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MILFORD MAN RUNS BOSTON MARATHON

BY TERRY ROGERS

Dave Vezmar began running cross country in high school, but took a break for a while before picking up running again at the age of 30. In 2009, he developed ankle and hip pain after long runs, so he went to a local running store where he was fitted for special shoes.

“They were horrible, I felt like I had 2×4 planks strapped to my feet,” Vezmar said. “I started looking for alternatives and happened upon a brand new forum on the Runners World website for barefoot runners. There were only a few people there at the time, but I was intrigued and went all in. That was March 2009. I ran my first barefoot race in Dewey that July.”

For many years, Vezmar has run in the Milford area as well as in races throughout the state, all as a barefoot runner. On Monday, April 17, 2023, he achieved one of the ultimate runner’s goals when he ran the Boston marathon, running the entire race barefoot.

“Sam Adams is the official beer sponsor for the marathon, so we get a certain number of bibs for each race that they raffle off,” Vezmar, an employee of Boston Beer Company, said. “All Boston Beer company coworkers are able to enter. I got lucky this year and they drew my name.”

Vezmar prepared for the race by increasing his weekly mileage over the past several months. When he found out he was running, he started looking at training programs and says he quickly became overwhelmed by the sheer number of programs as well as the wide range of training regimens.

“I basically did what I typically do and I just listened to my body as I trained as long as I felt good,” Vezmar said. “I kept increasing mileage. If I started to feel worn out or thought there was a possibility of injury, I scaled back. My longest run during training was 15.5 miles, total mileage that week was around 25 miles. One challenge we have training in Slower Lower is the lack of hills. Boston is known for its hills, so I had to figure out how to get hill training in. I did some hill work on a treadmill, but I also spent a lot of time running back and forth over the Route 1 overpass by the new hospital.”

Aware that he would be fairly slow, Vezmar expected to finish the race in about 5.5 hours but finished the race better than expected.

“When I got to mile 20 and knew it was just 10k left, I knew I had a chance of beating five hours,” Vezmar said. “I ended up at 4 hours and 52 minutes.”

After joining the barefoot group online, Vezmar explained that the small group of runners in that group became a great group of friends. They eventually launched the Barefoot Runners Society, a global community at www.theBarefootRunners.org a few years later. He explained there has been a significant amount of research into barefoot running and Vezmar himself was part of a barefoot running study done at the University of Delaware 10 years ago. International Barefoot Runner’s Day (IBRD) is celebrated the first Sunday

See **BAREFOOT** on page 4

of May around the world, he stated. Vezmar offered advice to those interested in barefoot running.

“Start slow, no more than a quarter of a mile per run for the first couple weeks, then slowly increase,” Vezmar said. “It may sound counterintuitive but stick to asphalt or concrete; grass feels so much better, but sharp things can hide in grass. They can’t hide on the road, plus the hard surface really helps dial in the proper running form. It’s unforgiving, so it forces you into a natural gait. I hear all the time people saying they can’t even walk to their mailbox barefoot. I’d urge everyone to spend more time barefoot, even if you’re not running, it’s healthy and will help build strength and conditioning.”

Another fact that Vezmar wanted to point out is that his feet are not “jacked up.” He does not have calluses or blisters, explaining that developing either of those means the runner is doing something wrong. His feet are just strong and conditioned. In fact, he pointed out that after the marathon, his feet looked exactly as they did before he ran the race. For those who are considering running the Boston Marathon, Vezmar offered more advice.

“Start training early so you have time to slowly build miles reducing the chance of injuries; beyond that, don’t overthink it, don’t stress. Travel a few days before the race so you have time to experience the expo and all of the activities, the whole city has marathon fever, it’s fantastic!” Vezmar said. “This race is different than any race you’ve ever run, the crowd will push you the entire race; it’s like a 26.2 mile party. High five all the kids, high five all the girls at Wellesley, dance a little with the

fans who have been drinking all day, experience it all; for most of us, it’s a once in a lifetime opportunity, take it all in!”

According to Vezmar, the entire race was fantastic, with crowds the entire length of the course. He joked that the “scream tunnel at Wellesley definitely lived up to the hype.” His favorite part of the race was the last half mile.

“The mantra is on ‘right on Hereford, left on Boylston’ and when you make that last left turn and see the finish line and hear the screaming crowd, there is not a lot that can compare to that feeling, knowing you’ve done something that very few have or will ever do,” Vezmar said. “The best part of the best part was having my brother, Stephen, right there at the finish line cheering me on. He was my support team all weekend and I don’t think I would have been as successful without him.”

Weather was the biggest challenge Vezmar faced in preparing for the marathon.

“Being a barefoot runner, weather does play an important part in training,” he said. “I had to do a lot of treadmill training where I had to wear shoes, so I had some concerns with making sure my feet were properly conditioned. During the race, we had an occasional light rain, and the roads were wet for the full course. In my 14+ years barefoot running, I have run many races in the rain, but I did have some nervousness about 26 miles on wet roads. This turned out to be perfect conditions, I probably would have had more challenges if it were dry. After the race, I was very sore on day one, walking was tough. Day two, I was able to stretch out a

bit and I felt a lot better. By day three, I was back to normal.”

Vezmar stated that he would absolutely run the Boston Marathon again. The bib raffle is open to those who have not run the Boston Marathon before, but he says that if he ever gets the opportunity, he will run the race again.



CULTURE



photo link: [Downtown Milford Inc.](#)

DOWNTOWN STREETSCAPE PLANS PRESENTED TO COUNCIL

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent meeting, Milford City Council viewed a presentation by Rick Kane of KCI Technologies regarding potential streetscape improvements in the downtown area. The demonstration included upgrades to improve the aesthetic of Walnut and Washington Streets, as well as Southwest Front Street, Denney Row and Park Place.

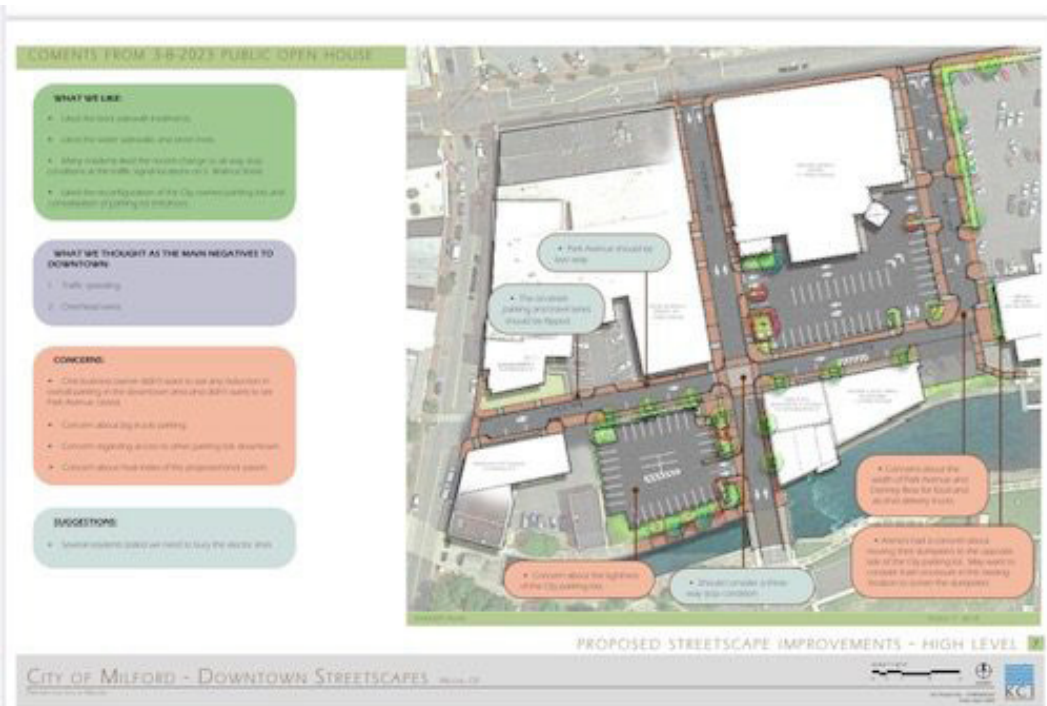
“There was a whole vision plan created for the downtown core that included accessibility to the waterfront improvements. And so our task that we were given was to focus in more closely on a few of the streets within that area,” Kane said. “Specifically Front Street from Church to Walnut, Park Avenue from South Walnut, going east and then north of Denney Row and then this Washington Street from Front down to the waterfront. Within that context, we were asked to look at accessibility, streetscape improvement possibilities. We might be able to introduce special painting, street furniture, street trees, signage, pole banners and lighting. We look at all those opportunities. And then in addition to that, we were also tasked with looking at parking situations. Looking at the existing municipal lots, and perhaps, you know, seeing if we could reorganize in those in some way to consolidate and create more room for streetscape possibilities.”

In the area of Washington Street, Denney Row and Park Place, Kane explained that both Park Place and Denney Row should be one way in order to improve the street dimensions. This allows for parking on one side of the street, buffering of the municipal parking lot and additional landscaping.

“Some other things that it did is that at the back side of the Park Place restaurant which we consider the waterfront. At the front, they have all of their existing trash cans and their grease trap vats and all that are just parked out here on the streetscape,” Kane said. “We were looking for a way to get enough fat in here that we could have the possibility to allow pedestrians to pass by that area while we still could introduce some potential enclosure screening of that area. And so those were some critical things that we thought would help improve the streetscape by converting to one way.”

Kane explained that low brick walls should be added around municipal parking lots to keep them in line with the historic nature of the downtown area. The parking lot across from Park Place needs to be reconfigured to allow a better flow of traffic. The display also showed several benches and small corner park additions in the area of Park Place, Denney Row and Washington Street. Kane also suggested that Arena’s enclose their dumpsters

See **STREETSCAPE** on page 7



STREETSCAPE from page 6

as the current open trash cans take away from the mural painted on the side of the wall. After Kane again stated that Denney Row and Park Place should be one way, Councilman Brian Baer pointed out that both streets were currently one way. Kane stated that they were one way, but the new configurations would improve the flow of traffic and allow for additional pedestrian traffic.

“Along Front Street, our task again was really streetscape improvements from Church to Walnut. And here’s where there was a suggested conversion from the two way to a one way [on Southwest Front Street]. And again, if we don’t make that change, it’s not going to give us the depth because again, we’re going to hold the north side curblin. Making it one way, it gives us some dimension here between the curb and the building to do the streetscape improvements that we’d like to suggest along the south side. We have bump outs here that narrow the street section down to allow better pedestrian crossings picture here over the existing bridge.”

Kane pointed out that the corner could be opened up with nice paving at the South Church Street corner and add screening against this existing parking lot. In the design, the parking lot on Southwest Front Street was reconfigured and reconsolidated to make it more efficient. An access point was closed off and the parking lot would have a one-way circulation. One of the high end recommendations to improve downtown was the addition of a small roundabout at the intersection of Southwest Front Street and South Walnut Street.

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MILFORD LIBRARY CELEBRATES NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK

BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford Public Library celebrated National Library Week from April 24 through 29. The week was filled with fun events for all ages, bringing many visitors to the library.

“This was such a fun week,” Carolyn Tabor, program coordinator for the library, said. “We held an ‘all that and a bag of chips’ giveaway. For every item checked out, we gave a free bag of chips. We also had patrons fill out cards telling us why they love our library and they were entered to win a gift card.”

Rebecca Bonawitz of PACE Your Life provided tips on how to prevent falls in your home while Irvin Cowboy performed a live concert on April 25. “The Other Side of the Tracks 2,” a video interview with Tom Summers and Charles Hammond was very well attended.

“The presentation of the film and the Q&A was a rousing success, full of valuable insights” Steve Curtis, vice president of the Milford Museum said. “There were at least 80 attendees at the presentation. We appreciate

being part of the National Library Week.”

Although not limited to National Library Week, free line dancing lessons, held every Thursday at 6 p.m. through May 18, took place during the weeklong celebration. There were also random book giveaways each day.

“We appreciate everyone who came in to celebrate National Library Week with us,” Tabor said. “Keep checking our events page as we are adding new things constantly.”

The Milford Public Library is located at 11 Southeast Front St. The main library is open Monday and Friday from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m.; Wednesday from noon until 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. The Teen Center is open Monday through Friday from 3 to 6 p.m. For more information about programs, call 302-422-9418.



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WHITFIELD TO TALK ABOUT STRATEGIC PLAN

STAFF REPORT

The next Milford Conversation will be held on May 4, starting at 8:30 a.m. The presenter will be Mark Whitfield, Milford's city manager, and he will be talking about Milford's Strategic Plan. The Milford Conversation is a free, family-oriented program open to the entire community. A question and answer period will follow the presentation by Whitfield.

Milford Conversation is held at the First Presbyterian Church at 101 S. Walnut Street. Park behind the church and enter in at the rear door off Pearl Alley. Walk through the kitchen to get to the church library.



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ANNUAL ANTIQUES MARKET TO BE HELD ON LAWN OF PARSON THORNE MANSION

BY TERRY ROGERS

The Milford Historical Society, the organization that manages the Parson Thorne Mansion, announced recently that they plan to hold their annual Spring Antique Show on Saturday, May 6 from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. The market will be on the lawn of the mansion known as Silver Hill.

“We hold the antiques market once every spring and once every fall,” Brooke Clendaniel of the Milford Historical Society, said. “We have several vendors who will be selling antiques, vintage items and collectibles this year. There is free parking onsite as well.”

The cost to get into the market, which includes the option to tour the mansion is just \$1 and all proceeds go toward the upkeep of the mansion. According to “A History of Milford” compiled by the Milford Historical Society, there is evidence that parts of the mansion were built in the first half of the 18th century. Although officially known as Silver Hill, it is more commonly referred to as the Parson Thorne Mansion, as Rev. Sydenham Thorne took possession of the property in 1785.

The mansion is an example of the old English colonial architecture that was common in that era. A book on Delaware stated that the mansion was constructed in the style of those found in Tidewater, VA, with a central portion flanked by two smaller wings joined by a walled passage. Although the window caps seem to be made of

stone, they are actually created from wood.

The interior of the mansion has been restored to look like it did when Parson Thorne lived there. There is beautiful paneling, corner cupboards of shell design and paneled doorways. After Thorne died, the house was placed in the hands of the Clayton family and a graveyard on the property contains the graves of Thorne as well as the parents of John M. Clayton. John Darby was the next owner of the property, a nephew of Clayton, before Benjamin Potter took it over. Col. Potter is best known for his bequeath to support the poor in Kent County, a fund that still exists today.

Under the ownership of Col. H.B. Fidderman, the roof lines were altered, adding dormers and lowering the roof pitch. There was no porch, only a small portico with benches.

In 1927, George H. Draper purchased the mansion and in 1962, the Draper family presented the deed to the Milford Historical Society.

For more information about the Milford Historical Society or to learn how to volunteer to help preserve the mansion, contact parsonthorne@gmail.com. Follow the society on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram as well.

MILFORD
LIVE

BUSINESS



photo link: Marcia Reed



BY TERRY ROGERS

Mark Dissinger is no stranger to Dolce. As a volunteer for Second Street Players for many years, he often joined the cast and crew on Saturday when they were working on sets at the coffee shop or grabbed treats for the crew. His daughter, Libby, worked at Dolce through the end of high school and most of college.

“We would joke when she came home and talked about her shift that if we owned Dolce, we could do this or we could do that,” Dissinger said. “Dean cuts my grass, and I wrote on the bottom of an invoice once time jokingly ‘When you want to sell Dolce, call me.’ Then, late last summer, I think in July, he called me and said ‘Hey, I’m calling about your invoice.’ I immediately asked if I shorted his pay or if something was wrong. He

DOLCE UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP

laughed and said ‘No, your note.’ He explained that he and Stephanie, as Dylan was starting to get older, wanted to make more memories and spend more family time together, so we just started talking. Then, I was presented with an early retirement option at U.S. Cold Storage, not because I am old enough to retire, but I had the years of service. So, I said okay and knew what my Chapter Two was going to be.”

The only thing that will change slightly in Dolce is the décor. Dissinger plans to do some minor remodeling, including new paint, new tables and chairs, possibly new cases, just some freshening up.

“It’s still the Chuck and George look,” Dissinger said. “Nothing major, though. I do want to do some remodeling to the building, like new windows and doors, primarily on the second floor and in the back, mostly things people don’t see. But as far as the product within the shop, no, none of the recipes are changing. None of the drinks are changing. We’re going to add things actually. I mean, those recipes have been the same. They are Chuck and George’s recipes, so they’ve been around a long time. A couple of them are fairly new that maybe Dean and Stephanie introduced, but pretty much it will be the same. People in Milford are creatures of habit. They like what they like and by golly, don’t change things, whatever you do.”

See **DOLCE** on page 13

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Many people have asked Dissinger if he plans to change things and he tells them if anything, he may add some savory items and elevate current items. The second location planned for 10th Street will lean more toward savory than the downtown location, but that project is on hold temporarily with plans to be open there in June or early July.

“I was hoping I could get it done before the end of the school year so I could start getting school kids, but I didn’t think the way things are going we’ll be able to do that,” Dissinger said. “I am the sole owner. I do plan to bring in my son-in-law as general manager and Libby will float between working for Tracy at the practice and helping me out. I asked her if she wanted some 3 a.m. baking shifts and she said no.”

One of the biggest challenges Dissinger has already faced is letting the public know that Dolce is not closing.

“Milford is full of rumors,” Dissinger said. “I’ve heard everything from ‘Oh they’re going to put a real estate office in there’ to ‘they’re just going to close it.’ We had a guy from Dover yesterday and he said he had to come in before we closed. The girl told him we were not closing and he said ‘I read the Facebook post and it says the owners are closing.’ She told him to read it again because the post simply said there was a new owner. I just want to let the public know we’re not going anywhere.”

Dissinger praised the Tatmans for the work they have done in the almost 10 years they have owned the coffee shop, but commented that, in any business, there was room for improvement.

“We want to remain the destination in downtown and with the growth that downtown is experiencing again right now with fondue. opening. I guess the Kings have Milly’s old building and they’ve got some good plans for in there,” Dissinger said. “I’ve talked to Zack a lot and he’s like, ‘I’m so glad you’re doing this.’ So, I am excited to see what downtown can be because I’ve seen it. I volunteered with DMI for almost 12 years, and I saw the ups and downs. Downtown is really great, and people enjoy coming downtown. We’re only going to build on that and continue to give them a good experience. We hope to have some extended hours eventually, but whether that will be in the morning or the after-

noon, we’re on the fence about that. But we have a lot of things that we want to do. We know we at least have to try some bigger ideas. And you try them for 60 or 90 days, if they work great if they don’t work okay, we tried it.”

When it comes to extended hours, Dissinger said he wanted to be mindful of his staff and their needs.

“The staff is great,” Dissinger said. “They are experienced, they are knowledgeable and we can even build on their skills to help us grow even more.”



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MILFORD CORPORATE CENTER PLAN APPROVED

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent meeting, Milford City Council approved the preliminary plan for the new Milford Corporate Center. The office and warehouse complex is planned for the corner of Milford Harrington Highway and Canterbury Road on what was known as the Fry Farm.

“The site will also include the construction of a new water tower that will serve the northwest neighborhood or northwest area of the city of Milford and a sewage pumping station that will serve the property,” Rob Pierce, city planner, said. “The city is also seeking the approval of a comprehensive signage plan which is associated with large scale development. We’re looking to install larger signs at the entrances to the industrial park on both Route 14 and along Route 15, which is

larger than what’s permitted by the zoning code under Section two of the staff report.”

Because the signage would be larger than what is permitted, a waiver was required. In addition, because this was not a residential subdivision, a waiver of block lengths was necessary. Mike Ryman of Becker Morgan Group explained that the plan presented was very similar to one presented to the public several months ago. Public comments and suggestions were incorporated into the plan.

“The site has three front edges on Route 15 (Canterbury Road), Route 14 (Milford Harrington Highway) and Churchill Road. The design of the site is 27 parcels



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See PLAN on page 15

that range in size from about 2.8 acres to 9 acres,” Ryman said. “The parcels that front on Route 14 and 15 are intended to target business office type uses a little bit on the smaller side compared to some of the internal lots. We have stormwater management located at the intersection of 14 and 15. And then we have another stormwater management facility located on the north side to primary access points coming in off of Route 15, aligning with Airport Road. A roundabout is proposed in that location which has been consistent from the beginning of the project. And it’s part of a TIF funding grant that the city receives from DelDOT to fund those improvements. The other access point comes off of Route 14 that would include left turn lanes and right turn lanes to access the site. We do not show an access to Churchill Road as has always been discussed, and that remains today.”

Interior lots allow the city some versatility as each lot is designed for 70,000 to 120,000 square foot warehouse spaces. The design allows lots to be combined for businesses who may want 300,000 to 500,000 square feet of space. There is also a walking path around the entire perimeter of the facility that will be open to the public. Code requires a 50-foot buffer, but the plans include a 100-foot buffer, something requested by several neighbors. There was also a request to keep a pond that already exists on the property and Ryman explained that stormwater drainage plans would incorporate the pond with rates of discharge that meet DNREC standards. Based on requests from local residents, there will be no access to the facility from Church Hill Road.

“Besides the fact they have agreed on the no access to Churchill Road at this point, we’ve had numerous meetings and conversations with them through the traffic study process. The final traffic study is in review at DelDOT and was actually filed last week,” Ryman said. There are some improvements associated with that and I want to run through very quickly. I already talked about the site access to 15 with the roundabout, the access to 14 with the auxiliary lanes Route 14 and 15, and Holly Hill Road. There will be some signal timing modifications required there and lengthening of the westbound right turn lane and southbound left turn lane so some improvements will be required at that intersection.”

A traffic signal will be necessary at Williamsville Road and there is discussion about a roundabout at Canterbury Road and Church Hill Road. Ryman pointed out that the Fry Farm was once proposed to be the Homestead development, which would have included over 1,000 housing units. The new project will result in less traffic than the original housing development planned at the location.

“So we are proposing some signage at the intersection of 14 and 15. We really wanted to do a nice sign there as kind of the gateway at kind of an obviously a major intersection at that point to really create an attractive entryway there with the stormwater facility and then a second sign at the Route 14 entrance,” Ryman said.

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The advertisement features a large, fluffy orange cat in the foreground, looking towards a bright sunset. In the background, a woman with blonde hair is smiling and holding a small dog. The text is overlaid on a dark blue background with faint pet-related icons like a bone and a paw print.

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS



photo credit: Ben Muldrow

ELECTRIC RATE INCREASE APPROVED BY COUNCIL

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent meeting, Milford City Council learned the results of an electric rate study conducted by Utility Financial Solutions (UFS). Dawn Lund, vice president of UFS, provided details on where the city's electric funds were now and projections for what the funds would like in the future. After Lund's presentation, council voted to approve a new electric rate ordinance at a slightly higher rate.

"Just a reminder that the electric utility is a self-sustaining bond, it's an enterprise fund," Lund said. "It should be funding its expenses, its debt, its capital replacement. So that's why we look at these things. We make sure we are on track for a long term financial sustainable utility, which of course helps with reliability and capital replacement."

Lund explained that there are three key areas every municipality should consider when determining if a rate adjustment is necessary. These include debt cover-

age ratio, adjusted operating income and projected cash balance. The municipality must be sure that cashflow is sufficient from operations to pay any debt service. In reviewing Milford's cash flow, Lund stated that their debt coverage ratio was good throughout the projection period.

"Next target I look at is adjusted operating income. The reason I'm calling it adjusted operating income here is your audit which actually shows your transfer to the city below the operating income line. So, I have to adjust your operating income to include that transfer as that's funded through rates," Lund said. "So our adjusted operating income is projected to be negative throughout the projection period. It's projected to be a loss. The loss continued to grow without any rate adjustments. And so obviously, that's one of the targets we're going to need to turn around in general if we're

See **ELECTRIC** on page 18



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trying to target about a million dollar operating income.” Lund explained that was a function of two things.

“One, I’m trying to fund interest expense on debt since it’s below the operating income line. Two, I’m trying to fund the inflationary increase on the assets I have invested in the system and what do I mean by that?” Lund said. “Let’s pretend I have one asset. And it’s a million dollar asset and I got to replace that in 10 years it’s going to cost me \$1.3 million or something more. The \$300,000 in my example, is what I’m trying to recoup through that rate of return. You have a very low rate of return of 6.5% projected that we’re trying to meet. Certainly, you’re not meeting it. Now, you’re projected to operate at a loss. We’re just trying to walk you toward a positive operating income with a rate track that I’m going to show you on a target.”

As she continued her review, Lund explained that she wanted the utility to have cash on hand to pay bills and to have purchase power costs. The city’s Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) was excellent which helped mitigate risk to the utility. Milford also has a large percentage of revenues from a much smaller sector of customers which is a risk. After presenting the methods used to determine electric rates in the city, Lund recommended that electric rates increase by 1.2 percent in 2024 which would increase the average residential seeing about a \$1.50 rate increase.

Based on the new ordinance passed by council, starting in July 2023, residential service will increase from \$19.00 to \$21.50 per month and in July 2024, would increase to \$21.50. In the third year, July 2025, the rate would grow to \$21.75. All other levels of electric user would also increase slightly over the next three years. Council approved the new rates with a vote of 7 to 1 with Councilman Brian Baer the only dissenting vote.



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BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford City Council recently made changes to its public comment code to allow members of the public to speak about any city-related business during the 15 minute public comment period at the start of every meeting. Mark Whitfield, city manager, explained that this was at the request of several council members who wanted to increase public input at meetings.

“I think there was concern before about open public comment and we’ve allowed it, and it’s not been that much of a problem. There’s not been a lot of people that have commented on something that you couldn’t comment on during the council meeting,” Councilman Todd Culotta said. “I agree that look, we keep it to three minutes, right. As long as the Sergeant in Arms so to speak is clear on that, who cares? Open mic as you want to call it, I don’t see that being a real problem. I mean, I enjoy when the voting public has a voice. If that voice is recorded in a public meeting, for whatever reason, as long as it’s not attacking us or being rude, it’s okay. I don’t see a problem with it.”

PUBLIC COMMENT NO LONGER RESTRICTED TO AGENDA ITEMS AT COUNCIL

Mayor Archie Campbell pointed out that in other towns, like Seaford and Georgetown, people have been escorted from the meeting by the police after they became unruly during public comment. He was concerned there would be a neighbor talking about another neighbor, something that had nothing to do with the city.

“Just so you know, some small localities had open mic nights and the person speaking was offensive. Using offensive words,” Councilman Andy Fulton said. “And the mayor threw the person out and then they had to pay the person off because of lawsuits because of infringement upon his rights. So I would suggest that we keep it associated with the agenda items.”

Councilman Dan Marabello, who served as mayor at one time, stated that there was public comment permitted when he was in the mayor’s seat and there was not an issue. City Clerk Terri Hudson pointed out that the comment was limited to agenda items during Councilman Marabello’s term. Councilman Marabello stated that he did not recall that, but felt it would not hurt to try allowing open public comment.

“So, you know the government is municipal government and is for the people, by the people, so to hear the

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people as much as possible is good. And I know we're saying that we do that now, but it's limited to the agenda items," Councilman Jason James said. "I think that when the solicitor, when we're going to public comment sessions, he explains the rules of engagement, you can't do derogatory statements, racial statements, whatever. And if he repeats that for the public comment period, for this 15 minute public comment to two to three minutes, we give the public an opportunity to prove whether they can conduct themselves. I don't think we should have one bad actor take the opportunity for every other citizen. I would like to have the people to be able to speak as much and as often as they possibly can."

Councilman Culotta agreed that there needed to be regulation and that Mayor Campbell needed to let people know their time was up or that he would not tolerate a certain tone or certain words. He felt if someone wanted to argue during public comment, they could have the conversation with the chief of police.

"I would just caution that from a law enforcement perspective, we would be extremely limited to being able to escort somebody out because comments were offensive as you really then start to go into first amendment rights and you all becoming victims of a crime," Chief Cecilia Ashe said, "So it would be highly unlikely that I would get up and escort somebody out of here because they made a comment. So, I just want to kind of set that ground rule so that you guys are aware of how we would proceed."

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EDUCATION



photo link: [Milford School District](#)

ELEMENTARY STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT DISCUSSED AT BOARD MEETING

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent Milford School Board meeting, Dr. Jason Peel presented revisions to the Student Code of Conduct Grades K-5 for board review. Dr. Peel explained that representatives from each school, including teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals and discipline deans helped craft the new policy.

“There were not a great deal of changes,” Dr. Peel said. “There were some revisions to the appeal process, hopefully to make it more clear and not necessarily change anything that would happen as we have in the past. Another change just adds the word ‘reporting’ and then redefining to ‘FYI’ is. This really is just a procedure that teachers use to document classroom behaviors that are happening in the classroom but also taken care of in the classroom, just to see how a student is doing over a period of time. Most notably, the large change is in the back where the old table and subsequent consequences have really been merged into one nice table and category which is really only four pages long, probably much easier for parents, students and staff to also read and use.”

After Dr. Peel presented the changes, board member Dr. Adam Brownstein apologized to constituents for stamping his approval on the policy the year before.

“I went through this with a fine tooth comb and there are many issues with this policy as written, so I first

want to apologize that I approved this last year. I think in hindsight that was a mistake,” Brownstein said. “We are sending a conflicting message to students by simultaneously calling cell phones an illegal object and then, in the very next paragraph, telling them what they should do with that illegal object during the school day. So clearly, there’s a lack of consistency there.”

Brownstein continued, pointing out that the policy put cell phones in the same category as drug paraphernalia, but in the next paragraph, it states that as long as it is turned off, it can be brought to school.

“Additionally, it is not being enforced,” Brownstein said. “So, I think we need to have a rational conversation. Either it’s going to be enforced across the board or we need to take it out of our policy. Part of my emphasis over the next 12 months is we really need to do something about behavior and if we’re going to do that effectively, we need to have a clear set of guidelines about what our expectations are. Putting something in the code of conduct and then not enforcing it, sends the wrong message to both parents and students. On page three, we talk further about cellphone usage, and I’ll just say my previous comments and skip that for the sake of time.”

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School Board President Jason Miller stated that he understood the disconnect in the policy and asked if Brownstein had a better solution. Brownstein explained that he would provide his suggestions when he finished going through the policy.

“I noticed on your Code of Conduct Authority, it says ‘when students are at a bus stop,’ but we neglected to mention the bus itself,” Brownstein said. “Nowhere in this code of conduct do we reference the bus specifically and it is my understanding that the code of conduct does apply while they’re on the bus, so that is an easy fix.”

Under “Removal of Students from Class or Social Activity,” Brownstein felt that the wording was inaccurate and that it was another area that was not being enforced.

“I find it interesting because it talks about when students sort of get amped up or when there’s no threat of violence, that student can be removed. But a lot of times our present push back is to clear the room, not clear the students. And I would like to better define which of those two actions is going to happen, in which circumstances, because again, as a parent, if I look at this and I see ‘okay, disruptive students are going to be removed from the classroom to help facilitate learning,’ and then my child comes home and tells me ‘I was acting normally and I was the one that got removed from the room,’ I think that again sends a mixed message.”

Under a section entitled “Aggressive Groups and Gang Policy,” Brownstein felt that the language which stated an aggressive group was any group of two or more students who act collectively in an aggressive, confrontational or territorial manner was too vague.

“If that’s going to be in here, you know, you get two guys or two gals from a sports team that get in a tiff with someone else, technically that’s two people acting aggressively,” Brownstein said. “That’s a lot different than gang reference, which is what this is meant to apply to. So, I think that the verbiage they’re sort of overly vague and could be misconstrued. We could probably tighten that up a little bit. I think the changes that we’ve made at the end are a step absolutely in the right direction. What we had before was phenomenally confusing. However, I think that Category 1 is a little bit of a mess because everything is valued the same way. And the official deterrence, shall we say, of the first offense of this 30 minute individual reflection, how we can lump academic cheating and the penalty is a 30 minute reflection is a little perplexing to me.”

Brownstein suggested creating separate categories, such as Category 1A, so students get one level of punishment and a Category 1B which would have a harsher consequence. There were also offenses under Category 2 which were the same or at least very similar to those in Category 1.

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A graphic with a background image of a piggy bank. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent dark grey box. At the top, it says "Do your dollars make sense?" in red. Below that, in white text, it says: "All DE schools are funded through a strict formula no matter the needs of the students." and "The 'one-size-fits- all' approach has not worked, right?". Then, "If we want DE to get smart like our neighbors..." in white. Below that, "Join the conversation." in red, and "Click to subscribe to our newsletter." in red. At the bottom, it says "FIRST STATE EDUCATE" in white with an upward-pointing arrow, and "EXPECT EXCELLENCE · ACT TOGETHER" in white.



MILFORD HIGH SCHOOL CHORUS CALLING FOR ALUMNI

STAFF REPORT

Calling all Milford High School Choir Alumni! You are invited to join the Milford High School Choir for the Spring Night of the Arts Concert May 24 at 7 p.m. As part of the performance, the closing song will be a combined choir piece. We would love for any alumni to join us for this piece. We would like to see this become a tradition and this would be the first year! If you are interested in joining us, visit the Milford High School Choir Website at <https://milfordhschoir.weebly.com/>. Here you will find recordings of the song, of each vocal part, and a pdf of the music. For any questions or comments, please email Mrs. Keefer @ jkeefe@msd.k12.de.us. Please forward this information to everyone and anyone who you believe may have been a Milford High School Choir alumni! Let's Sing Together!




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MILFORD LITTLE LEAGUE SEEKING UMPIRES

BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford Little League is facing a shortage of umpires, an issue facing many youth sports leagues today. Wayne Hurd, a volunteer with Milford Little League, explained that it is not difficult to become an umpire.

“As far as training goes, individuals must become familiar with the rules of the game,” Hurd said. “Many of the rules are similar to what you would typically see in Major League Baseball, but there are some that are different. In addition to studying the rules, individuals must learn the field mechanics of where to stand, how to move and how to communicate to align with the play that is happening.”

Hurd believes there are several reasons for the lack of umpires. There is a nationwide shortage of sports officials across all sports.

“In high school football for example, all games used to be played on Friday night in the Henlopen Conference, but now games are played on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, due to the shortage of officials. There aren’t enough officials to do all the games in one night,” Hurd said. “This nationwide shortage is fueled by existing officials walking away from the game due to referee abuse, harassment and assault in some cases. Additionally, new official recruitment is difficult due to the fact that they don’t want to be yelled at. Somewhere along the line, people feel like they are entitled to yell at officials when they don’t get a call their way. All this does is propagate poor sportsmanship and set a bad example for the kids. Also at the present time, we do not pay our officials. It is strictly volunteer, but we do

reward them with a meal from the concession stand at the end of the game. Lastly, umpiring is one of those activities that is a thankless job. Very few people know the hard work and the amount of time spent studying, attending training sessions, traveling, sometimes foregoing your family activities to umpire a game. Additionally, the cost of equipment is not cheap to get involved in.”

Milford Little League season has opened, and games are in full swing, Hurd said. Games are played Monday through Friday on multiple fields with teams engaging in both baseball and softball.

“On any given night, we could require up to 10 umpires between baseball and softball across all the various age groups. Many of our existing umpires are already giving up 2-3 nights a week to help us and we cannot expect more from those folks,” Hurd said. “We need to supplement and replenish our cadre of umpires because looking around, we have a strong core of folks who are 50-60 years old. We have already gone through 10+ years of Little League with our own kids.”

Anyone who is interested in becoming an umpire for Milford Little League can visit their website or visit the concession stand to leave contact information at any time during the season. The volunteer form can be accessed at <https://www.milfordball.com/volunteer>.

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photo link: Downtown Milford Inc.

COUNCIL REQUESTS SPEED REDUCTION ON ROUTE 113

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent meeting, Milford City Council authorized Mayor Archie Campbell to sign a letter to DelDOT requesting that speed limits on Route 113 through city limits be reduced to 40 miles per hour in any area where the speed is currently 45 miles per hour. According to the letter, on one section of 113, the northbound and southbound lanes have different speed limits.

“We have received a number of complaints with regard to the speed limit on 113 and throughout the city. We did a bit of a survey to look at what areas were posted at what speeds and it is somewhat scattered, I guess that’s the best word we could use but their actual location, there’s actually a different speed on the northbound side than on the southbound side in one section,” Mark Whitfield, city manager said. “So the letter was prepared for your review. I’m obviously happy to make any changes you would like to see made in the letter before it goes to DelDOT. From a staff perspective, we

were recommending a posted speed limit of 40 miles an hour through the city limits except where it’s already posted 35 for safety reasons, mainly on turns or on off ramps. But other than that, recommendation of 40 miles an hour throughout the city.”

Councilman Andy Fulton commented that this was in issue relayed to him by many of his constituents, that overall speed in the city was excessive.

“I’ve watched people try to get on to Seabury traveling at 55 miles an hour and two wheels are not uncommon. So, reducing the speed within the city limits would increase safety and the only 35 mile an hour area is actually when you’re getting on to Route 1 from 113 going over the overpass, everything else will be 40 miles an hour,” Councilman Fulton said. “That’s ample speed going past residences and giving you enough time to slow and enter businesses without having someone



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running into you at a high rate and also when you’re leaving a business it gives you time to get out without being rear ended.”

Whitfield pointed out that several housing developments were approved in the southern section of Route 113 and that there had already been one fatality at the entrance to a development.

“Whether that’s done or not, I do believe we just need more patrolling out there because 45 isn’t the issue. It’s the 55 and 60 that’s the issue,” Councilwoman Katrina Wilson said. “It is just speed way out there. It really is. And I know we can change speed limits and try to control this...”

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