



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Agreement Reached to Allow Construction to Begin on
Homestead-Wakefield Elementary School Redevelopment**

Town of Bel Air and Harford County Public Schools unite to move project forward

Harford County Public Schools and the Town of Bel Air have reached an agreement regarding an emergency access road through the Homestead-Wakefield Elementary School campus, an agreement that allows construction to proceed on the long-awaited redevelopment project.

After a delay of more than a year due to differing visions of use of the site, an agreement was reached on July 20, 2023, resulting in disposal of the legal actions by Judge Paul W. Ishak on July 26, 2023.

As a condition of site plan approval, Town officials requested, in April of 2022, that Harford County Public Schools construct a connection between East and West MacPhail Roads through the Homestead-Wakefield campus. The Town asserted that a connector was part of its comprehensive plan, and the Board of Education of Harford County declined the request out of concern for student and staff safety, and because the entire property is needed for educational purposes.

In a testament to both Harford County Public Schools' and the Town of Bel Air's desire to move forward with this important project, while ensuring the safety of students and the surrounding community, both sides have agreed to a compromise.

"Reaching this settlement truly was a collaborative accomplishment," said HCPS Superintendent Dr. Sean Bulson. "It is a testament to our shared commitment to providing our students with the finest education possible, while providing a safe and nurturing educational environment. I look forward to the day the students of Homestead-Wakefield Elementary School will get to enjoy their new school!"

Under the terms of the agreement, an access road, restricted to the use of emergency vehicles only, will be constructed on the campus. Access will be limited by an electronic gate. This agreement allows the campus to remain safe and secure, while ensuring first responders have a clear access route during emergencies.

"We are excited for our community that the new Homestead-Wakefield project is moving forward, and our children will have the school that they so abundantly deserve," Kevin Bianca, Chairman of the Board of Town Commissioners, said.

"Homestead-Wakefield has been a part of our community for decades, serving generations of students," Bianca continued. "This emergency access road will serve Bel Air, too, by ensuring the safety of not only our children, but the entire community, for the generations to come. We are thankful to the Board of Education of Harford County for taking these steps to ensure a safe environment for all."

"I am delighted we were able to reach a settlement with the Town of Bel Air," said Board of Education President Dr. Aaron Poynton. "This agreement takes the concerns of all involved parties into account, while ensuring the safety of the students, staff, and surrounding community. After having so many Homestead-Wakefield Elementary School students learning in portable pods, I look forward to when we will be able to welcome students into the new building!"

The Town of Bel Air has issued all the necessary permits to begin construction, and the new building is expected to be completed for the start of the 2025-2026 school year.

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