

Land Acquisition

Back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, at the time the Universalist Church Biddeford and the Unitarian Church in Saco consolidated, the congregations had to decide which building to keep. Both buildings were in sad need of repair. Members of the congregations and two local attorneys looked for ownership documents to the Unitarian Church. None could be located. The decision to use the Unitarian Church was based largely on its being unsalable due to lack of title.

To back track a bit – in 1825 the Saco governing body offered land on the town common land to any church that could build a church in two years. The Unitarians took them up on the offer and as you know, we dedicated our meeting house in Nov. 1827. Later in 1867 we added the Parish Hall. And in the early 1970s, we built the connecting building. There are references to all this in meeting notes and letters. However there are no official deeds or letters of transfer that we can find. It has been a long standing saying that “ when it rains, the water drips off our roof onto City land”. Our dumpster sits on City land.

Fast forward to a few weeks ago, when in a conversation about our church with city Councilor Eric Cote, I mentioned this situation. Mr. Cote said that he might be able to assist us with this situation. He asked us to let him know how much land we would like. Attached is a drawing of the options we’ve come up with.

Discussion up to now has been about eventually creating some parking in the side lot and/or the big lot. We would have to maintain any land we acquired. It is estimated that we would have to pay about \$800 extra for mowing if we owned the big lot. Any action we took that

would change the land – like parking lots – would have to be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission.

So here's what we need:

1. A vote on what option we'd favor.
2. Establish an ad hoc group to communicate our preference to Councilor Cote.
3. Work with Councilor Cote on a plan to acquire title to the property.

It is difficult to say how long this process would take. We'll have a better idea after we decide what we'd like to do about this.

Please review this information. Direct any questions to Anne D. prior to our Special Congregational Meeting on Sept. 11 so we can address your questions and concerns.