

# MILFORD LIVE

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**MAY 24, 2022**  
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Headlines .....	2
Culture.....	7
Business .....	11
Education.....	16
Health .....	20
Police & Fire.....	22
In Memorium .....	25
Stay Connected .....	27



REQUEST TO CHANGE PLAN DENIED

THIRD THURSDAY A SUCCESS

MILFORD POLICE CHIEF TO RETIRE

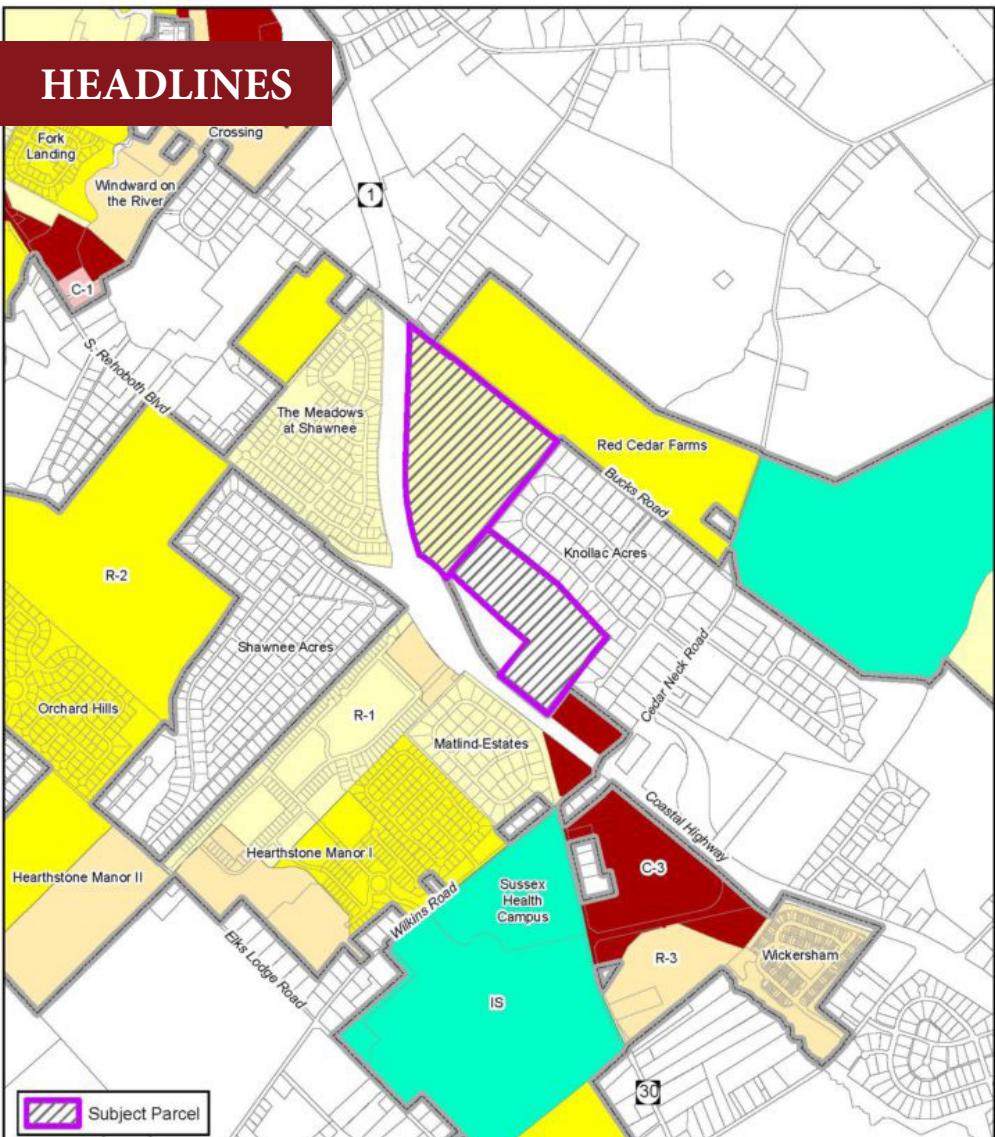
PHOTO BY JONATHAN MISTROT

# HEADLINES



PHOTO BY SUSAN MCLEAN PHOTOGRAPHY

## HEADLINES



THE CITY of  
**Milford**  
DELAWARE

Scale:	0	750	1,500
Drawn by:	WRP	Date:	04/06/22
Filepath:	2022ComPlanAmend_Wiggles_CLH.mxd		

Title: 2022 Comprehensive Plan Amendment  
Mr. Wiggles, LLC & Country Life Homes, Inc.  
Location & Zoning Map

BY TERRY ROGERS

With a vote of 6 to 1, Milford City Council denied a request from Country Life Homes and Mr. Wiggles LLC to change the 2018 Comprehensive Plan. The change would have changed over 110 acres of land located on the east side of Route 1 from Low Density Residential in the future use Comprehensive Plan to Commercial. City Planner Rob Pierce provided a brief history of the

# LAND EAST OF ROUTE 1 DENIED REQUEST TO CHANGE COMP PLAN

two parcels and the owner's previous requests to have the property rezoned.

"The Planning Commission reviewed this at the May 17 meeting and recommended denial of the Comprehensive Plan amendments upon a vote of four to two. The reasons for denial included they were not in favor of the Comprehensive Plan amendment because they felt there was adequate commercial land inventory already within city limits and along Route 1 and they had concerns about access to the property and compatible land uses," Pierce said. "The two dissenting votes that were supporting the amendment request, felt that the city should give the developer an opportunity to see what can be done with the property and that the proposal would benefit the city from an economic development standpoint."

After presenting the history of the property, Pierce turned the meeting over to the applicant for comment.

"We're here tonight as a result of my client requesting amendments to change the future land use designations for these two parcels, those future land use designations are low density residential currently, but it's important to discuss and understand completely the history of these parcels," James Griffin, an attorney representing the applicants, said. "When the city adopted the 2008

See PLAN on page 4

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## PLAN from page 3

Comprehensive Plan 14 years ago, it changed the future land use designations for these two parcels of land. The future land use designations for these two parcels had been highway commercial. When those highway commercial designations were taken away through the 2008 Comp Plan, my client did not own these lands. He acquired them later. The parties who did own them at that time had not taken any steps to develop them commercially."

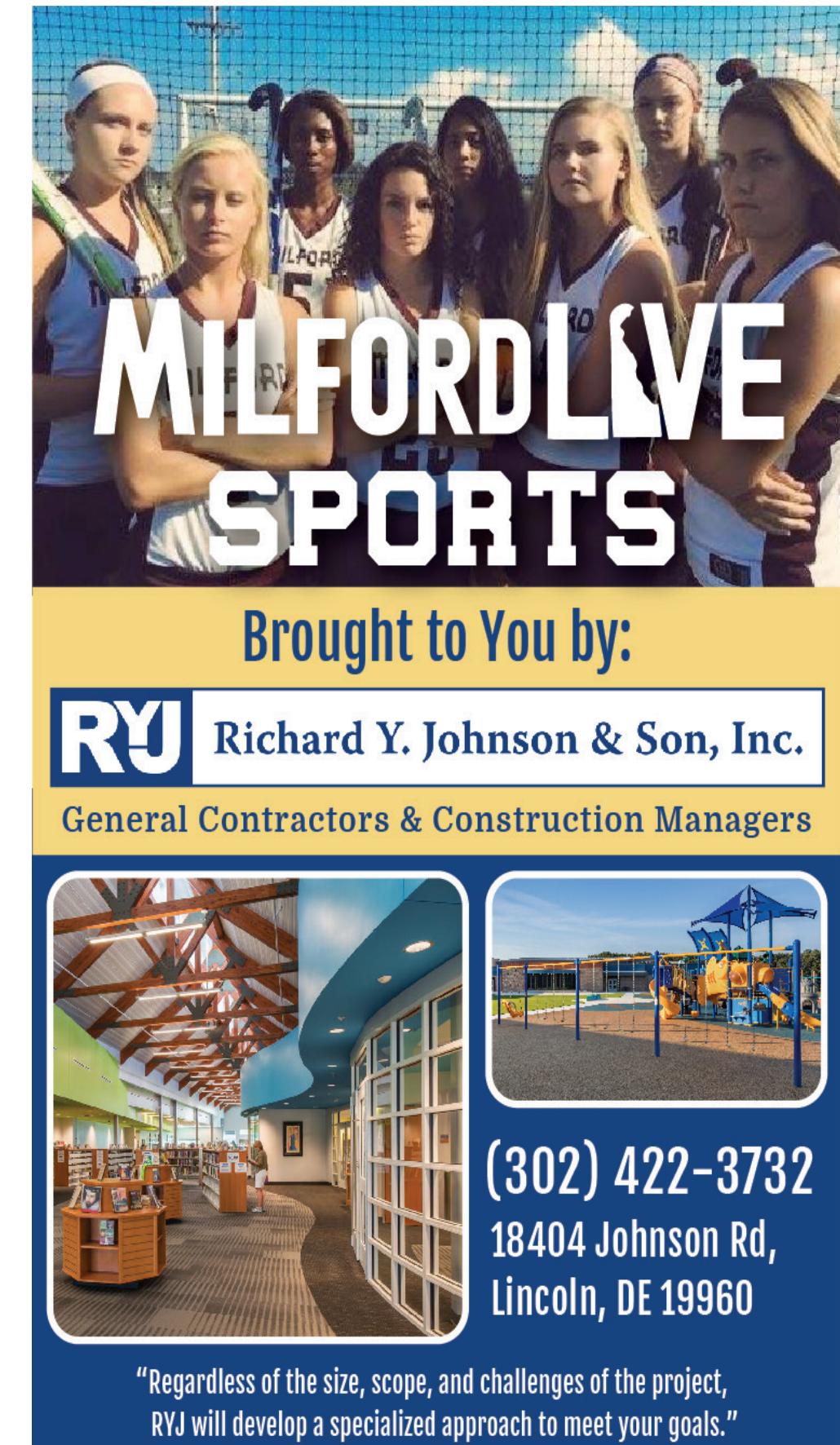
Griffin pointed out that changing the designation in the Comprehensive Plan did not approve anything but that it simply meant future commercial development was possible. He pointed out that his client would then be able to reach out to developers to see if anyone was interested in placing a commercial building on the land. During the public hearing portion of the meeting, Sen. David Wilson expressed support for the change, stating that there had been a letter submitted to Planning Commission with his signature that was not created by him, but that a corrected letter was included in the council packet.

"We have got to take a serious look on where are we going to put commercial businesses on the east side of Milford. If you'll take a look on the west side, what have you done to the city of Milford on the west side. You can't get down 113 now on Friday and Saturday night for traffic I'm here to discuss the future growth of what happens in the city of Milford. I've been here for 72 years, and I can tell you 60 years ago Milford was better served on commercial businesses. Let's go back, let's just take you on a little heritage tour here. Let's go back and

See PLAN on page 5



The brochure for Fur Baby Pet Resort features a large photo of a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel puppy running with a tennis ball. The title "FUR BABY PET RESORT" is at the top, followed by "PAMPER YOUR FUR BABY". It lists services: "Doggie Daycare. Overnight Hotel. Specialty Boutique. Spa Grooming." A section titled "FEATURING SAFE & FUN, CAGE-FREE DAYCARE & HOTEL" is shown. Below that are sections for "NATURAL GROCERY TO SPA PAMPERING" and "AWARD WINNING PET RESORT". A Delaware Today award ribbon is displayed. Contact information includes a phone number (302.725.5078), email (woof@furbabyboutique.com), and website (www.furbabypetresort.com). Social media links for Facebook and Instagram are also provided.



A photograph of a girls' basketball team standing behind a chain-link fence. The text "MILFORDLIVE SPORTS" is overlaid in large white letters, with "Brought to You by:" and the logo for Richard Y. Johnson & Son, Inc. below it. The company's contact information is listed: (302) 422-3732, 18404 Johnson Rd, Lincoln, DE 19960. A quote at the bottom states: "Regardless of the size, scope, and challenges of the project, RYJ will develop a specialized approach to meet your goals."

## PLAN from page 4

look at what happened in Milford and back in the 60s and 70s with clothing stores—Coopersmith, Hoffman, Fisher's, JC Penney, Derricksons, Grant Store—you could go to Milford and buy a suit of clothes. You could go to Milford and you can take and do your shopping. A lady could go get an evening dress. You can't even get a shirt in Milford now, Why do people go to Dover? Why? Because Milford doesn't have what it needs right here in Milford."

Senator Wilson, however, was the only person to speak out in favor of the change in the Comprehensive Plan. Steve Griffin, president of the Homeowner's Association with Knollac Acres, spoke for the homeowners in his development.

"Mr. Fannin and his company purchased that land around 2016 after the plan was already adopted," Griffin said. "He should have done his due diligence when he purchased the property. This was in the Comp Plan. That's why you do due diligence when you purchase land. Let's talk about Mr. Wilson saying that our subdivision wouldn't be here if he had anything to do with it. You're right. But we are here. Fact is that land is zoned residential. Our developments exist. There are 30 homes around Knollac Acres, 30 homes plus less you have Hidden Meadows and the other homes down Cedar Creek Road. What is your commitment? Us? Some of us are in the city of Milford. As one council member said earlier today I have an obligation not only to the citizens but to the neighbors of the city of Milford. That's us."

See PLAN on page 6



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## PLAN from page 5

It would be a horrible injustice to approve this which opens up the gateway."

State Rep. Bryan Shupe also spoke out against the change, talking not as a state representative but as a resident of Knollac Acres.

"I served alongside of you all as mayor and now state representative, but I come tonight as a resident of Milford," Rep. Shupe said. "He (James Griffin) said that we aren't residents of Milford. I know that I surely am. I operated a business there for 10 years, rehabilitated a 20-year vacant building and I know all of these people pay their state and federal taxes that pay for a lot of things here in Milford, so I'd like to just say that off the bat. "Tonight, we've heard the applicants' representatives say that the city representatives or the state agencies are incorrect about something that they've told you and I'd like for us to just recognize and listen to the people that we know we can trust. We know we can trust our city planner. We know we can trust our planning commission. We know we can trust the Planning Office in Delaware, and we know we can trust your own comp plan. And that's what I'm asking you all to trust in tonight is the things that we know that we can trust. This is the decision tonight."

Representative Shupe pointed out that the applicant could claim that the change to the Comp Plan did not mean commercial was going to happen, but in his experience, once the plan was changed, the argument would be made that since the Comprehensive Plan showed commercial, the zoning needed to change to match that plan.

"Any decision you make tonight should be based on the facts that you have today, not on what someone hopes they'll be down the road somewhere," Howard Webb said. "This property does not have access to Route 1, does not have access to Cedar Neck Road. There could be access on Bucks Road, but it has very limited capabilities. What it boils down to our applicant's property has a location problem. And that should not be a city problem. So we'd like for you to give that consideration."

Lucius Webb spoke against the application and suggested that council members who accepted campaign contributions from Elmer Fannin, one of the owners of the property, should recuse themselves from the vote. Councilman Todd Culotta admitted that Fannin had contributed to his campaign when he ran for mayor along with about 30 other people and he did not feel that he needed to recuse himself. Solicitor Rutt supported Culotta's decision stating there was no conflict of interest.

Public comment continued for more than two hours as many residents in the vicinity of the property expressed concerns about changing the land designation to commercial. When Vice-Mayor Jason James called for a motion on the first property, Councilman Michael Boyle motioned that the request be denied. The motion was seconded by Councilman Brian Baer. Councilman James then called for a roll call vote with six members voting to deny the motion and one, Councilman Culotta voting to approve it.

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# CULTURE



PHOTO BY VINCENT J. DESKIEWICZ SR.



**BY TERRY ROGERS**

Downtown Milford Inc. in partnership with the city of Milford and WSFS revealed two new plaques located on the Walnut Street bridge that identify the dividing line between Kent and Sussex counties. The new plaques are designed as a photo opportunity for those who come to downtown Milford.

"We are grateful that all of you are able to be with us today for the unveiling of our Kent and Sussex County plaques," Janne Collins, DMI executive director, said.

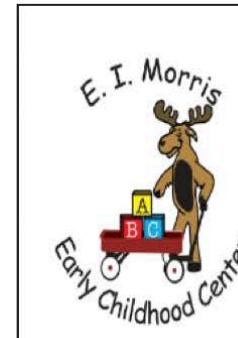
# DOWNTOWN MILFORD REVEALS COUNTY DIVIDER MARKER

"These plaques give our city another opportunity to be the hub of activity here in Delaware as we show everyone how these two counties come together to do so many wonderful things. With the unveiling of these county plaques, we expect that this will be the spot where many people will come to join hands and take pictures that are the focal point of the special memories they have made in Milford, Delaware, a great place to live, work and visit." Collins thanked Laurie Cale, retail office manager of WSFS for attending the event and for their partnership in making it happen.

Mayor Archie Campbell thanked council members for attending. Vice-Mayor Jason James, Councilwomen Katrina Wilson and Nirmala Samaroo as well as Councilmen Dan Marabello, Michael Boyle, Brian Baer and Todd Culotta were in attendance. Kent County Levy Court Commissioner Eric Buckson, Rep. Charles Postles and Sen. Dave Wilson were also at the unveiling.

"It's really an honor to be here today to be part of this event," Sen. Wilson said. "You know the unveiling of these plaques here for downtown Milford. It is a great day for Milford. I have always said Milford was a town

**See MARKER on page 9**



Milford School District  
Morris Early Childhood Center  
Kindergarten Registration Information



## 2022-2023 School Year

March 10 (Thursday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
March 14 (Monday)	8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
March 29 (Tuesday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
April 6 (Wednesday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
April 12 (Tuesday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
May 4 (Wednesday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
May 19 (Thursday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
June 1 (Wednesday)	4:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
June 7 (Tuesday)	4:00p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

## Important notes:

- Please call 422-1650 to schedule a date and time
  - Please indicate if you will need an interpreter
- Child must be 5 years old by August 31, 2022 to begin kindergarten
- You must bring your child for screening on your scheduled date and time to assist

## Documents required for registration include:

- State Issued Birth Certificate (with raised seal)
- Proof of Residency (utility bill, lease agreement, mortgage papers) within the Milford School District
- Guardianship/custody information if applicable
- Immunization (shot) record
- Physical Exam
- Tuberculosis Risk Assessment or PPD results
- Lead test result

\*Please note: Any family who is interested in being considered for the 2022-2023 Spanish Immersion Program lottery will need to register on or before June 7<sup>th</sup>. Any late registrants will be added to the waiting list.

**MARKER from page 8**

that was too big for one county so you couldn't get everything that was going to happen in Milford in one county. That's why we're here today, to celebrate what happens in downtown Milford. What better place to support the community and things that have happened in Milford in the last 20 years. There's a great future in Milford and we want to be a part of it. We want to see this town succeed and be number one in the state, so no doubt about it, it is going to be!"

The plaques are visible on the brick planters in front of the Santa House which houses North Pole Creamery during the summer months.



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BY TERRY ROGERS

Local musicians, spoken artists and writers are asked to come out to the Milford Library on June 18 from 6 to 9 p.m. and share their talents at an Open Mic night. The event will be held in the Richard M. Johnson Amphitheater.

"This is intended for an adult audience and performers," Carolyn Tabor, program coordinator for the Milford Library, said. "Anyone under the age of 18 must perform with an adult artist. And we want all types of entertainment including poets, writers, spoken-word entertainers, musicians and more."

Anyone who is interested in performing at the Open Mic night should contact Alex Strack at [alex.strack@lib.de.us](mailto:alex.strack@lib.de.us) to be added to the performance roster. They can also call the library at 302-422-8996.

"Performances are limited to five to 10 minutes per person," Tabor said. "Even if you don't want to share

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your talent, bring a lawn chair and relax on the lawn around the amphitheater to watch some unique performances!"

Open Mic nights are beneficial to performers as it helps build confidence and presentation skills. It can also help a performer test new material while also providing networking experiences for newer performers. Often, performers are inspired simply by watching other artists as they perform as well.

The Milford Library is focused on supporting the community with a variety of innovative resources in a safe and inclusive environment. They encourage life-long learning and imagination to enrich the quality of life. The library goes beyond books, striving to inspire all ages not only to read, but to learn and discover the world in a variety of ways.

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# BUSINESS



## COUNCIL APPROVES CHANGE TO FORMER FLOWER SHOP LOCATION

BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford City Council approved a request from Clark Service Group to change the former Milford Florist location on North Walnut Street to a contractor's establishment. Council was required to issue a conditional use for the property even though it was already zoned commercial. After rules for public hearings were read into the record by City Solicitor David Rutt, City Planner Rob Pierce provided details about the project.

"The applicant is proposing to convert the existing commercial building into a food service equipment and HVAC contractor's establishment. In the staff report the proposed operation which would be one office employee that will be full time and then there will be three service technicians that would deploy into the field from this particular area," Pierce said. "Two properties to the south are zoned residential and contain

single family detached dwellings and the property to the west across Walnut Street is the site of a portion of the community cemetery."

Pierce went on to explain that all uses would be contained within the buildings already on the property. The property has seven parking spaces which would be more than adequate for the three technicians, one office staff member and any customers who came to pick up parts. Pierce stated that the Planning Commission approved the request with a vote of 7 to 0 on May 17.

"As Mr. Pierce stated we were seeking conditional use using an existing structure," Trevor Kramer with Merestone Consultants, a company working with Clark Service Group, said. "Clark Service Group a food service equipment and HVAC/R service and repair provider based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The plan is to use the

See FLOWER on page 13

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## FLOWER from page 12

existing buildings and property for a branch office for their organization. Hours of business operation would be from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. They currently have three service technicians working in the lower portion of Delaware servicing all types of food service operations, from chain restaurants, healthcare, healthcare facilities, schools and restaurant groups. They would like to employ at least one person at this location to provide phone support, handle small packages and dispatch service technicians. The only storage that they would have on site would be inside the buildings. They may have an occasional customer stopping at the location to pick up parts, but that will be maybe one or two people per day. The existing retail space that was used previously for the gardening center will be used for small parts stock and office support personnel."

Councilman Michael Boyle asked if the Planning Commission required the applicant to install screening along the property line, something that was mentioned in the staff report. Pierce stated that a neighbor spoke in favor of the application, commenting that they had already been good neighbors and there were no comments related to screening. Solicitor Rutt confirmed that the hours of business would be Monday through Friday and that the applicant would be willing to install screening should council require them to do so.

Council approved the request unanimously.



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## FIRST THIRD THURSDAY EVENT A SUCCESS

BY TERRY ROGERS

Downtown Milford Inc.'s first Third Thursday event of the year was a success with many people wandering around Walnut Street, shopping in local stores, enjoying live music and eating at several food trucks.

"We really did kind of put this together at the last minute," Janne Collins, executive director of DMI, said. "I think from the time we decided to start up with Third Thursday until tonight was just 15 days, so we are really happy to see the turnout here tonight."

The theme of the first Third Thursday was "Spring Fling." Milford Museum offered coloring pages for children depicting the state bug—the ladybug. Irish

Rose offered live Irish music in front of the store while rock music played at the other end of the street. Milford Antiques had a booth set up out front offering some of their items for sale, while Tax Chicks had a fun give-away toss game designed for adults and children.

"Heavenly Taste Catering was back by popular demand," Collins said. "They sell really awesome fried fish among other things, also Top 5 BBQ was busy all night long. Milford Bucs also had a food truck that stayed busy. Downtown restaurants and shops were open late with some great sales going on and many had giveaways. It seemed that everyone who was downtown

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- SOUTHERN STATES

visited some of the shops while also enjoying a beautiful evening along the Riverwalk."

DMI is planning its next Third Thursday which will have a super heroes theme. They hope to have actual super heroes walking around downtown, offering great photo opportunities for those who come out. DMI is seeking vendors for all Third Thursday events. Anyone interested can find information on their website at [HERE](#) or call them at 302-839-1180.

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# EDUCATION



# SCHOOL TAX COMPONENTS EXPLAINED

BY TERRY ROGERS

In preparation for discussion about school tax rates for the upcoming year, Dr. Sara Croce provided the Milford School District Board of Education with details on the main components that make up school taxes. Each rate is determined separately and provides funding for different district needs.

"We are still waiting through the state budget year process, so the final operating bill has not been completed, nor has the final bond bill which affected a couple of components here," Dr. Croce said. "The current expense tax rate is the tax rate that provides us our local operating revenue. It covers things like teaching materials, technology, insurance, athletic programs and also our local salary expenditures. We had a current expense referendum on Oct. 6, 2015. And that rate will remain until there is an additional referendum for current expense. So that will remain unchanged this year."

Croce stated that the current tax rate for Sussex County was \$3.218 per \$100 of assessed value while Kent County property owners paid \$1.139. The difference in the two rates is due to an equalization formula used by the state so property owners in each county pay the same in taxes on a home of the same value. Kent County has assessed property more recently than Sussex which is why their values are lower.

"Our debt service tax rate provides revenue and interest to pay principal and interest payments on our bonds. So, we are in the middle of our first bond sale in quite some time, but as we discussed during the referendum process, we also have one expiring, so I anticipate that that rate will be going down just slightly though we have sold our first bond for just over a million dollars," Dr. Croce explained.

The bond sales are to be used for the current Milford Middle School renovation project which was approved by referendum in October 2021.

"The match tax component has several possibilities to match," Dr. Croce said. "Right now our district is only matching the minor capital improvement tax and that provides us funding for buildings and grounds, repairs and things throughout the district. There is discussion at the state level about increasing the allocation for minor capital improvements and the various uses of those funds. So, we're keeping a close eye on that and hoping that we can get additional funding in that way. And then finally, the tuition tax covers costs for the Milford school districts, especially students with special needs, whether they be in our district or in placements outside of the district. They've gone through that process with the state of Delaware. And then once again we're not assessing the capitation tax."

**See TAX on page 18**



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School board member David Vezmar asked if the increase in funding for minor cap, since it was a match tax, would result in the district having to increase that tax in order to get funding from the state.

"Potentially, but there's also a partner bill that is requesting that," Dr. Croce said. "So, right now the minor capital improvement match is 60% state, 40% local for all districts on it. Subsequently, there's also an equalized formula for debt service. So right now, state pays 75% of our construction projects and we only pay 25%. So, there is a partner bill, that is suggesting that they equalize the minor capital improvement match as well. So instead of 40%, we would only match 25% and still receive our 75% from the state. So again, all moving parts here as we go through the end of the legislative process."

Tax rates for the district are usually approved in June as they must be submitted to Kent and Sussex counties in time for property tax billing.



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**f**

# BILL TO BAR SCHOOL BOARDS FROM RAISING PROPERTY TAXES GOES TO HOUSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would stop school boards from unilaterally increasing school property taxes as much as 10% after a pending state property revaluation was sent by unanimous vote to the House floor May 18.

During the House Education Committee, Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, said his House Bill 389 would address the current reassessments of property in all three counties now underway.

"By the end of 2023, we should know exactly what our homes will be reassessed at," said Smith during the hearing.

The bill is aimed at a state law that allows school boards to raise property taxes without any kind of public vote, starting this summer when new school board members take their places. Smith said the issue got traction last year after New Castle County acciden-

tally sent tax bills to everyone during the pandemic, whether or not they had been paid through a mortgage. That opened people's eyes to how much they pay in property tax versus school tax. Currently, the fiscal note is "indeterminable," Smith said.

Rep. John Kowalko, D-Newark South, pointed out that a reassessment in no way guarantees a 10% increase in school property taxes, or even a 1% increase, for that matter. He said districts should not have to rely on referendums to get their funding and that he worries schools will lose the revenue they need because "notoriously, we as a legislative body have not adequately funded or even appropriately funded public education in this state."

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# HEALTH



PHOTO BY ROBERT J. NEARY PHOTOGRAPHY



BY TERRY ROGERS

The American Cancer Society reports that there will be 1,010 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in 2022, making it the number one cancer diagnosis in the state. They also indicate that around 160 people will lose their battle with breast cancer this year, often because of delayed diagnosis.

"The Women's Health Screening Program managed by the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition (DBCC) in partnership with Delaware Department of Health and Social Services work in together to help reduce death rates from breast cancer by encourag-

## DBCC STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR MAMMOGRAMS

ing women to get routine mammograms," Mary Jo Vazquez, Women's Health Program Manager for DBCC, said. "These numbers drive the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition's mission to educate our communities on the importance of breast cancer screenings, as treatment options are stronger the earlier cancer is detected. DBCC also provides critical education and programs to those who do face a breast cancer journey, ensuring that no survivor is left without support."

One of the issues facing some areas of the population is lack of access to mammograms. For this reason, DBCC offers central patient navigation resources at no cost to residents. This assistance includes obtaining a primary care provider in order to receive a prescription for a mammogram as well as assistance with Screening for Life Insurance applications.

"We also assist with screening scheduling and coordination," Vazquez said. "We can offer statewide transportation to and from screening appointments as well as offer certified medical translation and interpretation services for residents who speak another language, including Spanish and Haitian. We also partner with organizations and businesses to provide breast health presentations at no cost. These may be lunch or team meetings. We also offer screening days for employees as well as educational resources."

Anyone who has not scheduled a routine mammogram is encouraged to do so as soon as possible, Vazquez explained. If you or someone you know needs assistance in scheduling or getting to a mammogram appointment, contact DBCC at 1-888-672-9647 as early detection saves lives—and that life could be yours.

If you are interested in having DBCC provide breast health information or screening days for members of your organization or your employees, contact Vazquez at [mvazquez@debreastcancer.org](mailto:mvazquez@debreastcancer.org). To learn more about DBCC or the Women's Health Screening Program, visit [www.debreastcancer.org](http://www.debreastcancer.org).

# POLICE & FIRE



# MILFORD POLICE CHIEF TO RETIRE

BY TERRY ROGERS

Chief Kenneth Brown, who took the job as Milford's police chief in January 2016, has announced he will step down as of August 1. Chief Brown took over the department after the retirement of Chief E. Keith Hudson who served as chief since 2002.

"Last year, I got married and my wife has a funeral home down in Laurel," Chief Brown said. "She's become quite busy and she doesn't really have any help administratively. I've been toying with the idea of retiring, but I was trying to get through the new building, to wait for that to happen and get us moved in. Over the weekend, we just sat down and had a conversation about it and felt it was just the best way forward for us. I can unload some of my pressures and help her unload some of hers."

Chief Brown started with the Milford Police Department as an officer in March 1988. He explained that he never wanted to be an officer anywhere else. The only time he ever applied to another department was during a period when Milford was only hiring certified officers. A then-lieutenant with Milford suggested that Chief Brown apply elsewhere in order to get certified, so he put in an application with Harrington, but he never accepted a position with them. He was offered a position with Milford and has remained with them ever since.

"Probably the most rewarding part of my job is also the most challenging," Chief Brown said. "That is the social reform that is happening today. It has created a lot of stress, but it also has had a lot of impact. I ended

up getting on the board for the state chiefs which allowed me some influence in making changes throughout the state. It's been very rewarding."

Chief Brown stated that changes in how police officers interact with the community added stress to his job, but he also found that handling new officers today was much different than the way they were handled when he started on the force.

"There is a different mindset in the younger generation," Chief Brown said. "That has its challenges as well. It is tough for somebody of my generation to effectively deal with some of those issues."

Milford Police Department is also credited with some firsts in the state and Chief Brown is proud to have been part of that. Although Milford was not the first department to deploy body cameras, it was one of the first to use them throughout the entire department.

"That was the first thing I did," Chief Brown said. "It wasn't as big a topic as it is today, so to have council fully fund that was just amazing because there are huge costs and still are. It is not a one-time cost, it is a forever cost. We have to pay for storage of all of that evidence. People don't understand that those videos are evidence and we have to keep them for so many years."

Another program Chief Brown is proud of is the implementation of the Behavioral Health Unit, although he credits Councilman Jason James with spearheading that program.

**See CHIEF on page 24**

## CHIEF from page 23

"I think we were definitely up front on that," Chief Brown said. "I had been looking into it but never thought I would just be able to get it and when he brought up the idea, I was like 'Okay, now we got somebody serious about it.' So we ran with this, we took off running with that and got it done pretty quick."

Chief Brown also credits a supportive council with his success, stating that he could not have accomplished what he did without their support. His advice for his successor is that they continue to do the things he started and that they stay at the forefront of everything. He also suggested that he continue to build a good rapport with members of council.

"Quite honestly, I don't think I've ever been told no by the council. Of course, I didn't bug them with every little thing either," Chief Brown said. "You know, if I came in there and asked for something, we've done our homework and know that's what we need and this is what it's going to cost and all that, so thankfully they've always agreed. Anyone that follows me needs to understand that if you do it right, they support what you do."

As for leisure time in his retirement. Chief Brown stated that as busy as his wife's business was, he doubted there would be much leisure time. However, once he made the decision to retire, he felt a great weight lift from his shoulders. He still plans to live in Milford, so he will be around at events and festivals, but he is looking forward to less pressure after August 1.



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# IN MEMORIAM



PHOTO BY DEBORAH FELMEY

IN MEMORIAM



BY TERRY ROGERS

With the permission of his wife, Colleen, Paula Bragg submitted a request to rename the Milford High School auditorium The Dr. Gerald W. Thompson Center for Performing Arts. Dr. Thompson, who passed away in September 2021, served as band director and music teacher in the district.

"Just honestly, I expected there to be public comment on this tonight, based on feedback that I had heard," board member David Vezmar said. "I'm very disappointed that didn't happen. I fully support this. T, Mr. T, Dr. T, Thompson, whatever it is you want to call him, I had him for four years as a band director and played

# MILFORD SCHOOL BOARD SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON RENAMING MHS AUDITORIUM

in the pit band for musicals, so I am very aware of the different music classes and the impact that I think he had on the music program and the drama program, the musicals and stuff here. I think those will probably remain with this district for a long time because of what he put into place. I think he has earned the honor of having his name put on this auditorium."

Vice-President Rony Baltazar-Lopez asked if the district had received written comment and Superintendent Dr. Kevin Dickerson stated that there had been letters written on Dr. Thompson's behalf and a petition was submitted with over 1,000 signatures.

"So, I didn't have Dr. Thompson as a teacher, but I did have him as a substitute numerous times during band class," Baltazar-Lopez said. "I think it was said before that he was a very inclusive teacher, very motivating person. And I think I can speak to that. Every time I went into band class, knowing that he was a substitute, he made the class very enjoyable. I think a lot of students had a personal connection to him. I personally don't have a concern if we were to rename the auditorium."

Dr. Dickerson explained that the board was not locked into the exact phrasing submitted by the request and that the request actually stated those in favor were open to other naming options.

"I was also fortunate enough to go to school while Dr. Thompson was here and, although I wasn't a band

student, I did perform in drama," School Board President Jason Miller said. "And I can tell you the level of passion that Dr. Thompson brought to the school musicals and any activity that was going on as well as for marching band, you definitely knew you were in school with Mr. T or Dr. T."

Because the request was not an action item and because several board members wanted to hear public comment on the matter, they voted unanimously to place it as an agenda item on the June board meeting which will be held June 13, 2022. The meeting is accessible in person or virtually and those attending virtually may participate in public comment.

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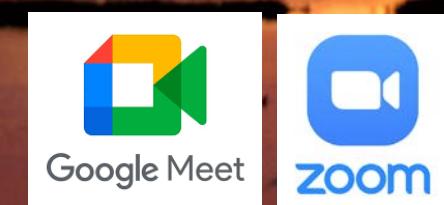
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