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Cost of Weight-Loss Drugs Hits Taxpayers



Stripers Arrive Earlier



Sanford Defeats Howard

photo link: Marcia Reed



Headlines

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COST OF WEIGHT-LOSS DRUGS FOR STATE EMPLOYEES HITS TAXPAYERS



BY JACOB OWENS

When Gov. John Carney announced last week that his **Fiscal Year 2025 budget** proposal included more than \$93 million in additional spending for health care plan costs for state employees and retirees, he didn't mention that a significant portion of that is attributed to an exploding issue: weight-loss drugs.

Delaware officials budgeted about \$2 million in the current fiscal year to cover the cost of a new wave of injectable weight-loss drugs. So far, the state has been spending about \$2.5 million a month on the drugs — total health plan spending over the first six months is about \$15 million. That adds to higher health care claims overall for an aging covered population, and the state now faces a health plan fund deficit unless premiums are raised next fiscal year.

While covered workers contribute anywhere from 4% to 13% of plan cost under the state government's General Health Insurance Plan, the remainder of the plan funding is paid by state taxpayers via the state's General Fund. Comparatively, only about 25% of private employer's health insurance plans currently cover GLP-1 drugs at all, according to a survey last year by the health care company Accolade.

In 2021, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration approved a formulation of **Ozempic**, a drug made by the Danish manufacturer Novo Nordisk known as a GLP-1, or glucagon-like peptide-1 which have long treated type 2 diabetes, for use in weight loss. The drugs mimic a hormone that targets areas of the brain that regulate appetite and food intake, reducing a patient's perceived hunger and allowing them to lose weight.

WEIGHT-LOSS FACTS

But GLP-1s require a patient to remain on the drug for at least four to five months to be most effective, according to the FDA, and the average monthly cost of the drugs runs around \$1,000 without insurance.

Ozempic, also known as Wegovy in its weight-loss form, is among the most prescribed medicines for state workers, according to data from the Delaware Department of Human Resources, which oversees the state's insurance plan. The number of GLP-1 prescriptions written for covered state workers or family members rose 28% in the five months from July to December. With additional drugs vying for FDA approval and increased available data on the drugs' impact, it's likely those numbers will continue to grow.

The increase in weight-loss drug usage has also spurred another expensive consequence: a rise in bariatric weight-loss surgeries. Over the first six months of the fiscal year, the state has seen an 18% increase in bariatric surgeries — that's due in part because use of

weight-loss drugs like Ozempic have allowed more patients to qualify for the procedure.

While health experts argue that use of the drugs to lower obesity rates and associated factors like high blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and more will ultimately lower lifetime health care costs for affected patients, states are struggling to deal with an explosion of upfront costs. Other states like Connecticut, Tennessee and North Carolina are changing how they approach their coverage of them in lieu of the costs.

Last year, Connecticut changed its plan to require any GLP-1 prescriptions to be made through a specific telehealth service, reducing the ability of patient's family doctors to prescribe a drug like Ozempic off-label. Tennessee chose to stop covering GLP-1 prescriptions unless a patient showed an existing diagnosis of diabetes. Meanwhile, North Carolina chose this month to drop coverage of GLP-1 drugs after being buried in more than \$100 million in costs last year.

Delaware, which chose to cover the drugs last March, is now reassessing whether to make changes to its own coverage of GLP-1 drugs. The State Employee Benefits Committee, which oversees Delaware's health care plans for state workers and retirees, is discussing the issue at upcoming meetings on Feb. 20, March 11 and 25 before making a recommendation to the state.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

PROPOSED LAW OFFERS LOOK AT ANOTHER 'NATURAL' BURIAL METHOD

BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware’s lawmakers are ironing out the details of an increasingly popular way Americans have dealt with death: allowing the body to naturally return to the soil. It’s one of a variety of ways to deal with bodies other than the modern, and costly, traditional services involving embalming and burial in a big casket.

Eco-friendly methods of burial are becoming more popular, said Nancy Goldenberg, chief executive officer of Philadelphia’s **Laurel Hill Cemetery**. That’s partly because there’s simply going to be a lack of land for people to get buried in caskets, particularly for urban areas, where land is precious.

“I think this is something we don’t often talk about,” Goldenberg said. “We cannot continue to build cemeteries. The land just isn’t there and cemeteries are going to fill up.”

Delaware’s legislature is considering natural organic reduction, a burial method that is slightly different from

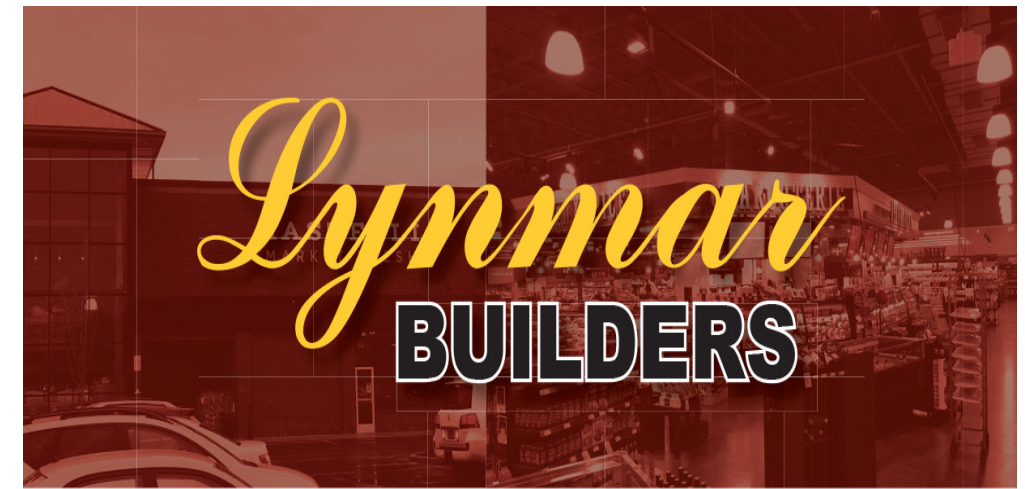
most natural or green burials, called natural organic reduction. It accelerates the decomposition of the body so it more quickly becomes soil. Some people call it human composting.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Natural reduction uses large vessels to enclose human remains with straw, wood chips or other natural materials for about 30 days. The contents of the vessel are mixed with warm air and periodically turned to reduce the body. The remains then can be given to the deceased individual’s family.

This burial is considered a more eco-friendly alternative because it doesn’t use the formaldehyde used in embalming, and doesn’t release of carbon dioxide and mercury into the atmosphere, like cremation does. It also uses 1/8 the energy needed to perform a cremation.

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DELTECH QUESTIONED ABOUT EXTRA SALARY FUNDING, PAY DISCREPANCY

BY JAREK RUTZ

It was higher education day in the Joint Finance Committee Thursday, in which the big three state institutions — [University of Delaware](#), [Delaware State University](#) and [Delaware Technical Community College](#) — made their cases for millions in state funding.

DelTech, which has \$100,460,200 penciled in through the Governor's Recommended Budget, is asking for additional \$525,000 for salary competitiveness, which the committee pushed back on. Just as in last year's hearing, Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, pressed DelTech President Mark Brainard with his questioning. Prior to Brainard even taking a seat in the middle of the fishbowl of the legislators, Lawson questioned why the top 12 employees at DelTech make \$1.2 million.

"I've got a problem with that, I've got a major problem with it," he said. "It needs to go to the classroom, to go to the kids."

His concern was in response to DelTech asking for about \$525,000 in state funding which was not included in Gov. John Carney's recommended budget for fiscal year 2025, to raise salaries for faculty and administration, or Plan A and Plan D employees, respectively.

"Plan A is for faculty and that's about 450 employees college-wide," Brainard said. "Salary Plan D is for administrators and that's 45 individuals college-wide — deans, directors, vice presidents."

Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton, and chair of the House Education Committee, also took exception to the request for funding to go to raises.

"What's the point of having a stabilization plan if we're going to now back fund it with a half a million?" she said. The stabilization plan, part of the governor's recommended budget, is funded at \$982,300 and is meant to increase and maintain faculty salary competitiveness.

Both Williams and Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, who are former educators in Delaware public schools, said additional raises on top of the stabilization plan are not fair because of the requirements of kindergarten through 12th grade educators as opposed to the DelTech instructors.

"They don't have the same requirements as our educators have to go through to be able to teach in a higher ed," she said. "I mean, we have many of our representatives and senators who work at some of these places, and so you can't compare the two. So if we have a stabilization plan in place, I don't know why we're now backfilling it with something else."

Buckson, who's on the Senate Education Committee, said the legislators and DelTech need to understand what Williams is saying without thinking that their work isn't appreciated or important.

"Public school teachers and what they're dealing with every single day is different," he said. "Their requirements are definitely different and that has to matter if funds are limited."

Brainard said the investments the General Assembly has made in the past few years has helped combat the shortage of instructors and he pointed out that DelTech monitors the average salaries of teachers in the 19 school districts. In the past, their instructors have been on par with the lowest-paying districts, and now, he said, DelTech educators earn about the middle of the pack, which is about \$45,000.

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Business

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PHYSICAL THERAPY, MOVEMENT HELPS SENIORS THRIVE IN RETIREMENT

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

Keep it moving — that’s the top tip for longevity from local experts to Delaware’s aging population.

“As we get older, we get lazy,” said 71-year-old Rick Stetler. Stetler was wrapping up a session at Milford’s **Aquacare Physical Therapy** last week. He is one of the hundreds of retirees pouring into Delaware yearly and expected to dramatically increase the size of the state’s older population in the next 25 years, as the younger population is expected to shrink.

Keeping retirees as healthy and mobile as possible will be important to Delaware and its booming retiree segment. Aquacare and **Pace Your Life** are two of the

organizations focusing on that in Milford, which is one of the Delaware’s magnets for out-of-state retirees.

“Honestly, movement is the key,” said Occupational Therapist Alicia Adkins, who works at PACE Your Life and Polaris Healthcare Rehabilitation Center, both located in the Milford Wellness Center building by Silver Lake, where Aquacare can also be found.

Mobility is Stetler’s goal and he began therapy because of a suggestion from his rheumatologist four years ago.

“I was bent forward and not walking very well,” Stetler said. He said not keeping his core strong caused it. “If you don’t keep your core strong you’re going to fold over like a tree,” Stetler said.

He said his rheumatologist told him he saw a 60% improvement in Stetler’s mobility after only two sessions with Aquacare. “I want to get to 90 percent,” he said.

While Stetler has had back issues since his 20s, it was when others began to notice that he took it seriously.

“I was walking very bent over. I kept getting remarks (about his bent back) from people I know that I only see occasionally,” he said. After trying other therapy locations, Stetler found Aquacare to be the right fit for him.

The physical therapy business has been around for 25 years and Aquacare physical therapist Amanda Petner said about 60% of patients are retired people or have Medicare, the government insurance for older people.

THE THERAPY AFTER COVID

Pace for Life’s Adkins has seen an uptick in the Boomer population where she works.

“I think COVID impacted a lot of them,” she said. “It took the movement factor away, with the aging population affected most,” she said. Several years later, therapists are still seeing the effects of it.

Petner said Aquacare’s one-on-one therapy is one of the business’s specialties. “We are with the patient the whole time,” Petner said.

“She watches everything I do. She pays attention,” Stetler said.

By doing that, Petner and fellow therapists can catch even the slightest changes in mobility, which can be a critical observation. One therapist will tell another if they see anything in any of the patients or have a recommendation or suggestion that could aid in their therapy, Petner said.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



CHAMBER DINNER CELEBRATES JOBS, INVOLVEMENT, INCYTE'S GROWTH

BY BETSY PRICE

A night to celebrate all things business and jobs started Monday with a call for Delaware to ready itself to become a manufacturing hub. China long has been a magnet for manufacturing, but its decision to limit couples to one child soon will mean there's not a big enough workforce to man factories, said Mike Quaranta, president of the [Delaware State Chamber of Commerce](#), at its annual dinner.

"Manufacturing has to go somewhere and in the next 10 years, it's going to depart China and look for places around the world to locate," Quaranta said. "There's a great opportunity for us."

The desire to draw attention to Delaware's wares is the motivating force behind the chamber's new Coolest Thing Made in Delaware [contest](#), he said.

"We need speedy, permanent, reasonable environmental policies that support manufacturing and manufacturers," he said. "We need to embark on an industrial expansion not seen in our country in almost five decades.

And we need policies that embrace this coming reality.

"The opportunity here is to double down on our manufacturing capabilities where local workers can fill local orders for local customers. And when we're done, we'll have the supply chain largely immune from international shocks and a more diverse economy."

Gov. John Carney emphasized the state's need to grow its jobs. "We need to win the competition with other states for good jobs," he said, especially jobs in science and technology.

The Chamber also announced several honors.

Gary R. Stockbridge, former regional president of Delmarva Power, was honored with the Josiah Marvel Cup. It is considered the chamber's highest honor and is given to a person who has made an outstanding contribution to the state, community or society.

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COMPACT MEMBRANE TO SPEND \$3.1 MILLION TO EXPAND

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

New Castle's **Compact Membrane Systems** will spend \$3.1 million to expand to meet market demand and triple its workforce, with state grants paying about one-third of that. Founded by a former DuPont scientist in Wilmington 30 years ago, CMS creates technology to capture and reduce carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. It will get \$875,480 from the state to help fund its growth.

A Graduated Lab Space Grant of up to \$760,480 will go toward 15,080 square feet of lab space, and a \$115,000 Jobs Performance Grant will help add 38 new full-time jobs by 2026.

"It's vitally important we keep legacy companies like CMS in our communities growing and thriving," said New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer. "We have the talent right here in our state, and this expansion

presents opportunities for our workforce to stay right here at home."

The grants were approved by the state Council on Development Finance and are dependent on the company meeting certain outlined commitments.

CMS recently moved most of its operations on Water Street, Newport, to a temporary site near the new facility that will be constructed on Reads Way. The expansion includes building 10,864 square feet of research and development and manufacturing-focused lab spaces along with more than 4,216 square feet of additional space. The lab will meet the growing need for membrane fiber for the carbon capture and sequestration market, a press release said.

The company has gotten a lot of attention for being a women-led company in energy technology and in the membrane industry.

COMPACT MEMBRANE HISTORY

Founded in 1993 by Stuart Nemser, CMS is now run by his daughter, Erica. She also chairs the Delaware Sustainable Chemistry Alliance Board. Its goal is to find technology solutions that capture and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, avert global warming and transform the industry into a long-term sustainable enterprise.

CMS has been shifting away from being a small, research-based company reliant on federal grants to take its place as a growing commercial entity that tries to marry commercial success with social responsibility while by delivering innovative new products. As the company has evolved, it raised \$16.5 million in a Series A venture capital round in 2023.

In considering where best to grow, it looked at Houston, TX, and areas further west before deciding to stay in Delaware and continue to expand its engineering, manufacturing and sales footprint.

"CMS has grown up as a Delaware company and, through this state support, is excited to cement our future in Delaware," said Erica Nemser, CEO. "We love the resources and opportunity Delaware has to offer, from excellent scientific and technical talent to the commitment to manufacturing advanced technology to address climate emissions."



REYBOLD BUILDS RETAIL CENTER NEAR ST. ANDREWS



BY KATIE KAZIMIR

A retail center is slated to open this summer in Bear adjacent to St. Andrews, a residential community, both developed by **Reybold Group**.

The foundation for St. Andrews Retail Center, which will house eight stores, is complete and steel will go up starting in about two weeks.

“Reybold Group is eager to introduce vibrant retail that will take the lifestyle experience to new heights for residents at St. Andrews, as well as for the surrounding community,” said Jennifer Corbett, commercial leasing operations manager at Reybold Group. “We are committed to welcoming a variety of new businesses at this retail center to enhance what Bear has to offer.”

REYBOLD SEEKS LESEES

Reybold Group said they have one signed lease from a future tenant and is seeking additional fitness, restaurant, retail and beauty tenants. Reybold representatives said they are in discussions with a pizza restaurant and a bubble tea shop.

It is at 1724 Pulaski Highway, also called Route 40, next to the Community Powered Federal Credit Union headquarters. The location is along a main corridor to Routes 1 and 95, and walkable to any of the residences at St. Andrews.

St. Andrews is the company’s largest residential community of 876 units, including 360 apartments, 450 townhomes and 48 single-family homes.



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Food & Dining

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NEED WARMING UP? DIP INTO ONE OF THESE FLIGHTS OF SOUP

BY PAM GEORGE

January was more like Janu-dreary, and if February follows suit, restaurants will need more soup options on the menu. That's because few foods warm the body and soul like soup. Granted, multiple choices can create a challenge. Which one to pick? Happily, several Delaware eateries came up with a solution: a flight.

If it seems like a strange idea, consider that there are beer flights and wine flights. La Casa Pasta in Glasgow has a pasta flight trio on Tuesdays.

Here's where to find the nourishing goods.

PIZZA BY ELIZABETHS

Ten years ago, the Greenville restaurant gave customers a sip of three soups, including the much-ballyhooed tomato, the flight's anchor. Indeed, on a recent visit, selections included tomato soup, chicken with lemon and rice and French onion for \$15. House-made breadsticks come with a cute presentation.

MILTON DOUGH BAR'S SOUP

Like Pizza by Elizabeths, Milton Doug Bar makes a good pie. But after a Facebook post of a soup flight, people have been ordering the \$18 offering of four soups. Selections might include chicken and dumplings, shrimp-corn chowder, tomato bisque and chili. Call before you pop in to ensure the soups are still in the kettles.

UNCLE JOHN'S BBQ

John Berl carries up to five soups — “as much as possible, all homemade” — at his brick-and-mortar location on Philadelphia Pike. Varieties have included chicken and dumplings, vegetable with brisket, crab bisque and chicken tortellini. Choose four 8-to-10-ounce portions for \$20.

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DORCEA

Chef Michael Bomba put Jamaican carrot soup on the Mid-Town Brandywine eatery's specials menu one day, and regulars won't let him take it off. The spicy soup joins French onion and crab bisque as standard selections. However, there are also one to two soups of the day, such as Maryland crab and chicken tortellini.

“You can do any three, besides French onion, on the soup flight,” says co-owner Tony Bomba. The cost is \$10.

SONORA

When a guest asked owner Melissa Ferraro to consider a soup sampler, she didn't hesitate. A recent \$15 flight at the Newark restaurant included fire-roasted tomato bisque, seafood chowder and carrot ginger.





DELAWARE CHEFS EMBRACE EVERYTHING BAGEL SEASONING

BY PAM GEORGE

If it seems like everything bagel seasoning is, well, everywhere, that's because it is. Avocado toast, pizza, Pop Tarts and arepas are among the food getting that deli treatment in Delaware, and they're not alone. A National Restaurant Association poll of culinary professionals found that the addictive seasoning was named a top flavor for 2024.

The mix typically includes dried garlic and onion flakes, poppy and sesame seeds, and salt — toppings left over after making specialty bagels. Combining them is a lesson in waste-not-want-not.

There's something about the blend that conjures the feeling and taste of a New York deli, says Kyle Berman, executive chef at **The Pines** in Rehoboth Beach.

"It has all the ingredients people love," he said.

In 2017, Trader Joe's captured the magic in the Everything But the Bagel Sesame Seasoning Blend. Since then, the food and hospitality industry has turned the humble

mix into a culinary must-have. Here are some creative ways to use it.

EVERYTHING BAGEL'S NOSTALGIA

As Berman noted, everything bagel mix has a nostalgic taste. He took it further by dusting Parker House rolls with the seasoning and he's not alone. The **Brandywine Restaurant** in Wilmington has also used the blend on the rolls, a sweet, fluffy milk bread invented in the 1870s in Boston's Parker House Hotel.

During the Riverwalk Farmers Market season in Milford, customers line up for **Fat Cat Farms'** everything English muffins. The Camden farm uses eggs from free-range hens and a special sourdough starter.

SAVORY NOT SWEET

Everything bagel seasoning instantly adds depth to savory pastries — there's no mistaking them for their sugary cousins.

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Government

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DOVER COMMITTEE WILL LOOK AT WAYS TO HELP CITY'S HOMELESS

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

The mention of a small homeless encampment on Delaware State University property has led to the launch of a Dover committee assigned to find ways to help solve the problem in Delaware's capital. The first meeting of Dover's Unsheltered Working Group will be at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 7, at the Dover Public Library.

Its creation came about during last week's Dover Council meeting, after the three-tent encampment at Delaware's only Historically Black College and University came to light. It was followed with close to three hours of public comment on homelessness in Dover.

Dover Code Enforcement officers believe there are an estimated 40 homeless encampments throughout the city of Dover.

"A number one-tenth of that is still too much," DSU Spokesman Carlos Holmes. "The existence of the home-

less camp was not a surprise to DSU," Holmes said. It's in the woods on the far side of the campus, away from the students. The university welcomes a look into the issue citywide, including possible solutions, he said.

"It's not a problem that's going away," Holmes said. "The poor and homeless have always been with us since the beginning of time."

Homelessness and the lack of affordable housing are big issues across Delaware right now. The Delaware House and Senate housing committees held a **joint hearing** on the issue at the end of 2023, talking about how the issues are entwined.

Among other things, the city of Milford is wrestling now with whether to put up a tiny house **village** for the homeless, a topic that spawned a four-hour meeting last week. And the city of Newark is **sponsoring** a series of

virtual coffee breaks to discuss zoning issues related to that at 10 a.m. Feb. 13; 2 p.m. Feb. 15; and 11 a.m. Feb. 23.

"We have seen the growth of the homeless community throughout the city," Dover Chief Code Enforcement Officer Eddie Kopp told city council last week. "They are everywhere, north, south, east and west. They are on private property, public property, state property, city property."

At the conclusion of public comment, Dover Mayor Robin Christiansen and council called for the immediate formation of the Dover Unsheltered Working Group.

"It's important we score a touchdown on this issue," Christiansen said. "It's not who scores it, but that it gets scored."

Christiansen said past efforts to address the Dover unsheltered population included three blue ribbon committees. Those were groups of people independent of political authority or influence appointed to analyze a specific question. Christiansen said their efforts were not successful because of a lack of a unified goal among committee members.

"Each group had their own agenda," he said. "Several groups were going in opposite directions."

HOMELESS CHALLENGES

Christiansen's Challenge to End Veterans Homelessness in 2015 and 2016 had better results.

"We try to use that template to address civilian homelessness," Christiansen said. The only way to make a dent, Holmes said, is for people to come together for the benefit of the homeless.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



AS STRIPERS ARRIVE EARLIER, COMMERCIAL FISHING SEASON TO SHIFT

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

With striped bass coming into the Delaware River and bay earlier in the year as the weather warms up earlier, DNREC plans to adjust their commercial fishing seasons. The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control will accept written comments to the proposed changes through Feb. 14.

Stripers, as the fish are commonly called, have been coming in earlier than they used to, said DNREC Fisheries Manager John Clark at a Tuesday hearing on the state's proposed fishing season changes. The state wants to add two weeks in February to the striped sea bass commercial fishing season and remove two weeks in April and May to the spring anchor gill net season. This action was recommended unanimously by the [Advisory Council on Tidal Finfisheries](#) at its Sept. 19 meeting.

The hearing came after the [Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission](#) updated its striped bass man-

agement plan Jan. 24. The Atlantic striped bass population has struggled to replenish itself in recent years due to fishing above sustainable levels, water quality and habitat challenges, and climate change, the commission said. A 7% reduction in harvest for commercial fisheries was recommended by the commission.

In May 2023, the fisheries commission revised stock rebuilding projections to show that the striper stock will drop by 2029 from 97% to 15%, due to increased fishing mortality rates during the 2022 season. The commission reported low numbers of juvenile stripers in key nurseries last year.

"From the Chesapeake to the Hudson, last year's scarcity of juvenile striped bass mean spawning fish will be rare in years to come," said [Chesapeake Bay Foundation Maryland](#) Executive Director Allison Colden.

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Education

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JFC PRAISES DSU AVIATION, SAYS IT SHOULD UPGRADE FACILITIES

BY JAREK RUTZ

Jokes were cracked, programs were praised and millions in state funding were requested from **Delaware State University** Thursday's Joint Finance Committee hearing. That committee is responsible for setting the state budget and allocating funding to different programs and organizations throughout Delaware.

DSU, the state's only Historically Black College and University, is asking for about \$47,000,000. It started its hearing on a light note. "Some of you may know I was in a fight with Elon Musk a couple of weeks ago," said DSU President Tony Allen.

Allen released a strong statement of disdain in response to a tweet from Musk suggesting that pilots that graduate from HBCUs have a lower IQ. Allen pointed out that out of the 101 HBCUs in America, DSU is ranked the third best public one and ninth overall.

Legislators applauded the successful and growing aviation program at DSU, which has 110 professional pilot students and 47 aviation management majors. Established at the institution in 1987, the aviation program owns a fleet of 26 airplanes. They are maintained at Delaware Airpark in Cheswold, the program's base of flight training operations. The school also recently partnered with United Airlines to help create professional opportunities for aviation students and graduates.

"I get excited when you come in here," said JFC Chair Trey Paradee, D-Dover. "There are times I want to laugh and cry, I'm just really excited to always hear all the good things that are happening on campus."

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COLONIAL ADDRESSES CONCERNS ABOUT SPORTS FACILITIES IN TAX FORUM

Flooded fields

BY JAREK RUTZ

How Colonial School District sports will benefit from a \$61 million tax referendum was a common theme among questions during Wednesday’s virtual public forum. District officials fielded queries about the effect of the referendum, which would raise average homeowners taxes by about \$250 annually. The money will be used to match state funds of \$122 million for maintenance and improvements on all of the district’s 13 school buildings, which is 60% of the cost.

The district’s residents must approve the tax hike via referendum to cover the 40% of the local portion, or it loses the state certificate of necessity funding.

Colonial Superintendent Jeff Menzer called athletic spending the “highest ticket item” of the capital needs, estimated to cost \$50.6 million is allotted to sports upgrades. Menzer and others from Colonial had very clear answers, and a positive outlook, to those inquiries.

“We’re not hiding that fact, but what’s really important is every student at every level deserves access to that,” he said. “We’re in a space now in our high schools across the state, private, public, parochial, it doesn’t matter...we’re looking at facilities that our students and families deserve.”

He cited some notable sports facilities in New Castle County, such as the ones at the Charter School of Wilmington, Appoquinimink High School, Odessa High School and Abessinio Stadium at Salesianum School.

Lauren Wilson, the district’s public information officer, added that when the sports facilities were in good shape, they were a resource for people who aren’t even Colonial students.

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BY JAREK RUTZ

Partnership was the word of the night in the **Wilmington Learning Collaborative's** January meeting Tuesday night. Dorrell Green, superintendent of **Red Clay Consolidated School District** and a member of the governing council for the group, said they need to make sure they spend the millions of state funding wisely while strengthening community partnerships with groups that provide help, such as wellness centers, out-of-school activities and social services.

"I'm excited about continuing to engage in that work to ensure that our schools solidify partnerships that are going to not only look at during school, but after school as well as out of school time around that whole-community, whole-child approach."

Red Clay, along with **Brandywine** and **Christina**, are the three districts that make up the collaborative, established in November 2022. The group, which is penciled in for \$10 million in Gov. John Carney's recently announced 2025 recommended budget, is meant to improve academic and social outcomes for students of

WLC BUILDING COMMUNITY COUNCILS, STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

nine elementary schools in the city of Wilmington. It hopes to do this by collaborating with community organizations and involving various stakeholders including parents in decision-making for policies and programs.

Partnership asset-mapping is one of the key components of the site-based community councils being established at the nine WLC schools.

"We have many partners doing great work within our school communities, and given the nuances and complexity of our days, those partners don't always have a space to collaborate and to really braid their streams of work," said Laura Burgos, the collaborative's executive director. "We want to make sure that we do a deep dive on those assets that currently exist, so that when we're structuring the community councils, those voices are present and they play an active role in the design process."

The asset-mapping, she said, will evaluate the current needs that are being served and identify those existing needs that are not served through the existing partnerships.

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CCAC OPENS INNOVATION CENTER TO HELP CLOSE TECHNOLOGY GAP

BY JAREK RUTZ

The **Christina Cultural Arts Center** unveiled its new and improved Innovation Center Wednesday, which leaders call a major milestone for the group.

“We envision that Christina becomes the one of the primary technology hubs in the city,” said James Ray Rhodes, executive director of the Christina Cultural Arts Center, “for students to collaborate globally, nationally, internationally, with technology, not just computers, but how we use technologies to bridge the technology gap.”

The Innovation Center is open to all members of the public and Rhodes hopes it brings together people from all over the city of Wilmington and beyond. Spreading about 500-square-feet, the center features nine computer

stations, a 3D printer, a smart board and a regular desktop printer. The **Mike Clark Legacy Foundation** funded the room’s equipment and upgrades, which cost about \$125,000.

“In the Black and Brown communities, there’s this technology gap, and this is a way we reduce that gap by providing access to more families, at no cost,” Rhodes said. The center is located at 705 North Market Street in Wilmington.

The idea for it originally came more than five years ago to expand the Cultural Arts Center’s computer center, but the pandemic caused delays, and in fall 2022, the center hired an architect and found a few contractors to get the project going. Previously, the computer

“
We saw a boost in website referrals from Delaware LIVE during our admission season.
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center just had four computers. The nine in there now are a mix of Macs and PCs.

Students will have access to AutoCAD and Archicad where they can design projects, buildings and houses in 3D. There’s also a tutor hub after school hours and people can also come to learn the different applications in the Microsoft Suite, like Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, Excel, Outlook and more.

“You just come in and sign up, put your name on a schedule. You want to do research or want to do a job search, it’s there,” Rhodes said. “Oftentimes families don’t have access to this technology, whether it be through internet access, or to have the tool like a computer or desktop.”





SUSSEX CENTRAL
HIGH SCHOOL

LAYFIELD HOPING TO GET PRINCIPAL JOB BACK AFTER CASE DISMISSAL

BY JAREK RUTZ

An ousted Sussex County school principal, who was sued by a former student, is trying to get his position back after the lawsuit was dismissed in court. Bradley Layfield, the former principal of [Sussex Central High School](#) in the [Indian River School District](#), was among those sued by former student Aniya Harmon, who claimed they circulated a video and a photo of her breast, which was exposed during a 2023 fight.

Layfield, the school district and Assistant Principal Matthew Jones were sued for invasion of privacy, conspiracy to invade privacy, intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress and the idea that Layfield and Jones were officials who should have known better.

BACKGROUND

Harmon alleged she was approached and attacked by another student in May, and as a faculty member attempted to pull Harmon away from the scene, her shirt was pulled down, exposing her full right breast. It was

captured by a surveillance camera and, according to the complaint. Layfield subsequently shared the video — without editing or blurring Harmon's breast — with other faculty members at the school.

Harmon claimed that Layfield and Jones created and circulated a meme using a still shot of Harmon and her exposed breast, superimposed with the face of Janet Jackson over Harmon's face. The image is in reference to Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction when her breast was exposed during the 2004 National Football League Super Bowl halftime show.

On Monday, Judge Calvin L. Scott Jr. of the Superior Court of Delaware dismissed the lawsuit, which Layfield and his representation — the [Neuberger Firm](#) — have been requesting for months. Harmon's representation, the [Igwe Firm](#) in Philadelphia, declined to comment immediately on the suit's dismissal.

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SALSTHON KEEPS \$175K GOAL, WILL BENEFIT ST. PATRICK'S CENTER

BY JAREK RUTZ

Wilmington's Salesianum School has started fundraising for SALSTHON 2024, which has a goal of \$175,000 to benefit [St. Patrick's Center](#). St. Patrick's provides emergency food, meals, respite for the homeless, clothing, transportation and recreational activities for people in need.

"People are pumped up to raise money, and they're excited to go," said Frank Holodick, a senior and student council president at Salesianum.

The annual event brings together the communities of Salesianum, and fellow Wilmington Catholic schools, [Padua Academy](#) and [Ursuline Academy](#).

The announcement of its goal and focus, comes as [National Catholic School Week](#) kicks off.

"It really just shows the spirit of the three schools, there's so much passion for each of our schools by the students here," Holodick said, "and that's really reflected by how much they get into that fundraising and different events that lead up to the actual SALSTHON as well as the event itself."

ABOUT SALSTHON

The student councils from each school help organize SALSTHON, which is an all-night dance party inspired by [Penn State University's THON](#), to raise funds for local charities. Many high schools and universities across the country have adopted some version of Penn State's THON. One change this year is that the event will take place Saturday, March 16, from 5 p.m. to mid-

night, rather than going through the early hours of the morning as in previous years.

"It was in the interest of student safety," said Alison Hildenbrand, a college counselor at Salesianum. "We were concerned about having students up all night and then seeing them drive home. We think this change could bring more energy to the event and hopefully increase student interest and participation, too."

The center was actually the beneficiary of the event 10 years ago, and several faculty and parents from all three schools have been or are currently involved with Saint Patrick's, according to Hildenbrand.

"We're hoping to have 1,400 people come," Holodick said. "We want to be the first year to max out."

This is the 12th annual SALSTHON and at least 1,000 students show up each year to dance the night away. The fundraising goal is the same as last year's. However, the three schools shattered that goal last year and raised \$243,791 for the [Ronald McDonald House of Delaware](#), which helps families whose seriously ill children are getting care at Nemours Children's Hospital.

Participants are required to raise \$250 each, and if they raise \$100 more than that, they can bring a guest of their choice. Since its inception, SALSTHON has raised nearly \$2 million for local non-profit organizations, including the Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans, Child Inc., B+, SL24: Sean's House, St. Patrick's Center, Limen House, Nemours Children's Hospital and the Summer Collab.

Hildenbrand said SALSTHON is a manifestation of the mission and actions of the three schools.

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Sports

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SANFORD DEFEATS HOWARD BEHIND BIG THIRD QUARTER

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The No. 6 Sanford boys' basketball team hosted un-ranked Howard Wildcats in front of a sold-out crowd Thursday night. Sanford was riding a six-game winning streak, while Howard came in riding a four-game winning streak.

From the opening tip, Howard set the pace of the game both offensively and defensively. Its tenacious defense and attacking offense had Sanford on its heels the whole first half. They started the game off with an 8-0 run causing Sanford to use an early timeout, but the Warriors were unable to come up with a game plan to slow down the Wildcats. Howard led the entire first half while taking an 11-point lead into the half by a score of 29-18.

Sanford came out in the third quarter with a plan to give the Wildcats a taste of their own medicine. They stepped up their pressure on defense and attacked the basket on offense changing roles with the Wildcats.

The Warriors went on to outscore the Wildcats 29-7 in the third quarter, taking their first lead of the game on a deep three from Khareem Hart, who scored a team-high 20 points for the Warriors with 2:10 left in the third quarter. The Warriors capped off the third scoring quarter on a put back from a basket from freshman

Marquis Newsome, who added eight points for the Warriors. Sanford now found themselves with an 11-point lead as they lead 47-36.

Howard did put up a fight in the fourth quarter, but was never able to climb out of the 11-point deficit after the big third quarter from the Warriors. Sanford held on to defeat Howard 69-61 to push its winning streak to seven straight games.

Howard was led by sophomore guard Bryson Lane who scored 18 points for the Wildcats.





PRESSURE DEFENSE KEYS DOVER'S WIN OVER SMYRNA

BY GLENN FRAZER

The Dover Senators used a 13-0 run in the fourth quarter to pull away from Smyrna Tuesday night in boys' basketball action. With 6:17 left in the game, the Eagles' O-B Coleman scored on a breakaway dunk to cut Dover's lead to 43-40, but he was pulled from the game when he committed his fourth personal foul seconds earlier. That's when Dover proceeded to score the next 13 unanswered points, forcing several turnovers with full-court pressure. When Coleman came back in the game, the Senators had a comfortable 56-40 lead with three minutes to go.

Dover opened the game by scoring the first 10 points, but Smyrna cut the deficit to 16-11 at the end of the first quarter. In what would become a theme, Dover raced

out to early advantages in each of the four quarters only to watch the Eagles come storming back. Smyrna grabbed its only lead of the night late in the second quarter 27-26 as Coleman passed to Ryan Jones for an easy basket. The lead was short-lived, when less than 20 seconds later, Dorrell Little scored to put the Senators back in front 28-27 at the half. Dover would never trail again.

The third quarter began just like the previous two as Dover took a lead of 37-29. Fueling the start were two big plays. Little converted the "and-one" and Jayvion Dennis drained a three pointer in the run. Once again, the Eagles stormed back to trail 41-38 going into the final quarter. Coleman scored six points to pace Smyrna

in the third quarter, and Logan Shaw "nailed" a long range jumper when the team needed a "lift".

Early in the fourth quarter, Coleman picked up his fourth foul. Following a missed foul shot, he broke down the floor for the "emphatic" dunk. Smyrna coach Andrew Mears immediately called a timeout and sat Coleman for the next three minutes. The hope was they could protect Coleman while keeping the game close. Dover dominated those three minutes, pushing the lead to 56-40 with a "suffocating" full court press. Dennis scored eight of his team-high 16 points in that final quarter, including his third three-point make of the game.

Dover head coach Stephen Wilson talked about his defense after the game. "It's what we do. The team is well-conditioned to run the press. Our guys played hard all night and I really appreciate that." When asked about being pushed by Smyrna for most of the game, Coach Wilson said "Coach Mears always has his team prepared — they play hard and that's our conference man. We have Sussex Central next and they are tough too."

Dennis led Dover with 16 points, Little added 13 and Istaban Norwood scored 10 for the 11-2 Senators. Dover now has an 8-0 record in Henlopen North games.

Smyrna was paced by senior Coleman with a game-high 20 points and teammate Maurice Kilgoe chipped in with 10. The Eagles are now 9-4 overall and 7-3 in division play.





CAESAR RODNEY RECORDS SIX PINS IN WIN OVER SMYRNA

BY BENNY MITCHELL

The 2024 Smyrna Eagles versus the Caesar Rodney Riders wrestling rivalry had everything fans could expect when the two Delaware traditional wrestling powers took to the mat on Monday night. An intense crowd, strategy, tightly contested bouts, big pins and some upsets. In the end, the Riders won nine bouts including six pins to win the match 46-28 helping them to stay in the hunt for the Henlopen North title.

“This is always an intense match that both schools look forward to each year. They moved some guys around and took advantage of those matchups, but I felt we stayed composed and got the bonus points in some key matches,” Caesar Rodney head coach Trey Mitchell said.

Caesar Rodney jumped out to a quick lead, winning the first four matches. The Riders’ Ben Donato won a 12-3 major decision over Michael Pierson at 106 pounds followed by a pin by Ashton Graham over Olivia Natarcola in 3:20 at 113 pounds. Cole Moffett continued the Riders run winning a 6-1 decision over Ian Alfree at 120 pounds. Trevor Copes would cap off the early string of wins for the Riders with a pin over Donald Smith in 3:49 at 126 pounds to give Caesar Rodney a 19-0 lead.

The Eagles responded with a pair of bonus point victories as Victor Hernandez-Bryant trailing 10-2 recorded a pin over Alex Batton at 132 pounds then Warren Coates won a 15-6 major decision over Braedon

Bole 15-6 at 138 pounds cutting the Caesar Rodney lead to 19-10.

“After the pin at 132, Bole did a good job going out and shaving points in a match he wasn’t favored,” Mitchell said.

Caesar Rodney responded with a pair of pins. Jamisen Dean pinned Cory Pierce in 4:20 at 144 pounds followed by a pin by Craig Dixon in 3:16 at 150 pounds over Ricaldo Camacho extending the Riders lead to 31-10.

Brandon West got the Eagles back on the board with a pin over Kenneth King in 46 seconds at 157 pounds.

The Riders picked up two more wins with Logan Heffington at 165 pounds pinning Jose Washington in 2:47 setting the stage for Owen Dixon to put the match out of reach with a 5-3 decision over Jesse Dixon at 175 pounds.

“At the beginning of the year we fill out our personal goals and number one for me was to beat Smyrna,” Heffington said.

Smyrna sandwiched a Riders pin with a pair of wins to end the night. Teagan Gratowski won by injury default over Owyn Meister at 190 pounds. Walter Toomer added another six points for Caesar Rodney pinning Mason Schulenburg in 3:05 at 215 pounds before Chi Chi Eule ended the night with a pin for the Eagles in 51 seconds over Caleb Kellum at 285 pounds.

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