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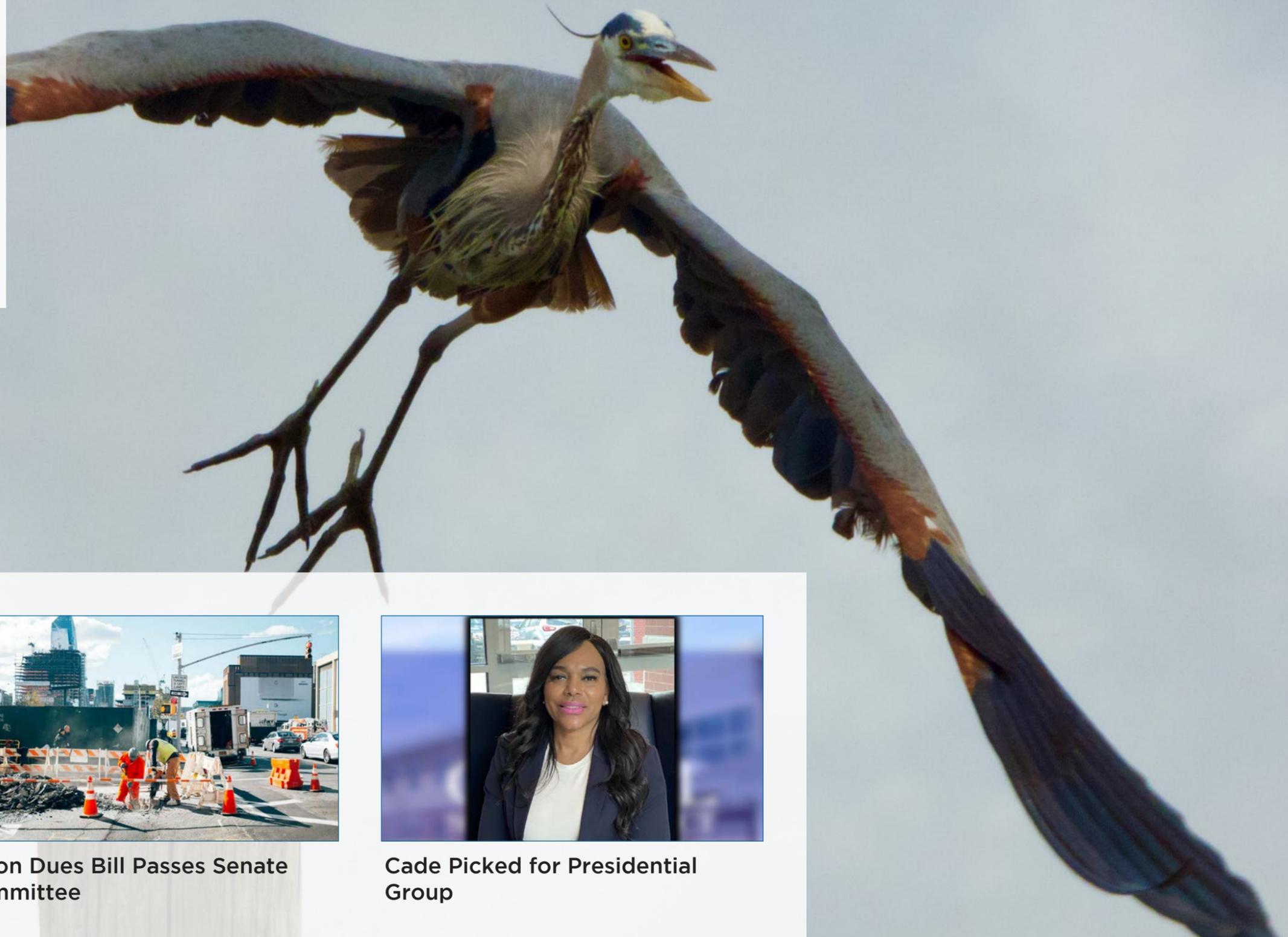
photo link: Randy Waters



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photo link: Gene Alderson

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Climate Bill Would Increase Scope of Energy Agency



Union Dues Bill Passes Senate Committee



Cade Picked for Presidential Group

photo link: Killens Pond State Park



Headlines

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MATT MEYER, LAUREN COOKSEY MARRY IN REHOBOTH

BY BETSY PRICE

New Castle Council's highest-ranking elected official married his girlfriend of two years May 7 on the Rehoboth Bay waterfront. County Executive Matt Meyer and Dr. Lauren Cooksey said I do in an intimate ceremony before 90 guests at [Rehoboth Beach Country Club](#). It is his first marriage and her second.

Their romance and wedding seemed to largely fly below the state's political and social radars. Meyer joked Tuesday that he uses his skills as a former diplomat in Iraq to keep his private life private.

"We did a lot of redirection there," he said. "I learned a lot of the tricks of the trade. I still have a few up my sleeves." Then he started laughing. "It wasn't like it was a big secret," he said. "It was private."

"We're both in sort of big loud environments," Cooksey said. "So it was nice to keep something just for us and our family and friends."

Their busy schedules mean they can't attend every political or social event together. His job as county exec keeps him on the move for long days, often through weekends, as does her job as an emergency room doctor. She is vice chair of ChristianaCare's emergency department. Meyer and Cooksey met through a friend two years ago.

"It was sort of a no pressure situation," Cooksey said. "We just sort of hung out with a mutual friend and really hit it off."

Meyer said he always wanted to get married.

"I think I was always determined not to settle," he said. "And I feel like I didn't settle. I'm not one of these guys who's like, 'I'm never getting married.' You wait and you look until you find the right one. I feel like I've found the right one."

Cooksey said their relationship seemed so natural from the start that she never feared getting involved with Meyer, even with the added stress of a political career. Meyer is expected to run for governor in the 2024 race.

"I think we're really good at separating it," she said. "Both of us compartmentalize work and home and are really respectful of the boundaries of both."

TRAVEL ADVENTURES

The couple made it a point to vacation together as they got to know each other. "We've traveled quite a bit," Meyer said. Not only did they take trips together to Washington, D.C., New York and Vermont, but also Kenya, Honduras and Hawaii.

That is going to make planning a honeymoon hard. "We've gone to all these honeymoon destinations already," Meyer said.

Cooksey said she came to admire Meyer's commitment. "What you see with Matt is what you get," she said. "He's really committed to his career, but he's also fiercely committed to family and his private life."

At the same time, he's never pressured her to be more visible or engaged in his political life.

"He lets me be involved where I want to be and I am able to step back," she said. "I've got my own career and kids, and I'm able to focus on that. So there's really a good balance."

[READ MORE HERE](#)

NEW CLIMATE BILL WOULD INCREASE SCOPE OF ENERGY AGENCY

BY SAM HAUT

With several climate bills moving through the Delaware General Assembly, a new bill proposes to increase the scope and power of a DNREC energy agency, sort of a state government version of Tolkien’s “one ring to rule them all.”

Senate Bill 7, sponsored by Sen. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown, would empower the Division of Climate, Coastal and Energy to help oversee Delaware’s greenhouse gas emissions and implement the state’s **Climate Action Plan**. It is an agency under the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, which already is fielding complaints about creating regulations to increase the state’s number of electric vehicles under an executive order from Gov. John Carney. Critics are angry about the vehicles and angry the rules are not the result of legislation.

“Now it’s time for the rubber to meet the road,” Hansen said. “And to do that, we need one agency with the

capability and resources to holistically direct Delaware’s overall energy portfolio, recommend solutions that will meet our goals and coordinate all of those efforts with the complex network of constituencies, advisory groups, regulatory agencies and private companies who have a stake in Delaware’s energy policy.”

Senate Bill 7 would require the state Energy Office to create a new energy plan for the state every five years. The bill also would have the Energy Office to promote energy equity, support the governor’s Energy Advisory Council, serve as a liaison between the state and federal government on energy programs, promote the building of the state’s energy grid, analyze how to make more resources, create more offshore wind farms, find out how to produce more renewable energy in Delaware, and inform the public about what they’re doing.

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ANIMAL WELFARE MAY GET DOGGIE BAG OF NEW DUTIES FROM GA

BY SAM HAUT

The 10-year-old state Office of Animal Welfare could walk away from this year’s General Assembly with added duties and new money to hire more officers. Two bills recently passed through the House Health & Human Development committee that would impact the office.

Senate Bill 71, sponsored by Sen. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown, would require law enforcement agencies, the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, and the Department of Justice to report cases of animal abuse to the Office of Animal Welfare.

House Bill 124, sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, would add a civil penalty for the first noise complaints received from barking dogs, then a \$50 fine for the second violation, \$100 for a third violation and

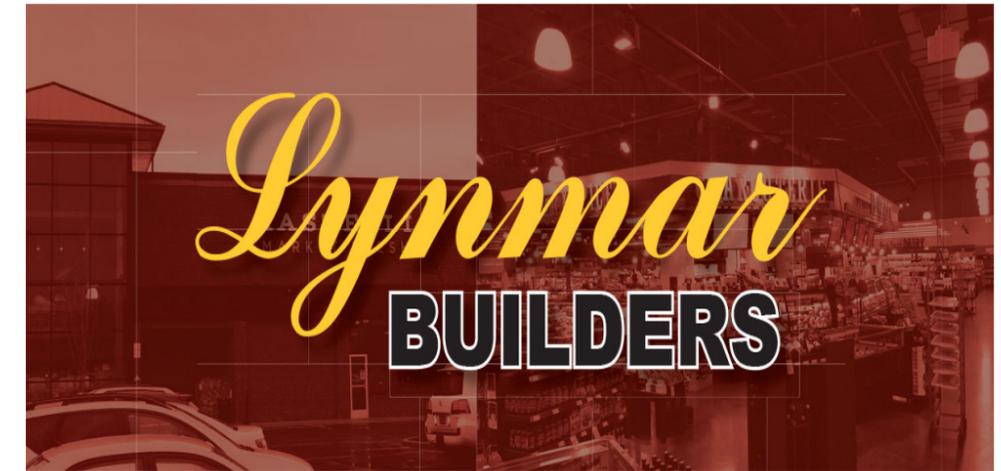
\$150 for any subsequent violations. All of that would be sent to Animal Welfare to handle.

Mark Tobin, chief of Delaware Animal Services, said the office already gets reports from Child Services about instances of animal abuse, so SB 71 would serve to codify something that’s already being done instead of adding more work.

Christina Motoyoshi, executive director of Animal Welfare, said in an email that HB 124 would create more work and response may not be immediate from a staff that’s already down some officers.

“Due to staffing and safety concerns, OAW only responds after hours to emergencies, so barking dog complaints could only be handled during business hours,” she said.

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PANEL: STATE SHOULD MAKE 1% EXTRA RETIREE FUNDING THE LAW

BY SAM HAUT

A subcommittee exploring state retiree health plans on Monday voted to recommend that the General Assembly codify putting 1% of the state budget into a fund that pays retiree benefits to lower the billions of dollars of deficit.

The State Employee Benefits retiree subcommittee asked Cheiron, a consulting firm, to look into additional ways for the state to lower the state's unfunded liability. The recommendation concerns post employment benefits paid for out of what's called the OPEB Trust Fund. It includes retiree benefits such as healthcare, life insurance and disability, but not pensions. Money for those benefits should be accrued in advance of needing them, but Delaware has not done that.

Financial experts said there is an \$8.3 billion shortfall as of July 1, 2022, and estimates will increase to \$20.7 billion by 2042 if no way is created to close that gap.

Last year, Gov. John Carney put 1% of the state budget into that trust fund and has proposed doing it again this year with \$51 million. It will not help close the gap fast enough, but does satisfy rating agencies who are aware that the deficit is hanging over the state finances.

The subcommittee, which was formed after the state tried to move retirees off their generous health plan to a more-restrictive Medicare Advantage plan because of budget fears, wants the state to make adding that 1% every year a law. Even so, that money would only add up to about 60% of the gap by 2052.

Jeff Taschner, executive director of the Delaware State Education Association, said the legislature should also consider whether it would be possible to increase that to 1.25% 1.5% 1.75% and 2% of the state's budget. Joanna Adams, pension administrator with the Office of Pensions, said that if the state funded it at 2%, the money

would amount to around 93% of the liability by 2052.

Rep. Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, said that because of the budget surpluses of the last three years, it may be possible for the state to kick in a higher percentage or even a flat dollar amount, but there should be a floor in the recommended budget line for both percentage and dollar amount.

"I would suggest we use a measurement, whether it's one and a half or whatever, but not be below," Ramone said. "So in other words, every year we are putting \$100 million towards this, or 2%, whichever is higher or 1.5%. Something that we have a bottom that we will not go lower."

Ten committee members voted to recommend the set-aside. Four people abstained, all state officials: Claire DeMatteis, secretary of the Department of Human Resources; Richard Geisenberger, secretary of the Department of Finance; Sen. Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown; and Ramone.

In order to cover the remaining 40% of the OPEB Trust Fund liability, the subcommittee will look into reducing benefits, such as lowering coverage for spouses; increasing the minimum retirement age; adjusting the amount of benefits offered based on length of service; and removing people who quit to work somewhere else before retiring.

Each option had an estimate for how much it would reduce the liability and how much it would make up for the gap in funding. All four accounted for around 20%.

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Culture

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photo link: Clear Space Theatre Company





MARRIAGE PROPOSAL CAPS TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

BY JAREK RUTZ

EastSide Charter School teacher Sinead Johnson thought she was being brought into the auditorium Friday to receive an award to cap off teacher appreciation week. Instead, in front of her first-grade class and about 30 family members and friends, her boyfriend Keith Rawlings Brown got down on one knee, held out a diamond ring and proposed.

Tears of joy bolted down her face as she said yes.

“This has been a journey for us both and it was tough keeping this secret from my love but seeing the look on her face from the surprise was more than I could ask for,” Rawlings Brown said.

The couple, both 32 years old, have been dating for two years, but have been close friends since they met in college at [Tuskegee University](#) in Alabama.

Johnson has worked at the Wilmington charter for three years, and many of her students—holding strings to mylar balloons that looked like engagement rings, and signs that said Yes and Marry Me—were crying, too, out of awe and happiness.

Rawlings Brown is a small business owner of his own trucking company.

“I knew it would mean a lot to Sinead the way I planned for it to be at her school and involve her students because

she cares so much about them,” he said. “It brought her and a couple of her students to tears. They love her as much as she loves them and her rapport with them is very inspiring.”

Aaron Bass, EastSide chief executive officer, said this is absolutely the best teacher appreciation moment at any school. He seemed to really enjoy alerting the media to the proposal, making them swear to keep it a secret and making them promise they wouldn’t do a story unless Johnson gave permission. She said yes to that, too.

“This literally is the greatest thing you could ever do for a teacher,” Bass said.

JOHN MOLLURA
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LONGWOOD BRINGS BACK ILLUMINATED FOUNTAIN SHOWS THIS SUMMER

BY BETSY PRICE

Longwood Gardens' main fountain complex comes to life again this summer with illuminated shows choreographed to light and music as the region's favorite attraction starts its summer schedule.

The gardens' popular Fireworks & Fountains shows will not return until the summer of 2024, and already one new segment of the illuminated fountain shows—drones and fountains—is already sold out. Fountain shows began Thursday, May 11, and will run through Sept. 24, with performances Thursday through Sunday evenings and programs rotating through a [schedule](#).

New this year are “Put Me In, Coach,” featuring a variety of sports-related tunes; “Rachmaninov: Power and Passion;” “Shake It Off: Taylor Swift;” “Starman: David Bowie;” “To Infinity and Beyond,” highlighting songs from animated movie favorites; and “Where the

Heart Is,” a showcase of coming-home hits by the likes of Bon Jovi and Ed Sheeran.

The Illuminated Fountain Performances are included with Gardens admission. Purchase tickets [HERE](#).

Other entertainment options at the Kennett Square, PA, attractions will include:

- Longwood's Beer Garden, offering pub fare and brews from Victory Brewing Co. They include the Longwood Seasons series brewed with ingredients grown at Longwood. Regional artists perform live instrumental music, including Hawaiian-Inspired Steel Guitar from Slowey & The Boats, Jazz Age Blues from Drew Nugent & The Midnight Society, and Traditional Cuban Son by Conjunto Philadelphia.
- The Summer Performance Series. Free and ticketed performances kick off with the May 12 [Curtis Sym-](#)

[phony Orchestra](#) performance, marking the first time the full orchestra will perform at Longwood; experimental folk-rock duo [Watchhouse](#) June 7; Mexican power duo [Jesse & Joy](#) June 18 and Grammy Award-winning singer songwriter [Lila Downs](#) in September.

- The return of the [Wine & Jazz Festival](#) Sept. 23. The award-winning performers include Chucho Valdés Quartet, Emmet Cohen Trio, Anat Cohen Quartet, Terell Stafford Quintet, The Dale Melton Trio, and High and Mighty Brass Band. Guests can enjoy wines from around the world, including selections from France, Spain, Argentina, South Africa and Italy, as well as domestic vintages from California, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania and more. Tickets are available now for \$65 and \$43 for designated drivers. Longwood Members receive a discount.
- [Festive Fridays](#) feature themed fountain performances, concessions, entertainment and more. In addition, on Festive Fridays, patrons can climb to the top of the Chimes Tower for a stunning view of Longwood's 62-bell carillon and the surrounding landscape. The first is May 26's “Bollywood Blockbusters,” celebrating Hindi film and featuring the Daksha Dance Troupe at 6:30 and 7:30 p.m. in the pumphouse plaza. Others include the June 30 “Make Some Noise,” during which keyboards will be set up around the gardens for guests to play from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.; “It's a Philly Thing” on July 14 highlights Victory Brewing Co. and live music from Polkadelphia; “To Infinity and Beyond” on Aug. 4 brings...

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STATE'S PILOT SURF FISHING RESERVATION SYSTEM STARTS MAY 16

BY BETSY PRICE

A new surf fishing reservation system for Delaware's drive-on, multi-use beaches is set to launch next week. The system will be required for fishing from the beach during summer weekends and holidays, which are the peak times.

It's necessary because after years of complaints about the limited number of tags as well as charges that out-of-state residents were taking spots that should go to Delawareans, the [Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control](#) decided to remove the sales limit.

In exchange, it instituted a reservation system that starts May 16 for Saturday, May 20 and then Wednesday, May 17, for reservations on Sunday, May 21. Reservations for each weekend will open weekly beginning Tuesdays

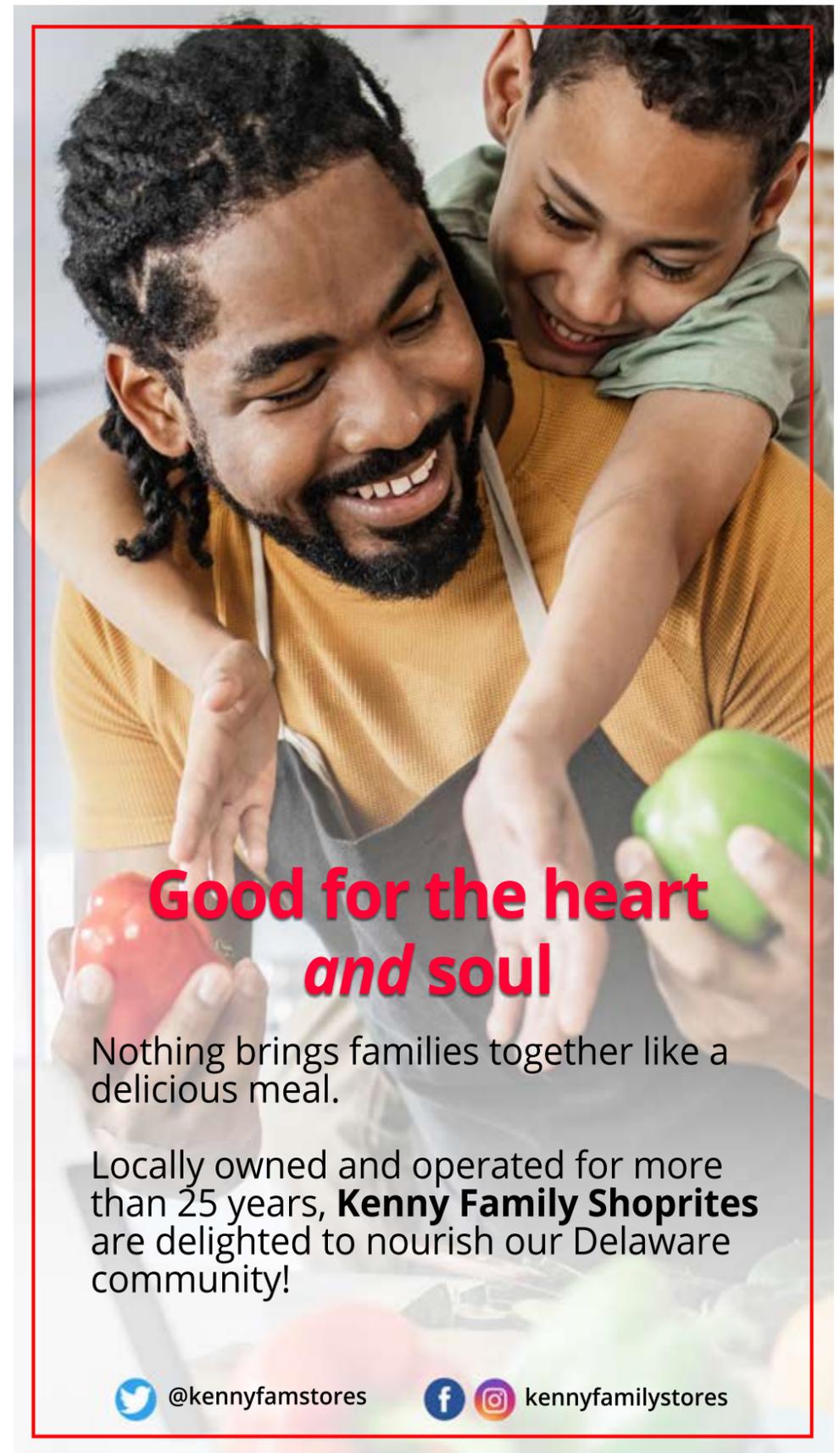
for the upcoming Saturday and Wednesdays for the upcoming Sunday and will be available until sold out for that weekend.

Those who hold annual and two-year surf fishing permits will be required to reserve time slots for weekends and holidays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., starting Saturday, May 20, through Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 4. That is a total of 36 days in 2023.

SURF FISHING SLOTS

Reservations are not required Monday through Friday, except for holidays. Reservations for holidays will become available the Thursday prior. Off-peak surf fishing permits do not qualify for reservations because they are for use during only non-peak times.

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Business

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300 PEOPLE PACK DELAWARE DNA LIFE SCIENCES CONFERENCE

BY BETSY PRICE

Two decades ago, a group of Delaware educators, businessmen and politicians founded a biosciences institute to help the state push into that sector of the economy. Gov. John Carney told the 300 people who packed the first Delaware DNA Life Science Conference Thursday that he could draw a line directly from that day to drug company WuXi STA's announcement last year that it will build a 90-acre plant in Middletown. The plant is expected to open in 2025 and employ 500 people full-time within a year.

Biosciences have helped diversify Delaware's economy, "driving job growth and economic development in our state, and nothing is more important than that," Carney said.

Helping to grow the state's bioscience sector was one goal of the Delaware DNA conference sponsored by the [Delaware BioSciences Association](#). It also offered networking, with the hope of leading to more collaborations,

along with breakout sessions on financing, manufacturing workforce and more.

DELAWARE DNA ISSUES

Among the points made:

- While Delaware alone has many things going for it already, it's actually considered part of the Pennsylvania region and many from Philly were in attendance.
- Even so, the greater New York-New Jersey region is considered the No. 1 regional ecosystem dealing with life sciences in the country. No. 2 is the greater Chicago area. No. 3 is the greater Philly area, including New Castle County.
- The industry itself needs to push for more government money to improve infrastructure and train more workers. Right now, the state of Kentucky ranks No. 3 on the list of states that put money toward bioscience, behind Massachusetts and California.

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JANE BRADY JOINS A BETTER DELAWARE AS BOARD CO-CHAIR

BY BETSY PRICE

A familiar face will join the board of **A Better Delaware**. Jane Brady, a former Delaware Superior Court Judge and three-term state attorney general will become co-chair, along with founder Chris Kenny, of the organization's board.

A Better Delaware describes itself as a non-partisan public policy and political advocacy organization that supports pro-growth, pro-jobs policies as well as greater transparency and accountability in state government. It mostly champions conservative issues and during elections its political action committee has supported conservative candidates. A Better Delaware is also leading an effort to help conservative groups create meaningful relationships and work better together.

Kenny, president and CEO of the Kenny Family ShopRite Stores of Delaware, also owns Delaware LIVE, which operates this website, Town Square Delaware and Milford Live.

BRADY'S EXPERIENCE

Brady joins the board a few weeks after losing a reelection bid as chair of the Delaware State Republican Party to challenger Julianne Murray.

"I am quite familiar with and have admired the significant work that A Better Delaware has done in a very short time," Brady said in an ABD press release. "I look forward to working with Delaware's business and civic communities to make Delaware a better place to live and do business."

Brady graduated from the University of Delaware and Villanova University School of Law. She recently received her Master's of Business Administration from the University of Delaware-Lerner School. She lives in Lewes with her husband, Michael Neal, and their son, Trent, who attends Cape Henlopen schools.

Kenny said he was pleased to have Brady bring her experiences to the board.

"Her grasp of the issues affecting Delaware today is keen and will be a great asset to our advocacy for improving Delaware for the families and businesses here," he said.

Sam Waltz, who currently serves as vice chair of A Better Delaware, said he had known Brady for quite a while and was thrilled to have the opportunity to work with her.

A Better Delaware also recently hired a new executive director, Ethan Lang, a Milford resident and undergraduate research fellow at Dartmouth College. Lang also has worked as a deputy recorder of deeds in Kent County, as a Delaware Supreme Court intern and as a Delaware LIVE freelancer in 2020 and 2021.

Other members of the board include former U.S. Congressman Mike Castle; Elder Law lawyer William W. Erhart; Dr. Greg DeMeo; retired professor of climatology, geography, and spatial sciences David Legates; former Christiana Fire Co. assistant chief Dennis E. Godek; former Kent County Judge William L. Witham Jr.; and Susan Cascells, who serves as treasurer.



photo credit: Jorge Zapata / PEXELS



Food & Dining

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BY PAM GEORGE

If you haven't been to the old Chrysler site in some time, you're in for a surprise. Gone is the manufacturing plant, built in 1951. In its place is the [University of Delaware's Science, Technology and Advanced Research Campus](#), a collection of sleek, new buildings with futurist facades. However, the newest resident on the STAR campus isn't inventing biopharmaceuticals, editing genes or coming up with new chemicals. Instead, [Grain Exchange](#) is preparing wraps, sandwiches, cocktails and salads for employers, students, faculty, locals and visitors.

The restaurant, which opened May 10, at 591 Collaboration Way, is part of [OMG Hospitality](#), which owns and manages Grain Craft Bar + Kitchen in Newark, Trolley Square and Kennett Square; Grain H2O in Bear, Grain on the Rocks in Lewes, and Lewes Coffee Co., which has space next to Grain on the Rocks and Grain Exchange.

A LOGICAL STEP

To recap: Grain is the brainchild of friends and neighbors Lee Mikles and Jim O'Donoghue, who spent time chatting around the Mikles' firepit. The University of Delaware graduates discussed the need for a family-friendly restaurant with casual food and great drinks. The friends did more than talk—in 2015, they opened the first Grain on Main Street in Newark, and more followed. Grain H2O and the Kennett

GRAIN EXCHANGE OPENS ON UD'S STAR CAMPUS

Square site both debuted in 2017.

By 2019, the partners were in talks with the University of Delaware to put a restaurant on the STAR campus, which many dubbed a “food desert.”

“We thought it was a great customer base that we wanted to tap into long term,” Mikles said of the employers taking up residence on the site. “We’re not a college bar, but we felt what was happening at STAR was significant.”

The existing buildings weren't designed to accommodate a restaurant. Enter the six-story FinTech Innovation Hub, built from the ground up. Not only does the 100,000-square-foot structure have space for a dining room and outdoor patio, but it also has room for a catering and commissary kitchen.

GROWING WITH GRAIN

So why the name Grain Exchange? Primarily to avoid confusion, Mikles explained. Tell a friend to meet you at Grain in Newark, and your GPS might take you to the flagship restaurant in downtown Newark. It's not unusual for the Grain restaurants to have distinct identities depending on the location. For example, the Kennett restaurant serves mushroom soup and the Lewes site has steamed shrimp.

“In the FinTech building, we want to show off our pride in Delaware and get people excited about that,” said Mikles.

It's not the first time. The Newark Grain was named for quirky Delaware inventor Oliver Evans, who created an automated flour mill for—wait for it—grain.

At Grain Exchange, Work Progress Administration-styled artwork pays homage to Delaware innovators, including Evans, also the inventor of the steam-powered Oruktor Amphibolos. Many consider it the first automobile. Another poster salutes Aunt Sallie Shadd, a caterer who served ice cream to freed black people in Wilmington. Reportedly, First Lady Dolley Madison traveled to Delaware to taste it, and she adapted the recipe for the 1813 inaugural ball.

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photo credit: Delaware.gov

Government

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HOUSE SENDS FIVE-YEAR PROPERTY REASSESSMENT BILL TO SENATE

BY SAM HAUT

Property value must be reassessed every five years, according to a bill passed by the Delaware House Thursday and sent along to the Senate.

House Bill 62, sponsored by Rep. Madinah Wilson-Anton, D-Newark, would require counties to reassess real property values at least once every five years, starting with the next reassessment. That hasn't been done in New Castle County since 1983, in Kent County since 1987, and in Sussex County since 1974. Wilson-Anton said that reassessments are being done in Delaware under a court order, and the bill will make sure that the state won't have to be ordered again to do a reassessment.

House Minority Whip Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden, said he would have preferred there be a rolling reassessment, rather than just one every five years.

"Say for example, 2008 reoccurs and there's a dramatic reduction in property values," Yearick said. "You may capture that based upon that five-year cycle, whereas

rolling reassessment, I think, mitigates some of the risk of that occurring."

Yearick wanted to know who is going to pick up the tab. "The state so graciously was paying for this one," he said.

Wilson-Anton said the state is not picking up the tab, the three counties are and that county council members support the bill.

"I know New Castle County has made it revenue neutral. And so they've really picked up the tab there," she said. Future reassessments would be a county responsibility to pay, she said.

Rep. Rich Collins, R-Millsboro, said he wouldn't support the bill unless they wait for the results of the current reassessment first.

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BOOSTER SEATS, BEER GARDENS, BANKING DISCUSSED IN SENATE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Child booster seats and beer garden workers had two things in common Thursday: Bills involving each were on the Delaware Senate’s agency, and both passed handily.

Senate Bill 68, sponsored by Rep. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Arden, would require children under two years old and under 30 pounds to be seated in a rear-facing seat with a five-point harness. Children under four years old and under 40 pounds would need to be seated in either a forward facing or rear-facing seat with a five-point harness. Children between the ages of four and 16 would be required to sit in a booster based on the manufacturer’s guidelines or a seatbelt.

SB 68 removes the existing fine for the first offense and requests law enforcement to provide a referral to the Office of Highway Safety car seat fitting station for

guidance and education regarding proper use of a child restraint.

If the bill is signed into law, the Department of Safety and Homeland Security would be required to implement an awareness campaign within 180 days of enactment. SB 68 now heads to the House side of the General Assembly, where it will be assigned to a committee for a hearing.

House Bill 69, sponsored by Rep. Sean Lynn, D-Dover, eliminates the requirement that beer gardens must have a daily average of at least 25 full-time employees to operate. Beer gardens are the only liquor establishments that have a statutory staffing requirement. HB 69 now awaits Gov. John Carney’s signature.

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BILL ON EV CHARGERS IN NEW HOMES PASSES SENATE COMMITTEE

BY SAM HAUT

The Senate Environment, Energy and Transportation Committee on Wednesday approved a bill that would require new homes to be built with electric vehicle charging stations.

Senate Bill 103, sponsored by Sen. Sarah McBride, D-Wilmington, would require new single-family homes with building permits issued after Jan. 1, 2024 and multi-family homes with final site plans issued after Jan. 1, 2025 to have electric vehicle charging stations.

Single-family homes would need to have a charging station either in a garage or the home's designated parking space, while multi-family homes would need to have at least 5% of parking spaces equipped for charging electric vehicles.

"The shift to electric vehicles is not ideological, it's

imminent and it's inevitable," McBride said. "Every major automobile manufacturer has announced a transition to electric vehicles. It's not a matter of if it's just essentially a matter of when. This legislation seeks to make sure that Delaware is better prepared for that transition."

McBride said the cost to install the wiring would be a couple hundred dollars for a single-family home, while installing a conduit and wiring would be several thousand hundred dollars.

"I feel like I have to preface this by saying that I'm not opposed to EV at all, in fact there's a bill out there where the state is going to move to a fleet of vehicles...and I signed onto that, so why can't the state take the lead," said Eric Buckson, R-Dover. "So I'm not opposed to

that." He said he is, however, very concerned when the state makes mandates that are outside of its government agencies. Buckson asked McBride if she has spoken with towns and municipalities to see what their opinions are.

McBride said they incorporated feedback they've received from local governments in the form of an amendment to the bill that would remove language about certain electrical requirements and update the definition of multi-family homes. The amendment has not yet been added to the bill, so the exact changes are unclear at this time.

The bill was approved by the committee with five in favor and two on its merits, but because Senate committees don't vote publicly on bills, it is unclear how committee members voted. Voting for a bill on its merits means a legislator doesn't want to go on record for supporting or opposing, but would like it to move forward for discussion in the House or Senate.

Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, asked how the grid would be able to support the extra power that an increase in electric vehicles would bring, and she said in response that it's not the job of the bill to create more electricity.

"I'm not here to argue about the policy changes that might occur on the back end to ensure that the grid is fully prepared for the transition to electric vehicles... but if for instance we're not going where I said we're going, and a byproduct of that is partly because of the grid, demand will be lower then," McBride said. "And this is just to make sure that we're prepared for what will inevitably be an increase in demand."

[READ MORE HERE](#)



UNION DUES BILL PASSES SENATE COMMITTEE

BY SAM HAUT

The Senate Labor Committee on Wednesday approved a bill that would give union members a tax credit for their union dues.

Senate Bill 72, sponsored by Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City, would let people claim up to \$500 in tax credit to pay for union dues on state taxes. Poore said union members used to be able to deduct dues from federal taxes so it makes sense for Delaware to allow them to deduct dues from their state taxes.

“This deduction was removed by Congress in 2017,” Poore said. “With that deduction being eliminated several years ago, the least we can do as a state is to offer that same deduction to Delaware union members on their state taxes.”

The federal change was a result of the **Tax Cuts and Jobs Act**, which suspended miscellaneous itemized deductions, which included union dues, until 2026.

Senate committees do not take public votes, but a check of the bill tracker shows Senate Bill 72 received three votes in favor and one on its merits.

Poore said that they will be changing the bill from a tax credit to a nonrefundable tax deduction, lowering the amount of money someone owes in taxes. The fiscal note for the bill anticipates that it will cost the state \$15.4 million in 2025 and 2026 fiscal years, based on an estimated 38,330 union members in Delaware.

Poore said that the fiscal note is based on the bill giving tax credits, but when she proposes a substitute bill for tax deductions, it will cost “significantly less,” though she did not provide any specifics on how much less it will cost or when the substitute will be released.

Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, said he’s uncomfortable voting for a bill that they don’t have the final version.

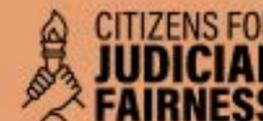
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BUCKSON CRITICIZES MATERNAL BILL FOR DROPPING TERM 'WOMAN'

BY SAM HAUT

Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, had issues Wednesday with a maternal health bill changing the words “woman” and “women” to “person” and “people.”

Senate Bill 106, sponsored by Sen. Kyle Gay, D-Elsmere, would replace those words in the Delaware code on maternal health and also change the term maternal depression to perinatal mood and anxiety disorder. These changes would apply to the part of the Delaware code that deals with maternal health, which specifies who receives informational materials on maternal health, including depression, that can occur during and after pregnancy.

During the Senate Health & Social Services Committee meeting, Buckson asked if, as a father of four, the bill as written would include him in spaces meant for expectant mothers.

“Sen. Buckson, I don’t want to make any assumptions about your personhood,” Gay said. “I know that you identify as male and have presented as such to me and asked me to use he/him pronouns with you.

“However, if you are neither in the pregnancy stage and you are neither carrying a baby, or if you are not postpartum, then my understanding of the language of this bill is that it would not apply to you.”

Sen. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown, said that she doesn’t understand Buckson’s concern with the bill, as she feels it will only help people. Buckson said that he takes issue with changing the word women to person.

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SCHOOL BOARD

2023 DELAWARE SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

ELECTIONS





CADE PICKED FOR PRESIDENTIAL GROUP ON BLACK EQUITY

BY JAREK RUTZ

Capital School District's superintendent will represent Delaware on a presidential committee in Washington, D.C. Vilicia Cade has been appointed to the Presidential Advisory Commission on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Black Americans.

"I remain humbled and poised to serve our nation as a member of this prestigious advisory commission, and look forward to using my life experiences, educational accomplishments and professional achievements to add value to the commission's vital work," Cade said in a statement.

According to district personnel, White House protocol prohibits Cade from talking to the media prior to working on the commission.

The commission aids in developing, implementing and coordinating educational programs and initiatives for agencies such as the Department of Education. It provides advice to President Joe Biden through the federal secretary of education, focusing mostly on:

- Promoting career pathways for Black students through programs such as internships, apprenticeships and work-based learning initiatives
- Increasing public awareness of the educational disparities Black Americans face and providing solutions to these problems

- Establishing local and national relationships with public, private, philanthropic and nonprofit stakeholders to advance the mission of equity, excellence and economic opportunity for Black Americans

Cade, who is also an author and social justice advocate, is the first Black female chief executive officer and superintendent of the Capital School District. She's the only Black female superintendent in the state and has worked for more than three decades to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and adults.

Cade was a key administrator of the Brooklyn High School's New Visions Reform Project, co-creator of the College Readiness Scholars Institute at the University of Delaware and is credited for launching numerous parent empowerment programs.

She also has served on boards such as Northeast Ohio Boys and Girls Club and United Way of Delaware.

Cade's bachelor's degree, three master's degrees and doctorate were earned at [New York University](#).

[Learn](#) more about the commission's goals and work.



STUDENT 'MENTAL HEALTH DAYS' BILL AMONG FIVE ON WAY TO HOUSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

A busy day in the House Education Committee Wednesday—headlined by a law that would give students mental health days—ended with five bills sent to the full House.

House Bill 3, sponsored by House Majority Leader Rep. Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, provides for excused absences for the mental or behavioral health of a student. It requires any student taking more than two such excused absences to be referred to a behavioral health specialist.

Longhurst said the bill helps destigmatize mental health while also flagging potentially troubled students to prevent them from hurting themselves or others. She said that a CDC survey showed the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an existing mental health crisis for students, and one in five school-aged children have a mental health condition, with 45% of children having experienced a traumatic event.

Rep. Rich Collins, R-Millsboro, admitted he had a hard time understanding what behavioral health means.

“My understanding is one of the huge problems we have in our schools today is a lack of discipline among the students,” Collins said. “Nobody can learn when they’re not disciplined, and that’s what I’ve heard from many teachers as to why they’ve left the profession or why they would not go back into it. So why are we legislating in this area?”

Several legislators pointed out that behavioral health is often a byproduct of student anxiety, and can manifest itself into students not being engaged in class or self-isolation.

“They may have anxiety, they may have ADHD, they may have a host of characteristics that create them to not be able to function in school,” Longhurst said.

[READ MORE HERE](#)





LAKE FOREST VOTES TO RAISE SCHOOL PROPERTY TAXES

BY JAREK RUTZ

Three weeks after Caesar Rodney School District's tax referendum failed, residents of another Kent County school district overwhelmingly voted to increase property taxes to give their schools additional revenue.

Lake Forest School District, in Felton, voted May 6 to raise school property taxes by 18.90 cents in the 2023-2024 school year, 10.80 cents in 2024-2025 and 37 cents in 2025-2026—per each \$100 of assessed home value. The district will generate an additional \$1,050,197 in revenue for fiscal year 2024, \$600,113 in fiscal year 2025 and \$405,632 in fiscal year 2026.

“Things did go really well, and the most important thing that I could say is major kudos and thanks to our community for coming together for a good cause,” said Superintendent Steve Lucas. “The people of Lake Forest

really recognize the value of education and the job that we're doing here, and we thank them for that. We look forward to doing everything we said we're going to do.”

The average assessed value in the district is \$33,878, so a typical homeowner would have a tax hike of \$64.03 in year one, \$36.59 in year two and \$24.73 in year three.

Out of 966 total ballots, 635 people, or 66% of voters, voted for the added tax.

Lake Forest's school board voted to go to referendum during its March 9 **meeting** because the district's costs for personnel and resources have escalated and will continue to escalate, resulting in a need to raise additional operating revenue, operate beyond its means or cut various services to its students.

“Our first order of business is to follow through on

our commitment to increase safety and security,” Lucas said. Part of that commitment is adding more constables in schools.

The revenue also will help the district pay its staff more in order to attract more workers with competitive compensation, he said. This includes hiring more substitute teachers and paraprofessionals.

“It's also going to really settle us in terms of being able to put our plan in place for technology, specifically the upkeep of technology,” he said.

The additional revenue also gives the district peace of mind when it comes to transportation, Lucas said, because transportation costs are sometimes unpredictable.

Lake Forest's tax rate for assessed home value is the lowest combined total rate in the county and of the traditional schools in the entire state. Its current tax rate is \$1.6122 per \$100 of assessed home value, which equates to an average of \$546 per year, or \$45.50 per month.

“This successful referendum just gives us the ability to plan in the future with confidence,” Lucas said, “and it helps us with making some good choices where operations are concerned.”



photo credit: RODNAE Productions / PEXELS



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CARNEY ENDS COVID EMERGENCY HEALTH ORDER, AS PLANNED

BY BETSY PRICE

A flurry of federal and state emergency orders accompanied the appearance of COVID-19 in Delaware in March of 2020, sparking months of fear, worry, financial pain and illness.

Three years and two months later, Gov. John Carney formally ended his State of Delaware **Public Health Emergency** order at 6 p.m. on Thursday, May 11, a glorious spring day full of sunshine and light winds blowing through flowering plants.

Carney's move echoes that of President Joe Biden, whose federal order also ends today.

"Thank you to each and every Delawarean who helped us get to where we are today," Carney said.



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