

Countdown to 375th birthday

By Henry J. Evans Jr.
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About three weeks remain until the start of making new history in Lewes as the city hustles and bustles to prepare for its 375th anniversary celebration.

"Things are going very well," said Mike DiPaolo, chairman of the Lewes and Delaware 375th Anniversary Commission.

DiPaolo said the commission has been working with Delaware General Assembly staff to make sure everything is in place for the Friday, April 21, first meeting of the body in Lewes since 1781.

A 10 a.m., a motorcade with police escorts will take dignitaries to Saint Peter's Episcopal Church where the general assembly will hold a ceremonial session.

With Second Street undergoing major construction, DiPaolo said planners designated an alternate pedestrian route to the church.

"There's a very nice brick pathway from Mulberry Street between the Ryves Holt House and Saint Peter's Center. We're going to be utilizing that for access to the church," DiPaolo said.

Mayor Jim Ford said the city wants to keep the Second Street project on schedule for late May completion as much as possible. But, Ford said, the city has decided that April 21 would be a day without construction.

"We really don't anticipate much inconvenience with the celebration activities there," Ford said.

He said a base-coat of asphalt material has been applied to the street so that dust shouldn't be a problem.

"It's not the ideal situation we

would like to have, but we're going to be able to be accommodating," Ford said.

DiPaolo said Lewes is ready to open its doors to host visitors from the Netherlands and from Lewes, England, who are coming to join the celebration.

"The second in command of the Dutch Embassy in Washington, D.C., Wim Geerts, will also be visiting us," said DiPaolo.

On Saturday, April 22, a birthday party for the city is planned at the Cape May-Lewes Ferry terminal. The free event will feature food, live music, official event merchandise and tours of the sailing ship Kalmar Nyckel.

"We're very excited about where we are at this point. We can't believe its only three weeks away," said DiPaolo.

With warmer than expected weather, some of the hundreds of tulips planted last fall by Lewes in Bloom for the event have started showing signs of life.

"They're a little early but that's one thing that is definitely out of our hands. Maybe the weather will cool just enough to slow them down," said DiPaolo.

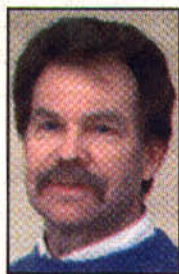
Young tulip shoots, some with blooms, can be seen around town and especially at the DeVries Monument on Pilottown Road, which will be the site of a rededication ceremony of the first Dutch settlement on Delaware soil known as Swanendael.

"If it stays warm and dry, they'll bloom early and they won't last as long," says Brenda Brady of Lewes In Bloom.

DiPaolo said he hopes the dry weather trend either continues or April's showers come early in the month rather than later.

"It's not going to rain. It's not

going to rain. We're pretty hopeful that it's going to be a beautiful weekend for Lewes," said DiPaolo.



FORD



DIPAULO