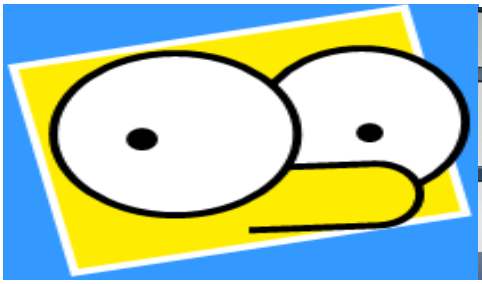

Eyes on County Council – October 13, 2026

SUSSEX COUNTY
DELAWARE

Highlight Events:

- The County Council's hold on reviewing major subdivisions due to the confusion regarding state's recent legislation (SB23/HB450), has created a lull in Council activity. Council has begun the work of evaluating the impact of the new laws and creating the needed changes in process. More to come as this develops.
- Make sure to VOTE!! Early voting starts October 22.
  Voting Locations - Department of Elections - State of Delaware

Public Comments:

- Gary Vorsheim made a plea to Council to review the strategy of using reserves to balance the operating budget. He pointed out Finance Director Gina Jennings' comment that at the current rate, the reserve balance could be depleted in eight years. Vorsheim made the point that growth needs to pay for itself, and that long term tax strategy needs to be assessed.

Consent Agenda:

- Lawson proclaimed United States Navy Week (Nov.15th-25th) for Sussex acknowledging the 250 year anniversary of our country.

Mike Harmer, County Engineer

- Warwick Park Sewer – Phase I, Project S24-13 A. Change Order No. 1 – request $9,705 supplementary funds on existing project of $1.4 million. Approved.

Bob Bryant, Airport Manager:

- Construct Taxiway B, Bid Package B - Project A24-16 A. Approval of Change Order No. 4 – request $20,132 for topsoil needed for grading. Approved.
- Construct Taxiway B, Bid Package C – Project A26-15 Project A26-15

- Award Recommendation for 2nd half of project to Richard Pearson Construction for $5,595,998 (FAA grant covers 95% of cost). Approved.
  Delaware Coastal Airport's Taxiway B project ready to begin final leg of work | Delaware Public Media
  Taxiway_B_Construction_RFP.pdf
- Approval of Delta Airport Consultant's Inc. Task Order No. 5 – service fees in the amount of $725,000 (FAA grant covers 95% of cost). Approved.

Old Business:

- **Conditional Use #2533 filed on behalf of RWE Clean Energy** – to grant a Conditional Use in an AR-1 Agricultural Residential district for a solar array on 69 acres, 2 miles northwest of Selbyville.
  - This was originally introduced on April 14 and deferred by Council. The applicant challenged and appealed to Superior Court. The Appeals Court returned it to Council to be reconsidered. (No details of the challenge were given at the Council meeting.) It was re-introduced and approved 3-1 (Rieley was absent). Doug Hudson, voting last, was the dissenting vote.
  - **EoCC Comment from the April 14th meeting:**
    Conditional Use #2533 filed on behalf of RWE Clean Energy *– Proposal was for a solar array on existing farm land – using 35% of the total 69 acres. The owner was doing it because he felt this would guarantee that the rest of his property could continue to be used for farming. Two persons spoke in opposition. Clifford Parker made a passionate plea to deny this change because he wanted to protect farmland in Sussex County. Donna Mitchell, a neighbor, was concerned with the impact it would have on the environment and the native animal species in the area. She described the proximity to the Great Cypress Swamp* – and potential environmental dangers the solar equipment might create. This proposal was approved by the P&Z with conditions. After testimony, Mr. Rieley requested the CU be deferred. The County Council voted 5-0 to defer.*

Grant Requests:

- Council made appropriate donations to the following organizations:
  - First State Community Action Agency for their 61st Anniversary Celebration
  - Cross Christian Academy Inc. for a scoreboard and sports equipment
  - Survivors of Abuse in Recovery Inc. for FATE protective parent support network program
  - Friends of Cape Henlopen State Park for Bike Helmet replacement
  - Rehoboth Concert Band for their 2026-27 concert band season

Newly Introduced Conditional Use applications:

- Four new applications were mentioned – solar array, tire repair shop, trucking business and indoor athletic field

Council Members Comments:

- None

Public Hearings:

- **Community Development Block Grant Program:**
  - Brandy Nauman, Director of Sussex County Community Development & Housing, together with Brandon Hamilton, Program Manager, presented the annual overview of the program and the status of their spending. The CDBG program is a federal initiative managed through the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant Program | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and administered locally through the Delaware State Housing Authority. For 2024 fiscal period, Sussex received $1,465,000 from the CDBG, $1,000,000 County and $750,000 from a different federal program (HOME) – total $3,215,000. The current year funds were $2,116,750 federal funds and $750,000 County – total $2,866,750. Future funding levels are unknown.
  - Eligible activities include housing rehabilitation (repairs to roofs, electrical, plumbing, etc.), sewer and water hookups and emergency repairs.
  - Primary uses of the County allocation are for emergency services (no running water, no heat/electric, leaking roofs, households in need of handicapped accessibility).
  - Eligibility is targeted to seniors, low/moderate income (80% AMI or lower), veterans.
  - Brandon presented slides of before and after projects that were completed under the program, offering poignant examples of the important work that has been done.
  - Lloyd commented that he sees the benefits of this program in his district, in particular; how it combats homelessness and he appreciates the objective way funds are allocated to allow people to stay in their homes.
  - Gruenebaum asked how they manage demand for the funds. Brandy responded, elaborating in detail how priorities are based on immediate need (e.g., emergencies).
  - McCarron noted that when residents in his district have needed help, including veterans, he has referred them to their office and they have always been pleased and appreciative with the help they received.
  - All members of Council thanked them for their work.
  - Next step is Council approval of the next annual period application for funding.

- **Conditional Use #2529 filed on behalf of Jaime & Darren Hooks** – to grant a Conditional Use in an AR-1 Agricultural Residential district for a mechanic repair business, office and equipment storage on 4.29 acres in Laurel.
  - A dump truck business owner requested the use of the property for additional storage. Neighbors do not object. Applicant's mother lives on an adjacent parcel. Lloyd went over the conditions of approval by P&Z to ensure applicant understood the terms: (1) an easement for the driveway on the adjacent parcel or relocation of the driveway and

(2) operation during designated hours only. The application was approved unanimously with the condition to amend hours of operation from 5am to 6pm.

- **Conditional Use #2573 filed on behalf of Total Package Landscaping, Inc.** – to grant a Conditional Use in an AR-1 Agricultural Residential district for a landscape business on 1.16 acres on the west side of Beaver Dam Road, just south of the Fisher Road intersection.
    - The applicant previously lived and ran his business on the property. He no longer lives there but would like to continue running the business there as storage for the equipment. Neighbors living in an adjacent property spoke in favor of the application and the applicant.
    - Councilman Lloyd again reviewed the conditions of approval by P&Z in detail to ensure applicant understood the terms. The applicant appreciated the review and stated he is willing to do whatever is required. Project was approved unanimously.

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

- Future meetings schedule:
    - October 20 (1:00pm start) 102026.pdf , October 27
    - November 10 and 17. No meetings November 3 and 24.

Sussex Preservation Coalition Upcoming Schedule

Council Meeting Broadcast:
County Council Meeting - October 13, 2026 (12:30PM Start Time)

Related Articles:
Delaware advances $165 million in housing and solar projects | News | coasttv.com
Belle Meade added to state's permitting accelerator | Cape Gazette
State to consider annual strategies plan updates | Cape Gazette
Developer: NIMBYism slows affordable housing | Cape Gazette
Delaware data shows disparity in funding for counties | Cape Gazette
Builders warn Lewes on subdivision pause | Cape Gazette
District 4 candidates Cuccia, Hudson split on development, energy | Cape Gazette
Higher fuel tax, fees among state's proposals | Cape Gazette
DelDOT maps road upgrades | Cape Gazette

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.