

September 16, 2026

To the Mayor and Members of the Lewes City Council:

For far too long, City staff have repeatedly expressed concerns regarding the negative, hostile, and increasingly toxic work environment fostered under the leadership of the City Manager and Deputy City Manager. Those concerns have been raised through appropriate channels on numerous occasions with little to no meaningful response or corrective action. And now after the release of multiple investigations and reports, the "letters to the editor" in the Cape Gazette, the threatening statements made to the press, the unsubstantiated allegations against the Deputy Mayor, and the repeated delay of investigations being released, we the City Staff wish to be heard.

The open letter submitted by an employee in May only scratched the surface of the culture that we experience daily. The reality inside City Hall is one in which employees consistently feel undervalued, disrespected, and unheard. We perceive the workplace as one where intimidation, hostility, favoritism, and retaliation have replaced professionalism, collaboration, and trust. We have attempted to raise legitimate concerns directly with the City Manager/ Deputy City Manager and they have frequently redirected and placed the blame on the Mayor and City Council rather than acknowledging and addressing the concerns. As a result, many employees have chosen silence over speaking up. We fear retaliation and believe the current processes would ultimately not protect us. Unfortunately, we believe that the system intended to safeguard us has failed.

Employees have repeatedly been instructed not to speak publicly about internal issues out of concern for embarrassing the City. Yet when the City Manager, Deputy City Manager and another employee publicly communicated with the press, Management's response was inconsistent. When questioned about this obvious disparity, no satisfactory explanation was provided. We have concluded that the communication was tolerated because it reinforced the narrative advanced by the City Manager rather than because consistent standards were being applied. Our concerns extend beyond inconsistent leadership by the City Manager and Deputy City Manager. We have observed a pattern of avoiding difficult conversations, failing to address employee concerns, providing inaccurate or misleading information to

staff, and repeatedly shifting responsibility for internal dysfunction onto others. While disagreements among elected officials do contribute to challenges facing the City, they do not excuse ineffective leadership or the failure to manage the organization with honesty, accountability, and transparency. Now, deception has been added to our list of concerns. Not only by the City Manager but by the Deputy City Manager who intentionally refused to be a part of an investigation.

The City Manager's alignment with certain members of council whose conduct has significantly eroded employee trust has further damaged confidence in the City Manager and Deputy City Manager. Employees are left questioning whether decisions are being made in the best interests of the City or to protect particular individuals or agendas. The recently released reports have proven evidence of this alignment. One of those independent investigations clearly unveiled the corruption and dishonesty of City Leadership.

Those of us who work within City Hall witness the day-to-day realities that the public does not see. We know the circumstances and truths surrounding many of the issues currently being discussed publicly. We have attempted to voice our concerns internally to the City Manager on our own and through the proper channels with Human Resources and have repeatedly felt ignored, dismissed, or discouraged from speaking openly. Attempts by the City Manager and Deputy to portray other departments or other employees as the source of the City's problems have only deepened division and mistrust. Rather than fostering collaboration and accountability, they have further eroded morale and trust throughout City government.

Leadership requires integrity, transparency, accountability, consistency, professionalism, and the ability to maintain trust throughout an organization, particularly during difficult circumstances. A true leader has the ability to unite an organization during difficult times. It is clear to City employees that the City Manager and Deputy do not possess those qualities. We have no confidence in the current leadership of City Management.

Accordingly, we respectfully but unequivocally express our no confidence in the City Manager's leadership. We believe that, for the benefit of City employees, the governing body, and the citizens of Lewes, new leadership is necessary to restore trust, rebuild morale, and move the City forward. It is our belief that the City Manager and Deputy City Manager should resign or be removed from their position so that the City of Lewes can begin

the process of restoring confidence in our administration and rebuild a workplace founded on professionalism, respect, accountability, trust and integrity; the core principles and values of our organization.

We are not requesting a temporary adjustment in management style. It is not a request for additional employee training, coaching, mediation, counseling, team-building, or a performance-improvement program. We do not believe that additional training or similar measures would resolve these concerns. We know that we need new leadership and rebuilding trust going forward. We are requesting a search for new and appropriate leadership. In fact, we are asking that a temporary leader is sought after and that Council searches for a permanent replacement. Without change, our workforce will suffer, employee turnover will remain high and hiring new talent will be impossible. We can assure you that if City Management is kept intact, you will likely lose the majority of the staff currently employed within City Hall as most of us are already seeking other employment.

We, the staff members submitting this letter, have made it clear that we have genuine concerns about potential retaliation from the City Manager and her Deputy as a result of raising these concerns and participating in the submission of this letter. These concerns have been communicated to Human Resources as well as to the three independent firms conducting investigations.

While each of these firms have reinforced that retaliation will not be tolerated, recent comments by a member of City Council have further heightened our concerns about whether employees can participate in these processes without fear of reprisal. For that reason, we have chosen not to identify ourselves or individually sign this letter. Our decision to remain anonymous is not a reflection of a lack of conviction in the concerns we are expressing. Rather, it is a direct reflection of the level of apprehension among staff regarding potential retaliation or other consequences for speaking openly about these matters. The fact that employees feel compelled to remain anonymous in order to safely express legitimate workplace concerns should itself be a matter of serious concern to the governing body.

The leading example of this fear was stated following an executive session and during the public vote on August 5, 2026. Councilperson Joe Elder stated, "Everyone responsible for being a part of the investigation needs to be held accountable. They made a personal decision to be involved and they need to be accountable." Then almost 2 weeks later on August 17, 2026 he

told the Cape Gazette "Anyone taking part in something like this should be held accountable by making their names public. They should not be allowed to hide". We find his statements deeply concerning. Employees who cooperate with an investigation are not making a personal decision to create conflict or undermine the City; they are participating in a process intended to address serious concerns and ensure appropriate accountability within the organization. Suggesting that employees who participate in an investigation should themselves be "held accountable" creates an understandable perception of intimidation and retaliation, particularly when the investigation involves the City Manager and a member of City Council. Prior to the release of the report, we questioned if we had done something to prompt this comment. Since the public release of the report, we know who needs to be held accountable. The facts and communications documented in the report have raised serious questions among employees regarding decision-making, communication, accountability, and the relationships between City management and elected officials. Regardless of the motivations of any individual involved, the circumstances have significantly damaged employee confidence in City leadership.

We believe elected officials have a responsibility to protect and support the employees who serve the Lewes community every day. Employees should not have to choose between reporting legitimate concerns and protecting their livelihoods. They should be able to participate honestly and appropriately in authorized investigations without fear of retaliation, intimidation, or professional consequences. The governing body should foster an environment in which employees feel safe to speak openly and participate in legitimate investigative processes. The fact that staff members are unwilling to attach their names to this letter because they fear retaliation demonstrates the seriousness of the environment in which these concerns are being raised. We respectfully request that Council take these concerns seriously and reaffirm its commitment to protecting employees who participate in legitimate investigative processes. Accountability should apply equally at every level of the organization.

It should be clearly understood that this letter was not written by any one individual. It represents a collaborative effort involving managers and support staff alike, with all participating individuals contributing to the discussion and content. No single person should be considered solely responsible for the letter or its contents. The decision to submit the letter collectively is

intended to ensure that the concerns expressed are evaluated on their substance and merit, rather than on the identity of any particular individual who participated in bringing them forward.