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Parents Plead for Safety



Hell's Belles New Bakery in Little Italy



Polytech Over Cape in Boys' Basketball



photo link: Longwood Gardens



Headlines

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LEGISLATORS CALL FOR MEANS TESTING FOR PROPERTY TAX CREDITS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Calls to consider means testing before granting veteran and senior housing tax breaks shocked a legislative committee last month. Delaware's secretary of finance doesn't think an income-based means test for property tax breaks is likely. Even so, Rick Geisenberger did say that a means test based on property values not only could happen, but should.

"Seniors get a lot of benefits under the Delaware income tax law," Geisenberger said. "They get to take an extra personal credit, which is worth an extra \$110 deduction in income taxes. They don't get taxed on their Social Security. They get to deduct up to \$12,500 of their pension when they turn 60. And when you get to the age of 65, you get an extra standard deduction worth \$2,500."

WHAT IS A MEANS TEST?

Means tests usually involve setting limits on whether someone is granted a tax break by looking at income, savings and other factors. Think food stamps, which is

now called SNAP or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In Delaware, a single person can receive a maximum of \$281 a month. That number is \$516 for a household of two, \$740 for a household of three, \$939 for a household of four, and the number continues to rise with each additional person. To be eligible for food stamps, an individual or household must make below a certain income.

In a House Education Committee meeting last month, several representatives brought up the idea of means testing for the 100% disabled veteran tax break. It's an uncapped credit for disabled veterans who live in Delaware for three years. The discussion was prompted by [House Bill 30](#), which would remove the three-year residency requirement.

Expanding the tax credit would cost the state between \$248,887 and \$518,514 in Fiscal Year 2024, according to the bill's fiscal note. It would rise about \$40,000 to

\$70,000 in coming years, the fiscal note said.

The average veteran tax credit is \$1,500, with a range from \$633 to \$4,632. Now, 710 disabled veterans benefit from the credit. With more than three months left to apply for the break, the Finance Department expects a total of 923 beneficiaries this year.

"I understand that it's not always easy to means test, because then you're also talking about hiring staff to process everything," said Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, said at the meeting. "I do hope that we will continue to have conversations about the best way to give relief to people who need it and give the maximum amount to those who need it."

He referenced his 13 years working in Medicaid and other health programs, and said he has concerns about there not being a means test for the senior school property tax credit. Delaware currently caps this credit at \$500 for seniors 65 years and older who have lived in the state for at least 10 years.

Rep. Sean Lynn, D-Dover, called for a means test during January's meeting as well to make sure those who don't need the tax cuts are not taking advantage of the state. Although property taxes help fund schools, districts don't lose a penny when seniors get a tax break.

"Whatever the lost revenue is to the school districts is then 100% reimbursed by the state," Geisenberger said.

Delaware was on the hook for \$28,789,300 for the senior tax credit and \$2.5 million for the disabled veterans one in Fiscal Year 2023, according to the budget bill.

Property taxes are a local, county-designated tax and counties do not have individual income tax information at their disposal, Geisenberger pointed out.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

PARENTS PLEAD FOR SAFETY IN HEATED BRANDYWINE BOARD MEETING

BY JAREK RUTZ

Complaints about safety at **Springer Middle School** at Monday night's **Brandywine School District** meeting devolved into a shouting match between a board member and a parent.

About 12 parents and several students told the Brandywine School District the same thing: They're concerned and outraged about the lack of action after bullying, fights and other events have compromised student and staff safety.

Most of the speakers referred to an incident that involved Springer Middle School Principal Tracy Woodson. It was unclear exactly what occurred, but parents at the meeting said Woodson was trying to break up an altercation between students and ended up on the ground in need of an ambulance and out of work for a week. Efforts were unsuccessful Tuesday to get more details about the incident from the district.

The complaints escalated to the point that board President John Skrobot III threatened to kick people out

of the meeting. "There is a civility clause that says that if you're going to come and be in attendance, you are going to have to act civilly, and we will pursue that, we will pursue that," he said.

Dylan Thompson, a parent, said it's embarrassing that parents have to come to the school board meeting every month to talk about the same issue.

"The smug look you had Superintendent Hohler when she [another parent] talked about safety, half the board is not even concerned and not even looking," Thompson said. "There's no care. What are we going to do to make these kids feel safe?"

He accused the board members of only caring about shaking hands and kissing babies while not doing what they were elected to do—keep staff and students safe.

Board member Ralph Ackerman then began to shout. "You are wrong, excuse me! We certainly do care," he said. "No, I'm not attacking the parents!"

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WILL FOAM CUPS, CONTAINERS BE BANNED LIKE PLASTIC BAGS?

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would ban restaurant use of foam takeout containers, plastic straws and beverage stirrers, is being shopped around for co-sponsors in Dover.

It's the second time that Sen. Trey Paradee, D-Dover, has moved to ban the containers and straws. A similar bill introduced in 2021 passed the Senate but didn't make it to the House floor. The bill would also ban cocktail picks and sandwich picks made of plastic, and would be implemented beginning July 1, 2025, if signed into law.

It does, however, allow customers to request a straw and exempts straws attached to an item such as a juice box and straws being used in a hospital or long-term care facility. Efforts were unsuccessful to reach Paradee for comment.

The [Delaware Restaurant Association](#) isn't thrilled. Again.

"We oppose the bill because we believe in a voluntary approach to any business decision within the restaurant," said association President Carrie Leishman. "More and more businesses are moving away for alternative packaging."

Many restaurants are phasing out less environmentally friendly packages, she said. "The majority of our restaurants have already phased out this type of packaging. Many of them did it as their carry-out business increased and their customer base asked for it," she said.

Smaller ethnic restaurants, many of which continue to use foam containers, are still struggling, she said.

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Business

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BRANDYWINE TOWN CENTER REDEVELOPMENT TWEAKED

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Community feedback has inspired tweaks to plans to redevelop the Brandywine Town Center. “They want to elevate the look, the feel and the offerings” in the area closest to Naamans Road, said Mike Hoffman, of Tarabicos, Grosso & Hoffman, the Delaware land use attorney for the Acadia Realty Trust. “It should be the front door and the heart of the property.”

The center was developed from a single tract—the old Brandywine Raceway, which closed in 1989—but has had varied success in different segments since it opened in 1997.

The back, at the northern side of the Brandywine Hundred property, is a successful power center of big-box stores, like Lowe’s. True, they come and go as chains reconsider their operations: the hhgregg closed in 2017, and the Bed, & Bath and Beyond is having a **closing** sale.

The front, with smaller retailers and a Target, is less successful, Acadia says in acknowledging “tenant retention issues.”

Acadia unveiled its latest plan Wednesday at a meeting co-hosted by the influential Council of Civic Organizations of Brandywine Hundred and New Castle County Councilwoman Dee Durham.

TWO BIG CHANGES

There are two big changes from what Acadia **proposed** last fall, Hoffman said: The community building will be moving east, away from the pond (on the bottom right of the rendering). And the path encircling the pond has been lengthened, widened and rerouted (dark gray on the rendering).

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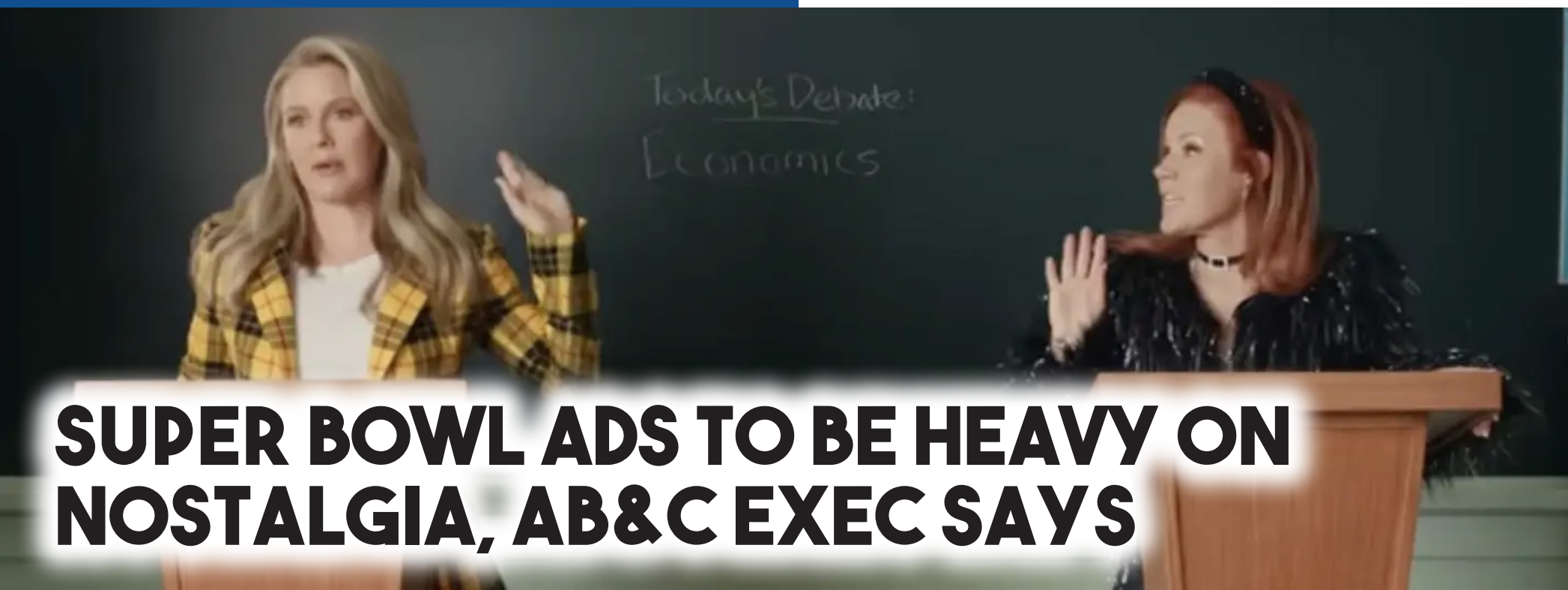
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SUPER BOWL ADS TO BE HEAVY ON NOSTALGIA, AB&C EXEC SAYS

BY SAM HAUT

It costs a lot—\$7 million for 30 seconds—to air an ad during the 2023 Super Bowl. It also costs a lot to make the ad.

“Soon it’s going to cost as much to make the spot as it is to buy the spot,” said Steve Merino, chief creative director at Aloysius Butler & Clark, a Wilmington advertising agency. Part of that increase involves celebrities.

“It used to be a novelty when you would see a celebrity in an ad,” he said. “Now, almost every single ad, you’re gonna have not only one but multiple celebrities.

“They’re trying to outdo each other, go more over the top, higher production, higher production.”

The downside of including more celebrities is that they become more a part of the noise.

“Oftentimes you might not have something new to say, and so they think that tacking on a celebrity is gonna

do that,” he said. “And what happens is everybody has a celebrity, and then they end up not cutting through.”

That said, he predicts “a lot of retro stars” in Super Bowl ads this year. “You’re going to see the people from ‘Breaking Bad’ and you’re gonna see people from ‘Clueless.’ So it’s actually gonna feel almost like a rather nostalgic Super Bowl year.

“Rather than last year which felt like, ‘hey we’re talking about electric vehicles or we’re talking about crypto currency.’ It actually felt very forward-facing. I think this is actually going to be a retrospective year.”

Merino said advertisers focus on three main things: Drawing viewers’ attention “by doing something different;” making viewers feel strong emotions; and making viewers remember the brand.

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CHILD CARE REPORT: FIRST STATE LACKS AFFORDABLE OPTIONS

BY JAREK RUTZ

A new report from [Rodel](#) shows that First State families do not have adequate access to affordable child care.

A coalition of advocacy groups—including Rodel, the [Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children](#), [Delaware Readiness Teams](#) and [First State Pre-K](#)—conducted a survey with hundreds of Delaware families to gauge their feelings about child care services.

Caregivers of children five years and younger shared common complaints about long waitlists, high prices and a lack of options around them. According to the survey, 81% of caregivers said the expenses of child care hold their family back from improving their situation.

The report found that 71% of caregivers looked at multiple places to send their children to, but 37% of them were waitlisted by at least two centers; 21% were flat-out rejected services.

The numbers are worse for parents in Kent or Sussex counties. Seventy-three percent of those people were waitlisted by at least two centers, while only 45% of New Castle County caregivers were.

“Kent and Sussex just don’t have options,” said Toni Dickerson, an administrator at [Sussex Preschools](#) and the chair of the [Child Care Association of Sussex County](#). She helped Rodel with the report. Rodel is a nonprofit focused on transforming public education in Delaware.

“For my centers, specifically, we have five locations and three of those locations are the only center-based options within the zip code,” she said. The Seaford School District only has one full-time child care center in the district, she said.

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Food & Dining

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HELL'S BELLES IS A NEW BAKERY IN WILMINGTON'S LITTLE ITALY

BY PAM GEORGE

Wilmington's Little Italy section has been home to some of Delaware's most iconic bakeries. Take, for instance, DiFonzo's, which opened here in 1945. After the Wilmington site closed in 2004, Black Lab Breads moved in. Meanwhile, Sheila Papa opened Papa's Pastry Shop in 2001. Stephanie Grubb recalls each bakery.

"As a kid, I remember coming down and going to all the different shops on Union Street that aren't here anymore," said Grubb, who lives in Bellefonte. "There's so much history on this street and people always remember it as having bakeries."

Grubb and her partner, Hannah Schoenbach, are keeping the legacy alive. On Feb. 3, the partners held the grand opening for **Hell's Belles Bake Shop** at 600 N. Union St.—Papa's Pastry Shop's old location.

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

Grubb and Shoenbach met while working at De La Coeur, a café specializing in pastries and breakfast. The café had an original location on Lovering Avenue in Wilmington's Forty Acres community and a second location in Independence Mall on Concord Pike.

Although the Forty Acres site had just eight tables, it was regularly packed. The suburban store was just getting started when the COVID pandemic hit, initially shutting down indoor dining. Owners Gretchen and Alex Sianni closed both sites in spring of 2020.

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Government

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BY SAM HAUT

Staff retention in Delaware's prison system was an important issue at Wednesday's Joint Finance Committee budget hearing. Monroe Hudson, the commissioner of the Delaware Department of Correction, told Sen. Laura Sturgeon, a Democrat who represents the Greenville area, that he thinks the department has made progress since 2017. It now has 2,647 full-time employees, the most since at least 2008.

"I can't say our numbers have gotten better, but I am very optimistic," he said. "We have 329 vacancies, about a 17% vacancy rate for correction officers," Hudson said.

The class hired last December was the largest class hired in the last two years, he said. It started with 36 and dipped to about 30. A class that starts in two weeks has enrolled 28.

JFC HEARS ABOUT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION STAFF RETENTION

"I'm optimistic that we're starting to turn the tide and things are gonna get better. We're offering a \$10,000 sign-on bonus. We're offering the cadet lodging if you live past 75 miles of our training facility. We've offered some retention bonuses going back a couple of fiscal years using ARPA funds, trying to keep staff here and keep them from retiring."

RETENTION ISSUES

Several factors contribute to a lack of retention, including less pay and odd hours, he said

"During COVID we saw a tremendous increase in the number of retirements," Hudson said. "We get on the other side of COVID and then we have what they call the great resignation and there's so many job opportunities."

One academy student "went to the NAPA Auto Parts for more money and a more stable schedule, straight day work, weekends off. Young people coming into our industry, whether it be probation and parole, or to be a correction officer, they're gonna have to work some weekends. and correction officers are gonna have to work a lot of evenings. A lot of weekends. So that seems to be a factor as well.

"Because they come on, they work permanent four to 12 with Tuesdays and Wednesdays off, and they see another job opportunity that pays 25 more cents an hour with weekends off, so they're taking that job.

"So I'm hoping...as some job markets slow up, people come back to state government. So hopefully we've turned that corner."

Ruth Briggs King, a Republican who represents the Millsboro area, said before the hearing that there needs to be enough funding for officers and they need to address retention rates.

"Looking at the increase that we see, less in incarceration, more in community corrections, which is parole and probation," she said. "So I want to make sure that we're funding adequately for the increased load that we placed on those officers. You can't decrease the number of those being supervised and not increase those who are doing the supervision and re-entry work."

Patricia May, a retired counselor, spoke during the public comment period to pay raises for counselors and non-uniform staff. When she retired, with 30 years of experience in corrections, she was "only making in the low 40s. If I had not had a husband that could help support me, I wouldn't have been able to afford my own housing. When I looked at the pay scale just now, it looks like we're still extremely low."

Citing her duty during the 2017 Vaughn prison riot, "I was in just as dangerous a situation as the officers."

[READ MORE HERE](#)



DUI PATROLS INCREASE FOR SUPER BOWL, ST. PATRICK'S DAY

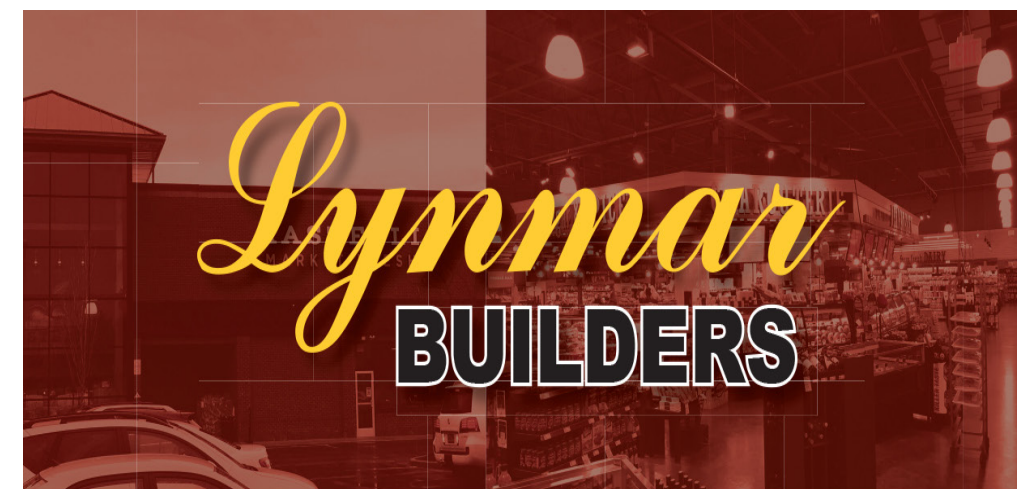
BY KEN MAMMARELLA

High-visibility DUI patrols are being increased throughout Delaware, starting with the long Super Bowl weekend and running through the St. Patrick's Day weekend. That's Feb. 9 through March 19.

In 2022, there were 1,175 crashes, 103 serious injuries and 4,655 arrests involving impaired driving in Delaware. From Feb. 10-14 (last year's Super Bowl weekend), there were 72 impaired driving arrests.

The **Delaware Office of Highway Safety** is calling the campaign "Fans Don't Let Fans Drive Drunk."

"If you're going out to a Super Bowl party and you plan to drink alcohol, make sure you plan to have a designated driver," Kimberly Chesser, director of the Delaware Office of Highway Safety, said in announcing the campaign, which also involves State Police and local police agencies.



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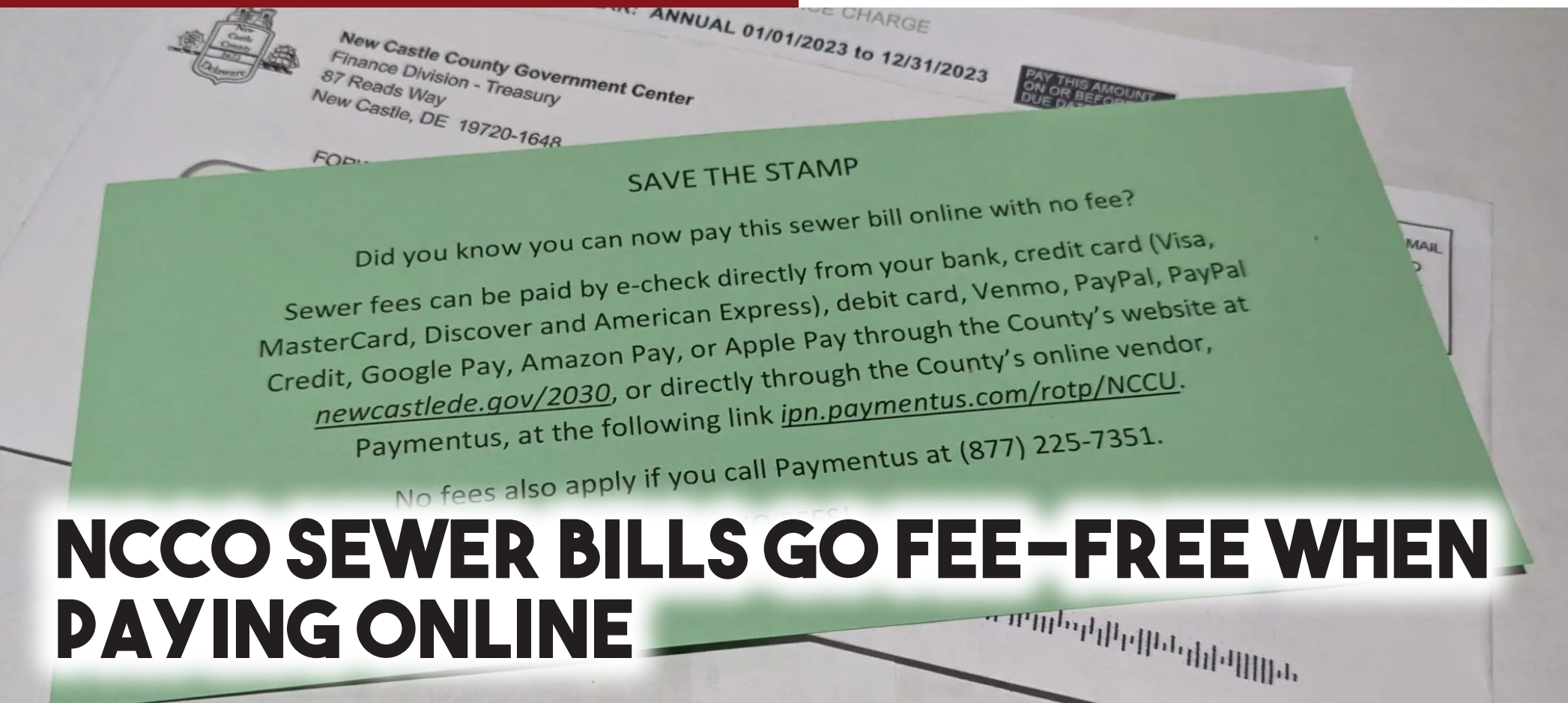
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NCCO SEWER BILLS GO FEE-FREE WHEN PAYING ONLINE

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

New Castle County has started to accept credit cards and digital wallets for sewer bills—without any extra fees to users.

“NO FEES!” the county announced on a insert on attention-grabbing green paper in the bills for sewer service charges that just went out.

As the insert explains, the county has an arrangement with a company called Paymentus that calls for no extra fee for consumers paying sewer bills by “e-check from your bank, credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express), debit card, Venmo, PayPal, PayPal Credit, Google Pay, Amazon Pay or Apple Pay.” And, as the insert states, consumers save 63 cents in postage.

The change, which started July 1, is “to encourage/promote convenient/affordable/accessible online payment options,” said county spokesman Brian Cunningham.

“All sewer payments are FREE OF CHARGE,” the county says on its [website](#), noting in the next sentence that tax payments are free only if they are by e-check or by automated clearing house, known as ACH.

County tax bills paid by most digital systems, however, will continue to have a convenience fee. Credit card fees are 2.35% of the transaction, another [page](#) says.





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BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Proposals for a notoriously congested bridge (the Tyler McConnell, in North Wilmington), Delaware’s busiest intersection (Hares Corner, aka U.S. Route 13 and Delaware Route 273) and Interstate 95 in Cecil County highlight the latest [regional transportation plan](#).

The Wilmington Area Planning Council collected comments at an [open house](#) Wednesday, Feb. 8 in Newark and online through March 6. [Registration](#) is requested for the event, titled 2023 Our Town.

Speakers at the meeting include Rebecca Higgins, senior policy advisor at U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Work, on funding an equitable system; and Todd Litman, founder of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, on developing innovative solutions to transportation problems.

The plan runs through 2050 and is the latest in a series going back to 1996. “Only transportation projects

TRANSPORTATION PLAN EYES TYLER MCCONNELL, HARES CORNER, I-95

found in the RTP are eligible for federal funding,” the council says in introducing the plan. “It is a living plan, subject to continual revision (at least every four years) and a tool for informed transportation and policy decisions that reflect public views.”

The council is proposing several policy “tweaks” in this update.

- “Eliminate all traffic-related deaths and severe injuries, while increasing safety, health and mobility for all.
- Support national defense preparedness and data sharing.
- Reduce carbon emissions via a new performance target for lower vehicle miles traveled by 2030.

“There are more than 100 projects on the draft ‘fiscally constrained’ (or financially reasonable given the forecasted funding) project list in New Castle County and about a dozen in Cecil County,” the council says.

Of course, proposals, priorities and prices change. Here’s a look at the ones that are the most significant (they’re also the most expensive).

Roads

- Widening Interstate 95 through Cecil County, \$1.2 billion estimated cost, in service 2050.
- Hares Corner grade separation, \$469 million, 2045. The traffic lights on U.S. 13 and Delaware 273—Delaware’s busiest intersection—could be replaced by an overpass and cloverleaf ramps, like what now

exists at U.S. 13 and Delaware Route 141, a mile or so to the north. “We would expect that the DelDOT planning process will evaluate traditional designs as well as the innovative concept presented in 2020 and [2021 Bike Delaware events](#),” said Heather Dunigan, principal planner for the agency.

- Widening Delaware Route 1, U.S. 40 to Road A (near Christiana Mall), \$300 million, 2036. Long-term safety improvements and congestion mitigation by widening the highway.
- [Maryland 222](#), U.S. Route 40 to Maryland Route 275, and the I-95 interchange, \$270 million, 2045. Adding new lanes in each direction and reconstructing the interchange near Perryville, Maryland.
- [I-95/Delaware Route 896](#) interchange work, \$257 million, 2026. Ramp realignments and other geometric improvements to address congestion and crashes caused by merging and diverging through, entering and exiting traffic.
- [Widening Route 1](#), Tybouts Corner to Road A (near Christiana Mall), \$115 million, 2024. Short-term safety improvements and congestion mitigation by widening nine miles from just south of I-95 to Tybouts Corner.

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Education

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LEARNING COLLAB TALKS BUDGET, EXECUTOR DIRECTOR SALARY

BY JAREK RUTZ

Wilmington Learning Collaborative officials grappled over budget plans and filled two vacant council positions Thursday night in their second meeting since forming. The term length for those positions is two years.

Shanika Perry, a Brandywine school board member on the governing council, was appointed by Gov. John Carney to serve as the chair of the collaborative, which is dedicated to helping the city's elementary and middle school children learn and achieve more.

Christina's Donald Patton, who is Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki's appointee to the council, was selected as the vice-chair.

After in-depth discussions about establishing bylaws simmered down with none being approved, the group refocused on how it would finalize its operational budget and its school program budget.

Delaware's operating budget allocates \$7 million annually for the Collab. At Carney's State of the State address last week, he recommended an additional \$3 million towards it for Fiscal Year 2024, which starts July 1.

Kim Klein, who works in operational support for the Department of Education, told the council members that they shouldn't bank on additional funds each year. Any spending over the \$7 million mark should be a one-time allocation, rather than built into their yearly spending, he said.

The group voted to create a budget committee tasked with outlining their initial budget. Co-chaired by Jennie Yeow, Red Clay's parent representative, and Christina's Alethea Smith-Tucker, the committee will include the chief financial officers from Brandywine, Christina and Red Clay, the three districts that make up the Collab.

Estimated allocations must be submitted to the Department of Education by May 15, and final allocations by July 15.

Although the meeting was supposed to focus on creating bylaws, Matt Lintner, lawyer for the Governor's Office, told the council that bylaws aren't crucial right now.

"I would want bylaws at some point within six months from now," he said. "If I was you guys. I would not worry about it right now. I would just get an executive director and start having a couple of meetings and figure out what the issues are that you're trying to navigate around and how bylaws might help you or not."

Brandywine Superintendent Lincoln Hohler said some policies definitely should be put into place, especially when the Collab is handling millions of dollars in funding. Patton agreed.

"We don't want to just spend \$7 million, \$10 million or \$17 million and then be sitting back at the table saying we had no progress," he said. Leadership matters to the success of the learning collaborative, he said, and the council needs to hire a strong, qualified leader.

The group is still developing a job description for the executive director. After comparing averages of admins and directors throughout the three districts, the council voted on a starting salary range between \$156,000 to \$176,000.

Near the end of the meeting, Yeow asked the council to make sure they consider Latino individuals for the executive director position and other roles the council might need to fill moving forward.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

APPO TO REVIEW SCHOOL SAFETY, INCREASE SECURITY

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Appoquinimink School District will review its safety measures and increase security at entry points for events. The changes follow a gun being found Monday night in a hallway when Appoquinimink High School was hosting a basketball game against Tri-State Christian Academy.

“The adults and the students handled that situation very well, thanks to the training that they’ve been given,” Superintendent Matt Burrows told the district board on Tuesday.

With about four minutes left in the game, a disturbance near the bathrooms prompted an administrator and two State Police officers on extra duty to go into the hallway.

“We did have video in the area, so we were able to quickly identify who the alleged assailant was at that time and were also able to identify that, during the melee, a gun did fall out of the pocket of the individual and landed on the floor,” he said.

The gun then appeared to be kicked and it went off, with the bullet striking a wall. No one was hurt.

Delaware State Police Detective Brian Timmons is leading the **investigation**.

“Thus unfortunately is not just something that impacts our school district,” Burrows said. “It impacts our community, where we have seen increased violence and gun violence...We’re going to do everything that we can do.”

Last month, a 16-year old male was charged in connection to a **fired gun** in Colonial’s William Penn High School. In September 2022, Appoquinimink School District and Howard High School changed their **football admissions policies** in response to a shooting that took place right off of Appoquinimink High’s campus during a game, and crowds storming the exits and hopping fences at a Howard game.



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12 STUDENTS COMPETE FOR DELAWARE POETRY CROWN MARCH 2

BY JAREK RUTZ

Padua's Julia Nowaczyk is looking forward to reading two poems to a packed Smyrna Opera House in three weeks.

"It means a lot to me when I get to share poetry," said Nowaczyk, a sophomore. "The poems I have picked for this competition center around a theme of community and family."

She is one of 12 First State students who are in Delaware's 2023 Poetry Out Loud state final competition, which will be held in-person for the first time in three years on Thursday, March 2. The finalists are:

- Bekah Booth, Delaware Valley Classical School
- Maiss Hussein, Hodgson Vo-Tech High School
- Emily Roth, MOT High School
- Aiden Morris, Mount Sophia Academy
- Lale Ergen, Newark Charter High School
- Julia Nowaczyk, Padua Academy
- Hunter Brown, Red Lion Christian Academy
- Abigail Ehemann, Saint Mark's High School
- Kaylee Rathbone, Sanford School
- Joelle Caternor, Smyrna High School
- Morgan Burnett, Sussex Central High School
- Ololade Olubowale, Tatnall School

They all advanced through their school competition after selecting and reciting works from an anthology of more than 1,200 poems.

The winner gets \$200 and will advance to the national finals in Washington, D.C., from May 8-10, with \$50,000 in awards on the line.

From her performance, Nowaczyk hopes people take away the love and admiration she has for those whose words she shares with the world. She will read "Genetics" by Jacqueline Woodson and "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus in the state final.

Poetry Out Loud is a national arts education program and annual competition for high school students. The final is open to the public and is free, but seating is limited to 250 people.





OPERATION HAIR CARE: CUTS, TRAINING FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

On Tuesday a steady procession of elementary students climbed into chairs at the **Paul Mitchell The School** and were transformed from apprehensive to glowing. The students were participating in Colonial School District's Operation Hair Care, a program that offers homeless students help with hair and makeup styling. It's also for students whose families are financially challenged.

It involved about 15 younger students who received shampoos and hair cuts, and about 15 William Penn High School students, all of whom hope to go into hair care, makeup and beauty.

The younger students were mesmerized by colorful drapes fastened around them for the cuts. One bright yellow included cartoons of jungle animals and really popped against the black of the studio.

It was an honor to be able to work with the kids, said Monique Lusby, a former student at Paul Mitchell.

"They're so excited and happy that it's their first time here," she said. "I love it. It's just a great day and it feels good to give back to the kids and make them feel great."

Senior Chemdiya Apere was thrilled to be working with Paul Mitchell professionals. She was able to tour the studio and listen to talks about choosing hair and makeup to suit your own hair.

HISTORY OF OPERATION HAIR CARE

Lauren Wilson, public information officer of Colonial School District, started Operation Hair Care in 2018.

"It started out of a conversation I was having with a family crisis therapist," Wilson said. "We were simply walking down the hall and a student that passed by had his hood up."

The therapist told her the child likely didn't want anyone to see his hair because he lived in a motel and his family couldn't afford to get it cut.



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Wilson, who believes the adage of when you look good, you feel good holds true, said it made her think about how a student's hair affects self esteem and social behavior in and out of the classroom.

In its first year, Operation Hair Care involved only Wilson's personal hair stylist, who cut a handful of students' hair. Now, dozens of students are served, with a trip to the hair studio four times a year.

It's a win-win, as the Paul Mitchell students need to fulfill a certain number of community service hours.

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ODESSA STUDENTS SEND BIRDS OFF WITH 'FLY, EAGLES FLY' PERFORMANCE

BY JAREK RUTZ

What do Odessa's choir, orchestra and band students have in common, besides a love of music?

The Philadelphia Eagles.

And to express their support, Appoquinimink's **Old State Elementary** and Odessa Middle and High School ensembles performed the team's fight song "Fly, Eagles Fly" Tuesday. The students wanted to give the NFC Champion Philadelphia Eagles a proper send off to Super Bowl LVII in Arizona. In five days, they play the AFC Champion Kansas City Chiefs.

"This day is about unity in our schools and it's awesome for us to come together for the Birds in their most important week," said Brian Endlein, **Odessa High School's** band director. "This is a fun way to kind of send them our well wishes."

"Having multiple groups from different schools come together is not something we usually get to do," said

Odessa High junior Angel Wilson. "So this united day allows us to not just listen to each other, but see where everyone is in their playing abilities, which evokes excitement."

He joked that although the school's mascot is the duck, birds of a feather flock together.

"When we found out we were all playing together, we all thought it was the coolest thing," he said. "You don't get to see 250 students come together often to not only display their musical gifts, but to celebrate the success of our football team."

Voni Perrine, principal of Odessa High, conducted the musicians eloquently, with a sharp, uniform silence abruptly following the student chanting "E-A-G-L-E-S EAGLES!"

"Our school values include being united, creative, determined and kind scholars, and we were able to put that on display in a joyous event," she said. "We have staff who are huge Eagles fans who helped put this together, and the students are excited too, so the performance was a great way to highlight our unity."

The Eagles will be donning their midnight green jerseys, the same ones they wore when they won the first Super Bowl in franchise history, defeating Tom Brady and the New England Patriots 41-33 five years ago.

Odessa High special education math teacher Kyle Curry, who's built like Eagles center Jason Kelce and has

a similar burly beard, mimicked his doppelganger by rocking a mummer costume during the performance.

He was copying Jason Kelce's now famous mummer costume worn during the 2018 victory parade.

"I bought it off Amazon," Curry said, "C'mon, I just had to!"



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BIG PLAYS HIGHLIGHT POLYTECH RALLY OVER CAPE

BY GLENN FRAZER

There was plenty to cheer for at Thursday night's boys basketball game as No. 3 Polytech hosted Cape Henlopen. In the end, the home team Panthers prevailed 77-72 with pressure defense and clutch performances in the final quarter, most notably by Kyle Gamber and Brett Shelton-Hoskins.

The visiting Vikings shook off a slow start and came to life in the second quarter as they "pushed the pace" and converted five shots beyond the arc to thrill their boisterous fans. Polytech held a 26-23 lead at the 5:15 mark of the second quarter when Cape went on an 18-2 run to take the largest lead of the night at 41-28. In that three-minute span, Drew Zimmerman drained two three-pointers, assisted on two other shots and made a nifty "ball-fake" layup for eight points. Also contributing during the "run" were Tyrone Tolson (four points) with fast-break buckets, while Kam Trammell and Trey Leggins buried long-range shots as the Cape fans just about raised-the-roof!

The Vikings took a seven-point lead at the half and the two teams battled evenly in the third quarter, setting up the final eight minutes of play with the Panthers trailing by five. A critical portion of the game occurred when Xavier Brewington was whistled for his fourth personal foul midway through the third, and was not inserted back into the lineup until 6:15 left in the game. In his absence, Gamber, Dorrell Little and Shelton-

Hoskins picked up their game. They helped the Panthers keep within a two-possession game. Polytech head coach John Pierce told us after the game, "We have a next man up philosophy...this group is resilient."

When Brewington returned, Cape's Trammell hit a "three" to put the Vikings up 64-58 with 6:10 to go. Then the Panthers started their rally. Little converted a layup, Shelton-Hoskins drained a critical shot beyond the arc and Gamber converted two traditional three-point-plays to put Polytech ahead 70-68 with barely two minutes left. Following an empty Cape trip down the floor, Shelton-Hoskins calmly hit another, and possibly the "biggest" deep shot of the night to put Polytech up 73-68. Zimmerman made a mid-range jumper to pull Cape within 73-70 with 1:09 to go, but the Panthers would win the game at the foul line in the end.

Coach Pierce acknowledged the Cape effort and his team's comeback in the face of adversity, "We knew Cape would come to play. This was very, very big for us to face this stress and pressure."

Cape was led by 30 points from Zimmerman, Trey Leggins added 11, while Odin Potemski scored 10 points. The Vikings fall to 11-6 with games left against Lake, Smyrna and Middletown.

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SUSSEX CENTRAL CLAIMS HENLOPEN NORTH MAT TITLE



BY BENNY MITCHELL

Coaches normally going into a match with a script of how they expect a dual meet to go. Before the midway point of Wednesday night's match both coaches probably abandoned that script as the match saw two big upsets.

Sussex Central won eight of the 14 bouts as it claimed the Henlopen Conference Northern Division dual meet championship for the first time since 2011 with a 37-27 victory.

"I told them before the match things aren't always going to go our way, we're going to meet adversity, somebody is going to lose that we didn't expect to lose and I challenged the boys this week, who is going to step up," Sussex Central head coach Shane Miller said.

Adversity struck early for the Golden Knights as number two-ranked Talan Savage at 132 pounds faced

number four-ranked Nathan Moore. Savage led the match 6-2 in the third period when Moore scored a reversal and put Savage to his back. Moore recorded the pin in 5:26. The Riders' Craig Dixon followed with an 8-2 decision at 138 pounds as Caesar Rodney took a 9-0 lead to start the evening.

The Golden Knights got on the board with a decision by Andrew Long at 144 pounds before fifth-ranked Jadyn Drummond pulled the second upset of the night at 150 pounds. The Riders' number two-ranked Cody Waski scored an early takedown in the match. Drummond scored a reversal and turned that into a pin in 1:43 tying the match at 9-9.

Cameron Cataldi responded with a pin in 1:55 at 157 pounds for Caesar Rodney, but the Golden Knights

reeled off three straight pins by Justyn Craig (165), Gabe Cannon (175) and Ivan Neal (190), giving Sussex Central a 27-15 lead just past the midway point of the match.

In a back and forth battle at 215 the Riders' Owyn Meister recorded a pin in 4:26 as Caesar Rodney closed the gap to 27-21.

The final four bouts went back and forth between the two teams as Mike Harmon won a 1-0 decision at 285 pounds and Evan Cordrey won a 3-2 decision at 126 pounds for the Golden Knights, while Alex McEvoy won an 8-4 decision at 106 pounds and Nick Moore scored a 4-2 decision at 120 pounds for Caesar Rodney.

"My seniors stepped up tonight," Miller said.

Caesar Rodney finished the dual meet season 10-2 and will await where it will be seeded in the upcoming DIAA Division I dual meet state tournament.

"It's tough to be on the short end of the match, but we had some guys go out there battle and step up when we needed it tonight. The atmosphere was electric which is great. We will get in the room and get back to work and prepare for the state duals and conference tournament," Caesar Rodney head coach Trey Mitchell said.

Sussex Central finished 20-0 and should be the number one seed when the wrestling committee meets on Sunday as they have defeated all of the teams that should fill out the tournament field.

"It will be nice to go into there with that number one seed, but like I said anybody can beat anybody on any given day especially this year," Miller said.





MIDDLETOWN DEFENDS HOME COURT IN DOMINATING EFFORT

BY GLENN FRAZER

The top-ranked Middletown Cavaliers and the No. 4 St. Georges Seahawks struggled to score points in the first half of their boys basketball game Monday night. At the end of the first quarter, the Cavaliers held an 8-2 lead and were up just 17-8 after the opening 16 minutes of play. In the locker room, head coach Azeez Ali told his players they were “playing at the Hawks pace in the first half, and wanted the Cavs to increase the defensive pressure while also making certain they get into a better rhythm with jump shots.”

Coach Ali’s team followed his instructions to perfection, outscoring the Hawks 15-3 to start the third quarter, grabbing a lead of 32-11, and never looking back in a 64-28 win.

Back-to-back three-pointers by Jaden Rogers and Marcus Edmond helped spark the run that basically put the game “on ice.” Rogers scored nine of his 13 points in that third quarter with several power moves in the paint.

As they did on Saturday with a convincing win over “top 10” Howard (77-48), Middletown shot extremely well at the free throw line against SGT, converting 12-of-13 attempts (92%). On Saturday, the Cavs made 19-of-23 at the line (83%). There are certain aspects of the game that help guide teams to success and a “deep run” in the postseason. Those include solid defense, efficient free-throw shooting and good ball movement. The Cavaliers are proving they have the ingredients to have such success, but when asked in his post-game interview,



coach Ali told us, “to quote the late, great Kobe Bryant, ‘The job’s not done yet.’ We’ve played well in the regular season, but haven’t achieved any of our goals yet.”

Middletown improved to 14-2 with the win and 6-0 in the Blue Hen Conference Flight A. Edmond led a balanced effort with 14 points. Rogers put up 13, Amir Hite added 12 and Jaiden McGhee supplied 10 points plus a “two-handed slam” in the first half of play.

The Cavaliers have a four-game winning streak following the loss to Salesianum in late January and have games left at Mount Pleasant and Cape, sandwiched around their “Senior Day” home game with Caravel on Feb. 18. That game with Caravel can be seen on Delaware Live-302 Sports.

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TATNALL, SALESIANUM TAKE DIAA INDOOR TRACK TITLES

BY GLENN FRAZER

The 2022-23 Delaware high school indoor track and field season came to a close Feb. 4 in Landover, MD.

The true 200 meter oval at Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex was the perfect site as the Tatnall girls and Salesianum boys secured the team titles. Tatnall accumulated 131 points to finish ahead of Padua with 107 points, while Smyrna and Saint Mark's tied for third place with 39 points each. The Sals recorded 98 points to win the boys championship. Alexis I. duPont took second with 58 points and Cape Henlopen was a close third with 57.

One of the closest races of the day was the girls' 4x800m relay as Padua and Conrad battled neck-and-neck until the Pandas pulled away down the final

straight to win in a time of 9:41.96, just three seconds ahead of the Conrad team (9:44.78). The winning foursome for Padua were: Anna Bockius, Katherine Bockius, Alessandra DeAscanis and Teresina DeAscanis. The Conrad team consisted of Jordan Blanck, Karen Tanner, Mallory Holloway and Alyssia Napier.

Not to be outdone, the boys' 4x800 race was equally exciting as the Caesar Rodney team of Maddox Downs, Patrick Craig, Evan Easton and Ian Cain ran a "blistering" 8:23.25, four and a half seconds faster than Archmere Academy. The Auks' time of 8:28.00 was turned in by Julain Facciolo, Nicholas Donelson, Camilo Alvarez and Richie Angiullo.

Salesianum edged Sussex Central in the 4x200 relay

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with a time of 1:31.05 to the Golden Knights' time of 1:31.07. The Spartans from Saint Mark's took first in the girls' 4x200 relay.

In the sprint events, Juliana Balon from Padua won the 55m dash while Tatnall's Adrianna Montgomery finished first in the 55m hurdles. On the boys' side, Yougandy Mauricette from Sussex Tech won the 55m hurdles and Sussex Central's Timothy Wright took first in the 55m dash.

Cape Henlopen swept the top three spots in the pole vault with Bailey Fletcher (13') taking first, Edward Houck (12') was second and their teammate Brady Mauro (11'-6') vaulted into the third position.

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