



## **Eyes on County Council – March 17, 2026**

### **Highlight Events (see additional details below):**

- State officials petitioned County Council for approval/agreement to engage in Route 9 (priority) and 113 corridor studies. This would immediately initiate a seven month long range study of the Route 9 corridor for investment strategies.
- Gina Jennings, county finance, proposed two initiatives to support Fire/Ambulance services. County would fund a universal billing system and an ambulance purchase program to leverage county purchasing power.

### **Breaking News:**

- Jill Hicks has announced her candidacy for County Council District 5 for the 2026 election. She looks to fill the seat of incumbent John Rieley.  
[Hicks announces run for Sussex County Council seat | Cape Gazette](#)

### **Public Comments:**

- Eight people spoke passionately in favor of a modest (approx. \$20 annual per lot) increase to property taxes to benefit independent libraries. Most of the speakers had stacks of hand-written postcards from library supporters, which they handed to the Councilperson of the appropriate district.
  1. **Leah Roselle**, director of Milford Public Library
  2. **Rachel Culver**, director of Georgetown Public Library
  3. **Dan Goodemote**, vice president of Franklin Library Board
  4. **Kelly Kline**, director of Selbyville Public Library
  5. **Britta Cordrey**
  6. **Lauren McCauley**, director of Rehoboth Beach Public Library
  7. **Darren Tatum Poole**
  8. **Kay Wheatley**, chair Rehoboth Beach Library Board of Trustees
- **Jennifer Cohan**, president of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Delaware and

**Katie Gillis**, executive officer of the Home Builders Association of Delaware spoke in opposition to the ordinance regarding Cluster Subdivisions on lands within the Comprehensive Plan Rural Areas with AR-1 Zoning.

- **Gary Vorsheim** – spoke about the expansion of large Data Centers in Sussex County. He said they create real environmental concerns and quality of life issues. He cited examples such as large amounts of water needed for cooling systems, continuous mechanical noise, diesel generator emissions during testing, large heat discharged when cooling, and major land disturbance from massive building footprints. He suggested Sussex County consider safeguards including: limit data centers to appropriate industrial zones, prohibit data centers on preserved or active farm land, and establish clear setbacks.

**Note:** members of council commented on this agreeing it is an issue of concern.

### **Presentations:**

- **Discussion and Possible Introduction of Moratorium Ordinance Regarding Cluster Sub-Divisions-** Vince **Robertson, Assistant County Attorney** presented the ordinance for a limited pause for Cluster Subdivisions on land within the AR-1 Zoning District in the Rural Areas as per the Future Land Use Map of the Sussex County Comprehensive Plan. The pause would end at the earlier of 1) 365 days from the date of adoption, or 2) when the ordinance regarding cluster subdivisions introduced on March 10 receives a final vote.
  - **Mr. McCarron** spoke in opposition to the ordinance. He praised the past year's collaborative land-use work in Sussex County, and expressed concern that a newly proposed ordinance could disrupt this "cooperative progress". He urged Council to continue forward with the existing land use recommendations to maintain momentum.
  - **Ms. Gruenebaum** said that the moratorium, as expressed, has been misrepresented by many people, which is unfortunate, because it affects the whole spirit of moving forward. She agreed to temporarily table the ordinance to keep focus on current land-use efforts and maintain progress. She also requested regular updates on development applications that are coming in and the progress of those that are in, so that Council can have a good understanding of exactly what is occurring in the development pipeline. Note – the item was tabled.
- **Discussion of future Fire/Ambulance Company Assistance** – **Gina Jennings, Finance Director**, presented potential initiatives to help these organizations through facilitating support services, standardizing accounting systems, enhancing fire services' revenue, create savings and efficiency and lowering the cost of operations. She stated her

mission of “protecting tax dollars” by gaining efficiencies. Replacing higher costs at the local department with lower cost/higher efficiency activity at the county level will deliver a net savings. Her recommendation has two parts:

- Streamline and standardize ambulance billing; issue an RFP to get the best price from a billing service. The maximum yearly cost to the county would be \$800,000. Improves collection of receivables.
- Leverage county purchasing power and centralize ambulance purchases. The county would purchase three new ambulances each year; each company would receive a new ambulance every seven years. (There are more than 20 volunteer fire services operating in Sussex County). The cost estimate is \$1.2 million.

These two items would be inserted in the 2027 budget and be funded by real estate transfer taxes. No vote was required.

**Discussion related to Route 9 & 113 Corridor Study** – Nico Brady, Deputy Chief of Staff for Gov. Meyer, opened the discussion providing some background information. Based on the governor’s Executive Order #16 ([Executive Order #16 - Governor Matt Meyer - State of Delaware](#)), the state is undertaking several initiatives to prioritize smart growth to optimize affordability, natural and working lands, economic prosperity, and environmental health, and recognizes the importance of effective coordination between the state and local governments to plan and invest in functional and sustainable land use practices. One of these is to conduct a seven-month coordinated planning effort with Sussex County to define a land use plan for the Route 9 Corridor Planning Area intended to kick start the county’s comprehensive plan update process and better plan for growth. (Route 13 corridor study, Georgetown to Millsboro, will follow.)

**Dorothy Morris**, Principal Planner Office of State Planning (and team lead for the state), and **Jamie Whitehouse**, Director P&Z (and team lead for County) identified a Core Planning Team made up of County and State representatives. The objectives of the Master Plan are:

1. Define the preferred purpose and function of the Route 9 corridor.
2. Coordinate master plan with the Sussex County Comprehensive Plan.
3. Reach consensus on what density means for the Route 9 corridor.
4. Generate land-use forecasts to gauge the infrastructure impacts.
5. Coordinate forecasts with existing and proposed TIDs.
6. Identify sufficient incentives/disincentives to ensure demand remains inside planned areas.
7. Evaluate land reservation and preservation strategies.
8. Coordinate the master plan with the transportation project prioritization and programming process to provide realistic timeframes for implementation.

This is a long term planning study with a 40 year outlook. These corridors have been identified as priority areas for state investment. The timeline is as follows:

- March/April – core planning team data exchange
- May/June – public workshops
- June/August – prepare draft plans of scenarios and goals for master plan
- August/September – public hearings and adoption of master plan
- September – review of state strategies to reflect master plan as needed

**Old Business:**

- **Conditional Use #2530** – Council unanimously approved the Conditional Use in an AR-1 Agricultural Residential district for 2 seasonal rental bungalows on 1 acre on Roxana Road near Millville.

**Introduction of Proposed Zoning Conditional Use Ordinances:**

- **None**

**Council Meeting Schedule: Tuesdays – check agenda for timing and location**

- **No meetings: March 24 and 31, and April 7**
- **Next meeting April 14**

**Council Meeting Broadcast**

[County Council Meeting - March 17, 2026](#)

**Related Articles:**

[Sussex council will not enact a moratorium | Cape Gazette](#)

[Sussex County approves Route 9 master plan study | Delaware Public Media](#)

[Library leaders, patrons ask county council to raise library tax rate | Cape Gazette](#)

[No vote on temporary cluster subdivision moratorium | News | coasttv.com](#)

[Sussex County explores new ways to support ambulance services in next budget | News | coasttv.com](#)

[Sussex P&Z approves final site plan for Chappell Farm | Cape Gazette](#)

[To push affordable housing, Gov. Meyer eases road upgrade rules - Spotlight Delaware](#)

[Limiting density will not reduce sprawl | Cape Gazette](#)

[Sen. Hansen seeks support for new wetlands program](#)

***Note: Eyes on County Council makes every effort to render events at public meetings accurately. It either explicitly quotes speakers, or paraphrases their statements as accurately as possible. If any representation in these notes is inaccurate, please contact us.***