

Capital Campaign Planning Team

Document 6 – Reflections from the Congregation

On February 24, 2019, Town Hall Meetings were held after each service to learn about the processes involved in planning for and leading up to a Capital Campaign. Nearly 100 congregants attended the meetings. This document lists questions and/or comments made by attendees from each meeting and individual responses from the Capital Campaign Planning Team. Similar questions have been grouped together for easier identification.

The questions and comments presented below were recorded by members of the Capital Campaign Planning Team in the form of note-taking during the first meeting and through note-taking and listening to the recorded audio of the second meeting. Some of your concerns may not have been answered fully; please know we are working to get those answers and will publish them once we do.

The Capital Campaign Planning Team thanks everyone who attended and especially those who asked questions or spoke up with concerns: John Austin, Don Bancroft, Dave Bauer, Margalie Belizaire, Diana Bell, Shari Brennan, Dave Bue, Randy Burnham, Chuck Colletti, Martha Constable, Jon Gage, Monica Garrison, Dan Iacovella, Robert Laug, Carrie McEvoy, Diane Melish, Gian Morresi, Julyen Norman, Jean O'Dell, Susan Pugliese, Marilyn Reed, Connie Rockman, Roger Rowell, Scott Singer, Emily Staub, Ulla Surland, Ron Taylor, Tom Weil, and Rob Zuckerman.

If you would like to comment on or continue any of these conversations, please write to the Capital Campaign Planning Team at CC@uuwestport.org.

Town Hall #1:

Is the Meeting House included in this Capital Campaign?

No, we are focusing on the main building this time.

Is this building designated as a Landmark?

The building is part of the Westport Historic Registry, but it is not on the Connecticut State or national registry of landmarks.

Is it possible that the determination of cost could change over time? For example, as we start fixing the roof, there could be more issues than we originally planned for. Before the vote will we have a realistic idea of the full cost of the project?

It is certainly possible that we will uncover unforeseen issues. However the architectural team will be doing a full engineering assessment of the project prior to a congregational vote about what work will actually be done. Our goal is to have no surprises.

Are Endowment funds available? How so?

The Endowment committee is excited about the Capital Campaign and is in discussion with Rev. John and the Board to determine how it can support fund raising while staying true to the mission of the Endowment.

I'm wondering if there will be "add alternates" in the bid, for solar tiles or geothermal considerations – anything to get us to Green.

Since we are just starting, it is a bit early to start planning bid alternates. The architectural firm Goody Clancy can incorporate this type of bid strategy in their final documentation.

Will there be phases to the plan?

Most likely, yes. Goody Clancy has already discussed the possibility of planning the work in phases to accommodate our fund raising.

How can the kids get involved? My son would love to help unplug the drain (under the walk from the lower level to the parking lot.)

We would love your help planning events where the youth can be involved with this project. We can talk further about this after the vote on May 5th.

We should consider a split system for heating and cooling; the new models are not so intrusive.

The mechanical engineer, Landmark Facilities Group, has already suggested considering the use of a VRFs and other split system technology to provide cooling and reduce consumption costs.

The glass in the sanctuary should be kept as it is from a design perspective but be more energy efficient. However, in other places in the building we may want to use other materials which could give us quite a bit of savings, be more energy efficient and also provide an element of safety.

We will pass these ideas along to Goody Clancy and keep everyone posted on the options they are considering for this big part of the project.

I have been doing research on commercial window film for my own house because of its thermal properties, and feel that we should consider this an option.

We will pass these ideas along to Goody Clancy and keep everyone posted.

What are the plans for keeping the church running during renovations?

When we reach the point of planning for construction work, this is something we'll have to work out with the construction manager with Goody Clancy's help.

All questions and answers should be posted.

We agree!

Are absentee ballots allowed at the May 5th vote?

No, and no proxy votes will be allowed either.

Town Hall #2:

How green and energy efficient can we make the building? We should walk away with a green building.

This is a recurring theme of concern for many in the congregation, and Goody Clancy will work to give us environmentally friendly options for all the work we decide to undertake.

A question about heating--do we use natural gas or heating oil?

We use natural gas in the main building, electric heat in the sanctuary, and heating oil in the meeting house.

I was drawn here by the ethos, culture and philosophy. As a designer, the beauty of the building adds to my spiritual experience. I am reassured by what I heard here today and feel confident about the process.

Thank you.

The hardest part is figuring out what we really want and how much we are willing to spend for that. We should address the functional ability of this building because it is limited for events right now.

The function of this building has been evaluated for years. We will be careful to not consider plans that reduce the level of function we have now.

This place is all about getting rid of pain – present and future, and I'm hopeful that we can do the same for this building. I feel that individuals can give more to the Capital Campaign, but we also need help from the Endowment to make something big happen. We should ask ourselves "will this place live after us"?

Please refer to our above response to understand how the Endowment is thinking about the Campaign.

I am a member “in utero” (not a member yet). We have been seeing information that refers to three options – renovate, rebuild here or move and build. Today we have just been hearing about the first option and I’m wondering if all three options are still in place.

Yes, please refer to Document 5, which briefly gives a summary of some of the biggest issues surrounding each option. Our vote on May 5th will determine whether or not we choose to proceed with a campaign at all.

I want to help ensure we don’t make costly infrastructure mistakes during the project. Based on my experience, we need to pay careful attention to serviceability and how to do smaller upgrades along the way.

We agree that proper planning is important. You will find this is a primary concern of Goody Clancy and Landmark Facilities. Let’s set up a time to talk so we understand your concerns in more detail.

I want to support to preserve and keep this building alive. Do we have the opportunity to get funding from public institutions and/or foundations? With concern about drainage, can we use this property in a friendlier way for the broader environment? Could this be an opportunity to think of this land as part of the Saugatuck Preserve?

There may be other organizations to contact. We would be happy to consider all your thoughts. Would you be willing to do some research about this and report back to us?

I was board chair during an earlier project and found by focusing on the amount of money that was really needed instead of the amount the feasibility study forecasted, we actually raised the necessary money to do all the work. The original architect, Victor Lundy loved this building when he saw it a decade ago and asked the Library of Congress to do their film about him here.

Thank you.

My wife and I were members of the North Parish Church in North Andover MA for 35 years. It was built in 1836 and just went through a major renovation which resulted in a new beginning for the congregation with new ideas and increased energy. The change can be a wonderful thing going forward.

Thanks, we agree!

Did I hear that the tiles in the sanctuary have asbestos in them?

Yes.

How can we replace them in an environmentally friendly way? How do we maintain the regular schedule of the church during the project?

The methods of removing and disposing of vinyl asbestoses (VAT) tile are regulated by the State of Connecticut. Goody Clancy’s planet friendly philosophies are part of the reason that we chose to work with them. For the answer to the second question, please see our prior answer.

I’m concerned to hear about all the things we cannot do. I’m not willing to not have everything until it’s determined that we can’t have everything. We are the future generation who hasn’t taken care of this building for the last 20 years. I’m willing to do multiple spreadsheets myself to explore all options of financing. The numbers get tiny when there are 300 or 400 people paying their share every month. I want it, and I want to explore every means so that we can get it!

Let’s get together and talk about loans for churches.

I’m from Nottingham England and went to a UU Fellowship there, in a stone church that was built in 1668. It served its congregation for 300 years so we can’t just give up on this building after 70!

Absolutely!

I was board chair when we hired Roberta Finkelstein. She gave a sermon on the hypocrisy of kicking the maintenance down the road though we said we loved the church. She said if we love the building so much, we should go into her office which had many buckets on the floor catching rain because there was so much leakage. Actually, I am hearing

that love today in this meeting.

Fortunately, we got that part of the roof repaired 3 years ago, now it's time to do the rest.

I am a Volunteer Conservation Coordinator for the Nutmeg Chapter Trout Unlimited and believe that we need to consider water management including run off from our impervious surfaces. The Aspetuck River runs right next to this property, and we need to think about our pollution of the water, including consideration of ways to let the water percolate into the ground instead of running off.

Goody Clancy mentioned this in their early presentations, and we feel that they have lots of experience evaluating and resolving these kinds of issues.

I have two concerns: roof water runoff and the heating and cooling of our offices and sanctuary.

The engineers associated with Goody Clancy will be evaluating both of these things and will present options for their resolution.

Again, the Capital Campaign Planning Team thanks all who attended and shared their thoughts. We leave you with two particular comments from two long-term members:

If we don't repair this building it will come down around our ears. We need to do this!

I have never contributed to a Capital Campaign but I will contribute to this one. This place becomes more important as I get older. We have to save this beautiful building, because it gets into your bones. We're going to do this!