

**First Parish UU Arlington  
Meetinghouse Campaign  
FAQ – Updated January 2014 (From October 2013)**

**Congregation Meeting - January 12, 2014**

**Congregation Vote – March 9, 2014**

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**1. RECAP AND BACKGROUND**

**Why are we making changes to our building?** We are updating and reconfiguring spaces that were designed in the 1950s and 1970s to make our building more accessible and to better accommodate our current needs.

The Religious Education wing (RE wing), also known as the Parish House, was built in the 1950s. It has small rooms currently outfitted for young children only, and a great deal of wasted space. (For example, the second floor room with the best natural light is currently a tiny and rarely used room.) It no longer supports the size, number, and types of activities we offer for children and adults. However, by reconfiguring the space and updating the finishes and furnishings, we will have a functional and attractive space for religious education classes for all ages, meetings, music rehearsals, and more.

The Office, Vestry and Sanctuary buildings were built in the late 1970s, when open space was the design fashion. We now feel the need for more private spaces, and will be increasing quiet, private meeting spaces.

We have grown significantly and are more active than we used to be. After the fire in 1975, when the new Sanctuary was under construction, the congregation could be accommodated in the Bailey Room for Sunday services. In fact, the whole Harvest Moon Fair fit in the Bailey Room.

**What are the priorities in the project?** There are three main goals:

- 1) Accessibility,
- 2) Building and renovating in accordance with our Green Sanctuary status, and

3) Right sizing our meeting space to better accommodate our current needs.

Some specifics include:

- Adding an elevator will make all three floors of the Religious Education Wing, or Parish House, easily accessible for both people of varying abilities and the moving of large items.
- Along with the elevator will come a new vestibule that will improve flow and create a light filled and welcoming atmosphere at this entrance.
- Ensuring aspects of the building meet accessibility code and apply universal design standards.
- Reconfiguring the rooms in the RE wing will create flexible classroom and adult meeting space for large and small meetings, classes, and rehearsals.
- The Bailey Room, currently dank and moldy, will become an attractive and useful space.
- Reconfiguring is a greener and more economical alternative to tearing down and building or expanding our footprint.
- Modified heating and cooling systems will improve the air quality and in the RE wing rooms, Parlor, and Vestry.
- Staff office spaces will be improved for both flow and privacy.
- Flexible room dividers in the vestry and some other larger rooms will create more private spaces and room size options.
- We are working closely with Sunshine Nursery to create flexible spaces that will work for both First Parish and our long time tenant.

**What is the Meetinghouse Campaign?** The Meetinghouse Campaign – Building Good Together began two years ago to raise capital improvement funds so that First Parish can better serve the spiritual and programmatic goals, objectives, and priorities of the congregation. The Campaign process gave the congregation an opportunity to articulate priorities for renovating the Parish facilities. These priorities were translated into three feasibility designs. These designs were reviewed with the congregation to provide additional direction and consensus.

**What is the Building Design Group?** The Building Design Group (BDG) is a committee formed to translate priorities expressed by the congregation into reality by making choices about what we can build considering the funds raised. Our choices are grounded in the shared congregational values of spirituality, religious education, music and social justice. Working within the pledged budget, the Building Design Group will recommend a feasible construction design.

**Who are the members of the Building Design Group?** The group represents major congregational committees and stakeholders. Some of the group members are experienced in architecture and construction. Staff from LDA, the architectural firm that designed the preliminary plan options, also attends many meetings. Carolyn Hodges and Jeff Keffer, (Meetinghouse Campaign co-chairs) lead the Group. Other parish representatives are Ellen Leigh (accessibility), Trish Webb (secretary),

John Chamberlain (Property/Green Sanctuary), Katharine MacPhail (architectural), Anne Goodwin (ParComm), Andrew Leonard (architectural/construction), Sharen Leonard, (member-at-large) Alane Hodges (Religious Education), John Galantowicz (financial), Sarah Short (RE), Barbara Tosti (Safety/Memorial Garden/Property), and Christopher Jones (accessibility). Advisory members are Marta Flanagan (Minister), Tina Schulz (RE Director), Peter Nobile and Dean Hofelich from LDa and Gerry Pedrini (Sunshine Nursery School).

**When does the Building Design Group meet?** The group meets weekly on Sunday evenings at 7pm. Meetings are open and your feedback is welcome.

## **2. PRIORITIES AND GOALS**

**What are the basic goals of the Building Design Group?** The goals are to:

- Procure an architect: LDa, the firm that designed the original feasibility designs was chosen.
- Develop building priorities consistent with the congregational goals and needs that fit within the available budget. The priorities are based upon the earlier vote of the congregation and include accessibility, improved meeting space and maintaining our alignment with “green” principles.
- Determine an effective management of the project: The group has decided on an Owners Project Manager (OPM) model.

**Can you elaborate on the priorities that are driving the design decisions?** After much discussion and review of the congregation’s comments on the preliminary designs and the proposed budget, the Building Design Group determined that the major congregational priorities are:

- Improved accessibility including an elevator and vestibule for access to the entire Religious Education (RE) wing, renovated bathrooms, better corridor flow and less congestion.
- Reconfigured programmatic meeting space that will accommodate all ages and larger meetings in more comfortable surroundings.
- Upgraded RE space including improvements to the ventilation, Bailey Room, and RE classrooms, and less disruptive access to meeting spaces.
- Reuse of existing space that is environmentally sound and consistent with green considerations.
- Building and life-safety code compliance is a primary project driver.

## **3. ACCESSIBILITY AND ELEVATOR**

**What is the current thinking about accessibility?** Accessibility continues to be a top priority for the project. By improving our meetinghouse, we create a worthwhile space that is more universally accessible. The architects will employ Universal Design to make our building attractive and functional for everyone.

**What is “universal design”?** Universal Design facilitates ease and flexible use of space in all areas. This “Design for All” philosophy will enable us to move beyond meeting construction standards required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to create “actual usability”. Designing for the lifespan of our congregants recognizes and respects our ever-changing needs. Everyone will be able to move more freely and participate more fully in the life of First Parish. We are currently evaluating universal design and access issues for those with mobility, vision, hearing, or medical disabilities.

**Will we involve other accessibility experts?** Yes, consistent with our commitment to enhance accessibility, we are employing the expertise of an accessibility consultant. Josh Safdie is the Director of Studio, a design firm within the Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD). IHCD is the home of the New England ADA Center. Mr. Safdie’s experience with social interaction and architectural space will facilitate achieving Universal Design at First Parish. He will review architectural plans and help ensure realization of our vision to provide an accessible Meetinghouse.

**What must change based on building codes?** The allotted construction budget is more than 30% of the currently assessed value of the building (which is \$1.8 million), which triggers provisions in the building code requiring full accessibility compliance for the entire campus. We believe that the current assessment is far below the actual fair market value, and we have requested that the town do an updated assessment. We are doing this not because of any lack of commitment to providing accessibility, but rather to give us the flexibility to spend our accessibility budget in the most efficient way. The current plans are focused on the RE wing and office areas; improvements to the sanctuary and narthex would be the focus of a subsequent capital plan.

**Does the plan include an elevator?** Yes! An elevator is a key element in the design of the renovation. It will make all three floors of the RE building accessible to all and will provide flexibility in using all of the spaces in the RE building. It will be sized to allow efficient movement of large items such as chairs, tables, school supplies, and musical instruments from floor to floor. The elevator will be located at the end of the RE wing hallway and will be enclosed in a new entryway/reception area to be built outside the current side-entrance. A short ramp will still be needed to provide access to the RE annex since it is not feasible to also add an elevator to the annex level.

**Why won’t the elevator be located more centrally so it could eventually serve the Tobey Lounge and balcony?** Placing the elevator more centrally would require major excavation, foundations and a much larger construction project. The current budget cannot support such a large project. In any case, the levels in the Sanctuary wing don’t line up well with a central elevator. If elevator access in the Sanctuary wing is ultimately desired, a separate lift will have to be installed in a future phase. Elevator access to the sanctuary balcony would be of little use without

completely rebuilding the balcony.

**What happens during a power outage?** A backup generator it is not required for the elevator. Disabled occupants are protected primarily by the building's sprinkler/fire protection system. First Parish will develop an emergency life safety/rescue plan with the Arlington Fire Department for building evacuation.

**Will there be added accessible ramps in case of fire?** It is not feasible to add an exterior ramp for the first floor of the Parish House. Ramp access for the other floors is also not feasible. Egress will be by the elevator, stairs and other building entrance points. All of this will be considered in the life safety/rescue plan.

#### **4. MEETING/PROGRAMMING SPACE**

**Will there be more meeting space?** The project will focus on making the current space more flexible and useable rather than creating additional, new space.

**How do we know what kind of space we need?** The Building Design Group and LDa conducted a room usage study to determine which type of rooms are most in demand and confirmed that larger adult meeting spaces are needed.

**How might the space change?** The Vestry, Parlor, Bailey, Damon and Pierce rooms, the Children's Chapel, as well as the location of staff offices, have been reviewed for renovation and possible reassignment. Some walls may be removed or relocated, making larger, flexible or dividable rooms. The elevator will make currently less accessible spaces more useable for meetings.

**What about RE classrooms?** We will retain ten classrooms for Sunday morning RE. We plan to improve the existing large spaces to accommodate big groups like the youth group.

**How will storage be changed?** We plan to address storage for both First Parish and Sunshine Nursery School through creative re-purposing of current space and more efficient cabinets and furniture. The committee has been looking at storage issues from many angles- storage for RE, storage for our tenants, storage of chairs and tables on every level- but also thinking of innovative storage strategies as a way of creating flexibility in the spaces in the building currently used by Sunshine Nursery and extending their usage to include the adult population of First Parish.

**What is planned for the Vestry and the Parlor?** We plan to install a moveable partition wall in the Vestry, which can be closed to provide privacy for functions while still allowing access from the sanctuary to the rest rooms and office area. It could be white board, acoustical fabric, glass, or a combination of surfaces. There would be doors in the wall for easy access. The Alliance closet in the Vestry may be relocated to allow an enlarged entryway from the narthex into the Vestry. The Parlor will be redesigned and enclosed for privacy.

**What about the staff offices?** The current plan calls for a complete redesign of the office area. The side door will be replaced by a new elevator lobby/reception area which will provide a much more welcoming space for people entering the building. The existing parish manager's office will be redesigned, and the minister's office will gain a private entrance so that people arriving for appointments with the minister will no longer have to traverse the parlor.

**How will reconfiguring walls meet programming space needs?** Reconfiguration will provide larger, flexible adult meeting spaces, and the elevator will allow under-utilized spaces to be used. Making larger rooms flexible/dividable is a critical strategy to meet congregational needs.

**Will there be improvements in the Sanctuary?** No major renovation is contemplated for the Sanctuary at this time. It is possible that we may need to make some improvements if required to meet state code, such as modifications to the Green Room rest room. There is a separate project being planned to upgrade the sound system in the sanctuary.

**Will there be improvements to the Narthex and Mass Ave entryway?** Enlarging or reconfiguring the doors from the sanctuary into the Narthex, and from the Narthex into the Vestry, is under consideration but will depend on the cost. The Mass Ave entryway will not be modified unless we are required to make code-related changes. Our architects have produced a design for a completely new Narthex, which could be considered in a future capital plan.

**How will the Cleveland Garden and Memorial Garden be affected?** The current plans call for both gardens to be retained. The Cleveland Garden will need to be reconfigured to accommodate the new side-entrance reception area and elevator lobby. The Memorial Garden will not be disturbed, unless the builder finds it absolutely necessary to access the sewer line that runs under it. In that case, our project manager will work with the Building Committee to develop a plan to minimize the impact to the garden and to deal sensitively with the required work.

## **5. GREEN SANCTUARY**

**How will the building project enhance our commitment as a Green Sanctuary?** The project aims to meet our needs primarily by renovation and reclamation of existing space, which is a much greener option than demolition and new construction. The renovated space will be brought up to compliance with the latest energy efficiency codes.

**Is air-conditioning (A/C) included in the project?** The RE wing and RE annex will be fully air-conditioned, enabling year-round use of these buildings and opening up the possibility of additional rental income. This will also solve the humidity and mold issues in the RE basement (Bailey Room). We are evaluating the possibility of extending the A/C to include the Parlor and Vestry. Unfortunately, A/C cannot be

extended to the Sanctuary within the project budget.

**Will the A/C have a negative impact on our energy use?** A/C is usually very energy-intensive, but our solar-panel array will provide a significant amount of the required power. The solar array was designed such that it can be enlarged to meet increased energy needs.

**Is it true that the Property Committee is evaluating the possibility of installing a ground-source heat pump (GSHP)?** Yes, there is a group headed by David Landskov looking at GSHP.

**What is a Ground Source Heat Pump?** A ground-source heat pump is a combined heating-and-cooling system that circulates water or other fluids from wells drilled into the ground. A GSHP is a highly efficient A/C source because the earth cools the water for free. The pumps and fans do require electricity, but sunny summer days are perfect for our solar-panel array, just when we need the most A/C! The GSHP can also be used as a heating source. Additional energy is needed to heat the water to the temperature required by our heat exchangers, but overall we would still save energy because in effect the earth pre-heats the water significantly above the ambient winter temperature.

**Could the building project take advantage of this system?** Possibly. David Landskov, who heads the GSHP investigation, is in contact with our architects about using GSHP.

## **6. RESTROOMS**

**Will there be new restrooms?** Yes, we will have plenty of rest rooms! On the main floor we plan a new, fully accessible gender neutral/family rest rooms adjacent to the existing rest rooms. The existing rest rooms may not be fully remodeled, but the hallway door, which currently blocks access to the women's room, will be relocated.

**Will there be other accessible restrooms?** Yes. We plan accessible rest rooms on all levels of the RE wing, including the basement and annex. If required to comply with regulations, we may upgrade the bathroom adjacent to the Sanctuary.

**Many of the new restrooms will be ADA-accessible, Gender Neutral and Family Friendly restrooms.** This makes our congregation and building more welcoming and inclusive of all—people of all identities, life situations, and life stages.

**The UUA website gives the following overview of who benefits from Gender Neutral Restrooms:**

- People who are uncomfortable in men's or women's rooms for many reasons; for example, people who are not women or men and/or people who are

gender nonconforming

- Parents/caregivers whose children are a different gender from them
- People with caregivers or personal attendants who are a different gender from them
- Other people may also benefit specifically from single-occupancy bathrooms, such as people who are extremely introverted, people who are breastfeeding or have other needs for privacy, and so on

**Is there appropriate focus to address restroom issues?** The number and location of restrooms is driven largely by code requirements. In particular, the maximum allowed occupancy of our various spaces is determined in part by the number of restrooms on each floor.

## **7. FUNDRAISING AND BUDGET**

**How much did the Meetinghouse Campaign raise?** The congregation has pledged about \$2,000,000 to the Meetinghouse Campaign (thank you!) and about \$260,000 had been received by October 1. That is just about what we had expected at this point. By January 1, 2014, we expect to have about \$710,000, and we should be close to the full \$2,000,000 by January 1, 2016.

**Is fundraising on track to begin construction this year?** About \$2,000,000 was pledged to the Meetinghouse Campaign (thank you!). As of January 8, about \$625,000 had been received from members of the congregation and the First Parish Trustees had set aside \$300,000 for the project, for a grand total of \$925,000 in receipts. We expect to have received the full \$2,000,000 by January 2016. We expect to take out interim loans to cover construction costs incurred beyond what we've collected. The costs of these loans have been included in the overall project budget..

**How does the budgeting process work?** The budget has three broad categories: direct construction costs, "soft" costs, and contingency:

- The largest part of the budget is allocated for direct construction costs. We currently expect construction to cost between \$1,200,000 and \$1,400,000 and LDa has been developing the designs around these limits. We'll develop a more detailed construction budget after the Builder is selected and as the designs themselves become more detailed.
- The "soft" budget represents planned costs that are not included in the direct construction project. The budget for these costs currently total about \$500,000 and include: the architect and OPM fees; fees for site surveys and materials testing; fees for financing and insurance; a new sound system and additional seating for the sanctuary; lost rental from First Parish users and

costs of renting alternative space for Parish programs (e.g. RE, worship, or meetings) during construction; new furniture for reconfigured spaces; and new signage throughout the building. We are in the process of refining the budget as our cost estimates become more accurate and the phasing of the project becomes clear. For example, if the project can be affordably phased during two separate summer construction periods then costs for RE space rental and lost rental income can be eliminated.

- About \$95,000 is reserved for contingencies, which is about 5% of the combined construction and soft costs estimates. We also expect the Builder to carry a contingency within the direct construction budget.

## **8. THE ARCHITECT**

**Has First Parish hired an architect?** Yes! The Building Design Group is working with LDa Architects of Cambridge to help us focus our priorities and create a scope of work that can be achieved with the money that we raised.

**Why did we hire LDa?** LDa is the firm that worked with us over the last two years to develop a master plan for our fund-raising efforts. The Building Design Group felt that their understanding of our congregational needs and aspirations was first-rate, and hiring them as our architects was the most cost-effective and logical way to proceed.

**Can you remind me of LDa's background?** LDa is a mid-size firm based in Cambridge. Named for their co founders (Treff LaFleche and Doug Dick), they have designed many church and non-profit projects including work at UU congregations in Concord, Newton and Beverly. The principals and project manager are active members of UU congregations, so they are well suited to help us achieve our vision. Their work shows a commitment to sustainability and universal access.

## **9. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND CONSTRUCTION**

**How will the project be managed?** Because of the size and complexity of the renovation, the Building Design Group recommended a professional Owner's Project Manager (OPM) who has significant experience in overseeing similar non-profit construction projects. After a careful interview and selection process, we have hired Bill Jackson to be our OPM. Bill has extensive experience with projects of our size and with churches and non-profits in general.

**What will the OPM do?** The Owner's Project Manager will participate from the schematic design phase, which is just starting, through the close-out of the project to represent the interests of First Parish. The OPM is our go-to person for problems and questions.

**Why did the Building Design Group choose this approach?** The group decided that managing the renovation project requires the objectivity of someone outside

the congregation who is a professional project manager with design and construction expertise. Even though individuals on the BDG have design and construction expertise, the time commitment is too large for a volunteer to undertake. The staff of FPUU also do not have the time nor design/construction expertise needed to manage the project. By hiring an Owner's Project Manager, we will save money by preventing errors or omissions that would come without oversight of the project with First Parish priorities and interests in mind.

**What is the tentative schedule for renovation?**

The BDG, architects and OPM are moving forward quickly with detailed design and construction documents, which should be completed by the end of April. At the same time, we are in the process of selecting a construction manager (Builder) to work with us during the final design phases to prepare the most efficient and cost-effective design.

We anticipate construction to begin at the end of the church year, in June. The proposed schedule from there is still being developed.

**When are we hiring the Builder?**

The BDG and OPM issued a request for proposal to select a Builder. We have asked four candidate firms to submit a full bid package for review by the OPM and committee. Interviews are targeted for mid/late January. The committee will make a selection and request Parish Committee approval to hire the Builder by early February.

**Why are we beginning in the spring?** This time frame will limit the adverse impact on all building users (including our tenant, Sunshine Nursery School) during the program year.

**How long is construction going to last?** This is still being determined, but it will be at least 8 months and possibly up to a year. In order to minimize disruption, construction may be divided into two phases, to take place this summer and next summer (2015).

**Will we be able to use the building during construction?** Yes, in part. Our OPM will be working with the contractor to develop plans for safe use of parts of the building while construction is going on. Portions of the building will be unavailable, as will certain entrances and exits. We will notify everyone as soon as we have more definite plans.

**What are our options during construction?** Here are some of the possibilities:

- Phase construction so that the bulk takes place during two summers. This may require that the church year ends early or begins late. The downside to this approach may be increased costs for the contractor to mobilize twice, as well as inflation.

- RE and Sunshine move to an alternate site(s). RE and Sunshine are investigating off-site options, which would involve renting space in a nearby facility, such as the Masonic Temple on Academy Street.
- RE and Sunshine use a partitioned sanctuary while the adults use an alternate site on Sundays, such as Arlington Town Hall or the Regent Theater.
- Share another church or temple, potentially with First Parish programming shifting to Sunday afternoons.

**Where will staff go?** Staff offices will be relocated within the church where possible, such as the choir room, front of the Green Room, etc. If RE moves off-site, the RE office might move to the alternate location.

There will have to be some disruption and dislocation in order to improve our facility for the future. We will all need to be flexible and open to change during this period.

**What about other building users?** First Parish is home to many activities as well as a variety of outside users. A subgroup will be formed to communicate with these users and share our plans and constructions schedule.

## **10. THE CONGREGATION'S ROLE**

**How can I make comments or suggestions?** You can provide input to members of the Building Design Group, attend one or more of the group's weekly Sunday evening meetings or send feedback by email to [BuildingCommittee@FristParish.info](mailto:BuildingCommittee@FristParish.info)

**Can I still pledge to the Meetinghouse Campaign?** Of Course! We welcome additional or increased pledges at any time. You can pledge by contacting the Meetinghouse co-chairs: Carolyn Hodges (ph 617-354-4868) or Jeff Keffer (ph 781-686-3788), or email us at [capitalcampaign@firstparish.info](mailto:capitalcampaign@firstparish.info)

**What is the next step for the Congregation?** There is a congregation meeting and vote scheduled for March 9<sup>th</sup>. The March vote is to approve the final project design, with associated cost estimates. This is an important meeting. The resulting vote will provide congregational direction for the Parish Committee to proceed with funding the project construction.

**How can I help?** Your input is valued! Timely input is extremely helpful. The Building Design Group is adhering to a tight timetable targeting the beginning of construction this spring.

**Are there immediate needs for my assistance?** Yes. We need additional Meetinghouse volunteers to address three pressing needs:

- Developing a grant proposal to groups such as Shelter Rock, a Unitarian Universalist organization that supports efforts such as improved accessibility.
- Contacting our non-congregational building users to provide building design and constructions updates as well as to solicit contributions from these organizations
- Volunteering to be “Blog Master” to help us provide the First Parish community enhanced real time communication, especially once the project work begins.
- Joining one of our many subgroups to determine furniture needs and storage solutions, choose sanctuary sound improvements, address landscaping matter including relocation of the Cleveland Garden, or organize a large group of volunteers to help clean, sort, pack and prepare our space for the construction effort.

If you are willing to help in these areas, please contact the Meetinghouse co-chairs: Carolyn Hodges (ph 617-354-4868) or Jeff Keffer (ph 781-686-3788) or email us at [capitalcampaign@firstparish.info](mailto:capitalcampaign@firstparish.info)