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AG ON DISPLAY



Delaware State News/Marc Clery
Ryleigh Stubbs, 6, of Harrington walks with her lamb in the Kent Building at the Delaware State Fair on Wednesday. More photos and today's fair schedule on Page 11.

REHOBOTH-DEWEY BUSINESS

Chamber calls for more state aid amid pandemic

By Matt Bittle
Delaware State News

DOVER — The Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce is urging officials to provide greater clarity and consistency to businesses during the pandemic and is calling for additional state aid. In a letter sent to Gov. John Carney Tuesday, chamber President and CEO Carol Everhart expressed concerns that a host of businesses will be forced to close unless steps are taken.



Carol Everhart

“For many of our seasonal businesses, the opportunity to generate enough summertime cash flow to make it through the winter months is quickly fading away,”

she wrote. “For many businesses in the Delaware coastal communities, summer seasonal revenues in June, July, and August count for as much as 80% of their annual revenue.

“While June was better than expectations, the month’s positive sales trend was quickly erased in the first two weeks of July. ... The financial and economic fallout will be like nothing we have ever experienced before if our government officials do not provide some help or relief immediately.”

Revenues through the first half of 2020 are down in a major way, with losses between 35% and 50% for hotels compared to the first six months of 2019, according to the chamber. Restaurants have lost 75% of their income.

See Chamber — Page 8

Cost major issue as Dover eyes police body cameras

By Mike Finney
Delaware State News

DOVER — There is no question that Dover Police Chief Thomas Johnson, Mayor Robin Christiansen and members of City Council are in support of acquiring body cameras for police officers in Delaware’s state capital.

The question they do have is, who will pay for it?

City officials said they would like to get a federal grant and save money rather than put the full cost of the cameras into the city’s budget.

The issue of body cameras for the city’s police officers was discussed during the Council Committee of the Whole’s Safety Advisory and Transportation

Committee virtual hearing Tuesday night.

When the half-hour discussion subsided, Councilman Roy Sudler Jr. made a motion that “the mayor, in conjunction with the chief of police, negotiate the best deal immediately in 2020 with vendors to be reviewed by City Council in regards to body cameras.” His motion was passed unanimously.

“I believe that the body camera will aid the city and council with ensuring fair treatment, quality police service and justice for all mankind,” Councilman Sudler said.

Chief Johnson said his department fully supports transparency and the acquisition of body cam-

See Body cameras — Page 9

INSIDE

Classifieds	30	Health	23	Opinion	4-5
Comics	28-29	Movies	28	Police	6
Dear Abby	29	Obituaries	12	Sports	17

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Chamber

Continued From Page 1

The group surveyed 76 of its 1,200 members, and just those 76 reported losing \$206 million from the same period last year.

Delaware has COVID-19 largely under control, Ms. Everhart said, noting hospitalizations and percentage of positive tests remain low. As of Tuesday, 68 people were hospitalized, down from a high of 337 in late April. The percentage of people testing positive has remained around 5% for the past month.

Delaware remains in a state of emergency, with limits on businesses like how many people can enter a store at one time. Face coverings and social distancing are mandatory when out in most public places.

Businesses are willing to take steps to keep customers safe and have appropriate precautions in place, Ms. Everhart said. She believes officials would be best served by allowing Delaware to move to the next phase in its reopening, which was initially slated for late June but has been on hold for the past month.

“With the more recent enforcement attempts designed to slow the spread of the virus, it is now obvious that the actual messaging being communicated by the State is a factor in this latest downturn. Many of the recent messages are unwelcoming and confusing to our residents and our visitors,” the letter to the governor states. “People believe our restaurants and bars are closed and that masks are required at all times, even while on the beach or while seated at tables.

“We feel that it is necessary for a more clearly stated series of messages touting the success of our plan to keep residents, visitors and staff safe while still providing a healthy, vibrant resort area be released. It is critical that this messaging come from our government leaders immediately.”

Ms. Everhart said Wednesday businesses should be given the chance to partner more with the state during the reopening process. Officials should concentrate on identifying and, if necessary, punishing outlets that do not comply with COVID regulations, she said.

The business community is not denying the severity of coronavirus, Ms. Everhart said, but people are very concerned about their livelihoods. Absent a move to make the state more business-friendly, such as removing some restrictions or providing funding to companies, Delaware will see a very serious hit to its economy, she said.

“The effects of an economic collapse to the business community in Sussex County will be felt across the entire State,” the letter states. “Tourism is one of Delaware’s strongest business sectors. Negative revenue trends in the restaurant, retail and lodging industries in particular have far-reaching consequences across the First State.

“We must do all we can, together, to avoid such an outcome. We ask that you direct key staff members to communicate that our businesses are open, adhering to the standards of responsible social distancing, sanitization and the wearing of masks. We want to be part of a safe and prosperous solution that gives our struggling business community

the best chance to survive.”

Jonathan Starkey, a spokesman for Gov. Carney, said the governor is very aware of how businesses are suffering but remains concerned about the public health risks that would come with easing restrictions.

“The Governor understands the important role that restaurants and bars play in our economy, and that’s why we’ve worked hard to try to help them open safely. However, on a call with the White House and the nation’s governors earlier this week, Dr. Fauci reiterated what we’re seeing around the country,” Mr. Starkey wrote in an email, referencing White House COVID task force member Anthony Fauci.

“A lack of social distancing and mask-wearing in bars and restaurants, particularly in vacation destinations, have caused the virus to spread. As the Governor has said throughout this crisis, we can’t have a healthy economy without healthy communities. The best thing we can all do is commit to wearing masks in public places, socially distancing, washing our hands regularly and staying home if we’re sick.

“While our numbers have improved, we have not won this fight yet. The fastest way to get off the quarantine lists of other states is for



Special to the Delaware State News/Chuck Snyder
Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Carol Everhart expressed concerns that a host of businesses will be forced to close unless steps are taken.

Delawareans and Delaware businesses to lean in and drive down our numbers even further. If Delawareans see instances of non-compliance with COVID-19 guidelines,

they should email the public health team at HSPcontact@delaware.gov.”

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Revenue Loss Comparison January - July 2019 vs. January - July 2020

	REVENUE LOSS 2019 vs. 2020 January 1 - July 6	BREAKDOWN BY GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION			
		Downtown Rehoboth Beach	Route One/ Coastal Highway	Dewey Beach	Lewes/ Other
ACCOMMODATIONS <small>Includes hotels, motels, bed & breakfasts, inns & guest houses, etc.</small>	\$31,592,031	\$21,307,529	\$5,480,146	\$2,804,356	\$2,000,000
ATTRACTIONS <small>Includes water parks, golf courses, water sports, performing arts, amusement parks, charter boats, museums, events, etc.</small>	\$10,292,979	\$8,839,134	\$381,000	\$166,845	\$906,000
REAL ESTATE <small>Includes rentals and sales</small>	\$45,000,000	\$30,000,000	\$12,000,000	\$3,000,000	N/A
RESTAURANTS <small>Includes restaurants, bars, candy stores, ice cream shops, bakeries</small>	\$41,860,267	\$12,639,643	\$12,355,000	\$10,500,624	\$6,365,000
RETAIL <small>Includes stores from boutiques to corporate (apparel, jewelry, books, furniture, housewares, etc.)</small>	\$57,000,000	\$13,900,000	\$43,000,000	\$100,000	N/A
SERVICE <small>Includes advertising, child care, exercise, personal services (nail, salons, spa)</small>	\$20,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$4,000,000
GRAND TOTAL	\$205,745,277	\$91,686,306	\$83,216,146	\$17,571,825	\$13,271,000

Notes for the above Revenue Loss Comparison:

Following individual Chamber contact to twelve to fifteen Chamber Members, the above financial information was provided for each of the six categories of business and then entered into their geographic location. **The above information represents only 6% of the 1,200 Chamber Members in the 19971 zip code.** The revenue loss shown compares January 1, 2019 through July 6, 2019 to January 1, 2020 through July 6, 2020 for a total loss of **\$205,745,277.**