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BUSINESS, 7A

EXCLUSIVE

Rehoboth fireworks display was a smoky mess for many



Smoke obscured Independence Day fireworks for some viewers in Rehoboth Beach on July 5.

SHANNON MARVEL MCNAUGHT/DELAWARE NEWS JOURNAL

Beach erosion partly to blame, vendor says

Shannon Marvel McNaught

Delaware News Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

For the nation's semiquincentennial, Rehoboth Beach advertised an over 6,000-shell show by Zambelli Fireworks.

The city paid over \$57,000 for it.

At dusk the day after Independence Day in "The Nation's Summer Capital," thousands of people waited on the beach, the boardwalk and atop hotels and businesses to see the display.

But when the fireworks were launched on the beach at Brooklyn Avenue, they were obscured by smoke for nearly everyone to the north. Many people, eyes and lungs irritated by the smoke, left the area as soon as the show began.

Others, mainly to the south of Brook-

lyn Avenue, said they saw a great fireworks show.

City officials offered a public apology via social media the next day, but said they didn't immediately know what caused the smoke.

On July 7, Zambelli Fireworks returned inquiries from both Delaware Online/The News Journal and the city.

The reason the fireworks were so smoky? It comes down to beach erosion.

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Wetlands bill awaits governor's signature

Measure would unify tidal, freshwater rules

Krys'tal Griffin

Delaware News Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

A bill awaiting Gov. Matt Meyer's signature would create Delaware's first unified program to preserve both tidal and nontidal wetlands.

Sen. Stephanie Hansen and Rep. Debra Heffernan introduced Senate Bill 9, the Wetlands Stewardship Act, on March 31. The legislation would create state-level protections for wetlands lacking adequate federal regulations.

The act also aims to improve the tidal wetland permitting process and use the same procedure for nontidal wetland permitting.

The legislation is the seventh attempt at protecting freshwater wetlands in Delaware since 1988, according to The Nature Conservancy, which has six land preserves with wetlands in Delaware.

"I am so happy this happened. This was hard fought every single step of the way," Hansen said. "This bill doesn't end the process; it's an important first step."

Why do wetlands protections matter?

Tidal wetlands are found along coasts and are influenced by the rise and fall of tides. Nontidal wetlands are made up of freshwater, thus not influenced by tides. These are often found near rivers, streams, ponds and lakes, according to the National Park Service.

Delaware already has a statewide tidal wetlands program, but nontidal wetlands are federally regulated and enforced by the United States Army Corps of Engineers under the Clean Water Act.

The federal regulation leaves gaps

See **WETLANDS**, Page 8A

Meyer blocks funding for Legislative Hall expansion

Olivia Montes

Delaware News Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Delaware Gov. Matt Meyer exercised his constitutional one-line veto power to strike a controversial allocation from the fiscal year 2027 bond and capital improvements bill – not even a week

after it cleared both chambers on the last day of session.

The allocation in question was roughly \$35 million to help pay for an addition to Legislative Hall in Dover.

Members of the Legislative Building Committee voted in February to revive the east-side expansion after shelving it last year.

The Statehouse has served as the state's Capitol for over nine decades and was last updated in the 1990s.

Expansion plans include adding four large meeting rooms and relocating the entrance from the west to the east side of the building.

For some, this immediately raised eyebrows.

In a letter addressed to the House chamber, John Flaherty of the Delaware Coalition for Open Government wrote this appropriation was "a glaring misuse of taxpayer funds," lacking in justification and should instead be struck from the bill.

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Nikki Glaser

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