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**March 5, 2023**

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# Headlines

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# CHARTER SCHOOLS SUE HOLODICK OVER SPECIAL ED PAYMENTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#), 11 charter schools and the Delaware secretary of education are waiting on a judge's ruling in a lawsuit about \$4 million in tax revenue the charters say they are due.

The network and the 11 charter schools sued Education Secretary Mark Holodick in Kent County Superior Court in July to get the money and to remove the secretary of education from the process approving the payments. The charters claim that Holodick failed to perform his legal duty to verify and certify their invoices and so they were not paid. State code requires the secretary of education to verify the invoices within 20 days of receiving them.

Representatives of the network and the Department of Education declined to comment on the case and even to define "special services."

Holodick did reference the lawsuit in the February State School board meeting when a member asked him

about rewriting the language for licensure and certification.

"At some point, we will," he said. "I think we're going to wait until this lawsuit is over between the charter schools and the traditional districts that's active...I think it makes sense for us to wait until that lawsuit plays out."

The districts are not defendants in the suit. Only Holodick is.

Delaware codes says special services include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, early identification and assessment of disabilities, special counseling services, developmental, corrective or supportive services that may assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education.

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# SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE LISTINGS DELAYED BY BACKGROUND CHECKS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The deadline for people to file to run for the May 9 school board elections has passed, but it may take weeks until the final list of candidates is published.

The problem: A 2021 [law](#) that requires school board candidates to complete a criminal background check and a child registry check. These must be completed before candidates' names can be posted on the Department of Elections' [website](#).

“New Castle County in particular has up to a four-week delay in turning around those background checks,” said Laurisa Schutt, executive director of [First State Educate](#), a local advocacy group that wants to catalyze radical change in education by activating the power of Delawareans. Rather than listing “pending” for candidates who are waiting on checks to be completed, the state’s elections page omits them.

“Now the public has no idea who is actually running,” Schutt said. Efforts were not successful Friday afternoon

to get a comment from the Delaware Department of Elections. First State Educate knows of 10 candidates whose names have not yet shown up among election filings.

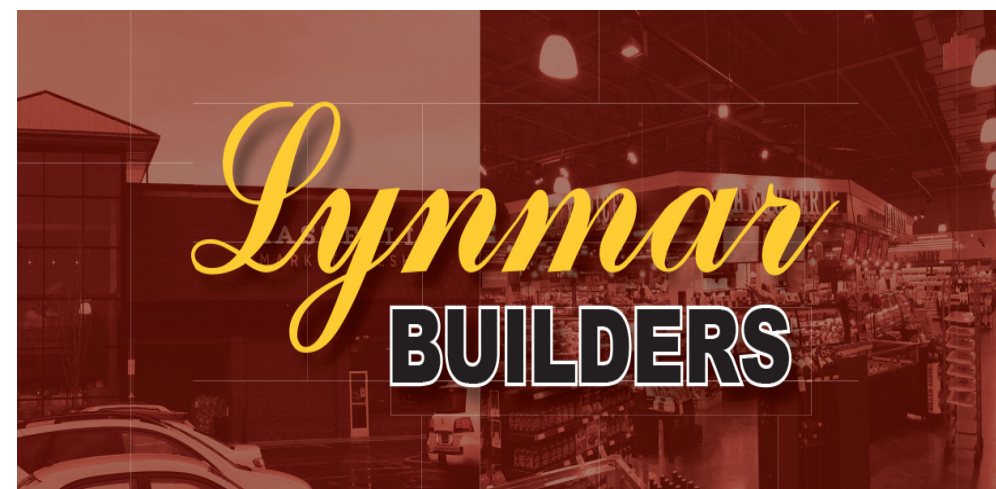
School board seats’ four-year terms are staggered so all members aren’t running at once. Last year, 42 people ran for school district board seats. On Friday, only 26 candidates were listed. Even for the incumbents who are re-registering, there is a \$79 filing fee which includes the background check.

“That isn’t communicated,” Schutt said. That’s added to confusion, she said.

There’s also not enough places to have a background check done, Schutt said. New Castle County especially has very few centers that provide backgrounding, which could be a deterrent for people to run, she said.

The final list of candidates probably won’t be available for several weeks, Schutt predicted.

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# DELAWARE OFFERS SECOND ROUND OF CHILD CARE WORKER BONUSES

BY JAREK RUTZ

Tiny Tots Childcare Director Jessica Burns got good news Wednesday: A second round of relief checks for Delaware's child care professionals. That will help her workers pay for their certifications, which cost between \$300 and \$500, she said.

"This definitely is a retention effort by the state," she said. "My staff is very, very excited and hoping to get to work on them very soon so that they can see those bonuses. It definitely helps them out a lot."

Wednesday, the [Department of Education](#) announced the second round of bonuses, this time for \$700, for child care workers.

"This is an important step to help families work and support vital day care workers," said Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown. It's a highly competitive market,

she said, and most providers are small businesses that struggled through forced COVID-19 mandates.

The state is using federal American Rescue Plan funding—which earlier provided more than \$120 million in relief for Delaware's child care industry—in an effort to keep early childhood educators in the state during the ongoing national teacher shortage.

The bonuses grew out of concerns about child care that popped up during COVID-19 when centers closed, forcing some parents to quit their jobs. It's also become a crisis among workers, who often cannot find affordable childcare so they can work. The problem existed before the pandemic, but grew much worse during it.

To be eligible for the bonus, child care professionals must:

- Work directly with children or provide on-site sup-

port in a licensed family child care home, large family child care home, early care and education or school-age center in Delaware

- Work at least 20 hours per week
- Have worked for at least 90 days at the time of the application
- Be at least 18 years of age or older

Burns said state regulations are going to change and require child care centers to employ only Child Development Associates in coming years.

"That's going to hurt the childcare field, so the state needs to give some incentives for people to get that classwork done and stay in the field," she said.

In summer 2022, the Education Department dished out \$1,000 checks. All bonuses are considered taxable income. The application for round two will be open for two months with all submissions due April 30.

"I'm happy that the state is using ARPA funds to encourage people to stay in the field and to thank them for the work they do," said Sen. Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown. "Having a strong child care system allows parents to secure and keep good-paying jobs which benefits their families and our local economies."

After being verified, licensed child care professionals can expect to receive their payments within 10 days if they choose direct deposit or up to 30 days if they choose to receive a check by mail. To apply for the bonus, click

[HERE](#).







photo link: [Out & About](#)

Culture

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# 'BOOK OF MORMON' FOR \$25? PLAYHOUSE OFFERS TICKET LOTTERY

BY BETSY PRICE

Feeling lucky, Delaware theatergoers?

You might want to try your hand in a lottery for \$25 tickets to “The Book of Mormon” when it hits the Playhouse on Rodney Square March 10-12. The digital lottery is a producer tradition at venues that host the national tour of the hysterical comedy. They have attracted as many as 800 entries at some locations.

At the Playhouse, tickets run \$40 to \$99 and have sold well. The Grand, which operates the Playhouse, will partner with digital ticket lottery platform [Lucky Seat](#) for the lottery. Participants must have an account with [luckyseat.com](#) to enter. Entries for shows at The Playhouse will open at 12 p.m. on Friday, March 3, and close Wednesday, March 8, at 10:30 a.m.

## LOTTERY WINNERS

Lucky Seat will send an email to winners at 11 a.m. on

Wednesday, March 8. Winners will have a limited window to purchase and claim their tickets, until 3 p.m. on Wednesday, March 8. If all tickets have not been claimed, drawings will continue at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. until all tickets have been claimed.

Tickets are subject to availability and a limit of two tickets per patron. In some cases, tickets may be partial view and, while every effort will be made to seat multiple seats together, there is a chance that seats may be split up. Tickets can be picked up at the Box Office at The Playhouse on Rodney Square with a photo ID starting two hours before the performance time.

“The Book of Mormon,” which won nine Tony Awards, features book, music and lyrics by Trey Parker and Matt Stone, who also created “South Park,” and Robert Lopez, who helped create “Avenue Q.”

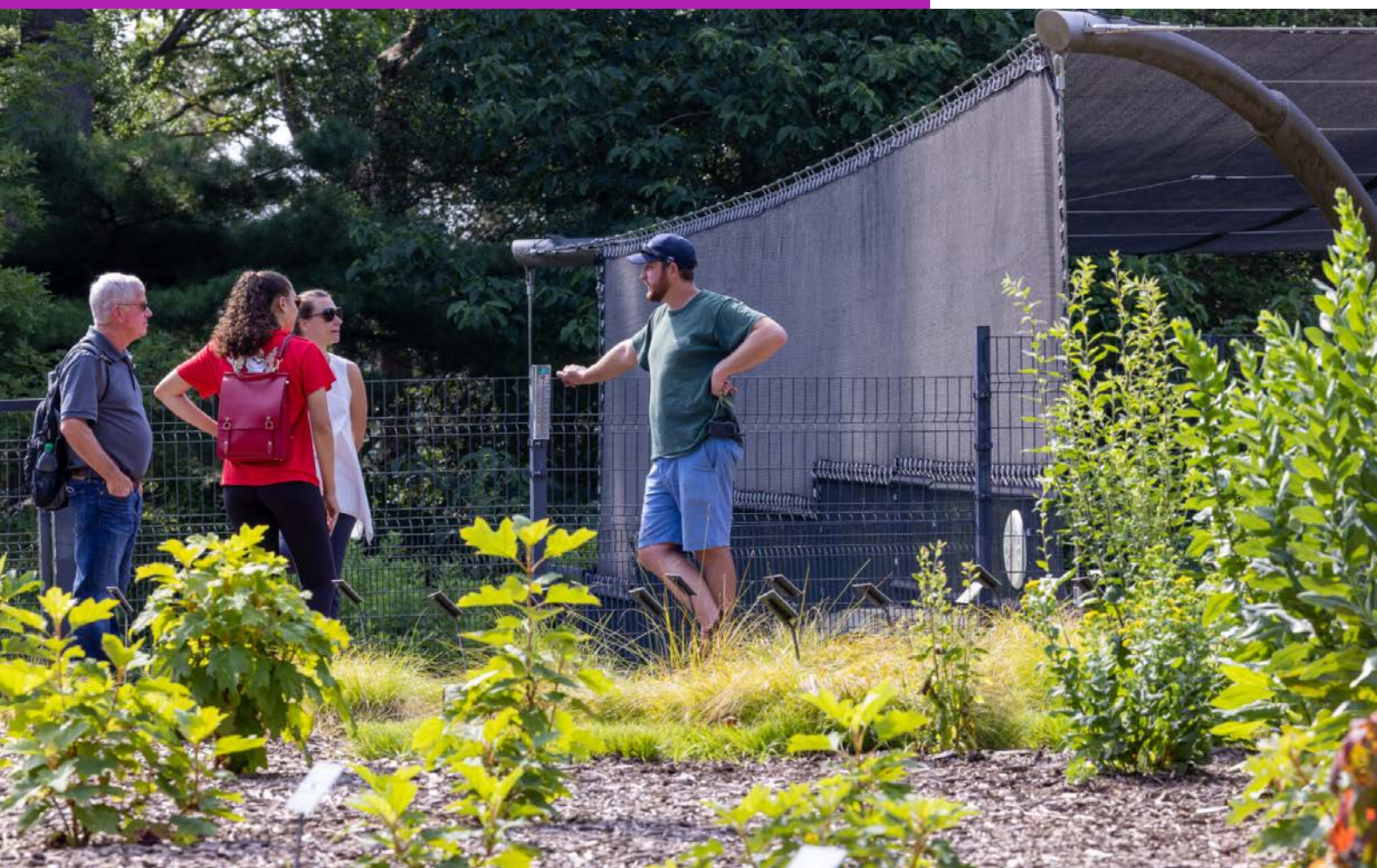
When the show does open in the Playhouse, it will be almost 12 years to the day since the irreverent tale of two missionaries serving in Africa became a Broadway sensation with seats selling for \$400 and up. It’s still bringing in crowds on Broadway.

The show drew a lot of attention for its dissection of religion. Even so, the Church of the Latter Day Saints embraced the production and even advertises in its Broadway Playbill.

A few regular tickets are still available at The Grand box office (818 N. Market Street, Wilmington), by going to [www.BroadwayinWilmington.org](http://www.BroadwayinWilmington.org), or by calling 302-888-0200.







BY BETSY PRICE

Mt. Cuba Center's latest plant research report offers home gardeners some options for turf grass-like plants that can be moved and work well in full shade or full sun. A five-year study of *Carex* plants, also known as sedges, found that many of the 70 tested were remarkably resilient.

"Some of the biggest surprises were just the adaptability of these plants," said Sam Hoadley, Mt. Cuba Center's manager of horticultural research. "We really kind of put them through their paces."

Mt. Cuba's trial garden uses middle-of-the-road average garden soils, he pointed out. The average home gardener should consider sedges as a tough, adaptable and versatile group of plants that will also provide food and shelter for wildlife, he said. In addition to providing ground cover like grass, they can be massed in large groups.

"Several different species kind of mixed together is really great," Hoadley said. "It's a very interesting look that gives you lots of different textures from plants with very

# SEDGES SHOULD BE WELCOME ADDITION TO GARDENS

fine textured foliage and plants with very coarse textured foliage. Two different kinds of foliage really contrast beautifully when they're planted together."

One *Carex*—*C. stricta*—is figuring into a project that Mt. Cuba is working on with the state of Delaware to help expand bog turtle habitats. Bog turtles, the smallest turtles in North America, are imperiled through their range, Hoadley said.

"They like to nest in the crown of this specific species of *Carex*, which grows in very wet boggy habitats," he said. Mt. Cuba has been propagating the plants and then giving them to the state, which as been planting them in the turtles' habitat.

"They're actually seeing the bog turtles using those plants as nesting sites," he said. "There's been successful collections of eggs that have hatched from those reintroduced plants. It's just a really cool story about conservation in action and showing how some of these conservation initiatives really do work."

For home gardeners, the many varieties of *Carex* offer lots of choices and looks.

"While we were mostly evaluating the *Carex* from an ornamental perspective, we were telling people, 'You know, these plants look good. They're going to have a presence in your garden for a long period of time. They add texture, and they're going to cover ground suppress weeds,'" he said.

Mt. Cuba didn't evaluate the plants' effect on pollinators because they are wind pollinated, unlike the plants in a recent hydrangea trial. During that one it was easy to where where bees flocked, which was to lace caps.

"*Carex* are providing habitat for wildlife while they're providing cover," Hoadley said. "They're also providing a food source in the form of their leaves. They are actually host plants for a number of caterpillars, as well as producing seeds that are eaten by birds and small mammals.

"So there is ecological value. It's harder to to measure, but a lot of those ecological interactions will actually happen in your home garden as we saw them happening in our trial garden." That makes *Carex* a strong possibility for anyone focusing on the long-term sustainability of a garden, he said.

[READ MORE HERE](#)





## RAISE THOSE GLASSES! WILMINGTON BEER WEEK RETURNS

BY BETSY PRICE

Restaurants and breweries will toast the return of Wilmington Beer Week, which started Feb. 28 and runs through Sunday. It will focus on locally brewed beer and there's a bonus for local suds lovers: Those who [download](#) a passport and get it stamped five times during the week will be eligible to win the Ultimate Wilmington Beer Tour, which is \$250 in gift certificates to select brew week venues. Second- and third-place prizes will also be awarded.

Special events will include a Sour Night at Wilmington Brew Works; an IPA Night at Iron Hill; an Atlantic 10 Watch Party with Lagers at Stitch House Thursday, March 2; a Beer Can Art Exhibition Friday at the Chancery Market Food Hall & Bar; and a Brewers Reserve Rare Beer Tasting Saturday at Iron Hill.

Participating makers are Bellefonte Brewing, Dew Point Brewing, Hangman Brewing, Iron Hill Brewery

& Restaurant, Stitch House Brewery, Twisted Irons Craft Brewing and Wilmington Brew Works as well as mead/cider craft producer Liquid Alchemy.

Participating restaurants with a significant craft beer profile also will join in: Chelsea Tavern, Dorcea, Grain (Trolley Square), Two Stones Pub (Wilmington), Trolley Tap House; Washington Street Ale House; and the Chancery Market Food Hall & Bar.

### BEER WEEK SHOWS GROWTH

“Wilmington has a great brewing tradition with some big breweries that unfortunately didn't survive much past prohibition,” says Craig Wensell, CEO and brewer for Wilmington Brew Works. “Now we've got three breweries in the city limits and plenty more a short drive away. When someone visits Wilmington and heads to a bar or restaurant, they can now find beer on tap that was brewed a few miles away.”



“I think it was the right move to shift the focus to local beer,” adds Justin Sproul, senior head brewer at Iron Hill Brewery & Restaurant. “It opens up opportunities for breweries to participate, which creates more excitement and makes for better events.”

Proceeds benefit “Restore The King,” a fundraising campaign to restore the King Gambrinus statue. The week will conclude with Beer & Brunch at participating WBW venues that offer food.

For more information or to download a passport, go to [www.WilmingtonBeerWeek.com](http://www.WilmingtonBeerWeek.com).

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photo credit: Pixabay / PEXELS



# Food & Dining

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# FOOD TAKEOUT, DELIVERY STILL STRONG, BUT COMES WITH COST

BY PAM GEORGE

During the pandemic’s peak, restaurant takeout soared. Partly, that’s because it was the only option in spring 2020. However, more than a few consumers still haven’t dined inside, and others have grown accustomed to the convenience of taking dinner home or having it delivered.

As a result, takeout is still trending. However, the demand can stress the kitchen, which is typically short-staffed, and some operators don’t trust third-party delivery services, while others depend on them.

## GROWING ACROSS CONCEPTS

Takeout has always been a selling point at fast-food restaurants, and in 2022, 85% of all fast-food orders were to go, according to market research firm the NPD Group. That number was down from 90% in 2020 but up from about 76% in the years just before the pandemic. Among full-service restaurants, 33% of orders were to go in 2022—nearly double the pre-pandemic rates.

But while quick-service restaurant menus are designed for takeout, other concepts have had to adjust—and it’s not easy.

“Everybody wants items they can take out in a box. Everybody wants **DoorDash**,” said Mike Stiglitz, founder of the locally based **Two Stones Pub** chain. “And that’s one of the things we’ve struggled with.”

For instance, Two Stones takeout nachos require multiple containers, and customers must assemble them at home. The dilemma helped give birth to **2SPizza**, which opened in Newark last month. But even pizza places are feeling the pinch.

“The takeout operation on the weekends is at capacity,” said Robbie Jester, owner of **Pizzeria Mariana**, which is also in Newark. “There is definitely still a demand.”

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# Government

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# STATE DETAILS PLANS FOR BROADBAND EXPANSION IN COUNTY HEARINGS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Kent County farm owner Jane Warren is anxious to have internet service at her home, but there's no way to do that now.

"We cannot function because everything is done online," she said during a Delaware Department of Technology and Information public hearing Wednesday night about state efforts to expand broadband access.

The department has until August to develop a five-year plan to increase internet access in unserved and underserved areas of the state and Wednesday night's hearing was the first of three, one in each county, to hear what people want.

Warren said the only way she now can use the internet now is to drive to a nearby hotspot.

"And when I was still working...it was expensive and half a mile away in the middle of nowhere," she said.

Jason Clarke, Delaware's chief information officer, told the Joint Finance Committee last month that the department expects a budget of \$158 million to fund the installation of broadband technology in the state's internet deserts. Work to expand the network already has begun in all three counties, thanks to state American Rescue Plan Act money, he said.

While many in rural and underserved areas have complained for decades about the lack of internet access, schools going to a virtual mode during the pandemic threw the issue into a harsh spotlight. Many children didn't have access to broadband service or the devices they needed to attend classes and that one issue helped focus efforts to get them help.

The expansion's target will be unserved and underserved locations, low income and affordable housing

communities, and community anchor institutions like libraries, hospitals and community centers, said Tammy Shelton, broadband manager for the department.

The speed of internet service will be one way the state determines who is and who is not receiving adequate access. The Department considers those who cannot get internet speeds of at least 25/3 megabytes per second (mbps)—a measure of how much information can be moved in that time—to be unserved, and those that get speeds between 25/3 mbps and 100 mbps to be underserved. They'll focus on community anchor institutions that have internet speeds below 1 gigabyte/second (gbps).

Delaware's state threshold for what it considered adequate broadband is 100/100 mbps. That is said to be adequate for a family of four who are streaming movies on their own devices, participating in video meetings, and playing multiyear online games.

Two Kent County residents said that they were spoiled in other states because they had multiple internet providers, and when they moved into rural Delaware, they realized they had limited options.

The Department will prioritize expanding internet access for:

- Rural residents
- Low-income individuals
- Veterans
- Individuals over the age of 60
- Individuals with disabilities
- English learners and individuals with low levels of literacy
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Incarcerated individuals

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# I-95 BETWEEN ROUTES 1 AND 896 TO CLOSE FOR BRIDGE DEMOLITION

## STAFF WRITER

Multiple lanes on Interstate 95 will close on week-nights from Thursday, March 2, through Wednesday, March 8, between Route 1 and Route 896 to remove a steel girder from the Chapman Road Bridge.

The closures will occur from 8 p.m. until 8 a.m. each day, weather permitting.

Southbound lanes closed at 10 p.m. Thursday, March 2, to 5 a.m. Friday, March 3 and will close at 10 p.m., Monday, March 6 to 5 a.m., and Tuesday, March 7.

Northbound lanes will close 10 p.m. Tuesday, March 7, to 5 a.m. Wednesday, March 8. Northbound lanes also may close Wednesday night, March 8 if needed.

Southbound traffic will exit onto westbound Route 273, turn left onto westbound Route 4, turn left onto southbound Route 896 back to I-95.

Northbound traffic will exit onto southbound Route 896, turn left onto eastbound Route 40, exit onto northbound Route 1 back to I-95.

This work is weather dependent.

Motorists should use caution and expect minor delays moving through the area.



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# PLAN FOR NEWPORT CONSIDERS TRAIN STATION, BOXWOOD ROAD

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

A new [transportation plan](#) for Newport might revive a way of traveling from a century ago and also anticipates how people are increasingly shopping online. The Wilmington Area Planning Council is hosting a public workshop on the plan 6-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 7, in the Old Newport Town Hall, 15, N. Augustine St.

Work on the plan began in 2021 with three main goals:

- Reopening a Newport train station (an idea that goes back to at least 2011).
- Determining the impact of freight movements to and from the Boxwood Road logistics center used by Amazon (Delaware’s [largest](#) building).
- Improving downtown for pedestrians and bicyclists.

All three goals are made harder by the way that downtown Newport basically sits underneath Delaware Route 141. The agency is ready to explore traffic calming and

redesign traffic flow downtown to keep regional traffic dispersed and at low speeds and allow for pedestrians and bicyclists.

It also suggests that the town buy land downtown to create metered parking lots, and it encourages businesses to share their parking lots.

Another idea is extending the Jack Markell Trail, which connect Old New Castle and the Wilmington Riverfront, to Newport, with a new boat ramp.

## 25 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEWPORT AREA

The plan looks at Newport, which has about 1,000 residents, and its suburbs, and it makes 25 recommendations. Most involve roadways and shared paths for bicyclists and pedestrians. The paths, if built, would better connect the Newport River Trail, the train station, the Boxwood Road center (“this recommendation is under consideration by the developers of the Boxwood facility for inclusion in their plans”), the Conrad Schools of Science, Richardson Park Elementary, the Delaware Military Academy, Banning Park and Delcastle Technical High School.

The plan also suggests extending DART’s Route 9 and setting up direct bus service between Newport and the University of Delaware (“ridership for this recommendation is currently lower than the warrant threshold”) and improving several bus shelters.

The biggest idea, by far, is bringing back passenger rail service to Newport. The plan predicts it would cost

\$30 million to \$40 million. A ridership model updated in 2019 “support the reopening” of the station.

However, a forecast of 500 weekday riders was based on 17 trains each weekday, but there are now only 10 weekday trains running through Newport.

The original train station was built in 1908 and has long been demolished. A new station would be built downtown, with parking expected to use state-owned land underneath Delaware 141. An [interactive map](#) places the new station just west of Route 141.



**“ We saw a boost in website referrals from Delaware LIVE during our admission season. ”**

**- URSULINE ACADEMY**



# WILMINGTON DROPS TRASH COLLECTION FOR A DOZEN BUILDINGS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Bureaucracy moves slowly, sometimes taking years to act. Online complaints, on the other hand, take just minutes or days to raise a ruckus. Both trends came together when Wilmington recently told the owners of about a dozen buildings that the city would no longer collect their trash or their recycling.

City code, as revised in 2014, limits trash collection to single-family homes and other dwellings with four or few units, such as apartments or condos.

In 2017, the city announced that it had reviewed about 20,000 trash and recycling accounts and determined that 97 of them were commercial accounts and should not have had free city trash collection. That list included condos, apartments, nonprofits, houses of worships, schools and daycares. On Jan. 1, 2018, the city cut them

off, sent them to private haulers and said it would save \$200,000 a year by doing so.

The new review of the situation led to the same results, affecting a smaller—but vocal—crowd.

“The city code clearly says that the city should be collecting residential only,” John Rago, deputy chief of staff for policy and communication, said in response to the latest change.

That’s not what people posting on a new Nextdoor thread wanted to hear, and it doesn’t matter that the free collection has—unlawfully—been going on for years, maybe decades.

## COMPLAINTS ABOUT TRASH

“There’s got to be more to this!” Nancy Kavanaugh wrote. “Ridiculous.”



“How does the city justify withholding one of its services from us, especially one as important to the environment as recycling?” Christopher Bell wrote. “They should be ashamed of themselves.”

Multiple people complained that their taxes should cover trash collection and recycling. They vowed to complain—but none of the dozens of posts on the thread showed any hope of reprieve from formal complaints.

An additional problem is that the city no longer operates front-end lifter trucks to handle the containers used by some multiunit structures, Rago said.

“Our intent is not to cause any hardships, but Wilmington’s charter and code are very clear in that city government collects trash and recyclables from residential properties only,” Mayor Mike Purzycki said in 2017.

The most likely scenario is that rents and condo fees will increase to pay for private collection.

“Our monthly fees just went up 9%, so now a portion goes to trash/recycling collection,” Nancy Ford wrote.

Brian Lamborn lives in one of the condos that lost garbage collection a few years ago. “It cost us substantially to hire our own trash removal company,” he wrote.







# Education

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# STATE BOARD: CHARTER HEAD CERTIFICATION MUST MATCH DISTRICTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

A state board has recommended changing the certification and licensure requirements for Delaware charter school leaders to match those of school district leaders. The move by the Professional Standards Board must be passed by the state School Board before going into effect.

The suggested change has angered charter school leaders and officials. Several wrote to the board prior to Thursday night's vote to argue that the cookie-cutter approach is the antithesis of why charter schools exist: to provide a flexible institution that tries to educate students in fresh and different ways.

At least one charter school mom wrote in to applaud the move, saying she was shocked to discover that the same credentials were not already required.

"All Delaware charter schools are led by highly qualified administrators," said Kendall Massett, executive director of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#) on Friday.

The leaders bring transferable skills from various professional fields, with different life and educational experiences, she said, which allows them to approach education with a new and innovative perspective.

"This is what makes charter schools so effective, allowing them to meet the original intent of the charter school law, increasing student achievement with research based innovative approaches to education," she said.

For certification, charter school leaders may either:

- Enroll in a traditional or alternative route to certification program that leads to traditional administrator certification and complete the program within three years.
- Earn approval for a digital portfolio submitted to an external vendor who will review work samples to measure competency and alignment to professional standards for educational leaders.

The portfolio is akin to meeting a rubric for administrators, and if individual leaders need help completing it, the Department of Education will provide professional learning to assist.

It would also require charter leaders to upload evidence to demonstrate competence in all of the standards as it relates to their work in the school. This option is only for charter leaders employed before June 30.

There's no difference between a charter school administrator and a district administrator when it comes to licensing certification for all leaders hired after June 30, the board pointed out several times. Leaders who are not currently licensed must complete up to three years of related professional leadership or management experience to fulfill the student teaching/internship requirement.

Massett previously said that charter school leaders do not have the same role as district school leaders, and it doesn't make sense to require the same certifications and licenses. She noted that they have to be excellent marketers to raise funds and drive enrollment, which are responsibilities district leaders don't have.

"Given the success of many of our charters, perhaps the state should be reviewing all administrative requirements," she said, "so that districts might also benefit from a wider selection of proven leaders in various fields."







# HODGSON'S MAISS HUSSEIN WINS 2023 POETRY OUT LOUD CONTEST

BY JAREK RUTZ

Maiss Hussein took home this year's Delaware Poetry Out Loud crown Thursday night with her recitation of Tarfia Faizullah's "The Poem You've Been Waiting For."

"The most exciting part of this night was seeing how everyone expresses their emotions so differently," she said. "You can look at the same poem and somebody's looking at it so differently."

It's important to keep an open mind, since people can interpret literature and perform poetry in unique ways based on their experiences, she said.

Hussein beat 11 other finalists from Delaware high schools at the state finals Thursday night at the Smyrna Opera House. She'll head to Washington, D.C., May 8-10 for the National Poetry Out Loud Finals with \$50,000 in awards on the line.

The junior from **Paul M. Hodgson Vocational Technical High School** also took home \$200 and earned her school \$500 to spend on poetry materials.

The 12 state finalists performed memorized poems in two rounds. Five finalists were chosen for the final round, where they performed a third poem. Contestants were judged on their physical presence, eye contact and body language, pace, rhythm, punctuation, dramatic appropriateness, articulation and evidence of understanding.

The contestants had advanced through school competitions, choosing works from an anthology of more than 1,200 poems. Competitions started in October, with about 200 students across the state participating.

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# STUDENTS TALK SUSTAINABILITY AT ENVIRONMENT SUMMIT

BY JAREK RUTZ

Odyssey Charter sophomore Arnav Taduviyi said awareness and education are the first step to combating the negative environmental effects of climate change.

“There is a point of no return which is honestly really scary and people should be aware and cognizant of that and try to make a difference, even if it’s just a small one,” he said Thursday during the fourth annual [Delaware Youth Environmental Summit](#). “That’s basically what we’re trying to do here today.”

More than 500 high schoolers from more than 30 schools gathered in Newark at the University of Delaware for the seven-hour summit focused on educating state youth on behaviors and actions to positively impact the environment.

The event had 25 breakout workshop sessions discussing topics such as school food waste, hydroponic gardening at schools, the importance of bees, coastal restoration, electric vehicles, environmental technology, forest fires and more.

“I went to an overconsumption of water workshop and I learned about the different ways people unknowingly cause pollution in the water,” Taduviyi said.

Not picking up after a pet results in their secretions flowing into sewers and into Delaware’s waterways. He also was taught that all grease needs to be disposed of in a trash can. Otherwise, it causes pipes to clog and will lead to contaminated water.

“After going to this summit, it’s so much easier to take positive actions, and having that in the back of your mind, you’ll make actions subconsciously that are more sustainable,” he said.

The day’s events are in part created by a team of 30 high schoolers who make up the student leadership team. Summit advisor Dee Durham pointed out that this was the first year there were information sessions for nine colleges to attract students to enroll in an environment-focused major.

In what looked like a job fair, dozens of environmental organizations had stations for students to apply to jobs, internships or to learn about what the organization does. Durham represented [Plastic Free Delaware](#), a group focused on eliminating plastic pollution in the state.

Ciara Rudloff, a sophomore at [St. George’s Technical High School](#), said the workshop that stuck with her the most was on the topic of reducing plastic waste.

“I learned what mealworms were and how they have a ton of microorganisms in them that break down plastic quickly, which is really unheard of,” she said. “If you put a bunch of them in a styrofoam box, over a week they would eat the entire thing.”

Figuring out exactly what allows the mealworms to break down plastic, Rudloff said, could help environmentalists come up with new ways to eliminate plastic so there’s less in the ocean and in landfills.

Like Taduviyi, Rudloff said a lot of people aren’t aware of how their actions might hurt the environment, so having educational sessions can help spread the word on what behaviors to avoid.

[READ MORE HERE](#)





# DELAWARE STATE POLICE INVESTIGATING ANONYMOUS THREATS TO SCHOOLS

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware police and schools apparently are among the targets of nationwide calls of false active shooters at the schools. Delaware State Police issued a statement later in the afternoon that said the calls have been determined to be a hoax and a form of “swatting.”

Swatting occurs when a prank call is made to emergency services in an attempt to generate a large police response at a particular address, the statement said.

Red Clay Consolidated School System posted on its Facebook page that its schools had not received any direct calls.

“Please be advised that law enforcement agencies across the state and nation are receiving false threats of active shooters at various schools,” its post said.

About 11:30 a.m., the Delaware Department of Education said officers were still at multiple schools throughout the state conducting patrols to ensure everyone’s safety. “Again, no threat has been identified,” the DOE post said.

The Newark Police Department announced at mid-morning that it was increasing police presence at West Park Place Elementary school and others because of an anonymous threat received by the department. It announced about 3 p.m. that an investigation had shown that the threat was not credible, but the department would maintain increased police presence for the rest of the day. Red Clay said the safety and well-being of its students and staff was its highest priority and that classes, activities and dismissal will follow standard protocol.

“The threat may not be real, but the panic and fear certainly is,” wrote Traci M. Murphy, a mom who is executive director of the Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence.

The University of Delaware repeated the police release and told its students and staff to remain vigilant and to call 911 if they saw anything suspicious.





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# KENT COUNTY SENIORS PICKED FOR U.S. SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

BY JAREK RUTZ

Joshua Donophan wanted to join a program that sends students to the U.S. Senate for a week because he believes it's crucial to understand how the nation's government officials think and how the government operates. Now the Lake Forest High School senior is getting a \$10,000 college scholarship to do that.

Donophan and Smyrna High School senior Carl Rifino both received the U.S. Senate Youth Program award. They will stay in Washington, D.C., March 4-11 for the program's 61st Washington Week.

## ABOUT THE U.S. SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

Created by the United States Senate in 1962, the program has been sponsored by the Senate and funded by [Hearst Foundations](#) since its inception.

Its goal is to increase young Americans' understanding of the interrelationships of the three branches of government and learn the caliber and responsibilities of federally elected and appointed officials. Each year, two students from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity are selected to participate. Another goal of the program is to emphasize the importance of democratic decision making in America and around the world.

"I got the email and I was literally jumping in the hallway, I was going crazy," Donophan said. "It was a great moment and I was glad I could share it with my friends and my teacher."

Rifino had a strong emotional reaction, too.

"I was in the library for study hall, I saw the email come up and I screamed," he said. "I grabbed my laptop, ran upstairs to my AP U.S. Government and Politics teacher's class and I barged into her class and told her and I started crying for like 30 minutes."

Donophan and Rifino don't have many specifics on what each day will entail, and they were asked to not disclose what they do know will be on the schedule. They will meet Delaware's United States Sens. Chris Coons and Tom Carper.

"That will be a great opportunity for me and Carl to talk with them," Donophan said, "and to actually ask them some questions and see where their minds are at with Delaware."

Donophan serves as vice president of Lake Forest's Business Professionals of America, and is heavily involved in the National Honor Society and Spanish club, which he serves as secretary. He hopes to go to Columbia, Harvard or Princeton, and while he is passionate about the government, he said he's not interested in the headaches and back-and-forth of politics.

"I think I'd be more suitable for something like law school rather than politics because I couldn't necessarily do politics in my right mind and still continue to just be myself," he said. "I've always been told I'm very good at making my point clear in an argument but in a civil way."

If law doesn't work out, he's considering pursuing a career in music or economics.

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# Sports

photo credit: Nick Halliday

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## SEAFORD GRABS EARLY LEAD AND COASTS

BY GLENN FRAZER

The Seaford boys basketball team put together a highlight reel of plays in the opening 12 minutes of their second round playoff game against Dover Thursday night. Seniors Brent Ricketts and Makel Hubbard both brought the sold-out crowd to its feet with slam dunks as part of a 16-0 Blue Jays run to end the opening quarter. Leading 23-5 after the first eight minutes, Seaford continued its dominance into the second quarter by outscoring the Senators 18-11 for the largest lead of the night at 44-19 with 2:41 left in the half. Dover was able to close the half on an 8-2 run to trail 46-27 at the break.

The Senators stayed with Seaford for most of the second half, slicing the deficit to 12 points at 60-48 with Denim Perkins finding Noah Allen on a “back door” pass from the top of the circle. Following an empty possession by Seaford, Dover had a chance to cut the lead under double digits, but Aviyon Matthews stripped the ball from Nasir Pierce and completed a “layup-and-one” to push the advantage back to 15 points and the Senators would not get any closer.

With 3:45 left in the game, Dover’s Jaheim Harrell shoved Ricketts from behind, drawing a technical foul.

While the officials gathered at center court, a fight broke out in the stands behind the basket in Ben Sirman Gymnasium. Although security acted quickly to break up the incident, both teams were directed to their respective locker rooms. Moments later, the public address announcer spoke to the crowd and asked that everyone to leave the building and head to their vehicles. Officials, representatives from the DIAA, coaches and athletic directors gathered and decided to resume the contest in front of a “near-empty” gym with Seaford up 69-53. The officials informed us, Harrell was ejected from the game after a “double-flagrant” foul. The Dover senior (in my estimation, one of the state’s best) saw his high school career come to a close after surpassing the 1,000 point plateau earlier this season.

The game resumed without incident as Seaford advanced to the quarterfinals with an 81-61 win, and hosted William Penn Saturday.

The Blue Jays were led by Hubbard’s 20 point effort. Ricketts added 16 including a spectacular one-handed jam in the second half. The defending first team all state selection (Ricketts) proved worthy of a repeat. The Jays improved to 21-1 with the win and extended their winning streak to 14 games. A win today (Saturday) would give Seaford a return trip to the Bob Carpenter Center and the Final 4.

Perkins scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half to lead Dover, while Harrell finished with 15 points. The Senators completed their season with a mark of 15-7.

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# SALESIANUM & URSULINE BRING HOME STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Salesianum and Ursuline were crowned state champions of boys and girls state championships Feb. 24 at the University of Delaware. Salesianum captured its seventh straight state championship accumulating 343 team points to outscore second place Charter School of Wilmington. Salesianum only won two races which were the 200 and 400 freestyle relays, but were able to score points in seven different races throughout the night.

Ty Wilmore from Wilmington Friends and Aaron Stevens from Conrad School of the Sciences each brought home two individual state championships apiece. Wilmore won both his state championships pretty handedly posting a 1:40.13 in the 200-yard freestyle. He then put on a great performance posting a 4:32.44 in the 500-yard freestyle. Stevens brought home

his individual championships in the 200-yard individual medley and the 100-yard breaststroke.

Ursuline was able to edge out the Charter School of Wilmington by six points to capture the 2023 girls state championship by a score of 298 to 292. Ursuline didn't win a single race but placed in 10 of them. Ursuline wins its first state championship since 2017.

Georgia Colburn, Laney Mullins and Rachel Bockrath all brought home two individual state championships each. Colburn won the 100-yard butterfly and the 100-yard backstroke. Mullins won the 200- and 500-yard freestyle races. Bockrath won the 50- and 100-yard freestyle races breaking her state record in the 100 with a time of 49.32 beating her time from last year of 49.82.



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# **DIAA GIRLS BASKETBALL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND ONE BRACKET UPDATE**

BY NICK HALLIDAY

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## MOUNT PLEASANT STYMIES CONRAD TO ADVANCE

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The Mount Pleasant Green Knights proved to be too much for the Conrad Red Wolves. The Red Wolves hosted a first round game after being named the 16 seed of the DIAA boys basketball state championship after a 15-5 season. However the Flight A Green Knights proved to be too much as the 17 seed.

After trailing by one point at half Mount Pleasant began to pull away in the third quarter. The defense and length of the Green knights began to take over the game. Big men Senior Segio Salis and Darnell Lloyd established their presence in this game.

The duo of Lloyd and Salis combined for 19 points and 13 rebounds in the game. A bulk of those stats came in the third quarter as the Green Knights were able to outscore the Red Wolves 21-11.

The third quarter deficit was too much for the Red Wolves to overcome as the Green knights made big play after big play to help close out the game and come away with a 69-58 victory to advance to the next round.

The Green knights were led by Niame Scott who scored 23 points hitting four three-pointers and went five for seven from the line. Anthony Sidberry and Darnell Llyod each added 13 points apiece. Conrad was led by Jaylin Horsey who scored 26 points connecting on six three-pointers.

The Green Knights advanced to play the No. 1 seed Middletown Cavaliers Thursday night.



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