



December 29, 2022

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

Dear Mayor Williams and City Council,

As we learned at the public hearing, the existing First Baptist Church of Lewes is not handicap accessible. Making the church ADA compliant is a priority. The Historic Lewes Byway Committee fully supports this goal and offers our comments in the spirit of community, proposing improvements to the project that improve safety and enhance an important gateway area to the City of Lewes.

The Byway Committee extends its thanks to members of the City's Joint Site Development Committee for requiring a meeting of the applicant and us to review the landscape plan. Blaine Bonham, Chair of our Public Landscape Sub-Committee, had two telephone meetings with Sarah Matas of Beacon Engineering. Thank you to Beacon for incorporating some of our recommendations in the submitted design.

Our recommendation to improve the current landscape plan by softening the corner of Baybreeze Drive and Kings Highway, along with adding additional plantings, including faster growing trees to hide the harsh backside of the proposed building, unfortunately, were not met favorably by the engineer. An important objective of the Byway Committee as stated in its Kings Highway Master Plan is extending the fabric of the City of Lewes out towards Route 1, to try to prevent the chaos of Route 1 from moving in. The proposed design exposes the backside of the replacement church structure to travelers along Kings and Freeman Highways. Without significant landscaping enhancements the view is that of a commercial pre-engineered metal building. (Core Value: Lewes has a unique historical origin and strives to highlight its heritage through building design and architectural preservation)

During the public hearing, Mr. Palmer of Beacon Engineering stated that DelDOT had all but given the final approval to waive the applicants' responsibilities for the construction of pedestrian facilities. Whatever reason DelDOT may have for this decision, we request Mayor & Council to require sidewalks as a condition of this project. Kings Highway and Baybreeze Drive is a frequently traveled corridor by students from Cape Henlopen High School, in addition to students, others from the Baybreeze Community and Jefferson Apartments use the corridor to walk to nearby destinations. Everything should be done to ensure their health, welfare, and safety.

We hope you strongly consider our recommendation of enhancements to the submitted landscape plan, and conditions to require sidewalks.

Sincerely,

Historic Lewes Byway, Chair
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