

**UUSP Town Hall 6/25/17**  
**Questions and answers about the WJA parking lot offer**  
**32 people present**

**How many more parking spaces could we get if we reconfigured the parking lot including lot 1?**

If we reconfigured our parking lot to include parcel 1, we might have a few more spaces. However the trees and bushes on parcel 1 now are because of the requirement to have a visual buffer between the sidewalk and parking lot. We don't actually need additional parking spaces on weekends and evenings because we already have about 150 spaces, most donated by our neighbors, which some of us use. During weekday working hours, UUSP currently uses 8-12 spaces, but only on Tuesdays and Wednesdays when we have events. In the future, according to experts, less parking will be needed, not more, because of self-driving cars and services like Uber.

**Would the number of spots on lots 2 and 3 including handicapped be the same as we have now?**

Yes. Handicapped parking is included in the 35 spaces.

**Can we continue to park in non-designated parking areas such as the driveway?**

Yes, as long as we own parcel 1. A few cars use the driveway from the alley inside parcel 1, although it is not designated parking. If we sell parcel 1, we'll no longer own that driveway.

**Are there different zoning regulations and setbacks for parking lots vs buildings?**

No setbacks are required if WJA buys parcel 1. City zoning requires no parking spaces for commercial shops less than 1500 square feet. WJA do not plan to have a coffee shop or other commercial business over 1500 square feet. City zoning requires one parking space per living unit, so if WJA builds up to 6 apartments, they've already planned for 6 additional parking spaces on their own parcel 1. High rise apartments/condos are not possible on parcel 1 because there is not enough space to accommodate the parking requirements.

**Do we have to sell? -- property value may increase over time.**

No, we do not have to sell. The property value will probably increase over time – but the likelihood that we will ever receive such a good offer for this subsection of our property is very low. It's highly unlikely that another buyer in the future would offer free paving, landscaping, lighting and environmental compliance on lot's 2 and 3, worth \$180,000. It is also highly uncertain that an increase in the absolute dollar value of the property would be reflected in the relative value that might accrue to UUSP in making a good decision now.

**Will we lose a good neighbor if we do not sell?**

WJA has been a good neighbor for 19 years, and has donated considerable pro bono time to local charities and non-profits: CASA, WMCA, Women's Free Clinic, Habitat for Humanity, The Heat Gallery, Academy Prep, Happy Workers, and UUSP. They are active members of the St Pete Preservation Society and want to improve our neighborhood.

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WJA has done pro bono work for UUSP several times in the past, including last month, when Jim Fitzgerald from Buildings and Grounds asked them to make recommendations for improved lighting in our sanctuary. Jason Jensen inspected the sanctuary and gave us twelve detailed recommendations for improving light.

**Can we envision a need to develop the parking lot for our own needs? – Other areas of our property could also be further developed -- Little House, rear courtyard handicapped entrance, covered inner courtyard, roof top added floors or garden.**

We've had many ideas and options for alternate uses of the parking lot, all of which are good. They would all reduce our parking spaces and require UUSP funds to pay for any development.

**Will a coffee shop (or other business, like a law office) require more parking?**

Yes, but since it would be small (under 1,500 sq. feet) only a few parking spaces would be needed. There would be some walk-in traffic. The street parking and shared UUSP parking should accommodate this.

**Will development of lot 1 add to the safety and enjoyment of the neighborhood?**

Yes. Dark empty lots are known to increase risk, as well as the sense of risk, of walkers and shoppers, especially at night. Where street frontage is occupied by buildings – whether business or residential – there is more activity and eyes on the street life, creating a neighborhood feeling of presence and safety.

**Does our lawyer agree with shared parking arrangements?**

Yes, he agrees that shared parking would work and would give ample parking to UUSP, including weekday work hours, which is the only time we would share. Weekends and evenings are all UUSP parking.

**Can we negotiate a lease agreement with WJA so that parking rights do not pass if WJA sells in the future?**

Great suggestion. I will ask both WJA and our attorney.

**Can we be assured that a high rise will not be built on the property? What about air rights?**

According to City zoning, a high rise is not possible because there is not enough space to meet parking requirements. For example, a building with 20 units in 5 stories would need 20 more parking spaces. Parcel 1 does not have room for 20 spaces or a parking ramp to a parking garage. In addition, WJA does not want a high rise because, as active members of the St Pete Preservation Society, it wouldn't fit into the neighborhood architecture.

Regarding air rights, great question, and I will check with WJA and our attorney.

**Has this process been open enough? Who has been doing the negotiating?**

Yes, the process has been very open. At the October 8 Town Hall Meeting, the congregation gave the Board the task of further investigating the facts and returning a recommendation on how to proceed. Since then there has been three additional Town Hall Meetings and three Discussion roundtables. All of these meetings

have been documented and the proceedings published on InfoNet and in website documents.

Board members have been openly invited and have participated in many meetings with our attorney and with WJA. As many as six UUSP participants (Board, Minister, Endowment) have joined the meetings, but fewer have joined as time went on. Results of all meetings have been sent to all members via InfoNet and announcements on Sundays, and published in documents on our website. The concerns brought up by UUSP members have all been sent to WJA, to which they've responded with better offers.

**Can we do more to pull in involvement of snowbirds through email and other methods of outreach?**

Yes. An InfoNet note has been sent to all members, including snowbirds, with updated information and a request for their questions, comments, and feedback. A new Google Group for questions, comments and responses has already been set up on the Internet with instructions on how to use this. In addition, members everywhere can send questions and comments via our UUSPete website to anyone on the Board, and get a reply. We estimate that there are 8 snowbirds out of town and 6 local members on vacation.

**Must we change our bylaws in order to have full participation?**

Yes. Full participation is our preference, but we probably cannot change our bylaws in time to meet the timeframe within which WJA needs an answer because the bylaws require a quorum of 50% of membership to amend the bylaws. This has proved a problem even at peak season. Perhaps at peak season, in January or February, we will be able to amend the bylaws to allow an inclusive process that takes advantage of modern technology and allows for confidential voting. At present we have set up an Internet discussion forum for everyone to join the discussion. In addition, emails will be sent directly to snowbirds and those on vacation to keep them involved.

Before the time when we can amend the bylaws, we had hoped for full participation for voting by using technology like using GoToMeeting and Skype in order to fulfill the requirement for a "voice vote" and being "present." Our attorney's opinion is that the bylaws do not specifically state we can do this.

**Are we getting a fair price for property or should we ask for more?**

Our official appraisal, done by Scott Seamen, gives a value of \$690,000 for all three parcels, and a separate appraisal of \$240,000 for parcel 1 frontage property as the highest and best price. You can read the complete appraisal, with measurements and comps, in the appraisal documents on our website. WJA has offered the full \$240,000 at highest and best for parcel 1.

**If paving exceeds the \$180,000 estimate, will WJA cover the increase in its entirety?**

Yes, paving, lighting, environmental compliance, and landscaping for parcels 2 & 3 will all be entirely paid by WJA, who do this all the time as architects. The \$180,000 valuation for this work is an estimate by WJA, which has been confirmed by two other contractors.

**Will a sale affect the value of our church?**

Yes. A newly paved, lighted, landscaped, and environmentally compliant parking lot, which also is in compliance with a City requirement to pave by the end of 2017, will increase the value.

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### **What about liability issues in an unpaved, unlighted parking lot?**

UUSP is liable for injury and incidents in our parking lot. We have property insurance but it's difficult to assess if it's enough for a large lawsuit. We have had a number of falls in the parking lot over the years. Given that we are under a City requirement to pave the lot, if a serious injury were to result from a fall, a lawsuit could put us in serious financial trouble.

### **Are we welcoming to visitors and children with disabilities?**

Yes and no. In our Sanctuary, Gilmour and Conway first floor, we have facilities that accommodate people with disabilities. But for mobility disabled children who want to attend RE, we do not have an elevator to Conway's second floor where RE classes and functions are held. We are not a welcoming church for mobility-challenged adults and children until we have an elevator.

### **Do we need an elevator for handicapped access and a safe fire exit from upstairs RE in Conway?**

Yes. This is an ongoing need that has not been addressed and disqualifies UUSP as welcoming to children and adults with mobility disabilities. A fire escape has long been needed for basic safety but has never been addressed.

### **Should we consider tithing from our annual budget to build endowment to cover unforeseen needs?**

This might be a good idea. However tithing would subtract funds from all other functions in order to add funds for unforeseen needs. Our endowment is currently at about \$285,000. This is enough to cover almost any emergency need except for injury due to negligence regarding our parking lot (we'll need to confirm this with our lawyer).

### **Are we selling just for the money or are we selling out of fear that WJA will move if we don't sell?**

I'm not aware of any fear of WJA moving and renting their building to the highest bidder. Our initial motivation for considering the sale of part of our property was to allow for infill development that would enhance the safety and appeal of our neighborhood, in keeping with contemporary urban redevelopment practice. We of course knew that the sale could be to our financial advantage for use on some of the many projects we have had in mind. That we might get our parking lot in compliance with the City's environmental and parking lot code requirements has turned out as an extra unforeseen benefit.

We're not selling just for money, but rather to have a safe, lighted parking lot and a much more attractive view of our church at no sacrifice of parking spaces. We're also selling to become a welcoming church to children and adults with disabilities, to enhance our mission of growth in our membership, to add to the endowment with needed funds for the future, and for both spiritual and intellectual growth, and community service. All of these aspirations require funding.

### **One vote either way will affect the final outcome, isn't it time to make a decision?**

In a democracy, one vote is sometimes the difference, and it can go either way. Our Bylaws require a quorum and a majority vote, which our attorney confirmed. Just as in political elections, every vote counts, as it did in Gore/Bush in Florida in 2000.