

Town of University Park

Report of Meeting

Council Committee on Public Facilities and Services

Thursday, October 24, 2013

7:00 pm

University Park Town Hall

6724 Baltimore Avenue

Committee Members Present:

Len Carey, Council Member, Ward 4, Chair

Michael Cron, Council Member, Ward 6

James Gekas, Council Member, Ward 2

David Brosch, Council Member, Ward 1

Others Present:

Roy Alvarez, Council Member, Ward 7

Tom Ahmann, Ahmann Architects LLC

Meeting called to order: 7:09pm

A draft timeline, dated October 24, 2013, for the possible purchase of Riverdale Presbyterian Church was distributed.

The minutes of the October 10 Community Conversation, which include questions and answers about the purchase of the Church, were distributed. Mr. Carey asked that these be approved as soon as possible so these could be available to the residents.

1. Recap of October 10 Community Conversation

- It was helpful having the one microphone available for questions.
- The Town Hall - round table set up worked well.
- Some residents said that a decision has already been made to purchase the Church - the Committee confirmed that absolutely no decision has been made.
- Encourage the younger families to attend the Community Conversations.

2. Possible acquisition of Riverdale Presbyterian Church for public purpose

a. Potential future uses and specifications

- Town Hall (Government, Public Works, Police, Chambers).
- Arts (visual, performing, classes, exhibit space).
- Aging in Community (village office space, housing, workshops, and concierge services).
- Child Care (pre-school, before/after care, satellite programs with county schools, summer day camps, inter-generational)
- Other (business meeting room, telecommute, continuing education for seniors and others)
- Civic (boy/girl scouts, yoga)
- Church

It was suggested putting out a simple Survey Monkey, asking “what do you envision” or “what would you like to see”?

It was also suggested, for those who do not use computers, to have large posters on the wall at the “Community Conversation” where residents can write down their suggestions for the use of the Church.

Mr. Brosch shared information he received on Osher Lifelong, a program that offers no-cost classes to senior citizens. This would be a wonderful program for University Park and hopes it can be pursued. Literature is available.

Initial Code Summary - Review Draft - Mr. Tom Ahmann, Ahmann Architects

Mr. Ahmann distributed and explained an Analysis of the Conversion of Riverdale Presbyterian Church and Associated Property for use as a Town Hall and for Other Governmental and Community Uses for the Town of University Park, Maryland.

- Areas that should be noted are highlighted.
- If the Church will be occupied by the police station and used as an emergency shelter, it is recommended hiring a Structural Engineer.
- There are two stairways where the head height is too low, dormers are recommended.
- A historical note was shared - there use to be heating underneath the floor in Custis Hall.
- It was suggested having an Environmental Study of the building.

b. Grants, bonds, and other sources of external funding - Mr. Gekas

- General obligation bond - \$1,000,000 at 3% - 15 year loan, for example, would be approximately \$90 per household per year.

- Grants – the Town would have to decide in January since our local Maryland delegates and State Senator would not want to introduce any type of legislation unless the Town commits to purchasing the Church. The Maryland General Assembly meets in January at which time our representatives would say okay, you've got a project, and then submit a grant request the first year from \$150,000-\$300,000. The next year the same thing – the total grant request over two years \$300,000 to \$600,000.
- If the Town receives the grants, we would pay down the general obligation bond. There is no pay back on these State grants: The State issues a Bond Bill and pays the principal and interest. There is a good chance for a municipality to receive grant money for a situation like this. The Town Treasurer Dan Baden will provide a sample copy of previous State Bond Bills and recipients.
- MEA Energy Grants - May be available for window replacements.
- FEMA - A lot of upgrading is required. But FEMA will pay 80% of the cost of the purchase and upgrading the building.
- MEMA - No information at this time.

It was suggested that a poll tax (surcharge) be included on the tax bill as a separate item for residents to see exactly what the purchase of the Church will cost them over the next fifteen years. This does not mean that property taxes would increase.

The Riverdale Presbyterian Church recently informed Town Hall that they are financially fine until June/July 2014, which reduces the pressure and allows a little more time in making the decision on purchasing the Church.

Mr. Carey suggests the Committee consider doing an advisory poll by post card or mail/ballot to every registered voter in University Park which would allow some survey in order to see how people feel about the purchase. Also, send the residents a post card in December encouraging them to attend the January 18 Council Special Session, prior to the January 20 regular Council Meeting when the decision is expected to be made

Meeting adjourned: 9:21 p.m.