

Board Report: September 2016

North Chapel Facilities Task Force

There's a good bit of progress to report this month.

1. The west lawn project was nearly completed [on 30 September](#) when the sidewalk was blacktopped. (There's a small amount of work to do to blend in the sidewalk with the lawn.) Not only has this project helped to direct water away from our basement, but the entrances to our Sanctuary and the church offices and parlors are now ADA-compliant! Kudos to Gina for engaging Tom Havill, the excavator, who did a great job. Robert Black consulted with him (and Gina, Anne Dean, and George Wohlgemuth) on the project.

2. The workshop focused on facilities planning [on 1 October](#) was very successful. We had a strong and broadly representative group in attendance: Gina Auriema, Chris Bartlett, Robert Black, Anne Dean, Veronica Delay, Geraldine Fowler, Denise Lyons, Anne Macksoud, Anne Marinello, Angel Rubino, and me. Many thanks to everyone for their focus and good thinking.

We heard updates on SE and how our space could work better for their needs; a presentation by Robert Black describing some of the challenges we face, particularly in reference to moisture, and how we might deal with some of those issues; and we talked about some of the ideas presented and came up with some very general ideas about how to address them. [Note: Anne Macksoud captured a video of Robert's presentation and will share it with us when it's available.]

There was general consensus that our priorities fall roughly in this order:

- We want to balance practical concerns (like dealing with our moisture issues) with programmatic/aesthetic changes (like renovating the parlors).
- We'll make sure we take into account our carbon-neutral goal in everything we do.

- We liked one of the plans that Robert developed as an alternative for the first-floor renovation.
- We need to move forward to address the issues we have with water in the area on the east side of the church and in the northeast corner of the entrance to the social hall.
- Next, we'd focus on drainage challenges outside the Chapel and the Chapel renovation.
- There was also general agreement that the roof is a priority. Though it's not urgent to do this project in 2017, we need to plan for it in the next few years. [See an update about this, below.]
- We thought there could be opportunities to fundraise for SE and for the Chapel projects.
- We agreed that we need to develop a plan that identified the work to be done, when we proposed to do it, and attached ballpark estimates of costs to each phase.
- Once we have a plan, we can share it with the community for feedback and buy-in. A useful communications framework was suggested, which allowed for tracking progress in several areas.
- Not mentioned, but important: we'd need to have big initiatives approved by the community at the annual meeting in early 2017.

Our next step is to convene a small group consisting of Gina, Robert Black, Anne Dean, V, Geraldine, Jack, Angel, and me to reach agreement on how our spaces could accommodate SE needs and the Chapel; review Robert's plans; discuss specific needs for each of the spaces we are going to renovate; and develop a sequence for these things to occur. By the end of the meeting, we'd have agreement on how we'd use our spaces; the order in which we'd like to tackle the work; and a list of specifications we could use to get some construction estimates. These will form the basis of a plan.

3. I reported last month that I was writing a grant application to the Preservation Trust of Vermont for funds to repair the roof over the offices and parlors. This is work that needs to be done, as noted by Sabrina Duk in her engineering report earlier this year. It will prevent damage to the Sanctuary and to the offices and parlors. Gina Auriema solicited bids from two companies for this work; Jancewicz & Son from Bellows Falls submitted a comprehensive bid of \$36,000. If our grant application was accepted, we would have received half of that amount (\$18,000).

As I was finishing up the grant proposal, Denise noticed that we were required to have the matching funds be in hand at the time of proposal submission. Since the board itself can't approve an expenditure that large (\$18K) without community authorization — which had not been obtained — Susan and Denise felt uncomfortable submitting the grant application. Once I understood these concerns, I agreed that the best choice was to hold our application and submit it next year. At that point, we'll be able to obtain the community authorization we need to proceed. And we'll also have a more comprehensive plan in place — hopefully with some ideas about how we are going to fund some or most of our initiatives. The good news is that most of the work is done on the grant application and it won't take much work to revise it next year!

4. Finally, we there was some discussion at the meeting [on Saturday](#), 1 October, about a name for this effort. May I respectfully request that we depart from the previous acronyms related to our future, our facilities initiatives, and our funding for them, and just call this task force the “North Chapel Facilities Task Force?” You'll note that I've preemptively adopted that moniker for this report. It's clear, descriptive, and, better yet, even I am starting to forget what all the FOFs stand for. Thank you for your understanding.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Stoner