it's designed to have interchangeable tops to be created in the future, and Hall is working on a design that could hold weightier items, such as a leg being shaved. It is \$45 on ToiletTable.com,

two for \$80.

The two-pound gadget (ABS, the plastic mostly commonly used in 3-D printers and recycled PVC) attaches to either side of most toilets and could hold up to five pounds. Enough to hold cellphones out of harm's way. A quarter of all cellphone damage is from being dropped in the toilet, he said. Of course, it could hold other items, like tissues, a drink, decorations or a tablet that could entertain toddlers being toilet-trained. "Any use you want," he said.

HOW THE TOILET TABLE CAME TO BE

The idea came to him in 2021 when he was sheltering in place during the pandemic, with many sources for Forever Treasure, his eBay jewelry store, shut down.

"I've always had ideas, but never followed them up before," he said. "I was doing investing in website domain names and I typed in 'toilettable.com.' And that popped

up for sale, and I said to myself that this device has never been made before. This has to be created."

Amazon does have a "toilet accessories" category, but not a subcategory that accurately includes Matt Halls Toilet Table. The retail giant is working on it, he said.

Hall received his patent in November of 2023 and sold his first one in March to a neighbor. Of course, it's in both bathrooms of the Hall house. Between the idea and the sale was a lot of paperwork for the patent, prototyping, a commitment to produce it domestically, a lot of investing to produce the five molds needed and manufacturing.

It's made at Schubert Plastics in Lenni, PA. Brian Schubert, a principal in the family-owned firm, plays darts with Hall and Hall's father, Bob.

"Brian Schubert has gone out of his way to make this happen," Matt said. Matt worked there for a few months, and Bob still does.

Bob said that members of the darts team are all excited about the table. "It's a great idea," he said. "Give it to someone who has everything, but they don't have this."

The Halls are also excited about heading to Chicago for the upcoming Inspired Home Show, North America's largest housewares trade show. Matt has been vetted to get a booth in the inventors section.

"I watch 'Shark Tank' like crazy and I did apply," Matt said, adding that he has not heard back. The hit TV series about entrepreneurs and their inventions scouted last year's show in Chicago and he hopes they'll be there this year and give him a chance to showcase his creation.





YEAR AFTER TIRE PILE HELPED TOPPLE PORT OPERATOR, SOLUTION NEARS

BY KARL BAKER

The massive tire piles at the **Port of Wilmington's** Edgemoor property that last year stoked fears among neighbors of mosquito infestations and rubber fires may finally be getting removed in the coming month, port officials said during a public meeting March 8. Yet, why tires still remain and how many have been removed to date is not entirely clear.

That is, in part, because the port's new operator, Massachusetts-based **Enstructure**, has remained quiet about the issue over the past months as a curious dispute played out between state officials and the original owner of the tires. Meanwhile, in an apparent case of coincidence, a separate venture is on the verge of obtaining a permit to bring in more used tires to a property that sits next to the Edgemoor site. While the owner of the new tire operation insists his will be done safely, skepticism from some neighbors persists.

In all, the development marks the latest in years of opaque dramas that have plagued the publicly owned Port of Wilmington, even as Delaware officials sought to grow jobs at the facility by transforming the Edgemoor property into the state's next shipping container terminal.

The outrage over the estimated 10,000 tons of shredded and used tires at Edgemoor erupted last spring, during the months before Delaware officials ousted the port's previous operator, **Gulftainer**, from the state. Leading the criticism then was Rep. Debra Heffernan (D-Bellefonte), who called the tire piles an environmental disaster. She argued they could become a haven for insects, or had the potential to fuel an uncontrollable fire that could send smoke into the nearby communities of Edgemoor, Bellefonte or Northeast Wilmington.

"It's a disaster waiting to happen," Heffernan said during a board meeting last May of the **Diamond State**

Port Corp., the state entity that oversees the Port of Wilmington.

At the meeting, the Diamond State board passed a resolution, sponsored by Heffernan, to direct public dollars to the Diamond State Port Corp. to clean up of the tires at Edgemoor — the site of a former chemical plant. Secretary of State Jeffrey Bullock, who serves as chair of the Diamond State board, said during last year's meeting that he expected the cleanup of the tires to begin in the coming weeks, either by the then-port operator, Gulftainer, or by the state. He also said the cleanup could cost as much as \$3 million.

"It has been far too long that this issue has festered," Bullock said at the time.

Nearly a year later, Gulftainer no longer runs the publicly owned Port of Wilmington. But, last week, towering piles of tire material still were visible from Hay Road, the street that runs alongside the desolate, 115-acre Edgemoor property that in past decades was the site of DuPont chemical plant.

Enstructure did not respond to requests for comment for this story. But, during a public meeting on March 8 of the Diamond State Port Corporation, Enstructure executive Bayard Hogans said he was "hopeful by next week that the majority of the tires would be removed."

Still, the lingering tire issue is troubling to many who live near the Edgemoor site, with some saying the slow movement on the problem follows what they have long described as years of disregard for their communities by state and port officials.

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Food & Dining

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ULYSSES AMERICAN GASTROPUB CLOSED, KILLED BY WORK FROM HOME

BY PAM GEORGE

After 13 years, **Ulysses American Gastropub** in Brandywine Hundred has closed. The beer-friendly restaurant is in the Shoppes at Graylyn on Marsh Road. A notice posted today on the door reads:

“It is with great sadness that we write this letter. After much consideration, we made the difficult decision to close Ulysses American Gastropub. We want to thank all of our wonderful guests and employees, past and present, for supporting us over these past 13 years.

“We have had many good times and made many great friends since 2011. We have been a part of so many birthdays, anniversaries, bridal showers, baby showers, fundraisers, rehearsal dinners and celebrations of life.

“We are extremely humbled that so many embraced our restaurant and that we were able to provide a welcoming neighborhood restaurant for all.”

Steve and Mike Lucey also own **Six Paupers Tavern** in Hockessin, which remains open. “It’s doing great,” Steve Lucey said.

ULYSSES’ LUNCH TRAFFIC

Keeping Ulysses afloat was tough after the work-at-home trend took hold during the pandemic. The dinner service returned to normal in the years following COVID-19’s arrival, but the daytime traffic remained sluggish and it was hard to recover with many area workers only in the office a few days a week. The 2023

opening of a second **Kid Shelleen’s Charcoal House & Saloon** in nearby Branmar Plaza only briefly affected Ulysses, he noted.

“I’m a big believer that having a lot of restaurants in one area is a good thing,” he said. Trolley Square and Kennett Square are examples, he noted.

In 1997, the brothers opened **Dead Presidents Pub and Restaurant** on North Union Street in Wilmington’s Little Italy. They later sold that restaurant. The Wilmington natives followed with Six Paupers in 2014. The name comes from Hockessin’s first handwritten census, which reported six paupers in the city limits.

Ulysses opened with Sean McNeice as executive chef. He already had made a name for himself at Washington Street Ale House and Mikimotos when Darius Mansoori owned them.

Ulysses quickly became popular for its burger nights, mussel dishes and craft beer selection. While families dined in the striped dining room, friends and coworkers gathered around the U-shaped bar in the front.

Lucey said Ulysses is currently for sale through Joe Latina at LMT Commercial.

Meanwhile, Brandywine Hundred residents who want their Chicken Nixon fix must travel to Hockessin.



photo link: Town of Middletown, Delaware



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Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



NEAL STRIKES GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE BILL; WILL INTRODUCE NEW ONE

BY BETSY PRICE

A Delaware legislator who identifies as nonbinary on Tuesday asked to strike a proposed bill that would protect medical professionals who provide general-affirming medical care. **Rep. DeShanna Neal**, D-Elsmere/Newport, introduced **House Bill 230** in June 2023 and asked on Tuesday for the bill to be dropped from consideration. Neal didn't give a reason during the session. Efforts were unsuccessful to immediately reach Neal for comment.

Neal already is working on a new, more up-to-date bill that will be introduced in the next month, said Taylor Green, Neal's legislative aide. HB230 was already out of date, Green said.

The bill would have given medical professionals who provide gender-affirming health care the same protections that the state of Delaware already gives providers of contraceptive and abortion services.

NEAL'S BILL

Among other things it would have:

- Made sure that medical professions providing that care could not be disciplined for those services even if such services are illegal or considered to be unprofessional conduct or the unauthorized practice of medicine in a state other than Delaware, as long as the services are lawful in Delaware.
- Prohibited health care providers from disclosing

communications and records concerning gender-affirming health care without the patient's authorization, with some exceptions.

- Protected health care providers from out-of-state civil actions for treatment that is legal in Delaware, including the issuance of a summons or the enforcement of subpoenas relating to such cases.
- Prohibited insurance companies from taking any adverse action against health care professionals who provide gender-affirming health care services.
- Given jurisdiction to Family Courts to determine custody disputes when a child is in the state to receive gender-affirming health care, and the provision of gender-affirming health-care is at issue in the custody dispute.
- Prohibit the state from enforcing an out-of-state court order that removes a child from a parent because the parent allows the child to receive gender-affirming health care.

The bill drew a lot of Republican opposition when it was introduced in the last weeks of the 2023 General Assembly session, but in a majority Democrat legislature, it often doesn't matter what Republicans say or want. The timing, though, is interesting.

Delaware's legislative session runs over two years and this one is 2023-2024. Introducing the bill last year meant it was still alive this year. If Neal introduces a bill in a month, it will have a little over two months to go through committees and be passed in both the Senate and the House. If not, it dies on the vine and will have to be reintroduced in the next session, which starts in January 2025.





SAFETY CONCERNS SURROUND BILL MAKING JAVELIN AN DIAA SPORT

High School Associations. According to the Wall Street Journal in July 2022, Brown said, at least 22 states within the country have adopted the javelin as a throwing event within their high school track and field programs. The NCAA also has sponsored a javelin event since 1921 for men and 1982 for women.

Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, and chair of the Senate Education Committee, asked Brown about the safety of the sport.

“The javelin throw can be practiced safely with appropriate safety precautions and rules, such as the use of a rubber-tipped javelin,” Brown said.

The single public commenter, Robert Overmiller said this was concerning. He pointed out that historically there have been deaths of young people goofing around and playing catch with the javelin. Overmiller said boys will be boys, and said even with the rubber tips, if young athletes are playing around, the objects are still dangerous and could cause serious harm.

Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, who’s been involved in athletics for decades as his time as an educator, said he was concerned that schools not offering javelin will be at a disadvantage at interscholastic competitions.

BY JAREK RUTZ

A new sporting event could be adopted into track and field competitions across the state. **Senate Bill 211**, sponsored by Sen. Darius Brown, D-Wilmington, makes the Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association adopt javelin as an approved event for all DIAA-sponsored track and field competitions.

In presenting the bill to the Senate Education Committee Wednesday, Brown pointed out that javelin has historical roots in the Olympic Games of Ancient Greece and is a recognized event within the rules and regulations found within the National Federations of State

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AVALANCHE OF COMMENT DELAYS ALCOHOL SHIPMENTS BILL

BY JAREK RUTZ

A lengthy discussion in the state legislature Tuesday led to a delay in a bill allowing direct-to-consumer alcohol shipments. **House Bill 259**, sponsored by Rep. Jeff Spiegelman, R-Townsend-Clayton, would allow farm breweries, microbreweries and craft distilleries to conduct direct-to-consumer sales of wine, beer, spirits, mead and hard cider. Spiegelman’s bill also would allow state liquor stores to conduct home deliveries, while requiring the licensing and training of delivery workers, and mandating that those receiving the order are identified and at least 21 years old.

In the House Economic Development/Banking/Insurance & Commerce Committee meeting, Spiegelman pointed out that 98% of the country’s population is able

to get alcohol to their door in some fashion, either shipping or delivery. Only Delaware, Mississippi and Utah outlaw the process.

“This is meant for the small guy, this is meant for the small business owner,” he said. “This isn’t really meant for the big guys.”

The bill had a ton of support, but because there were so many that testified in the public comment portion — including local alcohol distributors and breweries/wineries — the committee decided to continue the discussion at their meeting next week before voting whether to release the bill to the entire House.

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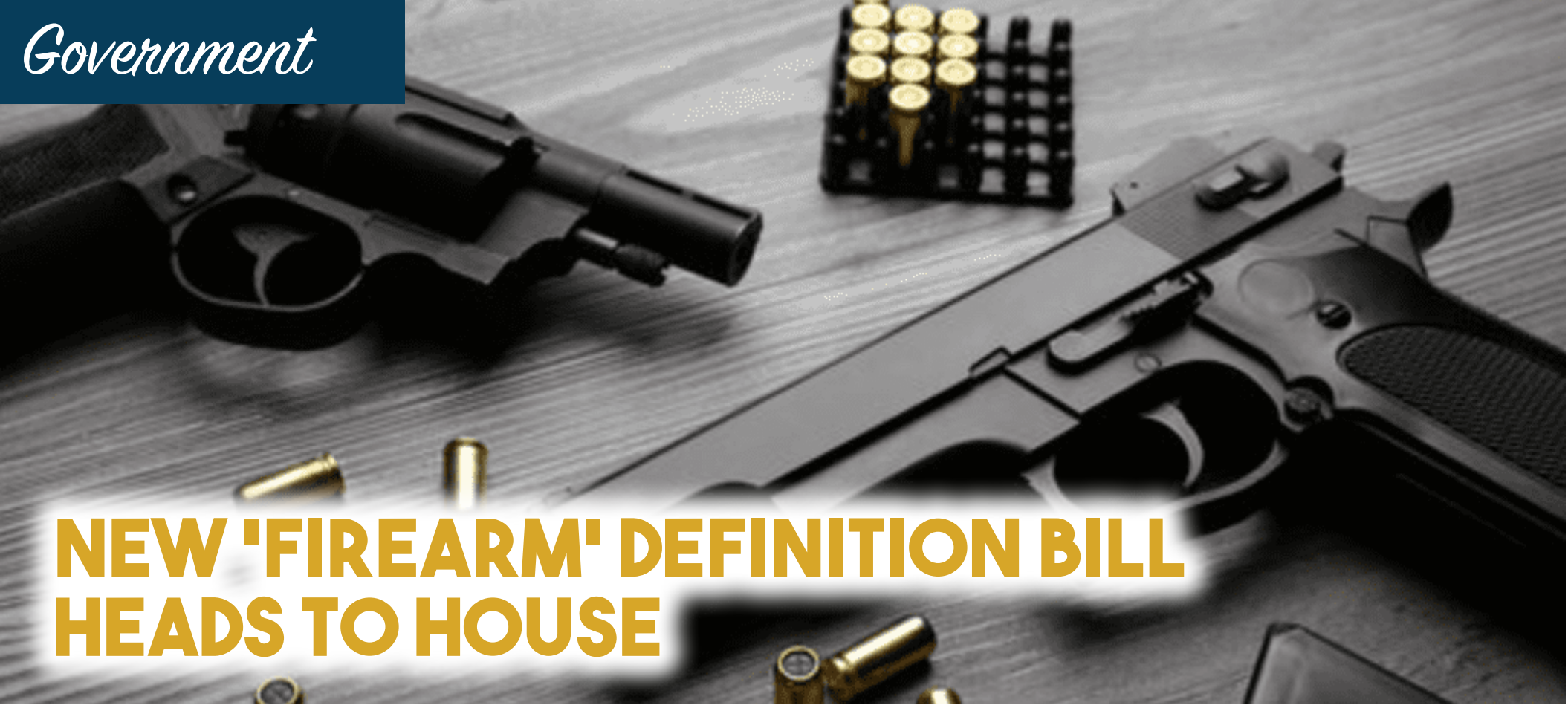
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NEW 'FIREARM' DEFINITION BILL HEADS TO HOUSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Delaware House of Representatives will be the first to take a look at a new bill that will redefine Delaware's legal description of a firearm.

The Firearm Definition Task Force, responsible for evaluating the state definition and its ramifications in lawmaking and criminal code, had a quick, 10-minute meeting Tuesday to take one last look at their work. The focus was on confirming additions suggested at last week's meeting.

"We have a final draft legislation of redefining firearm in Delaware Code, adding this new definition of projectile weapon," said task force chair Rep. Jeffrey Spiegelman, R-Clayton.

He thanked the Department of Justice, who worked with the task force to create an appropriate definition.

Part of the issue with the current definition is it created challenges for lawmakers, especially with the influx of bills relating to guns and weapons. Spiegelman has said it can create unintended consequences.


For example, the existing definition includes nail-guns, so technically someone with a former felony conviction would be breaking laws if they used one on a construction job. That's not the goal of some of the gun laws passed.

The task force has also added equipment like bow and arrows and spear guns, which have become more popular items of choice for hunting and fishing. "Projectile weapon" has been added to the definition. The bill, redefines "firearm" as any weapon from which a shot, projectile or other object may be, is designed, or may



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readily be converted to be discharged by force of combustion, explosive, gas and/or mechanical means, an explosive, whether operable or inoperable, loaded or unloaded. It says that a "deadly weapon" includes a firearm, bomb, knife of any sort, a switchblade knife, a billy, a blackjack, a bludgeon, metal knuckles, a slingshot, a razor, a bicycle chain or an ice pick.

"Covert firearm" means any firearm that is constructed in a shape or configuration such that it does not resemble a firearm. Here's the draft bill. It is unclear when it will be introduced to the House because first it will be circulated for sponsors.





HANDGUN PERMIT, TRAINING BILL RETURNS TO SENATE FOR VOTE ON CHANGES

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

After hours of wrangling over 11 proposed amendments Thursday, a bill requiring a permit and training to buy a handgun passed the state House in a different form and was sent back to the Senate for consideration.

Under **Senate Bill 2(S)**, most Delawareans could obtain a permit to purchase a handgun if they have completed an approved firearm training course in the last five years. It would exempt qualified active and retired law enforcement officers and anyone permitted by the state to carry a concealed weapon from that requirement because they already would have been required to complete a firearm training course.

Eleven amendments to the bill were heard on the floor, with the House voting to approve three sponsored by House Majority Leader Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New

Castle, a co-sponsor of the bill, and one sponsored by Republican Rep. Jeffrey Spiegelman, R-Clayton.

Minor-Brown said requiring a training course for people purchasing a gun is not an “undue burden.”

“It’s basic common sense to learn how to safely load, use and store a lethal weapon, which will make both the gun owners and the public safer,” she said.

House Amendment 2 extends the length of time a permit is valid from one year to two, allows local law enforcement agencies to ensure the surrender or removal of handguns purchased with a revoked permit and removes the training course voucher program.

Spiegelman said March 7 that removing the voucher for the training program could potentially set up an economic barrier to get a permit to get a gun and make the legislation economically discriminatory.

House Amendment 6, sponsored by Spiegelman, would reduce the cost of the required training program and exempt already trained professionals and individuals from the required course.

House Amendment 10 details what information may be retained by the State Bureau of Identification and exempts application information from the Freedom of Information Act.

House Amendment 11 requires that a person whose job training requires firearm training is exempt from repeating it for the permit.

House Republicans proposed several other amendments, however, the majority of these failed.

“I respect that the House felt that some changes were needed to get Senate Bill 2 across the finish line and I am committed to getting their amended version through the Senate and on to Gov. John Carney for his signature,” said Senate Majority Whip Sen. Elizabeth “Tizzy” Lockman, the prime sponsor of SB 2 (S).

Strong permit laws have been found to help prevent gun trafficking and the diversion of guns to criminals, a press release from the House Majority caucus stated.

GOP QUESTIONS NEED FOR PERMIT

Joseph Fulgham, director of policy and communications for the House Republicans, said the GOP questions just how effective this legislation will actually be. Fulgham pointed out that Attorney General Kathy Jennings never gave a clear answer March 7 when questioned about the number of people involved in gun crimes legally allowed to use a weapon.

“Law-abiding citizens aren’t the ones committing crimes,” Fulgham said. “The attorney general dodged the question multiple times because it doesn’t fit with her narrative that this is going to reduce crime,” he said.

He was able to find relevant information on illegal possession of guns during crimes committed in a report titled Delaware Shootings 2020—An Analysis of Incidents, Suspects, and Victims.

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LEGISLATORS BRIEFED ON LANDMARK SCHOOL FUNDING REPORT

BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware’s lawmakers got their first taste March 7 of a landmark, 200-page report from the **American Institutes for Research** that suggested the state invest up to 50% more in public education. The report was released in December at an event that only a few legislators attended, and on Thursday, it was introduced to the General Assembly in a joint House and Senate Education Committee meeting.

Stakeholders have been digesting the report over the past few months, but no action has been taken yet.

“Our next step...is to educate people about what the report says and what it means, and once we’re fully educated, then we’ll make decisions about what we need to do going forward,” said Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin and chair of the Senate Education Committee. Sturgeon also worked as a public school teacher for 25 years.

The presentation was led by Drew Atchison, a senior researcher at the American Institutes for Research, who also presented in December’s launch.

The state paid \$700,000 for the report, which filled with data on funding discrepancies from district to district and state to state; the lack of funding for high-needs students in Delaware, such as English learners, low-income students, students with disabilities and more, who would get multiple times more funding in other states; and the sharp decline in academic success, specifically with state and national standardized tests, in Delaware since 2013.

After a couple legislators said directly or implied that Delaware is “middle of the pack,” Britney Mumford, executive director of **DelawareCAN**, an education advocacy group, said in public comment that it is “facetious to say the state is middle of the pack.” She then shared a slew of rankings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress test, which Delaware ranked 45 or worse in every category on the test, such as fourth-grade math and eighth grade English language arts.

Atchison’s March 7 presentation was almost identical to his **presentation** in December.

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Education

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SCHOOLS AWAIT FINAL \$3.8M FOR DOWNTOWN GYM, LEARNING CENTER

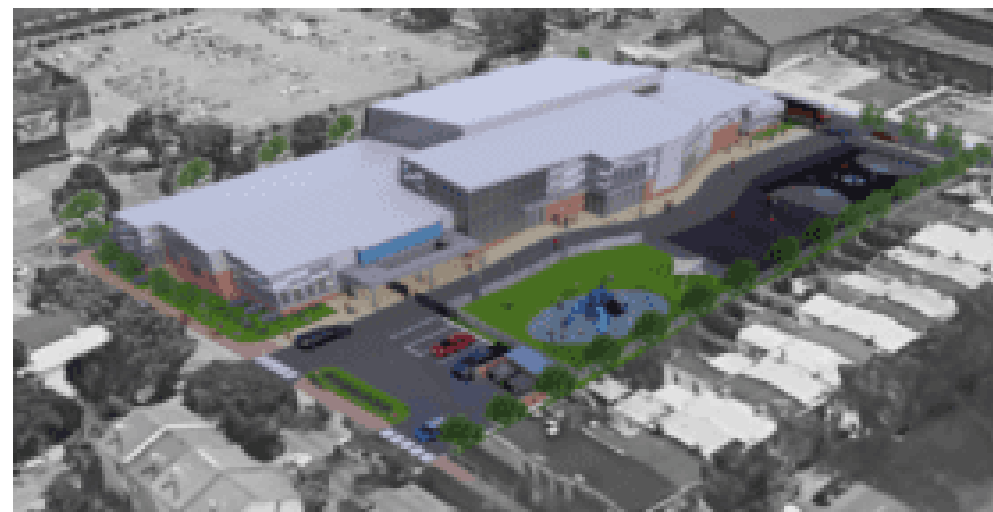
BY JAREK RUTZ

Three schools sharing the same building in downtown Wilmington are eagerly awaiting the hoped-for completion of an \$18 million project to build a gym, theater and early learning center.

Kuumba Academy Charter School, Great Oaks Charter School and **High Road School of Delaware** share the **Community Education Building**. Formerly a MBNA office building, the Community Ed building is meant to ensure that all Wilmington children have access to high-quality education and it also houses other services to help the students and their families.

The building already has \$14.2 million of the \$18 million needed from foundations, grants and private donations to complete the project, said Linda Jennings, chief executive officer of the Community Education Building.

“The proposed gym, theater and early learning center will have a significantly positive impact on our students and families,” said LaRetha Odumosu, executive director of Great Oaks.



Sally Maldonado, head of Kuumba Academy said her arts-integrated charter school is focused on the whole child. “It is critical that we provide our students with access to state of the art facilities to support our phenomenal arts and sports programming,” she said.

Kuumba’s talented and hard-working students deserve a safe, dedicated space to use on a daily basis to work and learn, and their parents are supportive of the project, she said. “Our parents are also very supportive of this project and what this will mean in preparing our students for high school and beyond,” Maldonado said.


Jennings hopes to have the remaining funds in September. After that, it should take about one year for everything to be open for use, with the goal of a fall 2025 launch.

“The idea of the building is to provide increased access and give students and families whatever they may need,” Jennings said.

The three new spaces are essentially filling in some of the gaps in support services that the Community Edu-



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cation Building seeks to offer. Jessica Amiss, associate director at the High Road School of Delaware, said the school looked forward to the future improvements.

“Our school is an important resource for local families and this significant investment in the building will help enrich the possible learning and enrichment experiences for High Road School students,” she said.

The building also houses partners that serve students and families, both educationally and in mission-adjacent and mission-aligned ways, said Ihsan Muhammad, chief impact officer of the Building.

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VOTE



BY JAREK RUTZ

Smyrna School District’s capital and operating referendum to raise local revenue for its schools has failed. Its request to raise local funds was rejected at a vote of 820 “yes” and 1,129 “no” (57.9%).

The other ballot option which would authorize the district to issue bonds for capital projects like building a new intermediate school also failed, with a vote of 874 for and 1,079 (56.1%) against.

Statement from Smyrna

“Dear Smyrna School District Community,

We want to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who supported us in today’s referendum. While the outcome wasn’t what we hoped for, we are determined to press forward. We will reflect, regroup, and reevaluate our next steps. This isn’t just about funding; but rather about investing in our students, staff, and community’s future. Your continued support of our school district is invaluable as we continue to provide the best

SMYRNA SCHOOL DISTRICT REFERENDUM FAILS

education possible for our students.

Thank you to everyone who attended the I Love Smyrna School District Day! We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all who participated, and a special thanks to our fine arts departments for their outstanding displays and performances. Our students continue to make us **#ProudToBeSSD**.

Thank you for standing with us.
#SmyrnaSchoolDistrict”

SMYRNA’S REQUEST

Smyrna was seeking \$8,618,951 in local funds for market pressure needs after already being approved for \$98,854,141 in state-matching funds. It was also seeking \$5,510,000 in local funds for operational costs.

The first question on the ballot requested the local portion of \$8.6 million, and the second question on the ballot was for the \$5.5 million to address the operating expenses.

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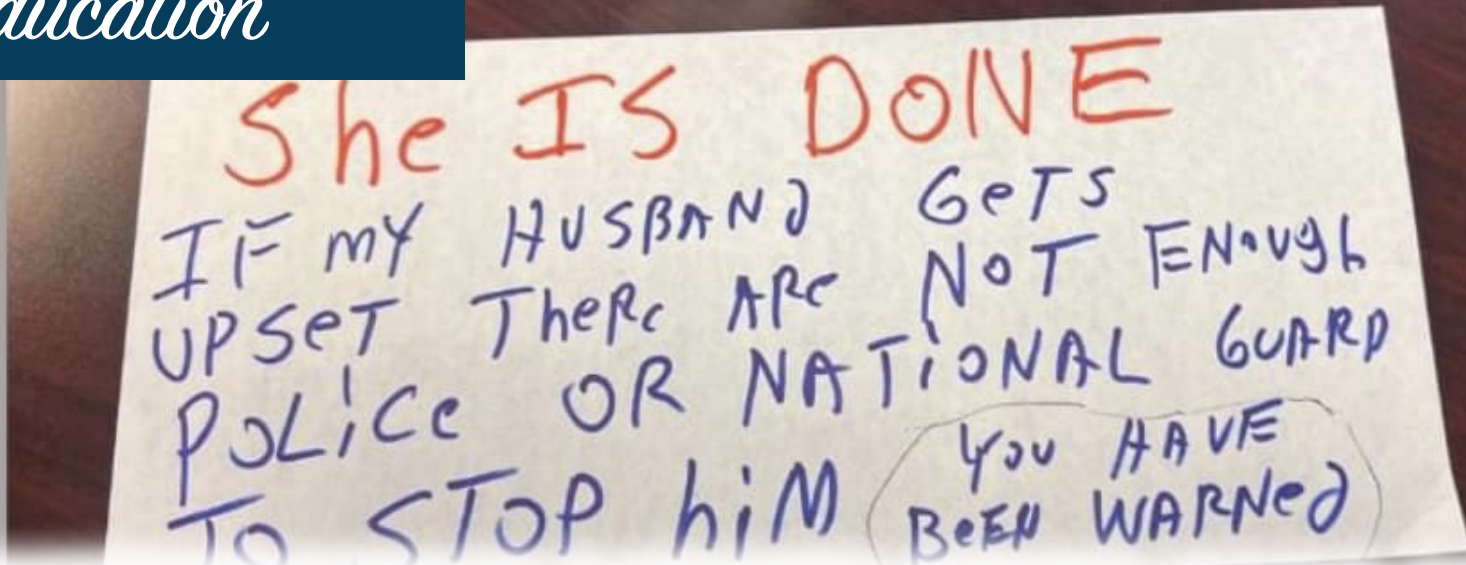
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NEW DETAILS EMERGE FROM POLICE INTO MILFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT'S CLOSURE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Milford Police Department Chief Cecilia Ashe shed some light on an ongoing investigation that was linked to Milford School District closing schools Thursday, March 7.

Last Thursday, several schools in the Milford School District were placed on “low-level” lockdown after a “credible threat was made toward Milford School District schools and offices.” The entire district was closed Friday, but opened back up Monday.

In a seven-minute press conference with Ashe and Bridget Amory, superintendent of Milford, Ashe confirmed the online speculation that the school closures were related to the Milford Police last Thursday asking for public assistance in its attempt to locate Thomas Caffrey, a 59-year-old male from Lincoln, who investigators say they want to speak with regarding a terroris-

tic threatening incident that occurred within Milford city limits.

According to Ashe, at approximately 1:20 p.m. last Thursday, Caffrey came to the Milford School District office at 906 Lakeview Avenue, to drop off a concerning letter for the school district.

“Contained in this letter was a district key access key card and building key for a previous employee of the school district,” she said.

The Milford Police Department was contacted by district administration at that time and an investigation into the concerning letter began. Police were advised that Caffrey appeared to be agitated when he dropped off the letter to the district office.

“It is important to know that Caffrey is a former employee of the Milford School District,” Ashe said.

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As a safety precaution, Milford High School and Milford Central Academy were placed on a heightened awareness or as many have referred to, she said, a low-level lockdown. There was a subject matching Caffrey’s description allegedly banging on the side door of the academy. This resulted in a full lockdown occurring at the high school and the academy.

Milford police school resource officers already at the school immediately responded to the area and it was determined that the subject was not Caffrey. Milford Police then worked with school staff to organize a plan to safely dismiss the two schools because the location of Caffrey was unknown. Once the plan was developed, it was put into action and all students were safely dismissed.

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CAESAR RODNEY HS: 5X STATE CULINARY COMPETITION WINNERS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The young cooks from **Caesar Rodney School District** are state champs once again. **Caesar Rodney High School**'s culinary team took home its fifth straight state title in the 11th Annual Delaware ProStart Student Invitational, which was hosted at the **Chase Center** in Wilmington. The **Delaware Restaurant Foundation** hosts the statewide competition featuring 17 culinary and management teams who were judged on teamwork, culinary expertise and restaurant industry management skills.

“Success is not just about winning competitions, it’s about the dedication, teamwork and passion that drive us towards our goals,” said Meg Gardner, director of the foundation. “These teams showed those skills throughout the day.”

Students from Caesar Rodney High School took home first place honors for the culinary competition, something they’ve become accustomed to, with a win streak

that spans back to 2019. The team is made up of students Melia Stamper, Shannon Powell, Ralph Figueroa, Carys Raber, Zoe Rowe and Grey Bendel.

Cape Henlopen High School’s team took home the silver followed by Paul M. Hodgson Vocational Technical High School’s team. In the management competition, Odessa High School’s team was awarded first place, followed by Laurel High School and Glasgow High School.

“Odessa High School’s win in the Delaware ProStart Student Invitational Management Competition is a wonderful representation of what the Appoquinimink School District values most: creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking and engagement,” said Lindsay Baker, culinary arts educator and ProStart coach. The team demonstrated great cohesiveness and coachability as they prepared their business proposal for the Green Leaf Cafe, she said.

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Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



DOVER STAYS THE COURSE TO WIN STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

BY JOE SINGLES

Coming on the heels of their upset victory over St. Elizabeth in the semifinals, Salesianum looked to be the more comfortable team early. Good team defense by the No. 6 seed forced Dover High School out of their offense as the basket appeared to have the proverbial lid on it for the Senators. The No. 2 seed from Kent County missed half a dozen point blank lay-ups including multiple second chance looks. It wasn't until the 3:24 mark that Dover got on the scoreboard with a 15-footer by Denim Perkins. Sallies on the other hand looked comfortable at the offensive end, knocking down a number of shots at all three levels, getting out to a 13-4

lead with 1:46 to go in the quarter. The Senators Coach Stephen Wilson would attempt to change the dynamic, switching to a 2-2-1 press with 1:25 to go, with the hopes of bringing some positive energy to his squad. 13-6 Sallies at the end of the quarter.

As Dover continued to struggle from the field, Sallies was right back at it, finding the open shooter for high percentage looks. Sallies ability to get offensive contributions from all five players on the court regardless of their line up made it extremely difficult for Dover to keep up after trying to recover out of their aforementioned 2-2-1 press. However, with Sallies' Justin Hinds

and Kareem Thomas on the bench, the Senators would go on a 7-2 run to pull within six. Two free throws at the end of the half would pull Dover within four, 27-23. Isaiah Hynson led Sallies with 11 points while Dover's Dorell Little led his squad with 11 points going into halftime. Dover's inability to convert around the basket was the story of the half as the Senators out rebounded Sallies 25-15, including 19 offensive rebounds.

Back and forth they went early in the third quarter as Dover's Little attempted to bring his team back from the four-point deficit. Sallies would not relent however, as their ability to creat good looks for their teammates continued. Still, the Senators found themselves only down two points with 2:11 to go in the quarter. Dover would break through with one minute to go on a tough, up and under layup by their point guard Perkins, giving them its first lead. Dover would score again just before the buzzer to take a 40-39 lead heading into the fourth.

Thomas for Sallies would make his presence felt once again early in the fourth. Relentlessly attacking the basket, scoring from the field and the foul line to give Sallies a two-point lead. At this point, both teams were operating on all cylinders. Dover was scoring under the basket on almost every possession while Sallies' individual talent worked together to play their style of basketball. 50-48 Dover with 3:09 to go. After trading baskets, Dover would secure a loose ball with 56.2 seconds to go and call timeout. Dover held the ball out of the timeout forcing Sallies to foul. Tarrance Williams for Dover made one of two free throws to give them slim three-point lead with 17.5 to go.

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BANKS CARRIES URSULINE TO STATE TITLE

BY JOE SINGLES

After a slow start and a feeling out process by both teams, the girls' state championship game between the Ursuline Raiders and the Caravel Buccaneers heated up. Larry Banks' Caravel squad demonstrated patience and strong work on the glass to score in a variety of different ways by multiple players after the first two minutes. Coach John Noonan of Ursuline on the other hand, seemed to be content with allowing GiGi Banks to play 1-on-5 basketball at the offensive end, resulting in a number of bad looks and coupled with low energy on the part of the Raiders. Despite their struggles, Ursuline found itself down by only two points at the end of the first quarter. 14-12 Caravel.

After Caravel senior Anaya Price knocked down her third three-point shot of the game, her teammate Jasiyah Price made another three-point shot on the very next possession, extending the top seed's lead to 20-16. Coach Noonan continued to play "Banks ball" and the

sophomore didn't disappoint. Banks would make three three-point shots in under 45 seconds, pulling the Raiders even, 24-24 with 2:10 to go in the half. The play of Caravel's Price and Janiyah Crawford were the story of the first half. Beating the Ursuline zone with three-point shots and penetrating the gaps for layups. Ursuline seemed content however to stick to the zone as long as it was able to get out in transition and put pressure on the Caravel defense. The Caravel backcourt combined for 23 points in the half while Banks and Brown for Ursuline combined for all 28 points for the No. 2 seed. The half ended 28-28.

Both teams came out of halftime with strong defensive adjustments. Ursuline remained in its 2-3 zone, but tightened up the gaps and rebounded the basketball, which is more difficult to do in a zone defense. Pushing the ball on after every rebound, the No. 2 seed took their biggest lead of the game, 37-34, with 2:45 to go in the

quarter. Caravel's hot shooting cooled off due to the Ursuline defensive adjustments but they still manage to remain within one possession throughout the quarter. The Caravel low post players, Brycelyn Stryckning and Jordin Tate, willed their squad to within one at the end of the quarter securing tough rebounds and giving their teammates second chance shots. It was 39-38 with one quarter to go.

Ursuline looked content to place the ball in Banks hands as much as possible as she continued to knock down deep three pointers and attack the basket. Her ability to see the floor and made strong decisions with the ball in her hands didn't deter Caravel however, as the Buccaneers hung tough, making a number of shots in the lane to finally regain the lead, 48-46 with two minutes to go in the game. With one minute to go, 'Caravel chose to run down the clock for the last shot with the game tied 48-48. After securing an errant pass, Ursuline would have possession with 5.6 seconds to go and put the ball in the hands of Banks once again. On her way to the basket, Banks would be fouled and earn a trip to the free throw line with 1.9 seconds to go. Banks would make the second of her two free throws making the score 49-48 and giving them a well-earned state title.

Banks led all scorers with 29 points, shooting 5-of-11 from the three-point line, while her teammate, Taylor Brown, accounted for 16 points. Caravel's Price had 19 to lead the Buccaneers. With 12 lead changes and a tie score seven different times throughout the game, the packed Bob Carpenter Center saw one of the best championship games in DIAA history.



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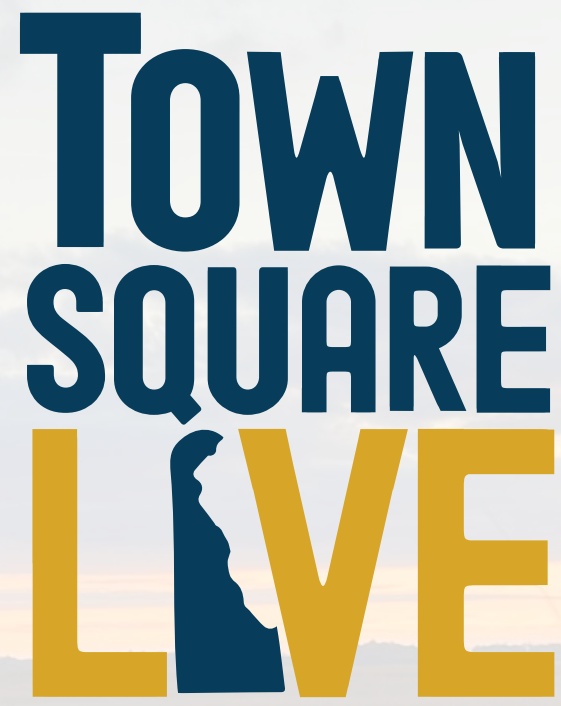
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