

# TOWN SQUARE LIVE

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June 20, 2024  
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Separate Public and Private School Sports Titles



ACLU Protest Ordinance



Special Football Camp at Titus



*Community*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**

Y LIBRARY  
D BRANCH

# BRANDYWINE HUNDRED LIBRARY AT LAST REOPENS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The **Brandywine Hundred Library** opened to patrons on Monday for the first time since it was closed Feb. 1 for maintenance.

While the library was closed, the county removed most of the flowers and shrubs from the landscaping in front of the building, replacing them with fresh mulch. A sign promises new landscaping with native plants. Inside the library are dozens of boxes of incoming items to be processed.

New Castle County planned a “soft opening to the public” on Monday and Tuesday, and then the Foulk Road **building** was closed on Wednesday for Juneteenth and on Thursday for its regular weekly closure.

## LIBRARY PLANS REOPENING CELEBRATION

A “reopening celebration” has been scheduled for Friday, June 21. “BHL’s new HVAC system is more energy-efficient, and patrons may notice improved airflow throughout the building,” said Catherine Wimberley, a spokeswoman for the county library system. “Simultaneously, ductwork was removed and replaced where necessary to ensure healthier air quality. The project also encompassed a roof replacement, ceiling repairs and painting of damaged areas.”

Hours and operating days at the Woodlawn and Claymont libraries had increased during the closure, but those libraries are scheduled to return this week to their

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old schedules, she said. The Brandywine library will resume the schedule it had in January.

The work was originally planned to take three months, but a final inspection of the heating and ventilating system did not occur until the weekend of June 15.

Brandywine staff noticed many of their regular patrons visiting other libraries. Claymont Library had the highest impact, with April circulation up 251% and visits up 150%. All New Castle County Libraries saw April circulation increases of 21%-48% and visit increases of 15%-42%.





# GA MULLS SEPARATE PUBLIC, PRIVATE SCHOOL SPORTS TITLES

BY JAREK RUTZ

On the heels of the state championships for many high school sports, the Delaware legislature is considering distinct title games for public and private schools.

**Senate Bill 328**, sponsored by Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, directs the Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association to separate all public and private school team championship sanctioned events.

“The bill in and of itself is somewhat offensive or not, depending on where you are in the state,” Buckson said.

Dozens of comments on social media flooded in after state championships largely won by private schools.

Many said it is unfair for public schools to be forced to compete with private ones. While public schools often have a larger number of students to pull from, private schools can lure top athletes with scholarships, some from out of state.

Britney Mumford, executive director of education group **DelawareCAN**, supported the bill in the Senate Education Committee Tuesday.

“It’s an issue that we hear a lot from constituents. It’s an equity issue,” she said. “Inequitable access to state titles also means inequitable access to potential scholar-

ships and the ability to acquire education for many of our students.”

She spoke specifically on wrestling, saying that historically, the number of students at Delaware private schools are disproportionately from Pennsylvania and Maryland.

“I think that’s really where we need to look when we’re studying the data around this issue,” she said. “How many of the students that are winning Delaware state titles are actually Delawareans, because it’s our job as a state to serve those students first.”

David Baylor, executive director of the athletic association, said he recognizes the sensitivity of the issue and acknowledged it merits discussion with all stakeholders. He did not support nor oppose the bill.

The athletic director from Caesar Rodney School District, head of school at Newark Charter and a coach in Colonial School District who previously coached at private schools said they supported the bill.

Senate committees do not vote publicly on bills, but instead sign the back of the bill with their vote after the hearing, which is posted on the **bill tracker** later. It had not been posted as of 1:30 p.m. Wednesday.

If the education committee chooses to release it, SB 328 will head to the Senate floor for discussion.





# FOOD BANK TO HOST ONLY ONE MASS DISTRIBUTION THIS MONTH

BY BRADLEY VASOLI

The **Delaware Food Bank** hosted one mass drive-thru distribution of food this month, on Tuesday, June 18, in Dover. It's the Food Bank's first since December. That's a big change from the monthly events that were held in all three counties, starting at the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic in spring 2020.

Kim Turner, the Food Bank's spokeswoman, says the main reason for the change is constraints on manpower after the pandemic tapered off, and that the changes are "more resource-based than need-based."

At the pandemic's worst, federal legislation, including the 2020 CARES Act and the 2021 American Rescue

Plan Act, supplied substantial aid for staffing at the distributions. But those funds have since dried up while charitable donations have lessened due to inflation.

"When your day-to-day expenses are higher, that oftentimes means less money that you could donate to charitable organizations like the Food Bank," Turner told Delaware LIVE.

Tuesday's event took place at **Dover Motor Speedway**. Going forward, the nonprofit is contemplating doing such an event each holiday season, most likely in all three counties, Turner said.

The National Guard, which Turner described as "an

incredible partner during the first few months of the pandemic," continues to aid the effort with food drives, but no longer sends several dozen Guard personnel to assist with the distributions. The Delaware Department of Transportation must also maintain a large presence to direct traffic at the events.

## FOOD BANK DISTRIBUTIONS

Mass-distribution pickups have slowed somewhat since the onset of the pandemic in spring of 2020, when events in Dover International and Christiana Mall each served roughly 2,300 families. But November and December distributions consistently see high traffic and that did not subside from 2022 to 2023. All three counties assisted 5,286 households last November, 873 more than were served that month the prior year.

At the Dover event, each household received one food package. Proof of Delaware residency was required, such as a state-issued ID, utility bill or Delaware SNAP benefits card. The drive-thru distribution provided packages of nonperishable items and households were limited to one package each.

The Food Bank is urging food-insecure residents and families who were unable to attend the Dover distribution to go to the Newark Healthy Pantry Center or the Milford Healthy Pantry Center.

The Newark site at 222 Lake Drive in Newark is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday; 9 a.m. to noon on Friday; and on the second Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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# SPEED CAMERAS TO BE ADDED TO I95/ ROUTE 896 INTERCHANGE

BY BETSY PRICE

On July 8, state will start using speed cameras around the **I-95/Route 896 construction zone** in Newark and they'll stay there until the project is ended. Drivers will have 21 days—dubbed a warning period—to get used to the cameras' presence, according to the Delaware Department of Transportation. Then registered vehicle owners will receive a base violation of \$20, plus \$1 per mile per hour the car was going over the posted work zone speed limit and other fees that apply to all tickets.

For example, DelDOT said if the captured violation occurs at a speed of 66 mph, the speed violation is \$20 plus an additional \$11, or \$1 for each mile per hour over the 55-mph posted work zone speed limit, plus other fees for a total of \$118. Second and subsequent offenses are higher. The tickets are civil penalties only and no points will be assessed to driver's licenses.

### SPEED CAMERA USE

Delaware first used the speed cameras on I-95 in Wilmington from January 2022 through November 2022 during the Restore the Corridor project. [Data](#)

from that pilot program showed a 46% decrease in total crashes and a 38% decrease in injury crashes compared to the same time period in 2021 when construction was also occurring. Overall, speeds through the construction zone decreased by more than 5 mph on average after the program began. Then and now, the cameras were used as part of Delaware's **Electronic Speed Safety Program**.

"The I-95/896 interchange project is currently the largest infrastructure project in the state, with hundreds of people working in the area," said Secretary of Transportation Nicole Majeski. There have not been any accidents that hurt workers, she said, "but we continue to see too many crashes involving vehicles traveling through the work zone."

The I-95 and 896 Interchange project involves creating a flyer that hopefully will ease congestion near the Newark Toll Plaza on I-95 and going into Newark on South College by improving the merging and diverging of 896 traffic on and off of I-95.

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*Business*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE





# \$3 MILLION PILOT PROGRAM TO FIND, TRAIN PEOPLE FOR STEM JOBS

BY BETSY PRICE

A new three-year pilot program bolstered by federal and state money will recruit and train Delawareans in STEM skills needed for basic laboratory and advanced biomanufacturing jobs. The move is part of a state focus on training a workforce for the future, partly to attract and keep the kind of STEM-related businesses expected to grow and provide more jobs in the future.

Just recently, for example, the state announced \$14.8 million in grants for **Incyte**, a biopharmaceutical company, to move office jobs into downtown Wilmington and refit work space at its Alapocas campus as labs. The move is expected to bring 500 new jobs to the state.

The newly formed Delaware Center for Life Science Education and Training, was created by the **Delaware BioScience Association** two years after it released a report with the Delaware Prosperity Partnership that identi-

fied the need to invest in the development of a diverse, prepared and resilient workforce to ensure future life science industry growth.

“The simple goal of these initiatives is to make Delaware the very best place in the world for employers to find life science talent at every level—from advanced manufacturing operators to PhDs,” said Michael Fleming, Delaware Bio president and CEO. “These new efforts will attract talent and companies of all sizes, strengthen our state’s manufacturing capability, boost regional economic growth and advance our national security.”

The move was celebrated June 14 at EastSide Charter School’s new Chemours STEM Hub. The 40,000 square foot facility is expected to be finished during the 2024-25 school year.

## STEM FUNDING

Key initial funding for the center will come from a \$2.1 million Congressionally Directed Spending grant supported by U.S. Sens. Tom Carper and Chris Coons, as well as the Delaware BioScience Association and additional private financial and in-kind support.

The Delaware Life Science Caucus, including Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, Rep. Krista Griffith, D-Fairfax, and Sen. Spiro Mantzavinos, D-Wilmington, plan to create a Delaware STEM Talent Advancement and Retention program to attract and retain new university graduates with Delaware STEM employers by supporting a portion of their college loan payments.

**House Bill 435**, sponsored by Griffith, Smith and Mantzavinos, will give qualified job candidates grants of \$1,000 to \$6,000, depending on their education level.

The Center for Life Science Education is set to launch in early 2025 and will create strategic partnerships with industry, academic institutions and community organizations to find and train workers. Key partners include non-profit community organizations serving the city of Wilmington, such as The Warehouse, West End Neighborhood House, and East Side Charter.

The pilot training program will take place at the Chemours STEM Hub at Eastside Charter School and other locations.

“These important STEM-focused initiatives will serve the state well by addressing employer needs, informing communities about jobs in a robust area of our economy, retaining science and technology companies, and keeping talent in Delaware which is a wellspring for any industry sector,” said Kurt Foreman, president and CEO of the Delaware Prosperity Partnership.



# CARNEY SIGNS BILL TO CREATE HOSPITAL REVIEW BOARD

BY BETSY PRICE

The Diamond State Hospital Review Board blew into existence June 13 when Gov. John Carney signed **House Bill 350**. The board, which will have authority to review Delaware hospital budgets, recommend changes and enforce those changes, will help the state and consumers lower their healthcare bills by limiting the growth of hospital budgets, supporters say.

Theoretically, supporters believe, that means the rise in what businesses and consumers have been paying lately will slow. Opponents say the state has no business interfering in private business, that budget cuts will mean less access to care and tests for everybody, and the board is not a comprehensive enough move to make a real change. Any programs to control costs should

include drug companies, pharmacies, suppliers and other healthcare providers for any real impact, those opponents say.

Chief among the critics was the Delaware Healthcare Association, a trade group of hospitals. It fought the bill amid a hail of scorn from the sponsors, but finally agreed to a compromise version that included the removal of a clause that would allow the state to take over hospital assets.

“Now that HB 350 has been signed into law, DHA will advocate to ensure that the law’s implementation enables Delaware’s hospitals to continue providing high quality care to the patients and communities we serve,” said President and CEO Brian Frazee.

“We are proud that Delaware currently **rank**s No. 2 in the nation for hospital quality and we will strive to ensure access to care for all Delawareans, strengthen the healthcare workforce, and advance health equity as the regulatory and implementation process moves forward,” he said.

## BOARD BACKPATTING

The Democrats who support the bill, however, may soon need physical therapy for patting themselves on the back for taking such a courageous stand, even when Dems dominate the General Assembly and can vote through virtually anything they want.

Gov. John Carney called the controversial bill an “important piece of legislation that will make a positive impact on Delawareans.”

“Rising health care costs are having a significant impact on Delaware families and state taxpayers, and we’ve been committed to addressing this since the start of my time as governor,” said Gov. Carney. “House Bill 350 will help lower the growth of healthcare costs in our state, while making sure we’re protecting health care quality and access.”

House Speaker Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, who sponsored by the bill, said, “With the signing of HB 350 today, we have taken a monumental step in getting these prices under control while bringing much needed transparency to our state’s hospital pricing process.”

“This legislation is a major breakthrough for small businesses and working families in Delaware, who for years have been paying more for healthcare than people in nearly every other state,” said Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark.

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photo link: Delaware DNREC



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# DELAWARE LIVE MARKS ITS ANNIVERSARY WITH GROWTH AND INNOVATION

BY BRYAN SHUPE

This June, Delaware LIVE is celebrating its fourth anniversary delivering daily hyperlocal news to the First State. Born out of a vibrant, digital newsroom in Kent and Sussex counties, Delaware LIVE was created to meet the increasing demand from Delawareans for more comprehensive access to news about their schools, lawmakers, decision-makers and local businesses. In a short span of four years, Delaware LIVE has expanded its footprint significantly, incorporating local news outlets such as Milford LIVE, Town Square LIVE, Chadds Ford LIVE and Delaware LIVE Sports. Monthly, over 200,000 Delawareans actively interact with us through our digital newsrooms, weekly emails, social media platforms and live streaming services.

## WHY LOCAL NEWS MATTERS

Local newsrooms are the most trusted source for credible information for residents, according to a national Gallup survey in 2023 of 5,000 adults. Local newspapers were rated as the “most reliable and trusted media source” of original reporting, more than television, radio, and social media. As a team, Delaware LIVE continues to develop a robust newsroom that relies on traditional journalism, unbiased reporting, and reliable sources. In 2024, Delaware LIVE received a high credibility rating for “proper sourcing and a clean fact-check record” and a least bias rating for “reasonably balanced story selection and minimal editorializing of content” from a nationally recognized Media Bias

Fact Check independent review. Delaware LIVE reporters won 10 awards, including five first-place ones, in the 2024 Delaware Press Association 2024 Professional Communications Contest.

## OUR PARTNERS SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITIES

We live, work and play in this community, and we can make it happen thanks, in part, to our advertisers who support the same idea. Thank you to the corporate sponsors and the community businesses who help us bring you the news. We are grateful for the support of industry leaders including Mountaire and Discover Bank, institutions of higher learning including Goldey-Beacon College and Delaware Tech Community College, private-public partnerships including the Delaware Division of Small Business and Delaware Prosperity Partnership, healthcare experts at Christiana Care and Bayhealth, small business families from Mathnasium and Telepathy Networks, cultural innovators including Hagley Museum and Delaware Museum of Nature and Science; and nonprofits including First State Educate, Easter Seals and the Delaware Boys & Girls Club.

As Delaware LIVE looks to the future, it remains steadfast in its mission to deliver the highest quality hyperlocal news, empowering Delawareans with the information they need to thrive. With plans to expand into several more communities, Delaware LIVE is excited for many more years of connecting communities and celebrating the stories that matter most. To become part of Delaware’s fastest-growing network of hyperlocal digital newsrooms, visit us at [DelawareLIVE.com](https://DelawareLIVE.com).





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# Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE





## HAMILTON'S ON MAIN CLOSES IN NEWARK; MOVING TO SMYRNA

BY PAM GEORGE

Two years after relocating to Newark to open **Hamilton's on Main**, owners Anthony and Jeremiah Brooks have left Main Street. The restaurant's last day was Sunday, June 16.

The couple put blood, sweat and tears into renovating the First Bank of Newark, built in 1850, which had fallen into disrepair after two pubs' beer-soaked tenures. When the partners were done, the three-story building was an elegant home for Chef Jeremiah's cuisine.

But in the end, the cost of doing business exceeded the revenue. "The overhead on Main Street is crippling," Anthony acknowledged. "Between rent, taxes and utilities, it's killing us. It's a great product in the wrong place."

The couple are industry veterans. Jeremiah trained under Culinary Institute of America graduates and James Beard-winning chefs in Washington, D.C. Anthony's family owned a New Hampshire restaurant and worked for Rare Hospitality International, which owned LongHorn Steakhouse and Capital Grille before Darden Restaurants purchased the company.

In 2019, the Brooks opened Hamilton's Tavern 1840 in Harpers Ferry, WV, in a Greek Revival building. (The restaurant was named for their Bernese Mountain dog.) They later moved to a larger structure in town.

Unsurprisingly, the pandemic affected revenue, and during that time, they visited a friend in Newark. When

their lease in Harpers Ferry was up, they opted to move to Delaware.

### HAMILTON'S FIRST MOVE

The First Bank of Newark appealed to the lovers of historic architecture, but it needed extensive renovation. The partners didn't realize that the HVAC system had been unattended while the structure was vacant, and they faced numerous costly delays. In spring 2022, the 135-seat Hamilton's on Main opened and stood out amongst the chains and longtime eateries.

A banquet space upstairs became popular, but was limited to under 50 people. The Brookses most recently received press for holding themed popups on the second floor.

Leaving the beautiful restaurant is undoubtedly bittersweet. But it's not all bad news. They've already started renovating the former home of Maverick Texas BBQ and Our Thyme & Table in Smyrna, a red brick building on Commerce Street that's been a millinery and department store.

Hamilton's Haven will have 134 seats and a 14-seat chef's table for Jeremiah's monthly "Duck Creek Social," which features multicourse dinners with wine pairings. The space also features a 1,600-square-foot patio and banquet space for up to 150. They plan to open in mid-August.

The Brookses seem to be flying south and that's intentional. A second restaurant on the Culinary Coast might be in their future, Anthony says.





# BIG FISH FORMS PARTNERSHIP WITH BALTIMORE RESTAURANT GROUP

BY PAM GEORGE

**Big Fish Restaurant Group**, a Delaware titan in the hospitality industry, and the Baltimore-based lifestyle hospitality company **Atlas Restaurant Group**, announced today that they've formed a partnership.

The Delaware group is known for its flagship Big Fish Grill, which has locations in Rehoboth Beach and Ocean View and on the Wilmington Riverfront. A previous site in Glen Mills closed and is now a White Dog Café. Atlas Restaurant Group has more than 36 restaurants, bars and entertainment concepts in four states—Maryland, Pennsylvania and Texas.

The partnership gives the group a firm foothold in Delaware. Atlas CEO Alex Smith and managing partner Eric Smith are former captains of the University of Delaware men's lacrosse team. The Smiths often visited Big Fish restaurants when they were young. Eric Smith calls the partnership a "full-circle" moment in the release announcing the business agreement.

Eric Sugrue, who founded Big Fish with his brother, Norman, said the partnership will be "transformative."

"Together, we will continue to innovate, inspire and delight our guests, while keeping standards of excel-

lence across various properties in our operations," he said in the statement.

## BIG FISH BACKGROUND

Big Fish has a large hospitality portfolio that includes Wilmington and beach eateries. Not all the restaurants are part of the agreement, Sugrue said. He declined to name the restaurants, but said the majority are part of the deal.

Big Fish Grill, which opened in 1997, was inspired by the Sugrues' festive gatherings. The family, which moved to Rehoboth Beach in 1977, seldom lacked for hungry visitors, who appreciated home cooking. The recipe for Neva's potatoes, a popular side, comes from the Sugrue matriarch, Geneva.

To open their restaurant, the brothers pooled their money, borrowed from family, and secured a loan. Business took off. Indeed, the kitchen was so deluged by carryout orders that Big Fish opened an adjoining market.

In the past, the Sugrue brothers' management portfolio grew by opening new restaurants and acquiring properties, such as The Summer House, now owned by Regan Derrickson of Nalu fame, and Striper Bites in Lewes.

Holly Monaco, president of Big Fish Restaurant Group, said the partnership will help grow the brands.

"With added resources, sharing the same values and goals, we can continue to build and develop a bright future for our team and further enrich the Big Fish experience for our guests and the communities in which we live," she said.



photo link: Town of Newark, Delaware



*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**





# STATE BUDGET, ONE-TIME SPENDING BILLS FILED IN SENATE

BY BETSY PRICE

The state’s \$6.1 billion budget and a \$168 million budget of one-time expenditures will cover raises for state employees, rises in healthcare costs for employees, state retirees and Medicaid recipients, an increase for some direct support professionals and help for low-income families who need childcare to work. The Senate is expected to vote on the bills Thursday.

“The spending plan we put forward today is a responsible, balanced budget that reflects Delaware’s solid economic growth over the last year,” said Sen. Trey Paradee, chair of the bipartisan Joint Finance Committee and the prime sponsor of both spending bills.

“That expansion will allow us to continue making critical investments in our schools, our health and the public services our communities depend on, all without raising a single tax for the seventh straight year,” he said. “I want to thank my colleagues on the Joint Finance Committee for their diligence, their hard work

and their conviction that building a strong future for all Delawareans demands that we stay competitive in the hunt for skilled labor through a strong job market and growing competition from our neighboring states.”

Republicans in the General Assembly, who have argued that the state should lower the real estate transfer tax and others because of four years of big surpluses, aren’t particularly thrilled at the rapid growth of Delaware’s budget. They have repeatedly pointed out that the Democrat-dominated legislature is creating too many programs that the state will have to fund every year going forward.

“Our annual spending plan has grown significantly in recent years,” said House Minority Whip Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden. “The FY 2025 operating budget, taking effect July 1, is \$523 million (9.3%) higher than the one it’s replacing. In just two years, the state’s annual operational spending has increased by more than \$1 billion, a 20.2% jump.

“The budget broke the \$5 billion mark for the first time in FY 2023 and the new one smashes through the \$6 billion ceiling. The new appropriations bill contains a lot of needed expenditures and worthy initiatives, but this breakneck pace of spending growth is as unsustainable as it is concerning.”

The budget also is putting contingency funds into budget smoothing accounts in case of future economic downturns from disrupting core state services. The Delaware Economic Financial Advisory Committee has been warning for a year that 2025 revenues will be down for a variety of reasons, but are expect to rise again in 2026. A \$50 million allocation intended to help cover future raises for educators, as part of the Delaware General Assembly’s ongoing effort to bring base starting salaries to \$60,000, included in the 2025 budget.

A state budget starts in January, when the governor releases his version. The Joint Finance Committee then reviews the governor’s ideas, holds public hearings on requests from state departments and other funded agencies. State officials, lawmakers and the public weigh in on, and the committee has to account for any programs created by the sitting legislators.

State law requires the next year’s budget, which takes effect July 1, to be passed before the General Assembly ends its session each year on June 30. In the last few years, it’s been passed well before that.

**Senate Bill 325**, the operating budget bill, would fund a third year of state employee pay raises with all merit employees slated to receive a 2% increase. Negotiated collective bargaining units and statutory step increases also would be fully funded.

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# ACLU PROTESTS WILM COUNCIL ORDINANCE LIMITING PROTESTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

*This article has been updated, with new comments from additional sources.*

The [ACLU Delaware](#) is urging the Wilmington City Council to vote ‘no’ in its meeting Thursday night on an ordinance it claims would curtail free speech and open the door for a lawsuit. Proposed [Ordinance 24-036](#), sponsored by Councilperson Nathan Field, would make it unlawful for a “noise disturbance” that is focused on a residence at any time.

Martin Lessner, an attorney in Wilmington and a long-time ACLU member, disagreed with the union’s position. He is not an employee of the ACLU nor is speaking on behalf of the ACLU. He sent the organization a letter explaining that the proposed ordinance is indeed constitutional and said that it made a mistake by sending its letter to the city council.

“If people were broadcasting a message targeted at individuals because of their religion or their political views, that would clearly be impermissible, and that is what this is aimed at,” he said Wednesday.

He wants the ACLU to explain to all city council members that the proposed ordinance is constitutional.

“I don’t have the right to pull out a loudspeaker in front of your house and say whatever religion you are, ‘get out,’” he said, “and I don’t have a right to target you because I know that you are a certain religion.”

There’s a concept of free speech, he said, called “time, place and manner.” Time restrictions dictate when expression of free speech can occur, place restrictions dictate where expression of free speech can occur and manner restrictions dictate how expression of free speech can occur.

According to the University of Louisville, the burden of such regulations is still fairly high, requiring the government to show that their restrictions on speech are:

- Content neutral (that the government does not outlaw content specific viewpoints).
- Narrowly tailored to serve a governmental interest (i.e., cannot be overly broad to regulate more than what is necessary to achieve government interest like, for example, public safety).
- Ample alternative means to express ideas.

The ACLU stated in a letter posted to its website that “this effectively placing undue limits on public assembly activities or protests.”

“Free speech and the right to protest is the pillar of our democracy and is critical to empowering communities,” the nonprofit stated. “Protests allow people to express their opinions and grievances and often give voice to minority or underrepresented groups who may not have other means to express their views.”

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# RUTH BRIGGS KING LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN FOR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

BY BETSY PRICE

**Ruth Briggs King**, a former state legislator from Georgetown, formally announced June 14 she is running for lieutenant governor. If elected, she said, she will continue to work as a public servant, just as she did in the House of Representatives.

“I realized that I was elected by Republicans, Democrats and Independents,” she said. “This is a campaign for the people, not necessarily the party, and in our state, the Democrat Party has been in the majority for over 30 years and they’ve left the people behind.”

The only Republican woman in the General Assembly for the 14 years she served, Briggs King **resigned** last year after she and her husband Stanley, built a home a mile outside of her district. At the time, she said, she had no

intention of running for office again and expected to stay busy working on the State’s Women’s Commission, a state Human Resources subcommittee and the board of A Better Delaware.

“I’m running because a lot of people came to me and said, ‘We need you. We need your experience. We need your integrity. We need your intelligence. We need you to work for us because you listen,’” Briggs King said. “My reputation has been built on constituent service, listening to those I serve, answering your questions and concerns.

“As your lieutenant governor, I would do no less. In fact, I would probably do more. I would do it throughout the state.”

## BRIGGS KING PLATFORM

She doesn’t plan to parrot a national agenda.

“We have to have some change that is responsive to the people, not a national agenda, but what Delaware needs, what our families and businesses,” Briggs King said.

She will be one of four women seeking the second-highest office in the state. Briggs King has no Republican challenger, but will meet the winner of the Democratic primary: Rep. Sherry Dorsey Walker, D-Wilmington; Rep. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Brandywine Hundred; and retired U.S. Army veteran Dr. Debbie Harrington of Middletown.

“It’s all women,” Briggs King agreed. “But I think there’s huge, unique differences in all of us and I have

served longer.”

She said her experience on the Joint Finance Committee, which writes the state budget, and a Revenue Task Force appointed by Gov. Jack Markell, as well as her other legislative duties, gave her a broad view of what happens up and down the state, how communities are different and what communities need to succeed.

Her own experience growing up on a farm and then as a teacher, regional medical laboratory executive and nonprofit association manager help her understand and see issues from multiple points of view, she said.

“If you see poverty in New Castle County, it looks different than it does in rural Sussex,” she said. “But if you’re not looking for these things and listening to people, you will miss that.”

While Briggs King is considered the running mate of Mike Ramone, a Pike Creek/Newark legislator seeking the Republican nomination for governor, but she could be elected and serve even if he is not. In Delaware, it’s possible to have a Democrat win one role and a Republican in the other. If she does win, she would be the first Republican woman to chair the Senate.

Briggs King said she will campaign on five platforms: tailored education, building a robust economy, a safer Delaware, better Veteran healthcare and improving Delaware’s infrastructure.

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# ARCHITECTS: NO ROOM FOR CHILDCARE IN LEG HALL

BY BETSY PRICE

Childcare facilities was on the wish list for an expanded Legislative Hall, along with an access-controlled parking lot linked by a tunnel or legislators or staff could use. Philip Conte with architects **StudioJAED** recommended against the tunnel for a variety of reasons, but the **Legislative Building Committee** voted in **April** to have one anyway.

On June 14, Conte told the committee there's no room for childcare facilities considering the space available, unless other programs were cut or space reallocated, and it would require 35 square feet per child.

If Delaware did include childcare facilities, they would be the only state that did offer that in the state house, according to a survey by Mark Cutrona, deputy director of the Division of Research. Even so, Jesse Chadderdon, chief of staff of the Delaware State Senate Majority

Caucus, asked if the committee had time to appoint a group to study its feasibility. Conte said architects hope to submit some plans within a month. That effectively meant there was no time, especially with the General Assembly in its last two weeks of session and the Fourth of July holidays on their heels.

### CHILDCARE REQUESTS

Chadderdon said he understood what Conte was saying. "I would say that as knowledge of this project has grown, at least in my experience, what I hear from current employees and even members is that childcare is in fact, a pretty big significant need or wish among people who are currently in the building," Chadderdon said.

Laura Wisniewski, chief of staff of the House Democrats, said she understood what Conte was saying, but wanted to echo Chadderdon.

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# REPUBLICANS BLOCK ABSENTEE BALLOT CHANGE BY REFUSING TO VOTE

Supporters say it will allow more people to vote in elections by offering options other than showing up in person on Election Day and removing a requirement that only certain excuses could be used for voting absentee. Republicans maintain that it will encourage illegal voting and allow the majority party (currently not theirs) “carte blanche” power to change rules on a whim, as Rep. Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden said June 13.

Absentee and early voting was a hot topic in the national and state elections of 2020, exacerbated by COVID 19 restrictions. The issues became even more heated when a Delaware Supreme Court struck down a previous attempt at changing absentee voting, saying it could not stand because it violated the constitution.

## ABSENTEE CHANGE RULES

Attempts to change the Delaware constitution have lots of strings attached:

- They have to be passed by a 2/3 majority in the state House or Senate. The Senate has enough Democrats to vote that through with a GOP vote. The House does not. On June 13, the bill only got 16 yes votes.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware House of Representatives Republicans blocked an attempt to alter the constitution’s rules on absentee voting by refusing to vote on it. **Senate Bill 3**, sponsored by Sen. Darius Brown, D-Wilmington, would have eliminated limitations imposed in the state constitution about when an individual could vote. It also would allow the General Assembly to set rules governing absentee ballots and early voting.



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# JAMES FARM EDUCATION BUILDING CONSTRUCTION STARTS

BY BETSY PRICE

The **Delaware Center for the Inland Bays** has broken ground for a three-season education building at the **James Farm** Ecological Preserve in Ocean View. The preserve, managed by the Center on behalf of Sussex County since 1998, is a 150-acre nature preserve located along the Indian River Bay. It's open to the public 365 days a year and last year saw 33,000 visits for education, recreational and research reasons.

Wednesday's ground-breaking officially heralds the start of the preserve's phase II, designed to better accommodate environmental education, restoration, research and community recreation.

## JAMES FARM IMPROVEMENTS

Planned enhancements include trail system improvements, a habitat restoration staging area, expanded storage and maintenance facilities, new interpretive and wayfinding signage, and the building. It's expected to be big enough to hold 70 people and to be equipped with electricity, presentation capabilities, counter space and sinks for lab activities.

"Sussex County is excited to see its long-standing partnership with the Center for the Inland Bays flourish in this project to build a new educational center showcasing the James Farm," said County Councilman Doug Hudson, whose district includes the Preserve. "Im-



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provements like this will help in our collective mission of educating children and adults alike about the importance of the Inland Bays ecosystem here in Sussex County, as well as preserving and protecting this coastal gem for generations to come," he said.

To pay for the James Farm work, the center has started a \$2.8 million capital campaign and is seeking state- and county-level funding, foundation grants, individual and corporate gifts, and in-kind donations of professional services, materials and labor. To donate or learn more, go [HERE](#).



photo credit: Appoquinimink School District



*Education*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# WLC LAUNCHES ANTICIPATED WEBSITE, NEW TRADEMARKED LOGO

BY JAREK RUTZ

The **Wilmington Learning Collaborative** has a new look. “Much like when you meet a stranger for the first time, you don’t have associations with their face, and as you start experiencing that person, you gain those associations over time, so the WLC has just launched its new face,” said John Himics, president of **First Ascent Design**.

The collaborative’s governing board held its last monthly meeting of the 2023-2024 academic year Tuesday night, and the group expressed its excitement for its new comprehensive website, designed by Himics and First Ascent. Laura Burgos, executive director of the WLC, said the team and community have “eagerly anticipated” the website, which contains the organization’s new logo and look.

Created in November 2022, the Wilmington Learning Collaborative is a state agency with millions of dollars

in funding, aiming to improve the educational and societal outcomes for children in nine city elementary schools across Brandywine, Red Clay Consolidated and Christina school districts. It just wrapped up its extended planning year, which included assessments of all schools, evaluating elements like academic performance, school climate, student and teacher needs and more.

Other recent actions include setting metrics of success to ensure any new policies or programming works, contracting a reading specialist group **Reading Assist** and contracting a trauma-informed social service group **Children & Families First**.

The collaborative now looks to begin implementing programs with the \$16 million in state funding it has.

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# MISBEHAVIOR ON SCHOOL BUSES MAY BECOME DISORDERLY CONDUCT OFFENSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Proposed legislation created in response to community complaints about school safety and discipline focuses on trouble in and with school buses. [Senate Bill 330](#), sponsored by Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, adds intentional interference with the operation of a school bus to the offense of disorderly conduct. Infractions include:

- Boarding a school bus and refusing to exist after being lawfully ordered to do so by the school bus driver
- Wrongfully restricting the movement of a school bus
- Threatening the school bus driver or any passenger entering, leaving, or waiting for a school bus

The legislation stems from a recommendation from the state’s Public School Transportation Committee, which said that many school bus drivers encounter irate individuals during their daily routes.

“Incidents of interference with the operation of a school bus have been becoming increasingly frequent, with 108 such incidents reported in the 22-23 school year, and 134 reported in the 23-24 school year,” Sturgeon said. “The type of incidents that our bus drivers are reporting are well described in the bill synopsis, but anecdotally, we have heard of instances such as an adult disobeying the driver’s order and actually entering the bus and walking down the aisle to threaten a student.”

She said since there does not currently exist a law which would effectively deter this type of behavior, when police are called, they say the only thing they can charge is trespassing.

Sen. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Talleyville, asked if there were defined crimes that could lend themselves to law enforcement. Sturgeon read a response she received from the Department of Justice before the hearing.

“Much of the conduct, depending on the specifics of what is said, how it is said, what is done and the effects on the people present, could fall within aspects of under Title 11 [including] harassment, terroristic, threatening and disorderly conduct,” Sturgeon read.

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# DSU PARTNERS WITH GETTY IMAGES TO VISUALLY TELL ITS STORY

BY JAREK RUTZ

**Delaware State University**, a top-ranked HBCU, is using the power of imagery to help preserve its legacy. The school has announced a new content partnership with **Getty Images**, a prominent global visual media company. Getty has a library of more than 477 million assets including stock images, editorial photography, video and music for businesses and consumers.

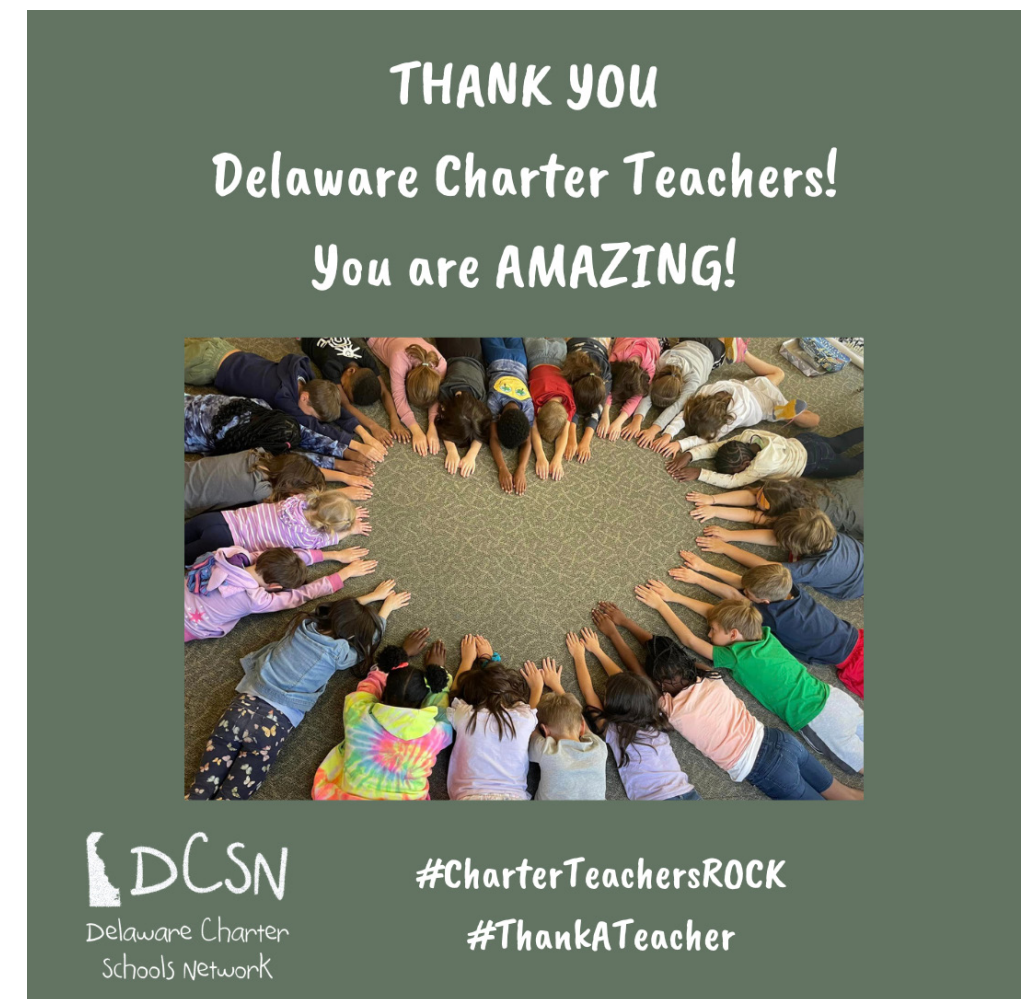
“The world deserves to see the import and rich history of Delaware State University and our ever-careful eye toward the future,” said Tony Allen, DSU president in a statement.

The partnership, he said, dramatically increases the university’s exposure and provides visual representations of its bold vision—the most substantively diverse, contemporary and unapologetic HBCU in the world.

It’s a move to preserve DSU’s rich history, protect its brand and globally extend the reach of its ongoing story as one of the top HBCUs in the country. DSU, which is the only HBCU in the First State, dates back to 1891.

The collaboration involves Getty Images managing the post-production costs to restore thousands of images from DSU’s Archives. Funding comes from the company’s **HBCU Photo Archive Grants Program** provided by the Getty Family and **Stand Together**, a philanthropic company, and the new archival content will be available for licensing via Getty Images’ global distribution platform.

The archive grants program allocates \$500,000 towards the digitization of HBCU photographic archives, and Getty plans to support the digitization of up to



100,000 archival photos from the grant recipients.

“We are excited to partner with Delaware State University and the HBCU community to illuminate the past, empower the present and inspire generations to come,” stated Cassandra Illidge, vice president of global partnerships and executive director of the HBCU Program at Getty Images.

Each HBCU’s photographic archive provides a unique and powerful glimpse into the mission and impact of their institution,” Illidge said.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

photo credit: Nick Halliday



*Sports*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# MINNESOTA VIKINGS, SALLIES STAR HOST FOOTBALL CAMP AT TITUS

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Brian O’Neill, an offensive tackle for the Minnesota Vikings, who attended and played football at Salesianum, hosted a youth football camp for nearly 300 children from second to ninth grade. The camp was held at Titus Sports Academy on Friday, June 14.

The camp consisted of many different football and agility drills that were being taught by fellow Salesianum grad and professional football player Troy Reeder, of the Los Angeles Rams, as well as Titus trainers and some local football coaches and standout players. There was also a special guest appearance from Gov. John Carney.

State championship head coach from Salesianum Gene Delle Donne, was there to help quarterbacks and with him was Smyrna’s starting quarterback Jacob Tiberi. In

the running back drills they had Delaware’s football player of the year Brian “BJ” Alleyne, who led Salesianum in their state championship run.

At the end of camp both Troy and Brian gave speeches to the camp’s invitees. Both wanted the camp goers to make sure they had fun, but enjoyed the drills that they were participating in, which got a loud yell of yes. They also had some other important messages they wanted to tell the kids and while they talked the kids listened.

Reeder told the kids “Whether it’s high school sports, college sports, or professional sports, whatever you decide to do, it takes hard work, discipline and toughness.”

O’Neill told the kids “there is nothing better than being on a team and being part of a team. Create really good



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relationships with your teammates and be the best teammate you can be. Sports are fun and it’s a great way to have fun with your friends so continue to have fun.”

All kids received a camp T-shirt and a Minnesota Vikings bag. O’Neill also surprised all the kids with tickets to the DFRC Blue Gold Football game which is Friday, June 21, at 7 p.m. at the University of Delaware.



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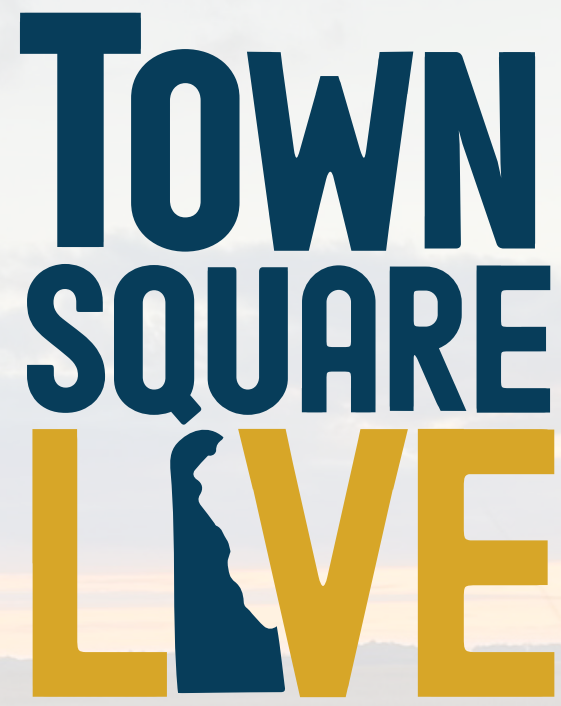
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