

1.9 Facilities

14 *Del. C. § 512(8) and (12)*

1. **Discuss the school's facility needs based on the educational program and projected enrollment. Discuss both short-term and long-term facility plans. Demonstrate that the estimate included in your budget is reasonable.**

At the time of this application, the board of the Sussex Montessori School (SMS) is assessing appropriate sites for the location of the school. Health and safety considerations, along with school size facility calculations for 455 students, are being incorporated into the search. The specifications used to evaluate appropriate sites include:

- Sites that support the Montessori philosophy that learning extends beyond the school community, incorporates natural environments, and supports interactions with the community including intergenerational and service opportunities.
- Classrooms that accommodate the activity of a Montessori Environment with square footage of approximately 1000 square feet.
- Space to bring the school community together for school wide events and programs.
- 15000 square feet under roof for the first year of the elementary school, with an additional 7,500 square feet in Year 2;
- Subsequent expansion for up to 455 students by year 4;
- Adequate parking and travel space (based on Sussex County Zoning Code) to accommodate student drop-off and pick-up logistics as well as faculty, staff, student and parent parking.
- Access from major arterial roadways to facilitate student transportation and safety.
- The improvement needs of the final facility, the ability to engineer health, fire, and safety systems per state, county, and city codes, as well as to implement storm water management upgrades and modern environmental building systems to create a low-energy-consuming and highly sustainable complex for the future.

During the planning phase for any of the three sites being considered, the board will work with a local architect to prepare preliminary designs for the following:

- 10 classrooms (1000 square feet each)
- Multipurpose spaces to accommodate art/music, library, other large assemblies, and possibly cafeteria space.
- 5-6 offices
- 1 reception area with secure access to classrooms

2. **If the applicants have identified a facility, state where the school will be located (including county location and any other location specifics) and, as Attachment 18, provide floor plans of the school that identifies each room and whether the building will be new construction or an existing building. Include a detailed description of the facility that includes the number of acres.**

It is anticipated that Sussex Montessori School will be located in the corridor between Georgetown and Seaford and will be acquired through lease or purchase once the school charter has been approved. The board has identified three locations in Sussex County which have sufficient geographic representation and available space and land (see 2b below). The Board has not entered into a contract with a site and will not do so until the charter application is approved.

- a. **If the site has been identified, list the detailed terms and/or conditions for the use of the facility. If not, describe the plans to identify a suitable facility.**

Montessori Works has secured funding from the Longwood Foundation (letter in attachments) to engage Mark Chura with Horizon Philanthropic in Sussex County to identify sites, assist in securing financing for the site, and to manage any renovations or construction needed for a site. This work began as of December 2017 and will continue during the charter application review process in the winter/spring of 2018. It is anticipated that upon approval of the charter for Sussex Montessori School, site number 1 below will be ready to have a contract for lease. If this site does not materialize, then the details to acquire site number 2 will be completed by July 2018. Finally, conversations and a letter of interest have been obtained for site 3 which could be a temporary site for the school for the first 3 years of operation.

If none of the above sites materialize, SMS will continue to work with Mr. Chura to identify a facility prior to January 1, 2019 and will ensure that the facility is in full compliance with all applicable codes and regulations prior to the opening of the school. Construction on the facility will be completed no later than late spring of 2019 so that a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) can be obtained by the deadline of June 15, 2019 in accordance with Delaware charter school law.

SMS understands that it would need to apply for an extension to the charter application by December, 2018 if a site is not secured to open in fall 2019. However, we expect that one of the three sites we have identified will become the site for the school.

- b. **If a facility has not been identified, specify potential locations that are under consideration, and discuss the process and timeline for selecting, acquiring, renovating (if appropriate), and taking occupancy of a suitable facility.**

- 1) **Site 1:**

This is the preferred site for the school. It is located on a publicly managed 750-acre campus roughly halfway between Georgetown and Millsboro just off Route 113. The location is close to Sussex Central High School, a day care facility and other buildings serving public needs. The campus is well maintained, with the central area containing structures surrounded by mature woods. All utilities are present, with electrical service provided underground. The existing road network provides easy access to the site. The campus also includes a 307 acres nature preserve. The site has a long history of public use, dating back to 1921. A recent master planning effort established strong community support for adaptive reuse of unused structures consistent with past public use of the site, and better utilization of the recreational assets within the campus.

Site number 1 consists of a 30,000-square foot complex of four single story brick buildings built in the 1960’s. It has been vacated now for several years. A central building of approximately 7500 square feet was constructed with a large cafeteria and central gathering space at its center, and offices ringing the perimeter. An additional three 7500 square foot buildings surround the central building. Each building is easily readapted for five classrooms and associated support facilities. A footprint remains a fifth 7500 square foot building that was part of the original complex but demolished a few years back.

The central building is in excellent condition and will require modest modifications to meet the needs of the new school. The remaining buildings are all structurally sound, but floor plans will need to be reconfigured and updated to meet required classroom needs. These buildings are currently being remediated for asbestos by the State.

All buildings are within close proximity of each other, ADA accessible and connected with a series of concrete sidewalks. The complex is approximately 20 acres surrounded by a road network providing easy building access and appropriate drop off space for buses. Existing electric, water and sewer at the complex appear adequate to meet future school needs.

The Site includes an adjacent building that originally served the complex as a gymnasium, and provided additional classroom space. The building was completely renovated within the last five years. This building is managed by the State, and could potentially be used in partnership with the new school to provide indoor recreation space and classroom capacity in its early years.

Funds secured from the Longwood Foundation will support site improvements (letter in attachments).

The timeline for securing this site is illustrated in the table below:

Engage in negotiations on school site #1 while charter approval process is happening	December 2017 – June 2018
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Cost estimates for major items for repurposing site completed	March 2018
Develop details and conditions of a 30-year lease with options on site number 1	Spring 2018
Sign lease for preferred site	June 2018
Begin repurposing construction work	June 2018 – June 2019
Occupy site	June 2019

Site 2:

Site 2 is non-developed land centrally located in Georgetown, close to the existing DTCC campus. Travel there would be easy for buses and students as roads are already in place to accommodate them. In addition, water and sewer connections exist close by allowing for us to potentially tap into those services at a relatively low cost. Additional unimproved acreage surrounds the property and would allow for future expansion if still available at a later date. This property provides an opportunity to create gardens and a campus in a natural setting, which is ideal for a Montessori school. Training and development for teachers would easily be facilitated through DTCC campus (with their permission) which offers existing resources in close proximity and already in place. We also feel this location benefits those students on the western side of the county (a target audience) as it is between routes 113 and 13.

The school would purchase approximately 15 acres of land. SMS would begin with modular units on this site adding units as the school expands. The school would begin a capital campaign for permanent construction after it is fully enrolled in year 3. Modular units would be purchased through financing. Funds secured from the Longwood Foundation will support site improvements, water/sewer and installation costs (letter in attachments).

The timeline for securing this site is illustrated in the table below:

Engage in negotiations on Site #2 if site #1 is not an option	January – June 2018
Parcels of land identified as back-up sites will be explored for regulatory requirements, construction costs, etc.	January – March 2018
Negotiations for property	May 2018
Settlement on property	July 2018
Completion of modular and occupancy	July 2019

Site 3:

This site is located further north in Sussex County but is still accessible to county residents. It is a repurposing of a facility that is part of a larger group of buildings being developed by Nationwide Health Care Services. This 22 acre site is being repurposed as an innovative, health-focused multi-use community. The available building has been targeted for educational purposes. While this building does not allow for anticipated expansion of the school, it is a solid site for the first years of the school should either of the sites above not

materialize. Conversations have been held with the representatives of Nationwide Healthcare Services and Sussex Montessori School has obtained a letter of interest from them to engage in discussions for a lease agreement. It is anticipated that negotiations for this site would begin if the other sites do not become viable options; May/June 2018.

c. Explain how the facility will meet the needs of students. Provide an assurance that it will be accessible to students with physical disabilities.

SMS seeks to enroll a diverse student body including students with physical disabilities. Prior to construction, the board, in conjunction with their construction management firm, will ensure the facility is compliant with the most up-to-date ADA regulations.

d. To the extent that the Applicant has discussed or established specific lease or purchase terms, include the proposed terms and any draft agreements. Ensure that all costs are included in the budget.

As a working estimate for occupancy costs, the school has budgeted \$850,000 for down payments, site preparation, and permitting. The overall cost for the preferred site number 1 is expected to be \$2,362,500 for three 7,500 square foot facilities at \$105 per square foot. SMS has not engaged in any specific lease agreements or purchase terms and will wait until the charter is approved to do so. However, the foundation has been established to ensure adequate funding for any of the sites in consideration.

- Sussex Montessori School has secured a letter of support from the Longwood Foundation committing to funding of \$350,000 at the time of charter approval, in support of request for \$500,000 in the spring of 2018. In addition, the Longwood Foundation is willing to consider a request in the spring of 2020. (Letter in attachments)
- The school has engaged in discussion with NCALL to provide financing for the school and to work with SMS to secure a USDA grant if appropriate. (Letter of Interest in attachments)
- Finally, SMS will partner with Horizon Philanthropic to secure funding from the local Sussex community. Horizon has a successful reputation for supporting non-profit efforts in Sussex County. Development of this campaign will begin in January 2018 with funding secured from the Longwood Foundation by Montessori Works for the gap until the charter is approved. (Letter in attachments)