

Roundtable Discussion Notes from July 2, 2017 Parking Lot Purchase Offer

07/02/2017

Paul's roundtable notes:

One relatively new couple said they thought the new offer looked good, but they had some questions. They asked about the history of the parking lot offers, and how the congregation felt. Another person said that the first two offers from WJA were not popular, but the new offer looked much better. The couple also asked about the process of bringing this issue to a vote.

One member said she was against selling the parking lot before the Town Hall on June 25. However after the Town Hall and after talking with a couple other members, she's changed her mind and now supports the sale.

One person was pleased with how the parking lot issue has been handled, with 4 Town Hall meetings and a constant flow of announcements and updates. She felt that the newest offer was surprisingly good and wanted to know why WJA did it. Another person answered that our strategy of doing nothing in nearly a year seemed to force WJA into the last offer.

There was a long discussion on how to use the funds if we decided to sell. One person thought the funds should be put into the endowment and any uses of the funds should be carefully considered and put to a vote according to our bylaws. One member cautioned against discussing the use of these funds into before the vote would be premature and distract from the merits of the sell/don't sell discussion. Another person felt that some needs were so urgent, like a fire escape for Conway 2nd floor and an elevator for disabled children and adults, should be dealt with immediately. Another view was that the 3-year plan committee should analyze the use-of-funds options and present different scenarios to the congregation. One view was that the funds should be deposited into our bank account at first, then ask the congregation how much should go to the endowment and how much for specific projects.

One longtime member stopped by the roundtable briefly, just to say that she understand the issue from all the discussions and supported the sale, and although she didn't come to church regularly, she would come on July 30 for the vote.

Howard's Round Table Notes

I was not thrilled with the previous offers but this one seems great.

We shouldn't sell it. We can always raise money for special projects. (This was a comment by Dwight Lawton when he was donating their Kirby vacuum to the church. He did not stay for the round table.)

If we kept the parcel and pave the parking lot ourselves, that would drop our endowment from about \$240,000 to \$60,000 which would reduce our ability to address other needs, including emergencies.

We're not using the parcel nor do we have any plans to do so and we do need to pave the parking lot. Seems like the sale is a good way to go. However, if we do the sale, we want to do everything we can to protect ourselves against things like zoning changes that may adversely affect us like what if in the future WJA sells both parcels to someone who builds a high-rise there.

These notes are from Paul & Laurie's table:

One member said they used to be at a different UU church up north and they had a similar situation where they had an unpaved parking lot. Several members wanted to keep it natural and unpaved. The lot got paved. About a year or so later, they saw one of the members who did not want to pave the lot was now having to use a walker and was using it to navigate the paved parking lot.

Maybe we should we spell out some of the things we might do with the money while not committing to it yet. That might help people understanding why we are repositioning assets and why doing so would be in our best interest. Some thought this was a good idea while others thought it was not as it might be perceived as committing the funds without thorough discussion and the church has blown money in the past. Some of that money spent quickly in the past was to buy out a previous minister's contract and putting \$80,000 down on a minister's home and the minister left soon and the property had declined in value.

To not just survive but thrive, the church needs to grow in membership. We have about the same number of members as we had five years ago (120). During that period we dropped to almost half of that. A paved parking lot plus applying the proceeds to needed maintenance, upgrades and marketing would help us attract and retain new members while not tapping into our endowment fund.