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photo link: Marcia Reed

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Meet Police Chief Cecilia Ashe



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HEADLINES



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MEET MILFORD POLICE CHIEF CECILIA "CC" ASHE

been my plan. I've had a house here in Sussex for over 15 years, so it's kind of always been my plan to start to move further down state and come closer to the beaches down here and closer to my house down there which I do not get to spend much time in. I am really looking forward to going onto a different chapter in my career and moving down to an agency here in Milford which is one of the largest police agencies here in Sussex. It is just an awesome opportunity."

Chief Ashe worked as the Inspector of Operations under then-Chief Robert Tracy and has a combined 27-year career in law enforcement that included positions in Arlington County, VA. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and is currently working on her Master's in Administration of Criminal Justice and Organizational Leadership, both with Wilmington University. She is a graduate of the Police Executive Research Forum Senior Management Institute for Policing Session 70. Chief Ashe is married and has two sons.

"I knew just through my experience here and being a police officer in Wilmington that there had been tremendous growth down here in Milford with the new hospital going in, a lot of residential building and apartments," Chief Ashe said when asked what she knew about Milford before being hired. "Just working with

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BY TERRY ROGERS

Chief Cecilia "CC" Ashe was sworn in as Milford's first female police chief on Monday, Feb. 13, after council voted unanimously to hire her in the position that former Chief Kenneth Brown vacated in August. Chief Ashe was chosen after a nationwide search conducted by GovHR since Chief Brown announced his retirement.

"My first reason for applying to Milford was opportunity," Chief Ashe said. "In Delaware, there's not a lot of chief jobs that come open, but I am a 17-year veteran of Wilmington Police Department. It has always kind of



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the former chief, Chief Brown, on various committees and stuff like that. The department's very progressive, always trying to stay top notch for the type and size agency it is, but I think that's always a struggle for small towns with smaller budgets, just really trying to move forward."

Chief Ashe explained that it is important to look at policing today, including police reform and body cameras. She also stated that looking at mental health is becoming a much larger part of policing today which is why getting clinicians on the field is important. She praised Milford for already implementing those strategies in order to not only keep the public safer but also to assist police officers in doing their jobs. When it comes to the challenges she will face, Chief Ashe believes most of those challenges will fade with time.

"I don't know if it's so much challenges as it's just things that are going to take time. I think learning the organization. I'm thrilled to be here. I mean, these officers are just the cream of the crop, like they're very engaged. So, I think for me the challenge is, and I don't know if I'd phrase it as a challenge, but I think just learning how things operate, taking time to evaluate the department, getting the officers' feedback on which direction they want the department to go and continue to advance," Chief Ashe said. "But I think also building trust in the community. That is not so much a challenge as it's going to take time. And that's not something that happens overnight. Milford is a very tight community. But I mean, just such an amazing community where just everybody is nice, and they're friendly, and they just

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take care of each other. So really kind of a small town feel, but you can feel the growth and the advancement within Milford so I would say just time in getting to know people and continuing to incorporate that in advancing the department at the same time and getting the trust of the community.”

One of the things Chief Ashe is looking forward to in the new position is to see what she can bring to the table, how she can help grow the department in a positive way.

“I think when you look at the way the community here embraces the police, I think that’s quite refreshing. In today’s society, and quite frankly, it’s just a joy. I enjoy it,” Chief Ashe said. “I said to my wife the other day, “It’s nice driving into work and smiling and it’s just a different feel, but it’s an awesome feel.” I think looking at how the community has embraced this police department and building them a \$20 million new police station that’s hopefully going to be ready October of 2023. So, just a great time to come into this organization. And just really want to get it to the next level and really put these officers first.”

While working in leadership in Wilmington. Chief Ashe oversaw a budget of \$65 million and was recognized on multiple occasions for her ability to apply business principles, along with common sense strategies, to the department’s budget which ended in an impressive cost savings of millions of dollars for the first time in over 10 years. In addition, her relationships at the state and federal level were instrumental in the successful acquisition of approximately \$8 million in grant funding. Chief Ashe was also recently recognized by the National Institute of Justice for her leadership, oversight and stra-

tegic planning while implementing Group Violence Intervention. She led enforcement actions on group/gang-involved violence, requiring collaboration with local, state and federal law enforcement as well as coordination with the U.S. Attorney’s Office and state of Delaware lead prosecutors.

“As the former Inspector of Operations and former Inspector of Administration with Wilmington, I often, especially in the operations capacity, had to engage with City Council. I often testified for the police department, whether it was before budget hearings for city council, and things like that. So I do have vast experience in dealing with city council,” Chief Ashe said. “What I think is very refreshing about this city council is none of them are out for themselves. They’re out to move the city of Milford forward which is just really refreshing. And I think I have their support having a unanimous vote. I didn’t hear anybody say nay when they swore me in, but I mean, even right down to the mayor, and to city council, like just so personable, very nice. They have embraced me and my family.”

Chief Ashe feels that the citizens of Milford should count their blessings that they have a council who supports the police department and is not in discussions to defund them. She explained that one of the draws for her to come to Milford was that everyone in city government, from the mayor to council to the city employees had figured out how to work together to move the city forward.

“When you look at it, this is working,” Chief Ashe said. “People are moving here and you have such a great

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diversity of people coming to town. You have the first African American mayor and now the first female police chief. It just shows how Milford balances diversity. Now, with the Chamber of Commerce working toward more affordable housing, it just gives everyone the ability to live here and thrive.”

When it comes to being female, Chief Ashe does not believe there is more pressure on her in the leadership role.

“I had a colonel in the Marine Corps, a female colonel, tell me one time people don’t care and these officers are the same way here. I had a department-wide mandatory meeting yesterday and it’s just very clear. These officers don’t care if you’re black, you’re white, you’re straight, you’re gay, female or male. They just want to be led. You give them the mission, and they will follow that mission, and these are officers who risk their lives every single day for the citizens and really for this country,” Chief Ashe said. “In all the challenges that we’re facing, I don’t think they look at me as a female chief. I think all those things are awesome, right, I want to continue to bring diversity and diversity of thought. But I really just think it’s about, ‘hey, this is a fresh set of eyes on our department. And yeah, she’s from the outside, but, you know, let’s see where we’re going. Let’s enjoy the ride.’”

One thing that Chief Ashe plans to focus on with the department is the health and wellness of her officers.

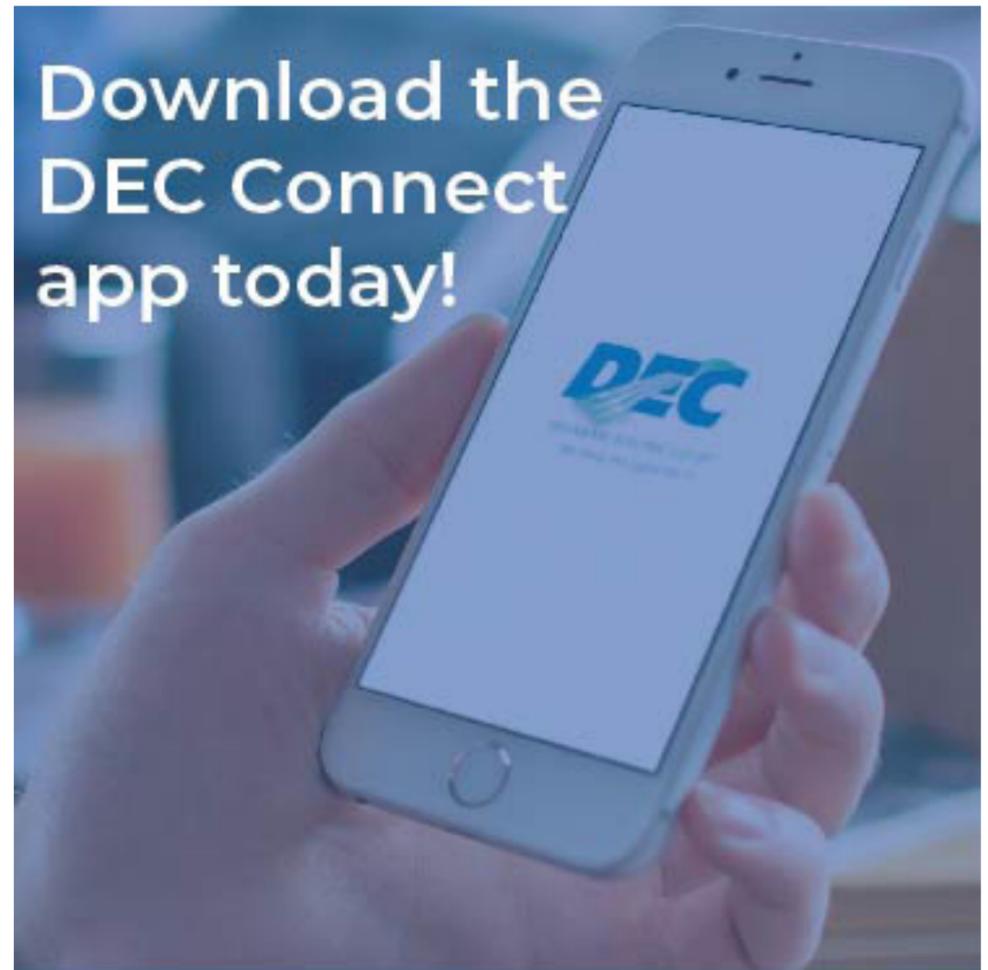
“One of my very strong focuses in this organization is going to be officer health and wellness. When we talk about defunding the police and we talk about police reform, people often ask me, you know where, where do

we think we need to reform police? And I think we have to remember that you really have to focus on officer health and wellness first, because when we focus on our officers, teach them the skills, knowledge and ability on how to deal with, quite frankly, some of the worst things that they see and most people wouldn’t even see in a lifetime, how do we teach them the skills to focus on their own health,” Chief Ashe said. “When that happens, the citizens are getting a good product. When we treat our officers with respect and dignity and justice, then they in turn will go out on the street and feel the same way. towards their community. So, I think that’s where we really have to start in police reform is reforming how we treat our police officers and making them our priority and their families. Give them the ability to come to work every single day. And quite frankly, see that this is the greatest job on Earth.”

Although there have been negative comments on social media about Chief Ashe being from outside Milford, she does not believe those comments will impact her position as the head of the police force.

“I think you know, it’s like anybody right? Move into a new neighborhood your neighbors are going to take their time getting to know you. So, I think any community that’s worth living in, is also going to sit there and say you got to earn it,” Chief Ashe said. “So, like I said, I think that is going to be one of the things that is going to take time. They’re going to have to get to know me, to know who I am as a person, know who I am as a police officer and know who I am as an executive that really wants to provide the best community services to them.

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So that's going to take time, but I appreciate people who are very protective of their community, because that shows that there is a close community bond. And it's almost like the military, like you got to earn your stripes and so I think those things are okay. I don't take offense to it. It's all factual. But I think it is just it's going to take time. And I look forward to listening to everybody. I don't get easily offended. Even some of the employees have asked me those questions. Again, I think it's just about embracing it, articulating why I came here, why I choose to come here. I mean, quite frankly, you know, there's a lot of police jobs open across this country."

The process to become the Milford police chief was not an easy one, Chief Ashe explained. It was a very competitive process, but she thinks that is because it is such a good department. She also sees the vision in where it needs to go.

"I'm very much a boots on the ground type of person. I'm going to be out there with the officers, out with the community. I was out today. Jo from the commerce office and I went walking through the town. I stopped in at the museum to learn just some of the interesting history. You know, like hey, did you ever eat any small ice cream cups? And you have had those little wooden spoons? Those were made right here in Milford. And who would know that this was actually one of the larger shipping building yards. I know the river has probably shrank a little, but I love history. And it's just, it's just a good feeling," Chief Ashe said. "I've just grabbed a cup of coffee, walked off and taken it in. I mean, who can complain when your office looks out on a beautiful river?

You can sit by the river and eat your lunch. It is such a beautiful town. I came in over the weekend and walked my dogs downtown. So many people came to introduce themselves and talk to me. Of course, that may be because I had a puppy with me, but it was refreshing to be greeted so warmly."

Chief Ashe's initiatives in group violence intervention in Wilmington led to a 58% reduction in homicides and a nearly 30% reduction in shooting incidents, demonstrating a record of success in developing effective relationships at all levels of the organization. This outcome simultaneously increased homicide clearance rates from 12% to over 67% and reduced citizen complaints against police officers by 22%.

"We are really blessed to have someone with such a history and record of service in Chief Ashe," Councilman Jason James said after Chief Ashe was sworn in.

Councilwoman Katrina Wilson agreed.

"I'm really thrilled to help bring the very first female chief for the city of Milford I'm excited about that," Councilwoman Wilson said. "I just feel so she's going to bring a new perspective and from interviewing, she was very, very excited and I think that that's exactly what we need."



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CULTURE



Photo link: Marcia Reed

ARMORY TENANT ASKS FOR LONG-TERM LEASE

TERRY ROGERS

Lillian Harrison, the executive director for Elevated Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit that maintains the former National Guard Armory in Milford, recently provided Milford City Council with details on what her organization offers and the many programs available at the armory.

“We are here to discuss consideration of the purchase of the formerly abandoned Milford Armory, now converted into a community service center and as you may know, we are a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in our community through various programs and initiatives,” Harrison said. “And over the past few years, we have worked tirelessly to revitalize the Armory, which was once neglected, of course, into a vibrant and diverse thriving community hub that provides essential services to local residents.”

Harrison continued, explaining that the Community Service Center offered a wide range of services for the community, including health and wellness, education and literacy classes along with job training and more.

“The center has become a source of pride for the community, providing a safe and supportive environment



for the residents to gather and access the resources that they need to succeed. Given the significant investment of time and resources made in converting this property into a hub, it would be in the best interest we feel at this for the city to consider allowing us to purchase the property,” Harrison said. “Alternatively, if the city is not in a position to allow the purchase of the property, it is suggested the city would consider a long-term lease of 50 to 99 years, understanding that this is a significant request. By working together, it ensures that the community service center will continue to provide essential services and support the residents for many years to come. Thank you for your time. And I wanted to add in addition to that, that we are we are at a point of what I call heavy lifting for the center. So, we’ve been able to make great strides in the renovation of the center. However, we need some major lifting now like a complete heating system. There are grants and tax incentives that

See **ARMORY** on page 10

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we're able to get that I know the city can't get for us. However, we have to be better positioned to be able to apply for those."

Harrison provided council with a slide presentation which showed the many services offered in the building. She explained that USDA and other organizations were willing to allow them to apply for grants, but since they did not have a long-term lease or did not own the building, they were limited in what could be provided to them. One of the programs offered in what is now known as the Milford Armory Community Service Center is one that provides transitional housing and a re-entry program that partners a construction program that hires ex-offenders. They also have a Women's Forum and others offered by the Small Business Association. Councilman Andy Fulton asked why she was asking for a lease of 50 to 99 years.

"USDA was more specific about what we needed, and they were saying 35 to 50 years, but with all the heavy lifting we need to do, I am asking for 50," Harrison said. "My team is all volunteers, and we are all working with multiple organizations to provide services to the community, whether it be food, furniture or other resources."

Because the heating system is not adequate, Harrison said that there was diminished capacity in the building simply because it was too cold, requiring her volunteers to be creative in getting services to those in need. Diamond Mechanical, who sits on the advisory board, have provided an estimate for a new heating system which will require converting an oil system to a natural gas system, but they are unable to go out for grants due

to the lease agreement on the building. Harrison showed a photo of the building during her presentation.

"That's our lovely building," she said. "And while it's old, we have come a long way and I invite you guys to come out and take a tour of the building. While we have come a long way, we still have a way to go. Aesthetically, I am a girl, so I like it pretty. She's not pretty yet, but we're going to get there."

City Solicitor David Rutt explained that the deed has restrictions regarding sale of the building.

"The deed from the state of Delaware dated Dec. 16, 2014, has a restriction that says, 'by acceptance of the deed, the city of Milford acknowledges that as described in Senate Bill 227 of the 147th General assembly, this property cannot be subsequently sold or in any way transferred to any person, corporation or association or used for a non-public purpose without further legislative approval from the Delaware General Assembly,'" Rutt read. "I can tell you, too, that the long-term leases, you're hitting 70 to 99 years and title companies look at that as a conveyance of interest."

Councilman Fulton asked if a 40-year lease would also fall under a conveyance of interest. Rutt stated that he did not know but a 40-year lease may not trigger the title company to say the property was conveyed.

"As I'm remembering 20 years back, we went into a longtime agreement with Milford Headstart and I'm not certain of the terms, but we leased that land, that building and it's still a long-term lease," Councilwoman Katrina Wilson said. "I'm not certain, I don't remember the amount of years but I have to do some research to

find that out and Terri might even know or have easy access to what. But then if that's the case, at least it gives some groundwork of where to start."

Councilman Fulton pointed out that it would be great to see what other long-term leases had been issued but that it was clear there were legislative roadblocks regarding the Armory property that may not exist with the Headstart property.

"You can't even have the appearance of conveyance," Councilman Fulton said. "Otherwise, we'll need some of our representatives, Sen. Dave Wilson or Rep. Bryan Shupe to step forward and propose legislation to do something about this."

Councilman Mike Boyle explained that it was clear the city could not sell the building as there was no guarantee the legislators would approve it or how long that could take. He suggested that Harrison contact USDA to see what they recommended for a long-term lease.

"I certainly will do my due diligence and find out mainly in speaking with USDA," Harrison said. "They have the largest part of the capital grant we need right now to get the system changed over and it was their requirement even before we moved forward."



MILFORD LIONS CLUB SPAGHETTI DINNER DETAILS

STAFF REPORT

Members of the Milford Lions Club are preparing for the 57th Annual Spaghetti Dinner which will take place on Saturday, March 4, at the Milford High School. Take out ONLY meals will be available for pick up from 2–4 p.m. Proceeds benefit many charitable activities in the area such as youth and education programs, eye exams and prescription glasses, as well as civic improvement projects, to name a few.

You won't want to miss this meal. If you're new to the area, ask the locals who makes the best spaghetti and they'll assure you they look forward to the Milford Lions Club Spaghetti Dinner each year. It's a tradition for many. Tickets are \$10 each and can be purchased at the door or in advance by contacting any member of the Milford Lions Club. You can also get tickets by calling 302-422-2861 or emailing secretarymlc22d@gmail.com.



CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY WITH A CONCERT IN MILFORD, DE

STAFF REPORT

The annual Milford Irish Music and Dance Concert sponsored by the Irish Rose Gift Shop and Downtown Milford, Inc., returns to Milford on Sunday, March 19, starting at 1 p.m. at the Milford Senior Center, 111 Park Avenue, Milford, DE.

Performances by the Irish band Seven Rings, a bag-piper, Irish dancers and Blarney the Leprechaun will delight the audience. There will be refreshments available including scones, biscuits, Irish potatoes, and cheese and crackers. A cash bar will be provided by the Milford Senior Center.

Tickets are \$30 per person (children under 12 are free when accompanied by an adult). Tickets are available for purchase at Irish Rose located in downtown Milford at 42 N. Walnut St., Tuesday through Saturday or online at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com). For more information, call Irish Rose at 302-491-4125.



BUSINESS



Photo link: Marcia Reed



GET ON BOARD TO OPEN IN MILFORD

BY TERRY ROGERS

Paige Cook got her love of food from her grandmother, a chef her whole life. Growing up in Bridgeville, Cook developed a love of charcuterie boards when she was young, thinking that designing the boards was more an art form than food. She began creating the boards for family as well as friends of family, eventually growing her offerings and leading to her formation of Get On Board which will open in the former Josephine Keir Building on Walnut Street.

“I am currently working full time at a high school with special needs students,” Cook said. “I absolutely love doing it and it will be hard to leave once I become full time with the shop. I teach a cooking class for my students every Friday to really show them that it is not hard and it’s something they can love doing.”

Her love of food and the beauty of charcuterie boards is what made her decide to start Get on Board so that she could share that joy with others. Cook recently moving to Milford. She worked in the restaurant industry for 12 years, most recently bartending at EasySpeak during the summers for three years.

“Opening a shop has always been the long-term goal of my business,” Cook said. “Downtown Milford is slowly becoming a place where small businesses are opening and booming. There is so much to offer to a business that opens on Walnut Street. Each small business in Milford supports a new small business, so I can’t wait to offer items and partner up with businesses to support one another. There really is nothing like this around which makes it so much more exciting knowing I get to start something new that is not common to this area. I am so excited to see my vision/dream board really come to life and to put my own style into a shop that is mine and really showcase what I do. I also am ready to see all this stress of opening a business is worth it. I know it will be, but shew, it’s a lot, but hey, we’ll get there!”

Get on Board will offer take out charcuterie boards made every morning as well as small grab and go boxes for lunches. There will also be cold merchandise including

See **BOARD** on page 14

specialty meats and cheeses that you can't find at the local grocery store. Cook plans to offer dry merchandise like mustards, jams, honey, crackers, nuts and other items that can be used on charcuterie boards or as gifts.

"I will also have different boards, cheese utensils and wine accessories available for purchase," Cook said. "One of my main goals as a small business is to support other small businesses, so I do plan to get in contact with multiple local businesses to put some of their products in the store as well as candles, shirts, tumblers, etc. With having small business items in my shop, it will not only help me, but will help spread the word about their business."

Cook also plans to hold paint nights as well as "sip and shop" events once the doors to Get on Board opens. She plans to have a bar with seats where people can order a glass of wine or a local craft or domestic beer with one of her custom charcuterie boards. The space is available for meetings and is also going to be designed as a place to visit before heading out to dinner or a great place for a girl's day out.

"In addition to the charcuterie, I have a luxury picnic addition to my business that offers rentals of peacock chairs, Igloo, picnic tables, wedding décor along with custom floral arrangements," Cook said. "I will be able to showcase some of the items I offer for this service as a lot of people don't know I offer it. The new space will make it easier to show people in person what else I offer versus only on social media."

The most challenging part of opening the new business for Cook will be finding a rhythm. She knows she needs to set hours that will be best not only for custom-

ers but for herself. She also is not sure what her "busy time" will be until she gets open.

"Every business has its challenges," Cook said. "It's all about what works best for myself as an owner all while making sure I please the customers."

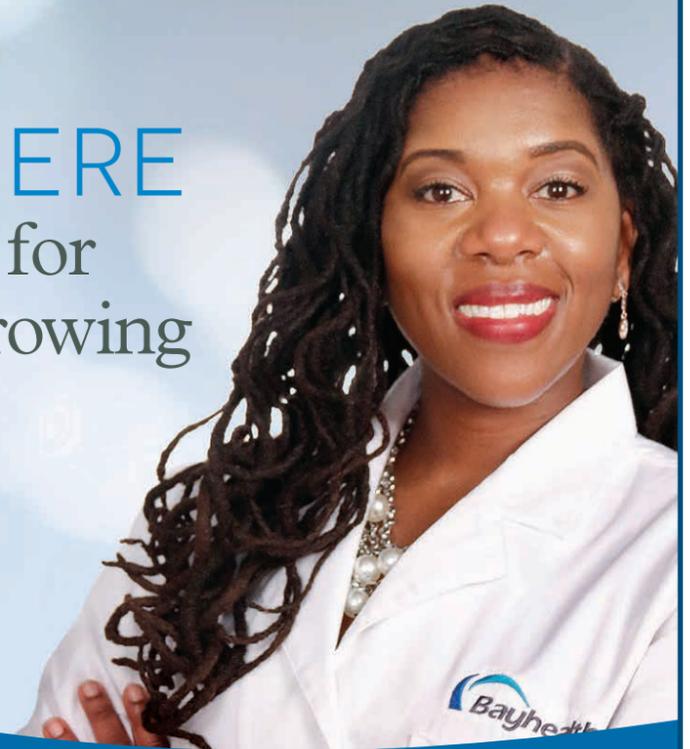
Cook credits Zack and Marissa King with pushing her to take this step, explaining that they have provided her with the support she needed to get the shop open.

"Opening this shop has been my end goal for my business since I started, but I definitely did not think I'd get the opportunity as quickly as I did," Cook said. "I am looking forward to seeing my dream become a reality. When I started Get on Board, I did not know it would take off in the way it did, but I couldn't be more thankful it did. Working with my customers, finding out what they want and making it come to life is the best part. So many people want smaller options for that day or just a grab and go lunch and it's hard to offer that right now. Not to mention, it will allow me to have my own space to really get creative and offer more than just a normal charcuterie box. Opening this shop will allow me to do those things and offer so much more to locals whenever they'd like versus only on special occasions."

The opening date is difficult to nail down right now, Cook explained. Many items are still in limited supply due to COVID, but the goal is to get in to set everything up by the end of spring so she can open Get on Board during the summer or fall. Cook is not hiring now, joking that she would be a "one-man show" for a while until she can grow the business enough to hire others to help her.



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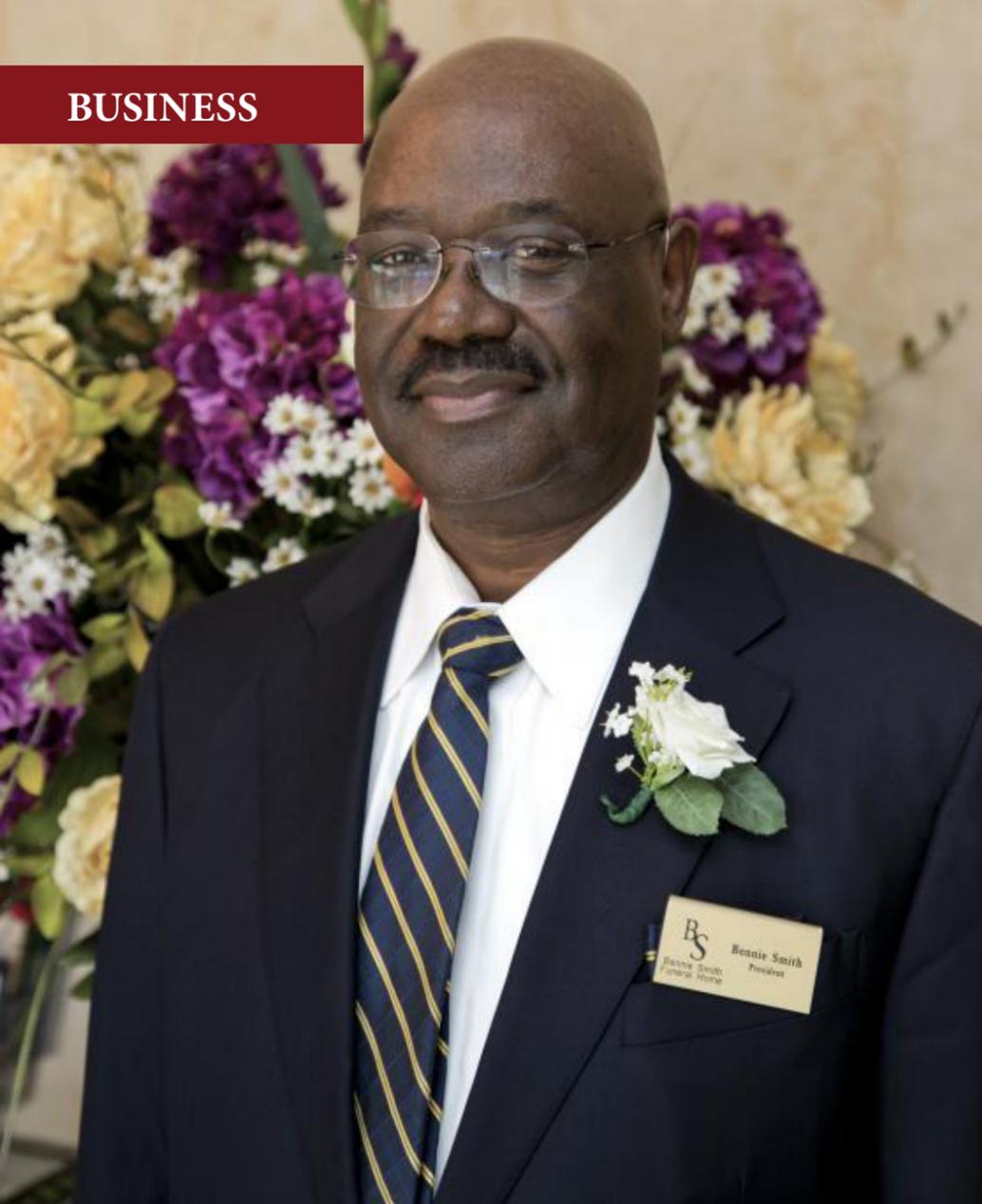
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BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPOTLIGHT: BENNIE SMITH FUNERAL HOME

BY TERRY ROGERS

Bennie Smith was born on July 18, 1948, the youngest of six children. Growing up on a farm in Faceville, GA, Smith worked a full-time job in his junior and senior year of high school in order to support his family. He attended a four-room schoolhouse prior to moving on to high school and drove for a local African American funeral home. It was while working in this job, Smith decided that he wanted to one day own and operate a funeral business.

Smith joined the Armed Forces as he knew his parents could not afford to send him to college. After an honorable discharge, he attended John A. Gupton School of Mortuary Science in Nashville, starting classes in 1969, working full time while attending school full time as well. He graduated in 1971 and then enrolled in the University of Minnesota, earning his bachelor's degree, the highest degree in his profession. With the degree, Smith could be licensed to operate in any state without restrictions.

His first position with a funeral home was with Hawkins Funeral Home in Philadelphia, where he worked from 1972 to 1973. He moved to Dover and took a position with Reese Funeral Home. While working there, Smith earned a Master's in Counseling from the University of Delaware in 1978. It was around this time he began to pursue his dream of owning his own funeral home.

Bennie Smith Funeral Homes began in 1982 when Smith became the Chairman and CEO of 14 funeral homes located in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, making Smith the leader of the first African American owned and operated funeral homes in the country. He also holds licenses in Pennsylvania and New York. The same year he opened his funeral homes, he was contracted with Dover Air Force Base to handle their funeral needs. He held this contract for 14 years until the military took over the operation.

In addition to the funeral home business, Smith also operated the largest fleet of school buses owned by an African American on the Eastern Shore. He also owned the Ebony Restaurant and Lounge in Dover, invests in a number of real estate ventures, offered limousine services, as well as three florists.

In 2017, Smith and his wife, Shirley, established the Bennie and Shirley Smith Scholarship Fund to assist students at Delaware State University and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Each year, the Smiths hold a holiday fundraiser to add to the scholarship fund which began with a \$100,000 investment to both universities.

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GOVERNMENT & POLITICS



photo link: [Scott Evers](#)

COUNCIL TABLES REQUESTS TO EXTEND WATER OUTSIDE CITY BOUNDARIES



BY TERRY ROGERS

Two requests to extend water and sewer lines outside city boundaries were tabled by Milford City Council at a recent meeting. The first was a request from Christiana Excavating who requested the extension south of the Milford Ponds development on Walnut Street and the second was from Colony West/Colony South located north of Milford.

“The properties are not contiguous with the city, therefore they are not eligible to be annexed at this time, but they only have one parcel between them and our current borders,” City Planner Rob Pierce said about the Walnut Street request. “The owner contacted the

adjacent property owners to see if there’s any interest in annexing into the city to kind of make this a contiguous request. But they have not received an answer to date. Staff is seeking guidance from City Council on whether to allow this property to connect to the city’s electric water and sewer utility. If permitted, the city would require the property owner to sign an agreement, which would require the properties to annex into the city if and when the properties do become contiguous with our current boundaries.”

Pierce explained that there had been other instances when water and sewer were extended beyond the city boundary, using Baltimore Air Coil as an example. There are also individual homes in Shawnee Acres who are on city water and sewer despite the fact that the development is not annexed into the city.

“I kind of want to digress just a little bit on this. We have two issues before us that deal with extending municipal services outside the city boundaries. I always thought it was our policy not to and I want to point to the next one in the Colony West development. That development is 33 years old, and we put a stipulation there and it’s just not achievable,” Councilman Mike Boyle said. “If and when we come into the city, you will just look at the map. There’s no way in the world the folks are going to come in because there’s so many properties between us and them. And on this one, on the excavating company, they’ve tried to contact the owners

of the properties but they got no answer to see if the other people are interested in that. And the other one has been educational because I had the opportunity to read 70-year-old transcripts from the council and from the planning commission on the way things used to operate. No way in the world I thought it made sense to send money or water outside the city especially when it goes all the way up there.”

Councilman Boyle continued that he came to realize the owner of the property outside city limits did not have to pay for the water to be installed but was simply able to tap into it.

“That now leads me to a question. How many of these things that we have out there beyond the city limits, that we’re sending utilities to? How many hidden agendas are out there? I have no idea,” Councilman Boyle said. “And I would like to get a list from maybe the utility department they can provide how many companies? How many residencies? How many things are out there that we’re providing the services to it realistically will never come into the city because of geographical location. Or the recipients have just said no I don’t want to.”

Pierce explained that the homes in Shawnee Acres were connected to city water and sewer because DNREC will not issue a permit for a new well or septic system when they fail if there is the availability of central water and

See WATER on page 18

sewer. Pierce agreed that the request from Colony West would be the largest served, but most of those receiving city services outside the boundaries were wells or septic systems abandoned as part of a remediation project. Councilman Boyle stated that he was not worried about those types of circumstances but that when a sewer line broke some time ago, it was discovered the city had an agreement with a property owner on Elks Lodge Road and he wanted to know how many of those existed.

“I want to tell a story, and this is before I moved here, I lived in a town in Virginia. It was a small city and there were a lot of old timers. A lot of them didn’t live in the city. There was an old family who lived outside the city with about 1,000 acre farm. They came to council and said, “so, we’re getting old. We’d like to have water brought to our house.” And the city council was really, really good about said, ‘yeah, we’ll bring it to you.’” Councilman Boyle said. “ Not long after, they sold the farm somewhere for like 5,000 housing units. Now the city, because they made the agreement to build a water filtration system by the subdivision. And the agreement was ‘well we’re going to charge a little bit more money because you live outside the city because residents of the city are paying property taxes for that.’ I was paying property taxes for that filtration plant. People outside the city said that it’s unfair to have them pay more money. They paid the same as people inside the city. So, I don’t want to see Milford in a position where we have committed as a course of business to provide things.”

City Solicitor David Rutt pointed out that he lived outside of city limits and had Milford electric. He also

reminded council that they installed a loop near Woods Haven to provide water in that area. Councilman Boyle stated that his biggest concern was that Milford was overextending its resources to people who had not paid to install those resources.

“There’s little benefit in annexing into the city unless you get sewer and water. Okay. And if we give it out without requiring you to annex, why would you ever do it,” Councilman Todd Culotta said in agreement with Councilman Boyle. “In Shawnee Acres, would you ever annex into the city unless we made you as soon as you tapped into our water? Now the question I have for Mark is what is the higher rate that those people outside of the city pay that makes it equal? Or do they pay a higher rate?”

Whitfield explained that people outside the city do not pay higher rates for electric, water or sewer than those in town pay. There is an upcharge for drilling outside the city, but not for the service itself. Councilman Culotta stated that he felt that was the point, that if council was going to make the rule that you could not annex unless land was contiguous, council could not then provide city services to land that was not annexed. Councilman Jason James pointed out that Councilman Boyle made good points, that the hook to get people to annex is city services, but after 30 years, the city may have lost that “hook” for Colony West. Councilman Boyle stated that he was not arguing there were not valid reasons for the agreements, but they seemed to be issued with no plan in place. He suggested council table both requests until more information could be provided.

“The plans that are stamped and approved for the project,” Pierce said about the Colony West request before council voted on tabling both requests. “We already provide water service to the townhouses and apartments in Colony West. This is the next phase which was part of that whole development out there that was recorded 20 years ago. They were seeking approval for the construction, public works and we wanted to try to tidy up any of the missing links.

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EDUCATION



Photo link: [Milford School District](#)



MHS DRAMA CLUB TO PERFORM GREASE

STAFF REPORT

Milford High School Drama Club will be performing GREASE for their Spring Musical the first weekend in March. They are inviting past 1989 and 2007 casts of GREASE to a reunion performance.

GREASE is a fan favorite that evokes fond memories for many people, including some Milford High School graduates who performed in this beloved show during their high school years. Because the nostalgic musical begins with a class reunion, the Milford High School Drama Club would like to invite the 1989 and 2007 casts of GREASE to join us for a Reunion Performance on Saturday, March 4, at 7 p.m. At the end of the high school performance, previous cast members will be

welcomed to join the current cast in singing “We Go Together.” If you were part of one of these casts, please help spread the word to others!

This year’s Spring Musical performances will be in the MHS auditorium on Thursday, March 2 at 6 p.m., Friday, March 3 at 7 p.m., as well as Saturday, March 4 at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. The reunion song will take place at the March 4th 7 p.m. performance.

Tickets will be available at the door and prices are \$5 Students (18 years or younger), \$8 Senior Citizens (60 or older) and \$10 all others.



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MSD MULTILINGUAL LEARNER OLYMPICS CELEBRATE MULTI-LINGUAL LEARNING

STAFF REPORT

The Milford School District hosted its third annual “ML Olympics.” Multilingual Learner (ML) Olympics is an annual academic competition created by the staff of Milford School District to allow ML students an opportunity to showcase their academic abilities while building pride and confidence in their multilingualism. Elementary teacher Montessa Brooks explained “The first event of its kind in the state, the purpose is to celebrate and recognize the hard work and dedication of our ML’s who have each worked to master more than one language.” The ML Olympics, which took place on Saturday, Feb. 11, at Lulu Ross Elementary School, is not just about language proficiency. It is about showcasing the richness and diversity of the many cultures repre-

sented in the Milford School District and how we can use language as a tool to bring people together and break down barriers.

As an elementary academic competition, events were held for grades one through five. Student Learning Specialist, Sharlitta Gilbert stated “There were 65 competitions in total. They included academic skills divided by English language proficiency scores. They included a focus on English language skills such as reading and spelling, mathematics using language, and the sciences including social studies.”

Director of Student Learning, Dr. Amory shared “We are incredibly grateful for the families who joined us as

See **OLYMPICS** on page 23



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well as the community organizations and numerous volunteers who helped to make this event a success. We appreciate the opportunity to celebrate the power of language and the achievements of our multilingual learners.”

Community organizations came together to support the event and provide outreach information including valuable resources to our families. Community organizations present included: Milford Police Department, Carlisle Fire Company, Avenue Church’s Culture Club, Delaware Office of Highway Safety, La Esperanza, DDOE Office of Multilingual Learners, DDOE Migrant Education Office, Milford Public Library, Polytech Adult Education (Adult ESL and Parents as Teachers), La Red, DNREC and Delaware State Parks, and West-side Family Health Care.

The event was attended by hundreds of students, families and community members. Local representatives included Mayor Archie Campbell and Milford School Board Member Mr. Matt Bucher. Additionally, the Delaware Department of Education was represented by former Secretary of Education Dr. Susan Bunting, Secretary of Education Dr. Mark Holodick, Chief Academic Officer Dr. Monica Gant, Office of Multilingual Learners Education Associates Maria Rodriguez and Cary Knight, and Migrant Education Program Recruiter Maria Mendoza. Members of Governor John Carney’s English Language Learner Task Force included Margie Lopez Waite and Allison Burris Castellanos.





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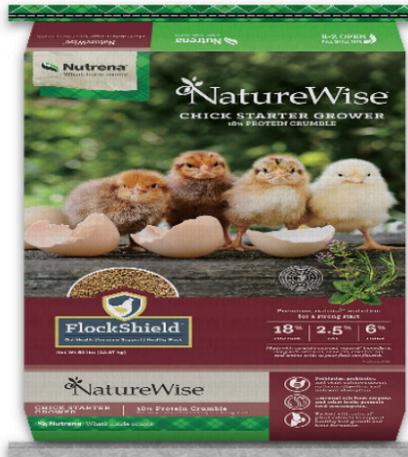
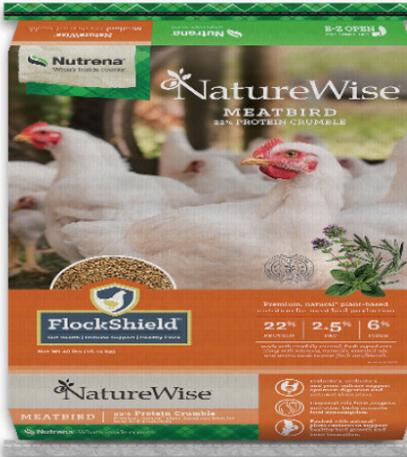
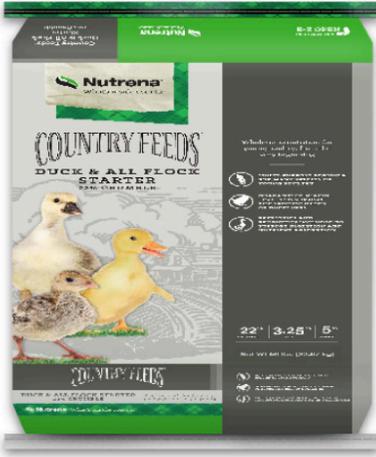


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MSD ANNOUNCES ONLINE KINDERGARTEN SCREENING NOW AVAILABLE

STAFF REPORT

Online kindergarten registration is now open for the 2023-2024 school year and in March MSD will begin screening students for the upcoming school year. On-line registration can be found [HERE](#).

The Milford School District will begin kindergarten screening for the upcoming school year on Thursday, March 2. To be eligible to start kindergarten next year, your child must turn five years old by Aug. 31, 2023. Registration is available online, but be sure you select 2023-2024 school year. You will need to upload the enrollment documents listed below and can scan documents using your smartphone. You will still need to schedule a screening appointment for your child. You can also register in person by completing registration when you bring your child in for a screening.

Documents that are required for registration include: State-issued birth certificate, parent/guardian photo

ID, proof of residency within the Milford School District (utility bill, lease agreement, mortgage papers which include parent/guardian's name and address), immunization (shot) records and physical exam. If you are interested in having your child considered for the Spanish Immersion Program lottery, you must enroll during this open registration period, ending on June 11. It is very important that all required documents accompany the forms in the packet, to ensure timely registration. Once your child is completely registered, a Morris staff member will reach out to schedule a virtual kindergarten screening appointment. Please contact the Morris Early Childhood Center at 302-422-1650 with any questions.



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HEALTH



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STAFF REPORT

Compassion, advocacy, listening and critical thinking. These are words the daughter of a patient used when nominating Bayhealth Medical ICU Nurse Jennifer Melvin, MSN, RN, for the DAISY Award she recently received.

“I am an RN myself and in 23 years and three states of practice, I can confidently say she is one of the best nurses I have encountered. I am so grateful for all her

MELVIN'S COMPASSION AND ADVOCACY EARN HER A DAISY AWARD

help with my dad and the care he received while in her capable hands,” wrote the daughter as she continued to express why she thought Melvin should receive the DAISY Award.

“She is a great reminder of why we do what we do as nurses! You can tell she derives satisfaction from changing the outcome and providing the best care possible to her patients and does it with a smile and calm demeanor. Kudos to you Jenn!” she concluded her nomination for Melvin.

Melvin, who joined Bayhealth 20 years ago and has served in several roles across many departments and started working as a nurse in the Medical ICU at Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus in late 2021, said receiving the award was humbling and a big surprise.

“I do not come to work or care for my patients with the hopes of gaining something. In fact, it is the exact opposite. I come to work and take great care of my patients because I enjoy giving, being someone that someone in need can count on, and someone they know that will help them through,” said Melvin, who decided to become a nurse after a conversation she had with her own dad about colleges and career options.

“I truly hadn't thought of myself as someone that would go into healthcare, but my dad saw me otherwise,” she shared. “He was my motivation to go to nursing school.”

Melvin also remembers the patient whose daughter nominated her for the DAISY Award. “I recall his deep gratitude and overwhelming sense of safety and trust that he felt when I was assigned as his nurse over the course of his stay. I advocate for my patients in a way where I not only articulate their thoughts, feelings, wishes and clinical needs, but I use my vast clinical knowledge to support this reasoning and justification for the next steps in a patient's plan of care and clinical work up,” she explained.

The DAISY Award is given by the DAISY Foundation, which was formed in 2000 by the family of J. Patrick Barnes. The Barnes family wanted to recognize the nurses who cared for Patrick and all the other “unsung heroes” of the nursing profession.

DAISY Award honorees are chosen by nurses, administrators, peers, physicians, volunteers, patients, and family. If you know a Bayhealth nurse who deserves to be nominated, visit www.Bayhealth.org/DAISY and fill out the nomination form.

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photo provided by MSD



BUCS COME OUT ON TOP AT CAPITAL CLASSIC CHAMPIONSHIP

STAFF REPORT

In an exciting Capital Classic championship game, the MCA Boys Basketball team came out on top 50-41 over Gunning Bedford. Being named to the All Tournament Team were Stephen Sivels and Ka'ron Bacon. Michael Mullen received the tournament's Sportmanship Award and Kaisan Bacon earned MVP. We are beaming with #bucpride #wearemilford

The MCA Girls Basketball team captured third place at the Capital Classic, with a 41-17 win over Mariner Middle Monday! Eighth grader Saniya McCray was recognized as an All Tournament Player. Way to go, girls!



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POLICE & FIRE



CHANGES MADE TO FIRE ENHANCEMENT FUND

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent meeting, Milford City Council agreed to change the name of what was the Carlisle Fire Company Enhancement Fund to the Fire Enhancement Fund. The change was to reflect current fire service districts in Milford as there are now developments that are in Houston Fire Company district as well as one proposed that will be in the Ellendale Fire Company district. In addition, council approved wording that would give them the discretion to use the funds for public safety measures. During public comment at the beginning of the meeting, Carlisle Fire Company Tor Hazzard and Fire Chief Shawn Hinton expressed some concerns regarding the fund changes.

“The Carlisle Fire Company Enhancement Fund was originated from past president of the Carlisle Fire Company, Marvin Sharp, and former city manager Richard Carmean,” Hazzard said. “The intention of this fund was for Carlisle Fire Company to have the funds to purchase equipment, right now, we are purchasing

handsets for the building as an example, plus building additions, additional storage rehab in our current facility or for the potential need of a future substation. The agreement was the city hold the funds in its accounts to collect the interest on that money collected by which both original parties agreed on.”

Chief Hinton explained that the company was not opposed to changing the name of the fund nor were they suggesting Houston and Ellendale should not receive their portion of the funds, but that they wanted clarity on the verbiage regarding public safety equipment. Peggy Schmidt, a resident of Milford also spoke prior to council’s discussion about the fund.

“I am a fairly recent resident and have been here a little over five years. And one of the things that I think is your responsibility is ensuring the safety of the residents of Milford and our property. And it looks like this is one of the things you’re trying to do in this meeting tonight and I would like to express some concerns related to the Milford Fire Company,” Schmidt said. “In 2020, their total revenue was \$2,338,104 and their expenses were \$1,426,223. Which means that they had essentially a profit \$912,681. So, I don’t think the fire department is in as big of a financial bind as we are sometimes led to believe. They also have about \$7 million in publicly traded investments. This is all public information that is available from IRS from their tax filings. With this in mind and realizing that they are having problems with recruitment and with their response times according to the chief’s interview this week with the news, I’m concerned about our safety, and I understand that other fire departments are having to come and protect us and to sometimes respond to

fires in our town. And we need a way, and it looks like you’re trying to address that, to ensure that the equipment is available to the responders that are actually coming. And I appreciate that very much. But I also hope you are thinking about how to be fiscally responsible to the people of Milford and at the same time, ensure an ongoing fire safety program that is actually responsive to our needs.”

City Manager Mark Whitfield explained that the change to the ordinance would better clarify council’s role with the fund. He also stated that the verbiage added was not technically needed as council has always had the ability to use the enhancement funds for fire safety purposes. He explained that water towers could be deemed fire safety equipment, but the town actually pays for those out of public works. Councilman Dan Marabello asked if Ellendale and Houston get funds from their towns through building permits as the enhancement fund is a fee of 0.25 percent added to building permits issued in Milford.

“Not that I am aware of,” Whitfield said. “Most of our Carlisle Fire District actually lies outside the city. They do get money from Kent and Sussex county, but they don’t get enhancement money from Kent or Sussex county.” Whitfield explained that the fund will be tracked so that Houston and Ellendale will only get the percentage of building permits that are issued for their fire district.

Councilman Jason James pointed out the fifth line of the ordinance, asking if council already had that power. Hazzard again explained the concerns the fire company had with the verbiage.

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