



July 25, 2019

Mayor Becker and City Council
City of Lewes
P.O. Box 227
Lewes, DE 19958

Dear Mayor Becker and City Council,

The Historic Lewes Byway Committee extends its sincere thanks to the Lewes Planning Commission for recommending the Cape Henlopen School District meet with the Byway Committee to review the Shields Elementary School site development plan. The Shields project is on Savannah Road, one of the six corridors of the Historic Lewes Byway.

Members of our committee met with Brian Bassett, the Director of Capital Projects for Cape Henlopen School District along with members of the design/engineering team, at the Lewes School site. We were tremendously encouraged by their interest and receptivity to our feedback. Although the plans are still very preliminary, we were encouraged by the open dialogue and look forward to continued discussion as the project goes forward.

The State of Delaware defines a Byway as a corridor that has been recognized for its importance to Delaware's heritage, recreational activities and scenic beauty. It is managed in order to protect six special intrinsic qualities: scenic, historic, natural, cultural, and recreational or archaeological. It encourages an appreciation of its surroundings and the development of tourism and recreational resources.

The Lewes School, which will become the new Shields Elementary School under this project is an historic and iconic building that has been a landmark in Lewes since it was built in 1921. It has significant historic value-which is one of the intrinsic values that the Byway Committee seeks to recognize and protect.

We commend the Cape Henlopen School District and their architect for presenting a plan that preserves the historic character of this stretch of Savannah road by sensitively restoring the iconic Lewes School to its original state, as it was built in 1921.

As previously stated we were encouraged by our meeting, of what will be included in future, and recommendations we hope will be considered. We offer an outline below:

- Mature trees and shrubs in front of the Lewes School, many of which have shaded this stretch of Savannah Road for many decades will be retained.
- The original front entrance of the Lewes School will not be a primary entrance. No change to the walkways or landscaping in front of the building except to remove the foundation plantings and replace them with native species.
- Benches may be placed under the trees at the front of the building. Creating a sense of welcome and reinforcing the historic connection between the town, community, and the school.

- Shields Elementary School main entrance (on the Bethel side) has a number of islands in the parking lot. We recommend the islands be planted with native grasses or other small plantings to soften and cool the islands and assist in water retention.
- Plans note all lighting fixtures will be down lights to provide for security while not having light “over-spill” upwards towards the night sky.
- We recommended the stormwater management facility at the front corner of the site on Savannah Road adjacent to Bethel Cemetery be planted with flowering native trees, shrubs and grasses to visually enhance the viewshed from Savannah Rd.
- We were encouraged to see a buffer of native trees between the bus parking and Savannah Rd. on the Sussex Drive side of the school and look forward to seeing that further developed as the plans are finalized.
- Though we are encouraged that the school has made provisions for additional parking both for cars and buses, we are aware that this will increase the amount of impervious surface on the site and will be interested to receive more information on how stormwater will be managed to avoid flooding on Savannah Road.
- The plan creates two entrances for the new Shields Elementary School—a parent/student drop off entrance and parking area on the north (Bethel side) and a bus entrance/parking area at Sussex Drive. We believe that this proposed traffic pattern will improve safety will be an enhancement for all users of this stretch of Savannah Road.

The Byway Committee respectfully recommends Mayor and City Council consider:

- A requirement that the Historic Lewes Byway Committee be given the opportunity to review and comment on:
 - o Final site and landscape plans prior to approval.
 - o Preliminary architectural renderings upon receipt.
 - o Final architectural plans prior to approval.
 - o All signage visible from Savannah Road before approval and placement.

Once again the Byway Committee extends its sincere thanks to Brian Bassett, Cape Henlopen School District and Timothy Skibicki, Tetra Tech for their willingness to meet with representatives of our committee, and for their receptivity to our ideas and concerns. We look forward to working together as plans are finalized, and to celebrating a wonderful addition to the City of Lewes and the Historic Lewes Byway.

Sincerely,



Mary Roth
Historic Lewes Byway, Chair

cc: Lewes Planning Commission
Cape Henlopen School District, Brian Bassett