

## **Board Straw Vote on WJA Offer and Reasons**

The Board has discussed the parking lot issue for the last 12 months. There have been three Town Hall meetings with the congregation, numerous roundtable discussions, and a number of ways to interact with members including a Google Discussion site which has over 60 posts, a Pros/Cons list agreed to by the entire board to summarize the main issues, Parking Lot Central every Sunday, a Straw Poll vote in process now, and a Skype session on August 20 for those members out-of-town who want to discuss and ask questions.

The BoT, which has been deeply involved in this issue, held a straw vote on Aug 10 about whether or not to accept the offer by WJA to buy parcel 1 of our parking lot for \$240,000 and fund the paving, environmental compliance, landscaping and lighting of parcels 2 & 3 worth \$180,000, which would remain UUSP property.

Since there are good reasons on both sides of the vote, board members wanted the congregation to know the reasons for each of their votes.

The vote tally was 4 yes, 1 no, 2 abstaining. Here are the votes and reasons, listed in the order received.

### **Linda Paul**

I plan to vote yes:

1. Our parking lot will be brought up to city code and will be safe AND not require UUSP to secure funding to accomplish this;
2. The sale of parcel 1 will provide needed income to UUSP and also help improve the streetscape near our building and Mirror Lake
3. This version of the proposal has taken into account the concerns and needs of UUSP.

### **Laurie Clement**

I will vote yes in favor of moving to negotiate the sale of Lot one of our parking lot to WJA for the following reasons.

The property purchased in 1997 for its designated use as a temporary grass parking lot has received a number of waivers but will be required to conform to city codes for parking lots by April 2019. The cost of bringing the lot up to code including paving, drainage, lighting and landscaping will cost an estimated \$180,000. The collaboration with our neighbor WJA will completely cover this cost as well as provide \$240,000 in needed reserves for the Church's maintenance and physical improvement while improving the safety and accessibility of the lot without losing the parking space for which it was originally purchased.

As a member of the Board of Trustees I recommend this sale of Lot 1 as a fiscally sound and socially responsible action which will benefit the Church, the congregation and the continuance of our mission.

### **Lori Price**

I would vote in favor of the accepting the proposal to sell Lot 1.

I believe it is the fiscally and morally responsible thing to do. It is a lot we use minimally and do not maintain. Under this proposal, we retain ownership of our parking lot, have it brought up to code, and realize a substantial financial gain that we can use to further our mission and care for our primary property. I don't think keeping this one lot presents any opportunities to further our mission.

We approached WJA to ask them for assistance on possibly developing our property (the 3 lots), and after considering the options for developing it ourselves, we decided that was not feasible, for various reasons. Selling Lot 1 will not change that. At that point, WJA offered to purchase it from us and develop it themselves. They have made us several different offers, each one trying to respond to concerns that the congregation or the board had. This current offer, I believe, responds well to nearly every objection or concern we have had. Because I don't subscribe to the belief that you should "never sell property," having sold several houses that I've owned, I believe that sometimes there are legitimate reasons to sell property. The real estate market goes up and down - I'm not a gambler - for instance, when we bought our current

house in St. Pete, we thought the market was near the bottom and we were getting a good deal. That's what all the research indicated. But in fact, the market continued to plunge and we ended up overpaying for it. So you really never know – the value of the lot could go up, but it could just as easily crash. We are a church, not real estate investors. I believe we should do what's best for our church in the here and now.

I have some specific reasons for thinking that:

- ☐ Bringing our lot up to code, after a lapse of 20 years, is a moral and ethical imperative to me. We should be setting the example, not resting on our "exception" of being a church "so the rules don't apply to us." I don't believe that conveys who we are or what we stand for.
- ☐ Making our lot safer and more attractive at no cost to us or our endowment. Having it lighted, with a smooth walking surface, clearly delineated parking spaces, perhaps landscaping we can reasonably maintain. This would also add to the overall aesthetics of our church and our streetface.
- ☐ Gaining income to pursue our mission and/or make needed improvements to our physical facilities. I agree we need to have a plan for what to do with the money, but I don't think we need to have a plan in place to proceed with the sell.
- ☐ Important to me as an urban planner is improving our neighborhood with an active building on the streetface of Mirror Lake rather than a hole in the streetface with an uncared for and unmaintained vegetated spot that hosts overnight camping like we have now.

Thanks for listening, and for caring enough to read this and engage in this important process.

## **Reggie Craig**

Thank you all for the opportunity to fully explain our positions/ concerns. I think this kind of transparency is of utmost importance moving forward.

I do not support the sale of lot #1 for the following reasons:

The proposed sale is not the result of our congregational visioning toward determining the future of our property,

This sale also restricts our ability to create our own vision of future uses and improvements on the remaining lots.

This lot is prime water view property, which is irreplaceable, and will continue to increase in value.

This sale would eliminate any consideration of future green space. Not allowing us to set an example in our city, by maintaining green environments.

We will have no control over what would be developed or who might own it in the future.

The terms of the Deed restrictions are not defined. With these deed restrictions existing into perpetuity, unless we try buy out of the agreement, if possible. This could be expensive, prohibitive or impossible

The shared parking opens possibility of parking disputes (as our real-estate attorney indicated as likely).

The value of the remaining land is reduced. The property would be sellable only as a parking lot with deed restrictions.

I'm concerned that this sale takes advantage of an oversight in our by-laws, allowing church property to be sold without requiring the more rigorous standard of a super-majority, for both quorum and majority vote, as well as not allowing absentee voting.

### **Paul Burnore**

I vote yes to accepting the offer from WJA to buy parcel 1 of our parking lot. My reasons are:

It is in the best long-term interest of our congregation. Without losing any parking spaces, we would have a safe parking lot, reduced liability, and the capability to better maintain our buildings and expand our programs.

It promotes our UUSP mission and covenant by allowing us to grow and reach out through our shared ministries.

It is fiscally the responsible thing to do. It helps to shore up our finances and endowment. Since we're required by the City to "pave" our parking lot by April 2, 2019, we would not have to run a capital campaign or reduce our endowment by \$180,000. Instead our endowment would grow.

It does not increase expenses. There are no taxes to pay on the cash from the sale, no increase in insurance premiums, reduced liability for injuries, and minimal maintenance costs.

It is environmentally responsible. Currently the unfiltered runoff from our parking lot flows into Mirror Lake. Instead we would have environmentally friendly and compliant drainage and filtering.

It reduces our liability. Our attorney's biggest concern is a lawsuit for an injury sustained in our parking lot while being out of compliance with City code.

It is ethically the responsible thing to do. We could provide a safer parking lot and have the funds for a fire escape for our kids who attend RE on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Conway. There would also be funds available for an elevator in Conway if we decide to be a mobility-impaired welcoming community.

It is our civic duty to comply with city code by April 2, 2019. UUSP has been given many extensions since 2001 to comply with City code, but have never acted on them. We've been informed that no further extensions will be given after April 2, 2019. If we don't comply we must cease to use the parking lot.

Because of setback requirements for other buyers than WJA, since they own the joining property, parcel 1 is smaller and less desirable on the open market and would be unlikely to bring an offer as good as we have.

It enhances our Mirror Lake neighborhood with responsible development, improvement in appearance, and a safer parking environment.

## **Morgan Gresham**

I remain undecided on the vote at this point.

I recognize the unique opportunity here. I do not know if we will find a more convenient way to pave our parking lot while also receiving a substantial profit for part of our land.

Although I strongly believe that we should improve our parking lot, I would rather see the congregation come together to do so while maintaining our control of the entire parcel of land. I believe that we have incredible potential for lake-view space (multi-use outdoor space for play, service, worship, and potentially rentals if we so chose to use it in that way). I am concerned that once we relinquish the lake-view parcel and commit to an exclusive parking lot use for the other parcels, then we lose that potential -- in perpetuity.

However, I also recognize that, to date, our congregation has been unable to raise the capital to improve the parking lot to appropriate standards on our own. I would like to believe that we would be able to do this without selling our property.