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HEADLINES

PHOTO LINK: MARCIA REED

NEW RESTAURANT TO OPEN IN PENNEY SQUARE EARLY 2023

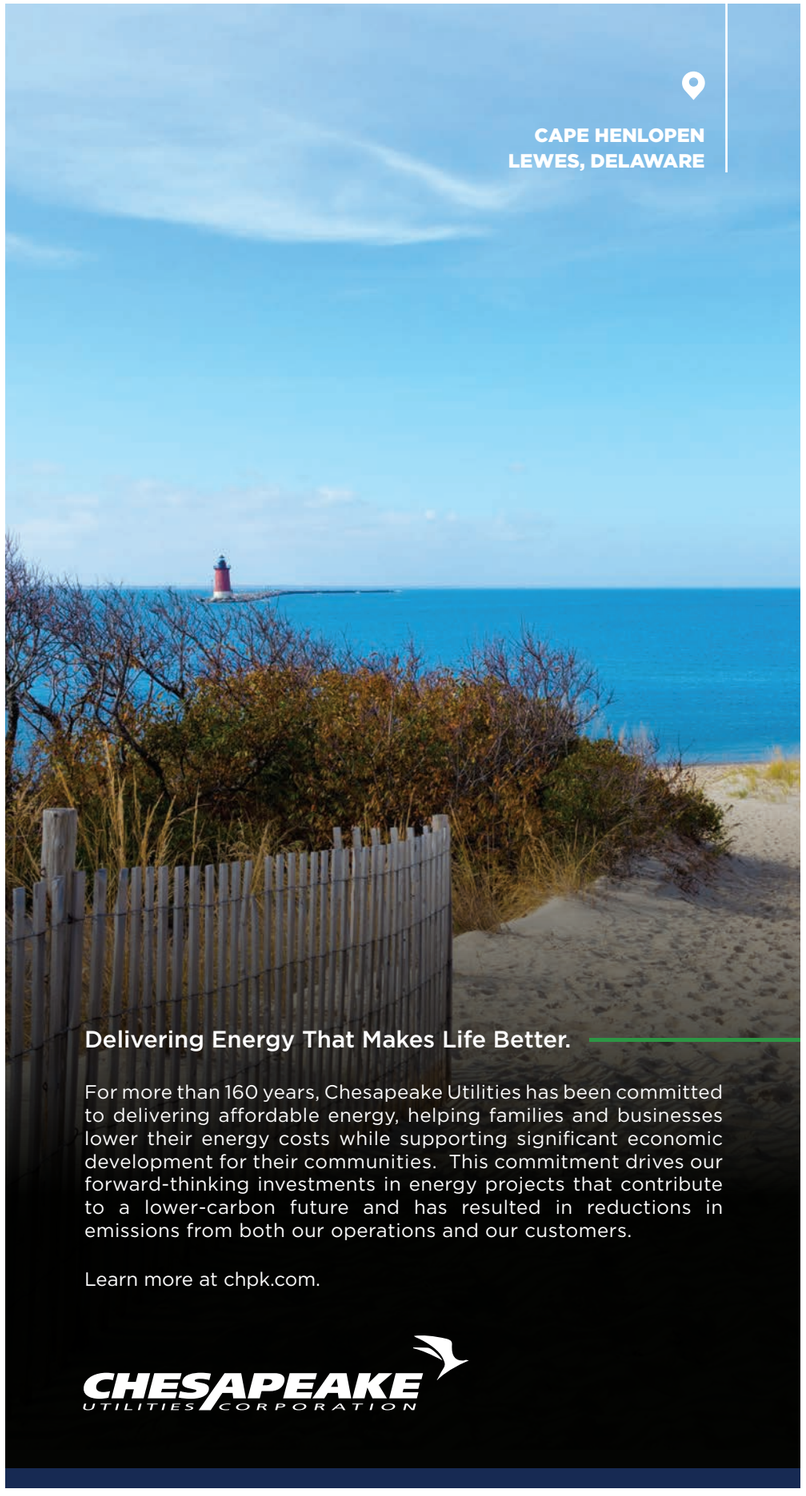
BY TERRY ROGERS

When it comes to the restaurant industry, Zack and Marissa King already have a winning track record with EasySpeak, located on Milford Harrington Highway. The brewpub and distillery is a popular destination for visitors and locals alike. The couple purchased Penney Square in 2021 and, almost from the beginning, planned to put a new restaurant in the location. Last week, the couple announced that there would be a new eatery downtown. The new restaurant, fondue., will be the first of its kind in Milford.

"We are continuously purchasing property in Milford with certain types of businesses in mind," Marissa said. "Each one, we try to bring something new and unique to the area that we feel as if Milford needs in order to attract people. Zack and I found ourselves driving an hour plus on special occasions, so we thought why not bring this concept to Milford."

The new restaurant will have a simple menu focusing on gourmet cheese and chocolate, keeping in the tradition of fondue with courses cooked table side. It will also feature the craft cocktails that the couple are known for as well as decadent desserts. fondue. will feature a large bar that Marissa says will be the perfect place to start or end a date night and an intimate dining room designed for fine dining and special occasions.

See RESTAURANT on page 4



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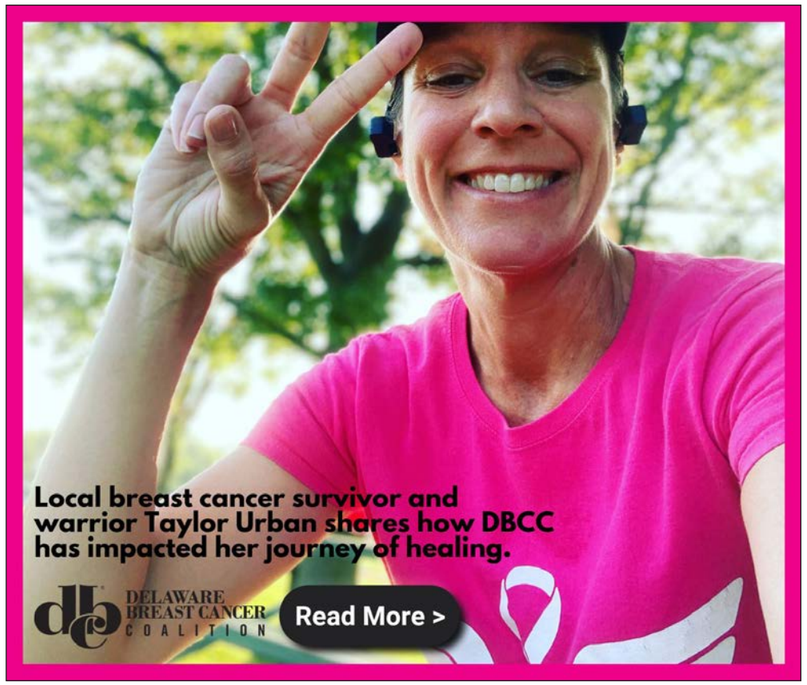
"We will have a back area designated for large groups and finer dining," Marissa said. "The bar area will be primarily an apps and dessert situation. The back will be more for special occasions or sit-down dinners."

As an added attraction, the small shops located in Penney Square are planned to compliment the new restaurant, although the details for those are still being worked out, Marissa said.

"I personally am opening a luxury salon and day spa," Marissa said. "I've partnered with a local cosmetologist, and we are opening the salon, hopefully Feb. 1. The day spa we are looking at early April. Again, just trying to bring stuff that Milford needs to the area and I'm tired of driving to Seaford to get pampered. So, if you know any hair stylist or aestheticians looking for a new home, send them my way!"

Marissa is hoping to develop other retail shops that will accompany fondue.

"That is the million dollar question," Marissa said when asked when the new restaurant would be open. "It depends on approvals and stuff, but we are hoping for early 2023."



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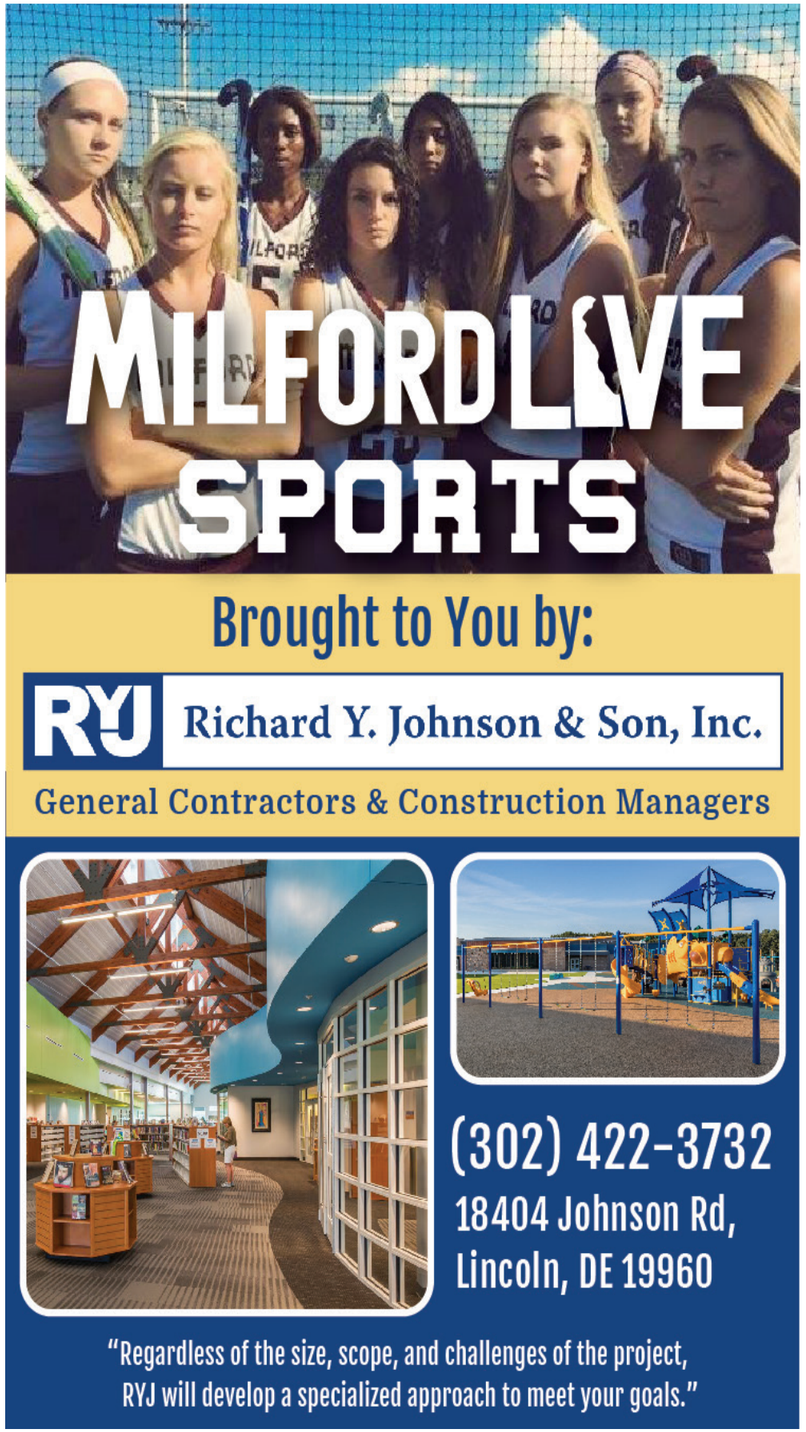
MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL HOMECOMING KING AND QUEEN

BY TERRY ROGERS

This year's Milford School District Homecoming King and Queen are Aaliyah Tilghman, representing the Class of 2023 and Desmond Aladuge, representing Football. Other members of court included:

- Abigail Baxter – Choir
- Dakota Carmona – BPA
- Sofia Lopez – HOSA
- Saige McMahan – Girl's Tennis
- Sabta Mele – Student Government
- Melissa Mesidor – Field Hockey
- Layna Reynolds – National Honor Society
- Eve Sekscinski – Band
- Brianna Thompson – Cross Country
- Nicolas Coona – National Honor Society
- Jude Cline – Boys Lacrosse
- Daniele Cusick – Yearbook
- Liam Dennehy – Cross Country
- Evan Gregg – Class of 2023
- Andrew "AJ" Kravitz – Boys Basketball
- Owne Peel – HOSA
- Matthew Winkleblech – Student Government
- Jared Wright – Boys Soccer



CULTURE

PHOTO LINK: JONATHAN MISTROT

VETERANS SUBJECT OF NEXT 2ND FRIDAY PRESENTATION

BY TERRY ROGERS

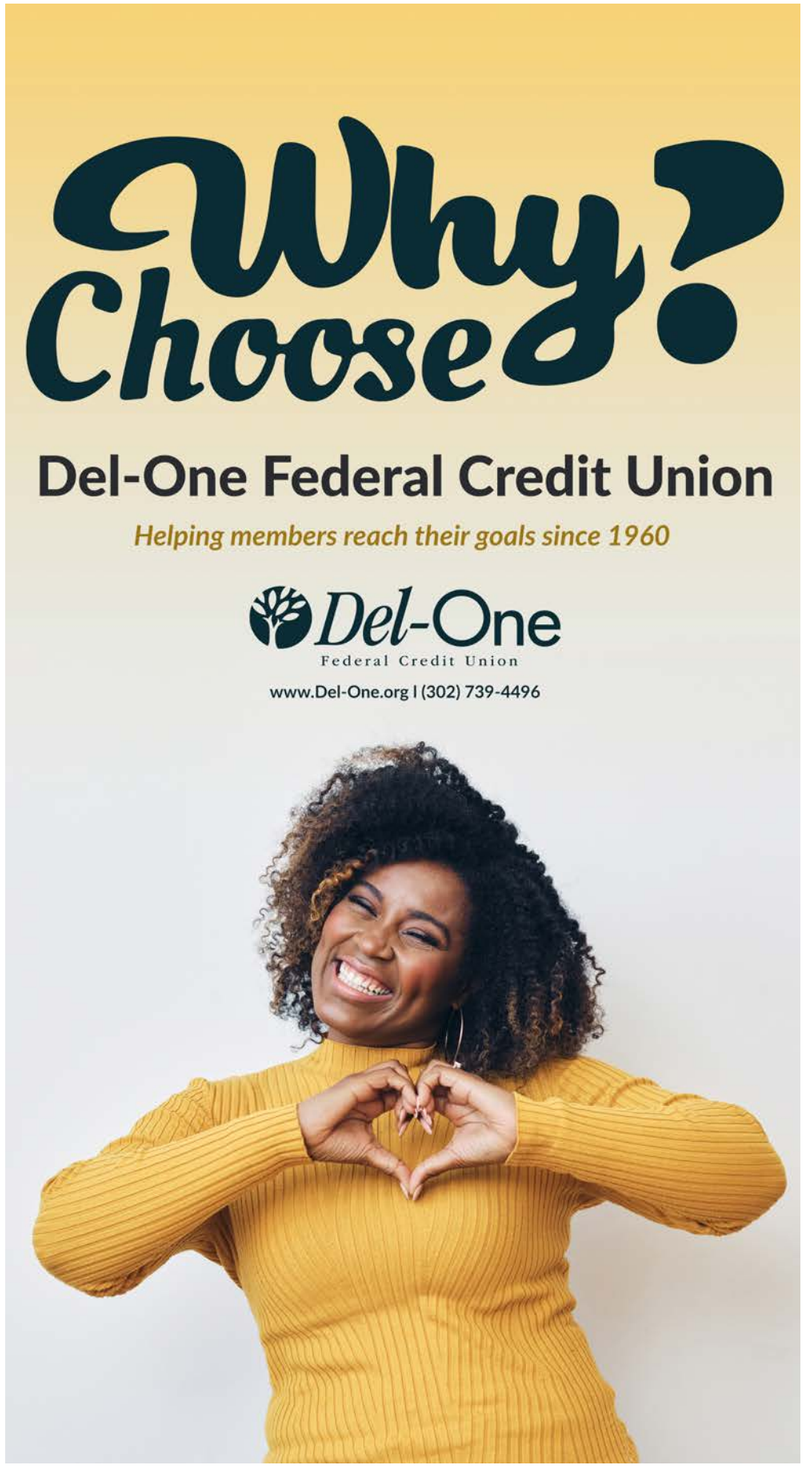
The 2nd Friday presentation for November, held at the First Presbyterian Church in Milford, is entitled "Vets You Are Not Forgotten." The program is planned for Veteran's Day, Nov. 11, at 7 p.m.

"Project Recover is a collaborative effort using 21st century science and technology to find and repatriate Americans missing in action since World War II," John Huntzinger, program coordinator, said. "This is to help recognition and closure for families and the nation. Our speaker is Dr. Collin Colbourn, their lead historian."

According to Huntzinger, the remains of soldiers who are missing in action, or MIA, are being worn away by time and elements. The program provides insight into the mission of Project Recover to "leave no one behind" and to encourage donations that will help the organization bring home missing soldiers.

The program began with Dr. Pat Scannon's vision to bring home soldiers from Palau in 1993. Initially known as the Bent Prop Project, Project Recover has grown from a small, grassroots organization to a team of professionals and volunteers using new technology to bring home those who have gone missing. Over the past 30 years, Project Recover has brought home more than 60 World War II aircraft associated with more than 185 MIA soldiers around the world.

See VETERANS on page 8



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Dr. Colbourn has been working with Project Recover since 2016, managing historical operations which include archival research, data management, case analysis and field investigations. Through his efforts, Project Recover has developed a massive internal archive with thousands of maps, historical reports and images. Colbourn is a post-doctoral researcher with the University of Delaware and works closely with co-founder, Mark Moline, Ph.D.

"I do this work because I am not only passionate about the historical challenge, but also because with our team and our technology, I can transform mundane days at archives and museums into real answers for families who have mourned the loss of their loved ones with no answers for so many years," Colbourn said.

Colbourn received his MA in War and Society as well as a Ph.D. in History at the University of Southern Mississippi. After graduation, his first job was with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

The program is free, and refreshments are provided. A Zoom option will be available if there is enough interest. It is a family-friendly program held in the church library at 101 South Walnut Street. Attendees are asked to park behind the church and enter through the back door from Pearl Alley and enter the library through the kitchen. If anyone is interested in a Zoom option, they can contact the church at 302-422-5701.

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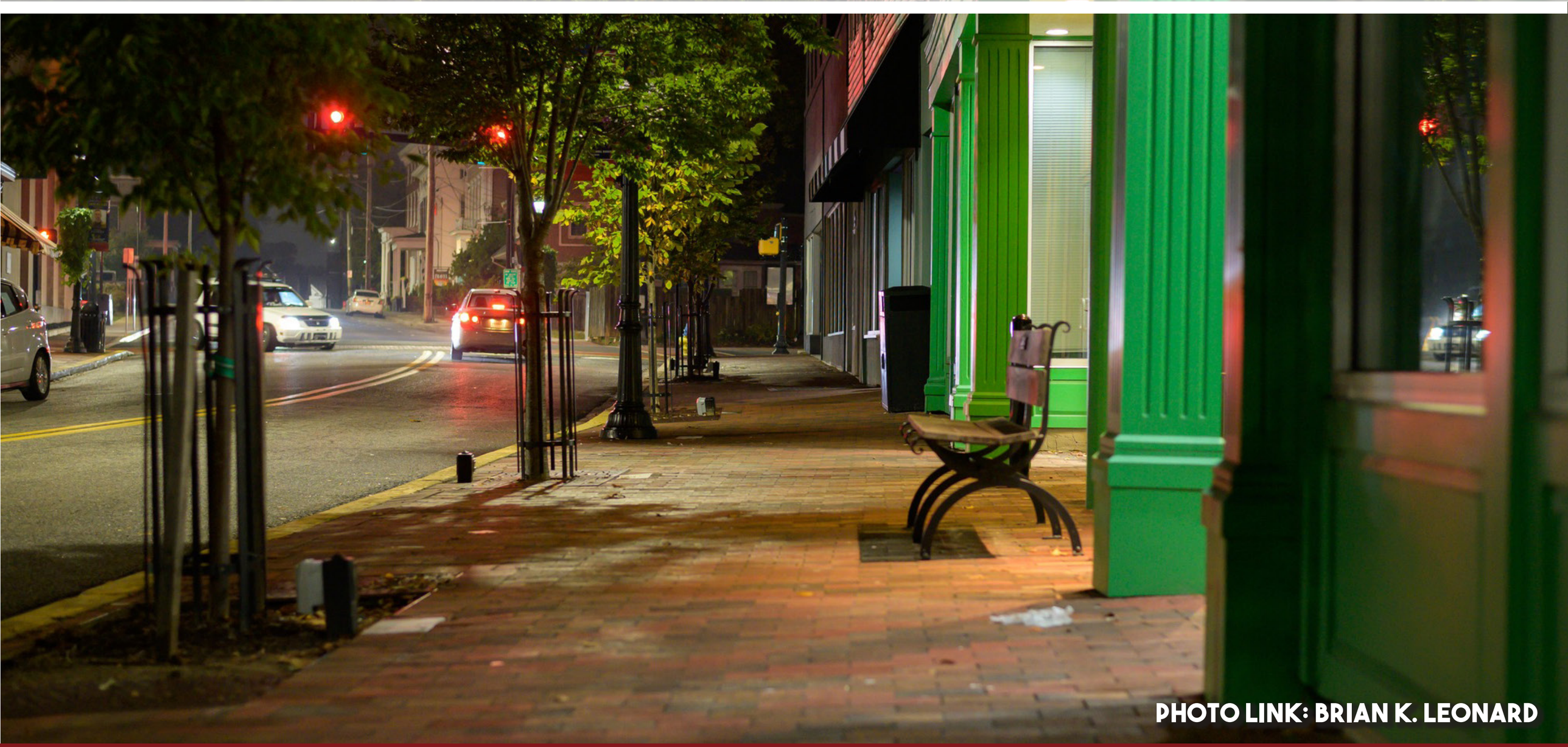

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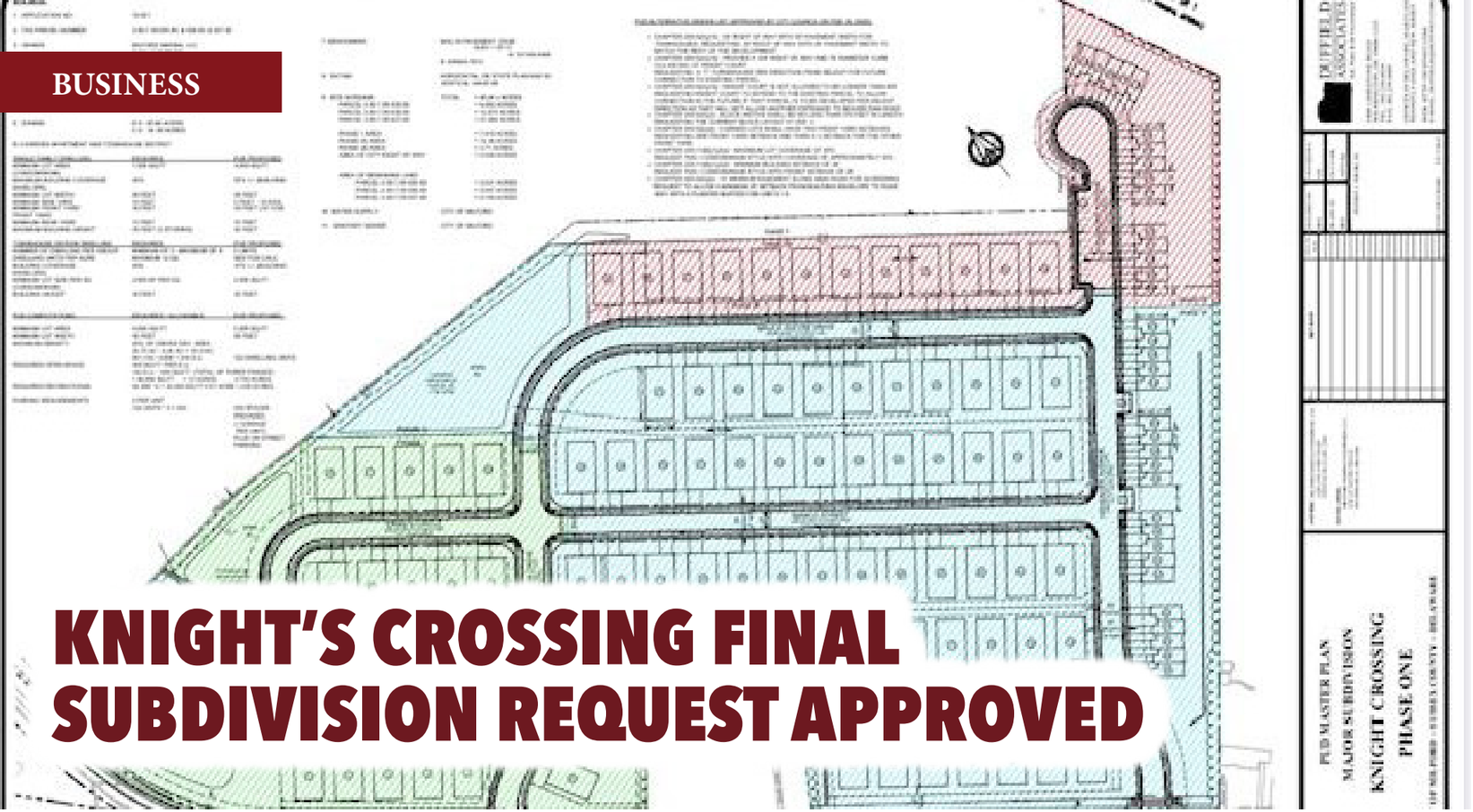

KNIGHT'S CROSSING FINAL SUBDIVISION REQUEST APPROVED

BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford City Council approved a final subdivision plan for Knight's Crossing, a development which will be located on Beaver Dam Road. The development had previously been denied as they requested single family units to be only 10 feet apart. The developer redesigned the project to allow for the required 16 feet, requiring them to reduce the number of single family homes and increasing townhomes by five.

"The rest of the conditions are met," City Planner Rob Pierce said. "The six clusters of townhouses flanked the southern side of the property were shifted slightly to the west. Another cluster of five townhouses were added at the end of the cul-de-sac to the east."

Mayor Archie Campbell asked Benjamin Culp, an engineer with Duffield Associates if there were any plans to widen the roadways. Culp explained that they had gone through DelDOT approval and were planning on adding turn lanes as well as widening sections of the road. Councilman Dan Marabello asked how extensive the landscaping was in the development.

"It meets Milford code, and all of our ponds are also landscaped," Culp said. "We have an extensive buffer on the right hand side. If this is approved tonight, we

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SUBDIVISION from page 11

are hoping to get started on Phase 1A which is already approved."

Councilman Mike Boyle pointed out that council had recently approved a development where there were some environmental concerns.

"We're getting near the river and undeveloped land that has been overgrown," Councilman Boyle said. 'Was there a survey done or have you contacted DNREC about the existence of an eagle's nest, an active eagle's nest?"

Culp explained that the property had gone through the PLUS system which includes a DNREC review and that should trigger a native species comment. Pierce stated that there were no comments related to an endangered species. There was a question about a previous development, but it turned out the eagle's nest was not located on the property in question after all.

"I think the issue with it is we ought to consider that it's not where the nest is located," Councilman Boyle said. "It is the distance from an active nest to a construction site. And, depending on the time of year, the distance varies 300 to 600 plus yards, or I think, feet. It's not just a DNREC regulation, it's a federal law that has to be taken into consideration. And as we get into those areas that are heavily wooded and closer, especially to wetlands and rivers, it needs to be something that we will look at. There has to be some comment from DNREC that the area does not contain any active nests."

City Solicitor David Rutt explained that the criteria were not in the code and if council wanted to ask for that information, they would have to pass a code amendment to do so. He explained the burden is not on the applicant to check whether there are active nests. He also stated that if the applicant meets all the criteria under the code, council is required or obligated to approve the plan. Council had the right to add a bird survey as part of the process, but it would need to be added as part of city code. Pierce explained that the PLUS process was very detailed.

"On the other one, they did miss it," Councilman Andy Fulton said. "Well, they didn't miss it. They thought they missed it and then discovered it wasn't on the property or within the boundaries."

During the public hearing on the development, two residents who lived near the proposed area spoke against the plan.

"I live across one from this property," Lucius Webb said. "It's really a question more than a concern. I see no plans for any bike path or anything to accommodate that because the road to Slaughter Beach from Milford is a highly trafficked road by people who want to stay fit which includes a few of you. You hear you all should want to stay fit and use a bike, but there's no plans, no responsible behavior on the city of Milford to include bike lanes on the edge of a development and I encourage you to think about that. Also, I think you should think to the past and know the history of this property. It was the James Farm. And Mrs. James was a sister to Hugh Rodney Sharp and he was a gentleman who restored Odessa and he was a big-time guy at DuPont and his people came and designed the landscaping around the James home on that property. The landscaping remains the home does not. So, you asked what you

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SUBDIVISION from page 12

should preserve besides eagles, and also think to the future. What are these people going to do. There is no golf course, you did not preserve that."

Brenda Watson asked if this would be a 55 and older community as was previously stated as well as whether there would be an entrance into the development from Route 36. Culp explained that he did not believe this would be a 55 and older community and that there was no plan for an entrance from Route 36. Pierce stated that there was a residual piece of land between the development and Route 36 which is why there were not plans to put an entrance from that road.

The request was approved unanimously.

"Something I want council to consider in the future," Councilman Todd Culotta said. "We're here tonight to vote on this because we denied the application before with five-foot setbacks on each side of the house for a total of ten feet between structures. We talk about affordable housing, and we need to consider this because those criteria add to the cost of the home. I will say yes, and I do appreciate the modification, but we need to consider that in the future."

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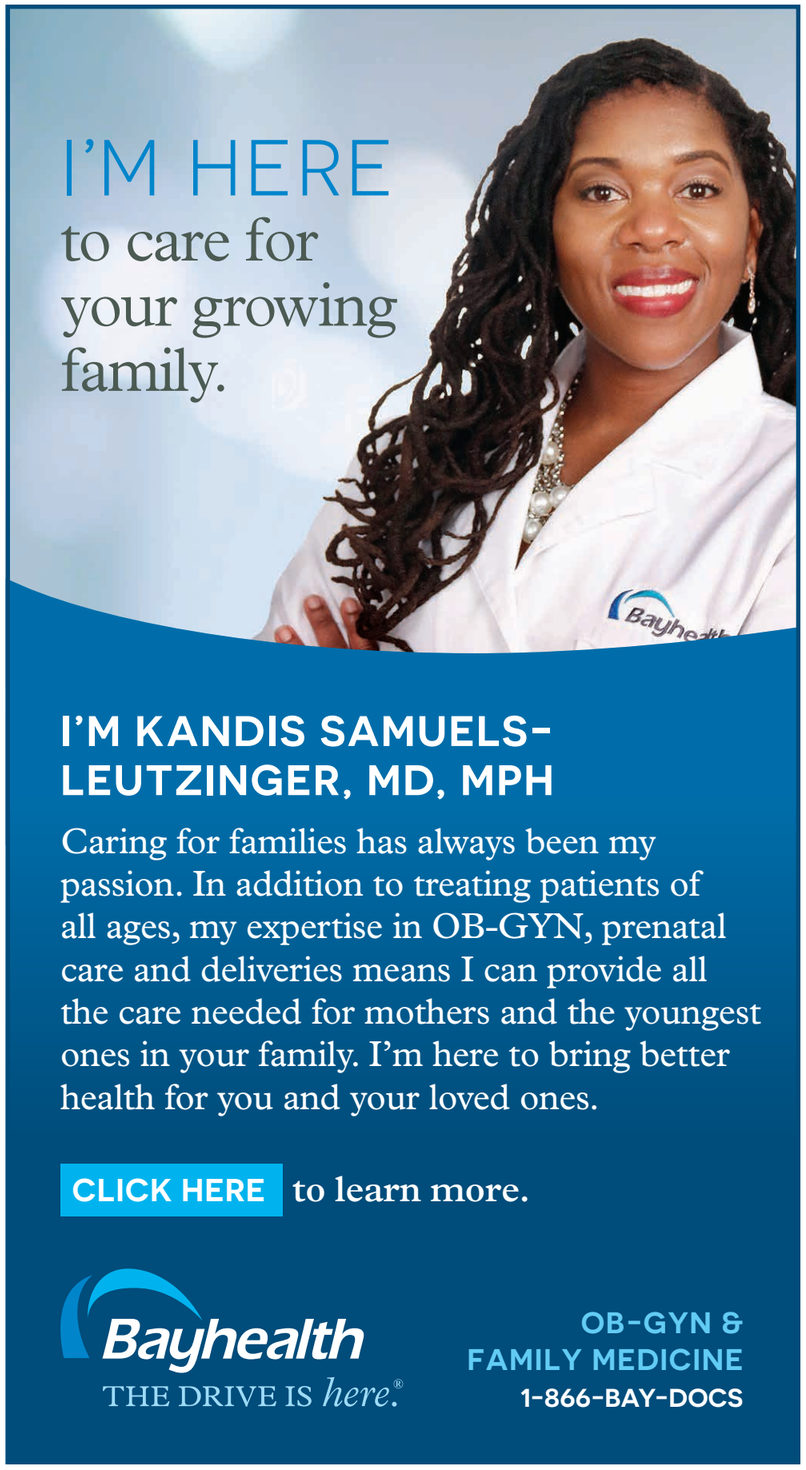

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

PHOTO BY BEN MULDROW

COUNCIL PASSES SENIOR CITIZEN TAX RELIEF

BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford City Council recently passed a measure that would provide tax relief for those who are 65 and older. The updated regulation includes initial changes to increase income thresholds in response to inflation and include additional changes requested by council at a recent public hearing. The new tax relief ordinance retains an inflationary adjustment to $20,000 for a single owner-applicant and a $40,000 for a joint-owner. It also simplifies exempted income language while expanding income types to include government-sponsored post-retirement pension that is provided in lieu of Social Security benefits.

"We introduced this in September 2022 and considered it for approval at the Sept. 26 meeting," Lou Vitola, finance director, said. "The measure was postponed to provide staff with time to research questions arising during the meeting, the foremost of which contemplated the merits of expanding the income exclusion beyond the code's only two specifically cited income exclusions, which were Social Security and railroad pensions."

In addition to not including other forms of pensions, the original code also had what was termed a "marriage bonus" or "marriage penalty" which was in violation of IRS regulations. The original code allowed property owners making $15,000 who collect Social Security or a pension to receive a tax exemption, while married couples could not earn more than $12,750 each.

"You mention government pension," Councilman Todd Culotta asked. "Is that every level or just federal?"

Vitola explained that it was every level, including police officers, first responders, firefighters and more

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TAX from page 15

who receive private and public sector pensions. Councilman Andy Fulton pointed out that the post office used to offer a pension, for instance. The new code reads that as long as the property owner's income is below $20,000 for an individual and $40,000 for joint owners, they will receive exemption from property tax on $40,000 of their home's assessed value. The income levels are exclusive of Social Security and government-sponsored pension payments.

"I do want to thank Councilman Fulton for bringing it to council's attention that we were leaving out others that receive retirement benefits," Councilman Jason James said. "These are government-sponsored retirement benefits outside of Social Security, especially the veteran type benefits, so I thank you for bringing it to our attention."

The ordinance passed unanimously.

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EDUCATION

MSD RELEASES TIMELINE FOR MILFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent meeting of the Milford School Board, a timeline for the Milford Middle School project was presented. The timeline explains the steps that will be taken by the district as it remodels the former middle school into a school for fifth and sixth graders.

"The public information officer graciously put together this tentative schedule," Mike Sharp, supervisor of Buildings and Grounds, said. "It walks through the process from the referendum, where we are at with the timeline and it is subject to change. But, it gets us through each stage and the project is moving along pretty well so far."

The timeline began with the passing of a referendum in October 2021 which allowed the district to issue bond sales to cover the cost of the remodeling. The building was abandoned by the district in 2012 and a previous referendum to demolish the school and build a new one failed in 2014. The estimated cost for the project is $57,270,453 with the district responsible for $14,890,318 which will be covered by the bond sales. The state will pay the remaining $42,380,185. Over 67 percent of voters approved the referendum.

Board President Jason Miller asked when there would be a rough draft of the design of the school.

"We had a rough draft meeting last week and I believe it's there," Sharp said. "We went back to them with the original draft, and they are working through it. I would assume before the holidays or no later than January we will get a draft."

Miller stated that he sees a lot of questions on social media about what the new school would look like. The plan is to demolish the newer wings of the building and keep the historic center part, built in 1929, intact. From August 2022 to November 2022, the district has held education specification programming meetings and district reviews of the project. From October 2022 to January 2023, the project will undergo schematic design with planning and bidding scheduled for October 2022 through April 2023.

In addition, between October 2022 and April 2023, community engagement meetings are planned to get public input into what the building may look like. Environmental remediation and demolition will take place

See TIMELINE on page 20

TIMELINE from page 19

from August 2023 to November 2023 and construction should begin in December 2023, continuing through January 2025. The goal is to have the school open for students in the fall of 2025.

The timeline can be viewed by clicking **HERE** and scrolling to page 15 of the board documents.

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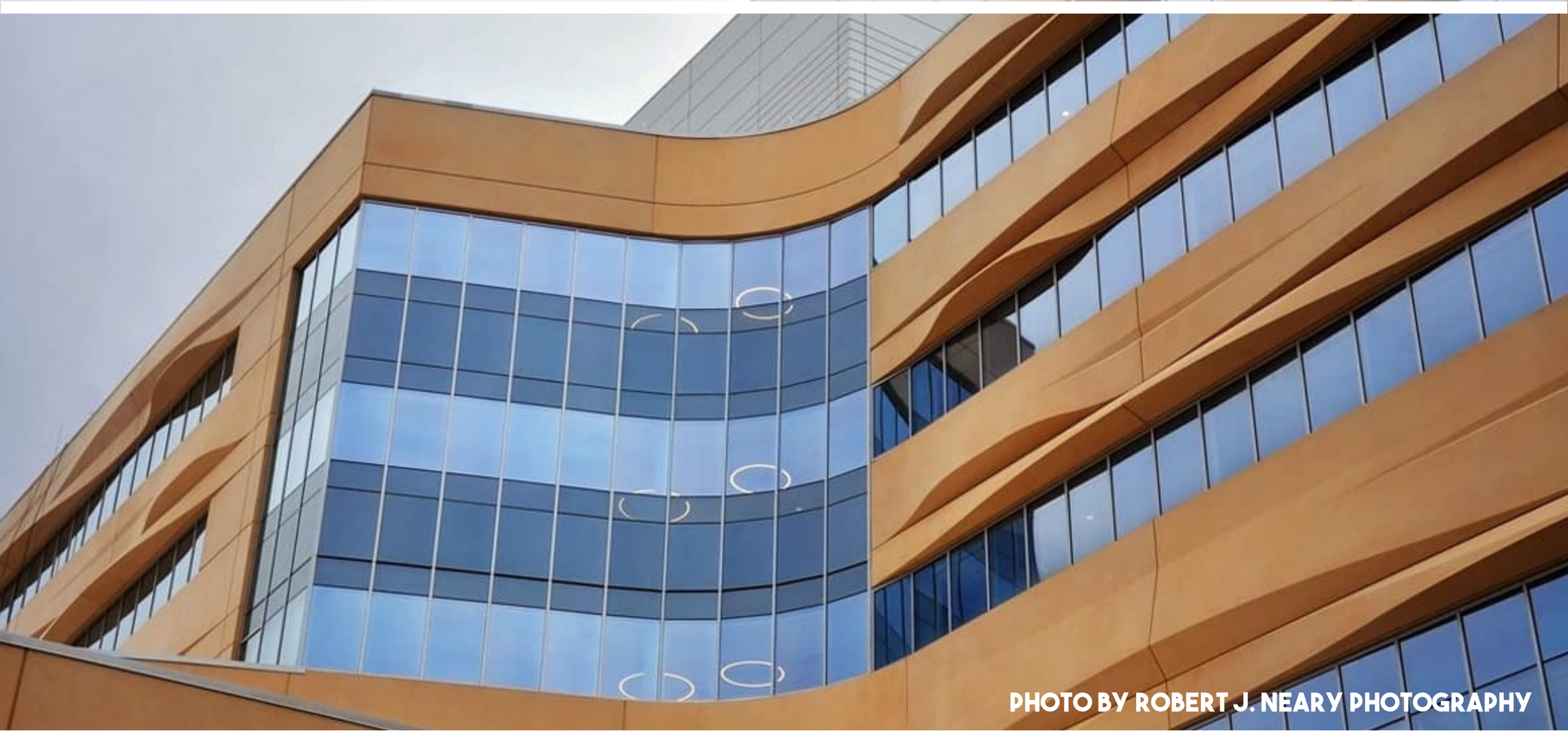
HEALTH



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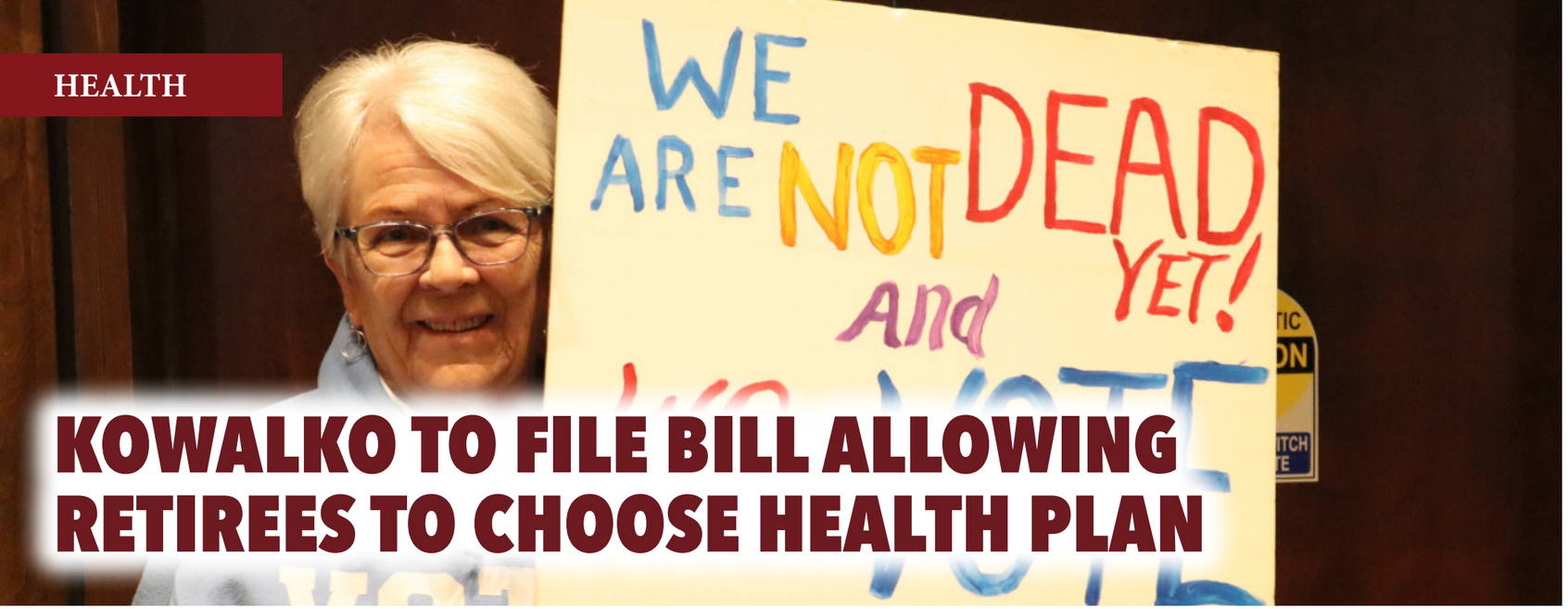

KOWALKO TO FILE BILL ALLOWING RETIREES TO CHOOSE HEALTH PLAN

BY BETSY PRICE

State Rep. John Kowalko on Friday unveiled a bill that will allow retirees to choose between the state's current special Medicare plan or switch to the Medicare Advantage Plan that's triggered all kinds of **angst**.

Kowalko, D-Newark, has spearheaded opposition to the plan, saying it will dramatically change the way retirees get their health care. The plan would force retirees to get a doctor's referral for treatments they now can schedule on their own, and it could prevent them from seeing doctors out of state because—Kowalko's bill says—doctors in surrounding states do not accept the Highmark Medicare Advantage plan.

The opposition says the change to a Medicare Advantage plan and doing away with a Medicare supplemental plan was done without notifying the retirees and without legislative input.

State officials say the change was not secretive, that retirees' care will not change substantially, and that the switch is necessary to better budget for health care costs in the future.

Kowalko said in his press release that his legislation will enable the state to comply with the court's directive and assure retirees that they will have options.

"If retirees choose the supplement option, they will be lowering the substantial risk to their healthcare access that the Medicare Advantage privatization edict puts in jeopardy," Kowalko said. "Furthermore, this legislation allows the General Assembly to embrace its obligations to its retirees and reiterates the General Assembly's respect for those workers who have earned that respect."

Enrollment for the state retirees was to have begun Monday, Oct. 25. On Oct. 27, Delaware Supreme Court

See HEALTH on page 23

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HEALTH from page 22

Judge Calvin Scott Jr. issued a stay of the implementation of the Medicare Advantage Plan for state retirees. He ordered the state to take steps to make sure that the retirees' current health care remains in full force and effect while the stay is in effect. The court will schedule a trial to make a final determination on the fate of the Medicare Advantage plan, Scott's ruling said.

Before the ruling, the Delaware General Assembly announced that the House and Senate would hold a special session Oct. 26 to create a new subcommittee that would monitor the performance of Highmark's Medicare Advantage plan.

According to the General Assembly's press release, the General Assembly "does not have the power to undo the Carney Administration's contract with Highmark."

The committee would be composed of state retirees, lawmakers, union representatives and other state officials. Specifically, the subcommittee would monitor compliance with the Medicare Advantage contract, solicit public input about patient experience and provide quarterly reports to the General Assembly.

Kowalko's bill is not yet filed, so doesn't have a bill number, but the copy he released Friday includes as sponsors Rep. Madinah Wilson-Anton, D-Newark Rep. Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek; Rep. Bruce Ennis, D-Smyrna; Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel; Rep. Sean M. Lynn, D-Dover; Rep. Dave Osienski, D-Newark; and Sen. Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown.

Both Kowalko and Ennis are retiring from the legislature. Their replacements will be elected Nov. 8.

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