

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF AMHERST
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Informational Congregational Meeting
Sunday, October 22, 2022
11:30 AM in person and in the UUSA zoom room

Line of credit for siding replacement

Helen Blatz described the payment plan on the line of credit used to pay for the siding improvements (loan = \$173,942).

We got a construction loan from Florence Savings Bank for 80% of the expected cost. We paid 20% out of reserves. We are paying interest only for 6 months until Feb 2023. Starting in March we will begin paying interest and also principle. It will cost about \$1100 - \$1200/month for 20 years. The loan has a variable rate. For 5 years the interest rate will be 5.4%. After that it will be adjusted depending on current interest rates. There is no prepayment penalty. Our closing costs were \$4000, which is lower than usual, thanks to the generosity of Florence Savings bank. That amount includes the \$1500 attorney fee. Right now we are paying interest only on that \$4000. The payments are not in this year's budget because we didn't have enough information last spring to include them.

HVAC improvements

Ron Grosslein introduced the recommendations of the Meetinghouse Committee for improvements in the HVAC system and outside grounds (estimate = \$50,000 for HVAC work).

Susanne Personnette is our liaison with the builder and architect. Ron relayed a report that she sent to him on October 13. Most of the siding has been installed at this point except for the tower. The color match to the newer part of the building is very good. The bushes out front were not damaged. Thermal imaging showed that the building insulation is pretty good. There was a second layer of shingles from 1893 that had to be removed which cost \$11000 out of our \$22,000 contingency.

The oak benches outside of the Meetinghouse have been removed because the wood was rotting badly. The sign in front of the building, "Unitarian Meetinghouse", is also rotting. Another member reported that it was built by our minister in the 1970's and thus has some historical significance. The Wayside Pulpit has been damaged and removed. All these things are being included in a "Landscaping Project". We will need to decide what wording we want on the signs that will be replaced. The Meetinghouse committee will be looking for others to help figure those things out.

Another member asked that we make sure our Black Lives Matter and Rainbow flags be replaced with screws attaching them to the building.

Anyone who is interested in helping think about signage, benches, etc., please contact Ellen Kosmer.

Ventilation: We had a study done by Tighe and Bond to tell us what our HVAC equipment could do if upgraded. The cost would be about \$50,000. We need to integrate those upgrades with potential sustainability upgrades proposed by the Green Sanctuary Committee. The committee proposes to hire an outside consultant with expertise in sustainable buildings and also in effective HVAC to help us figure out how to proceed.

Sustainability – reducing use of fossil fuels at the Meetinghouse

Jeff Clark introduced the recommendations of the Green Sanctuary Committee (GSC) to replace the furnaces and add photovoltaics to the meetinghouse (estimate = \$102,250)

We would like to make our building as carbon neutral as possible. We have already done some insulation work in the old and new parts of the building, sealed leaky holes, and put up solar panels. The next step would be to replace furnaces with heat pumps and add more solar panels to pay for the electricity needed to run the heat pumps. Our water heater would not be replaced as it's very difficult right now to do that, according to Sam Pomeroy, who works on our HVAC. Sam suggested that we could get heat pumps to add to the existing furnaces. We would use the heat pumps unless the weather was very cold and then the existing furnaces would serve as backup heat. We could also replace the existing furnaces completely and use resistance heat as a backup for the coldest days. Because of rebates available now, it makes the most sense to replace the furnaces completely, at a cost of about \$36,750. That would increase our electrical demand. Solar panels on the Sanctuary and the entrance roof – 64 of them – would cost \$94,000. There is currently a 30% rebate so our actual cost would be \$65,800. The PV companies think the panels would pay for the heat, but of course they can't be sure.

PhippenAdams solar is a local company that will finance PV projects for non-profits, but we don't know yet whether they will have time and resources for our project. They would get the rebates and own the panels for 6 years, after which they would return ownership to us. The GSC thinks we can pay for the HVAC/heat pump study with the Green Fund.

Funding for these projects

Peter Lacey discussed our thoughts on how we intend to pay for these necessary capital improvements.

We still have some reserves, even after paying our 20% down payment for the loan. Some donors have stepped forward and we think the interest and principal payments through the rest of this fiscal year will be covered by the reserves and those donors. More donors would be welcome. Please speak to Peter if you are interested in making a donation now. The plan is to contact the membership to gauge the interest in supporting a capital campaign. To pay for the previous renovation, we asked for 3-yr pledges and raised enough money to finance the whole renovation. Peter Lacey, Helen Blatz, and Elliot Kelly are currently members of a committee that will organize the capital campaign. If anyone is interested in joining them, please let them know.

Report written by Louise Grosslein, UUSA Clerk