



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Bel Air Planning Commission clarifies status of  
Homestead/Wakefield Elementary School expansion**

Yesterday evening at the Bel Air Armory, the Bel Air Planning Commission revisited a decision from April 7, 2022, regarding Homestead/Wakefield Elementary School (HWES) to address more clearly the conditions surrounding the proposed expansion. At the center of the school development is the Town requirement to connect East and West MacPhail Road. The Planning Commission set a special meeting in order to understand the needs of the Harford County Board of Education (BOE) regarding their schedule for the HWES expansion and explore a path where the connecting roadway can be incorporated into the proposed improvements.

As part of this effort, the case was reopened and comment was received by Town staff, BOE and the public. It is important that some facts be made clear as this project moves forward:

- At no time has the Town held up the HWES expansion. In fact, as of this date the Building Permit application has not been submitted to the Town by BOE.
- The need for the connector road between East and West MacPhail Roads has been included in the Comprehensive Plan for the Town for over 54 years and no objection has been voiced by the BOE during consideration of the various Comprehensive Plans. This includes the recent update completed in March of 2022.
- The existing entrance to HWES from S. Main Street is poor at best and does not provide for adequate access to the campus. The campus includes the existing Bel Air Middle School.
- After the events at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, the Town is most concerned about emergencies and how the project can improve access for first responders and provide a more direct connection to the hospital.

Based on the existing conditions and the need for the connector outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission considered the following clarifications to their original decision:

- The HWES building may proceed without the need for a dedicated public road right-of-way.
- The County, Town and BOE will work together to satisfy the Bel Air Comprehensive Plan requirement for a roadway connection in order to make the campus safer for students, staff and those who use the recreation fields during non-school hours. This effort will also address the wellbeing of Town residents east of the campus.

It is the desire of the Bel Air Planning Commission, the Town staff, and the Board of Town Commissioners that HWES be improved in a thoughtful manner and to incorporate a design that provides a safe school campus as well as benefit for the surrounding neighborhood.

After hearing from the Town staff, the Applicant (BOE) and the public on the HWES zoning case, the Planning Commission tabled the case to allow BOE time to review their plan and have discussions with the Town regarding a compromise to allow the project to continue with minimal or no delay.

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