



# REHOBOTH BEACH HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION

February 28, 2024

To: City of Rehoboth Beach Board of Commissioners  
Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC)

**Subject: Deauville Beach Lease Negotiations**

Dear Mayor and Commissioners and DNREC Administrators,

The Rehoboth Beach Homeowners' Association Board (RBHA) has been following the discussions regarding the lease at Deauville Beach and we are very concerned by the decision by DNREC to walk away from the lease agreement that has been in effect since the mid-70s. By walking away from this lease and insisting on a new lease that would cost the City considerably more than the existing lease, DNREC decided that the concerns of residents and homeowners of Rehoboth were not a consideration.

It is our understanding that there were multiple meetings between DNREC representatives and Acting City Manager Evan Miller which began in March 2023. In these meetings DNREC proposed a new three-year lease which would charge the City approximately \$10,000 to \$12,000 annually through an annual fee of 10% of all daily parking and annual pass revenue sold at Deauville Beach. Mr. Miller provided the Board of Commissioners with an estimate of \$150,000 in annual costs to the City for expenses including, but not limited to, lifeguards, parking enforcement, tennis court maintenance, and portable toilet rental fees. That cost estimate does not include expenses such as police support and the material and personnel expenses related to routine maintenance including trash pick-up and beach cleaning. It is important to note that any expenses not covered by the Deauville lot parking revenues were additional costs to the City budget.

The decision by DNREC and the City not to continue negotiations jeopardizes a key reason why our homeowners and visitors are coming to Rehoboth: our beautiful beaches. Deauville Beach is a community asset that should not have been taken out of City control. The agreement to turn control of the beach over to the State was made without public input or transparency, during the dead of winter when residents and homeowners are likely not following City activities.

**RBHA strongly urges DNREC and the City of Rehoboth Beach to return to lease negotiations.** We fervently hope a solution will be found to continue Deauville Beach under City management, or, at the very least, for DNREC to agree to continue the existing maintenance of the beach and continue to enforce the City's laws and regulations. If no new lease can be successfully negotiated in time for the summer season, we would like to understand the plan for making this a smooth transition and how these essential decisions will be made. We also want to know how our members can provide input throughout the process. There are many important unanswered questions which must be discussed and resolved before the start of summer.

These include:

- How will the parking and beach fees be established? Will Deauville Beach be a part of the state park system and will state park passes be valid at the parking lot and beach?
- Will beachgoers be able to access the beach from the walkway entrances on Surf Avenue?
- Who will manage trash and beach clean-up? Will this be done on a daily basis?
- Will lifeguards be available on busy September weekends?
- Who will be in charge of policing the beach and enforcing Rehoboth's city ordinances at the beach or will DNREC ordinances supersede those of the city?
- Will dogs be allowed on the beach?
- Will surf fishing be allowed on the beach?
- Will large tents and canopies be allowed on the beach?
- How will loud noise be enforced?
- Will beachgoers be able to continue to enjoy the amenities at Deauville Beach including the tennis courts, concession stand and portable toilets?
- Will umbrellas and chairs be made available on the beach as beachgoers have enjoyed this amenity and opportunity to rent umbrellas and chairs as needed?
- Will bonfires now be allowed? If so, how will they be managed to ensure the beach remains clean?

We are sure there are many more questions and details to work out. RBHA wishes to be a constructive part of the process so residents and homeowners have a voice in determining the fate of this valuable resource that means so much to all of us who have made Rehoboth Beach our home.

Respectfully,



Pam Baker  
President, RBHA

CC: Evan Miller, Acting City Manager, City of Rehoboth Beach