

## **Frequently Asked Questions on the Buckwalter Parkway Project – February 16, 2022**

### **The Property**

#### **What is the Buckwalter Property?**

It is a 10 acre tract on the east side of Buckwalter Parkway just north of Lord of Life Lutheran church. The Buckwalter Parkway connects State Route 46 (May River Road) to Hwy. 278 (Fording Island Road). Directly across from the Buckwalter site is a Kroger superstore and restaurants. The Buckwalter Planned Development project was initiated in 2007 and is a rapidly developing area in Bluffton.

#### **What was the purchase price?**

The property was purchased in 2014 for \$600,000. The property was paid for with money raised in a capital campaign that was initiated in 2015. That campaign, named *'One Great Church, Two Front Doors'* raised funds for development work on both campuses.

#### **Why was the property purchased?**

The church was looking for a site to expand the Bluffton Ministry that was meeting on the USCB campus. The property was going into foreclosure. It was offered to the church for \$600,000. The location in the Buckwalter planned unit development is considered prime real estate.

#### **What is the current value?**

The property has not been reassessed since purchase. Per acre value in the Buckwalter planned unit development has gone up in price similar to other real estate price increases in the Bluffton area.

#### **Who owns the property?**

The South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church owns the property.

#### **Why has it taken so long to begin Phase 1 development?**

After the capital campaign, the church did not have sufficient funds to put a building on the site. The Town of Bluffton did not support development without a planned structure of some type. After much discussion and negotiation, the town agreed to an athletic field and a parking lot as a focus of the initial development. Following that work, a dispute over property boundaries and access arose with Lord of Life Lutheran church. That dispute was finally resolved in 2021.

#### **What are the reasons to build a church in Bluffton?**

St. Andrew adopted expanding into Bluffton as a mission in 2014. In the fall of 2015 a church congregation vote approved the use of capital campaign funds for site preparation of the Buckwalter property. The Bluffton congregation is outgrowing its current location on Persimmon St., which is a leased space. There is no area for outdoor activities. Bluffton, Okatie, and Hardeeville are the fastest growing areas of South Carolina. Although there are other Methodist churches in the area, the Bluffton church has an opportunity to reach some people through its contemporary services and youth

programs. The services include contemporary Christian music provided by an excellent band. The ministry has formed a relationship with First Zion Baptist church in Bluffton, a church that serves the African-American community, through its Bridge Builders group. The Bluffton church also participates in other community outreach programs with the Pope Avenue campus such as Christmas Grace and Backpack Buddies. The combined efforts of the two campuses allow Saint Andrew to reach a much larger community.

A strong aspect of the Bluffton campus is the developing youth program. The 'ministry through sport' aspect of the athletic field offers a way to attract youth to the Bluffton Ministry.

### **Permits**

What development permits and approvals are required and what is the current status?

1. County access driveway permit- received
2. SCDHEC/OCRM land disturbance permit- pending Army Corps of Engineers extension.
3. Town of Bluffton Storm water MS4- will submit once SCDHEC OCRM permit received.
4. US Army Corps of Engineers wetlands permit extension - pending
5. Town of Bluffton Final DRC for site work permit- we will submit once all permits above are received.

### **What is the issue with the US Army Corps of Engineers wetlands permit?**

The existing wetlands permit for the Buckwalter Parkway planned unit development expired December 31, 2021. The church's 10 acre parcel was one of the last undeveloped parcels in the Buckwalter Parkway so expiration of the permit prevents us from any development on the property until the Corps of Engineers assesses our property lines with respect to the wetlands. We have applied for an extension of our previously allowed property lines. If the permit is granted it will be a two year extension.

### **Who is handling our permits through the approval process?**

We have contracted with Andrews Engineering in Beaufort to manage our permit applications and work through the approval process.

### **Are there any other issues with the permits?**

The staffs of the various government groups involved have been impacted by COVID, so they are running behind normal turnaround times for permits. These organizations do permitting on a first in – first out basis, so we are just waiting on our turn in the review process.

### **Development Project (Phase 1)**

#### **What is in the scope of Phase 1 of the development project?**

Although the extent of scope is dependent on funding, what is required to satisfy our permits is the following:

1. Installation of a silt fence on the property
2. Storm water control measures – drainage conduit, lagoon, irrigation system
3. Removal of trees, removal of upper layer of soil (grubbing), and grading
4. Parking lot and curbing
5. Importation of soil to augment existing soil

6. Grading, fencing, and seeding the athletic field
  7. Grading and seeding the area designated for future building (south end)
  8. Temporary transformer\* and electric supply for the irrigation system
  9. Buckwalter Parkway access
- [\*location of a permanent transformer will depend on the location of building pads]*

**What is not in the scope of the current development plan?**

Since there are no structures planned to-date, building pads will not be installed on the south end of the property. There will not be water and sewer on the site so restrooms will be “Porta-potties”.

**What are some of the challenges that will be faced during Phase 1 development?**

The major challenge with developing land and building in Beaufort County is dealing with drainage of water and soil stability. This site is one of the few remaining undeveloped sites in the Buckwalter Parkway development zone. As surrounding sites have been developed, soil has been covered with buildings, roadways, and parking lots. This site is currently taking runoff from existing developed sites. A mitigation plan for dealing with the runoff is in place.

**Will the trees that are removed have value as timber?**

Yes, to the point it might offset some small portion of the cost. Also remember that the short-term value of the trees is that they are helping to suck up water on the site. Part of why local authorities having jurisdiction over this site don't want you clear cut it and then leave it sit.

**Who is the general contractor for the development of the site?**

We have not selected a general contractor. In 2021 we were working with Aspen, a church design-build firm but our site development contract expired at the end of 2021, before any work began.

**Can we partially develop the site, using only the money on hand, and stop development?**

We must do the work that has been agreed to with the Town of Bluffton Development Review Committee. The scope of work for that development has been estimated to cost \$1.8M. In order to use only the money on hand (approximately \$731,000) we would need to go back to the Town of Bluffton with a reduced scope of work. They would have the same concerns, i.e. no building on the site. In addition, it is very unlikely that \$731,000 would be sufficient to develop the site for outdoor ministry.

Another option that has been suggested has been to stop development and wait until more funds are raised. Again, the Town of Bluffton would need to be advised of that plan. There is also a significant additional cost of remobilizing equipment on the site.

**What if we sell the property as-is?**

The property's purchase value (\$600,000) might be recovered. The lapsed wetland permit and undeveloped state could make it less attractive to buyers. The Bluffton Ministry would also be without space for future expansion.

**Why is an athletic field in the plan?**

Since Phase 1 does not include a building, the Town of Bluffton requested development of a purpose for the site. The athletic field was a compromise that allowed us to put in site egress and a parking lot.

An athletic field also has a role in the Bluffton Ministry as a site for 'ministry through sport'.

**Why is a lagoon in the plan?**

We need the capacity of the lagoon to control storm water runoff onto the site. Lagoon water will be used for site irrigation.

**What will be the egress plan from (and to) Buckwalter Parkway?**

The current plan egress is very similar to what we experience entering and exiting the Pope Avenue site with an entry lane, a left turn (out) and right turn (out) lane. The Town of Bluffton is reviewing access to businesses along the Buckwalter Parkway. The access plan is considering including a traffic light at the entrance to Washington Square on the west side of Buckwalter Parkway. An access road from that light that bounds Lord of Life's property and our property connecting to the traffic light at Lord of Life's parking lot is under consideration. That will negate the need for the egress directly from the Buckwalter Parkway. Regardless, that egress from Buckwalter Parkway will be the temporary construction entrance to the property.

**What are the major cost items in the project?**

Imported soil is a major cost item. High quality soil is in short supply in the Lowcountry due to the building boom. In order to build the appropriate grade and compression, soil must be imported. In order to control costs, the contractors will be asked to keep all excavated soil (e.g. from the lagoon area) on-site. Material and labor costs have increased in the past year, raising the cost of the project overall.

**Finances****What is the cost of Phase 1 development?**

We had a development contract (unsigned) with Aspen for the scope of work that was \$1.8M. That contract lapsed at the end of 2021. In order to start the work we will need a new contract with a developer.

**What money is available to begin Phase 1?**

There is approximately \$730,000 on-hand to begin work. The church is seeking approval of a \$1.2M loan from Truist. We will need confirmation that we are in the loan approval process to begin discussions with a developer.

**What are the monthly payments on a loan?**

Monthly payments will be \$6959.52.

**Will there be additional costs beyond development over the long term?**

Yes, there will be additional insurance costs, utility costs, and program costs (e.g. sports programs). The

athletic field and associated equipment will need to be maintained. The lagoon will require maintenance. The parking lots and any new structures will require maintenance. None of these costs have been identified or included.

**Will there be a capital campaign to raise funds? Will it cover both campus' needs?**

We are beginning the process of launching a capital campaign. The first step is to select a consultant. The Building Committee has identified 3 candidates that we will be interviewing in upcoming weeks. Following the interviews we will select one candidate that will be recommended to church council. After the selection the consultant works with the church to prepare a feasibility study that costs 10 – 20% of the total cost of the campaign. The feasibility study will take into account all of the capital needs of the church at **both** campuses. The consultant will present this study with recommendations before proceeding with the campaign.

All of the consultants that we are interviewing will cost the church approximately \$50,000 - \$60,000 for a three year campaign. That figure does not include ancillary costs associated with fundraising, e.g. printing costs, catering costs, or website development.

**Are there other sources of funds?**

We plan on seeking grants and sources outside of the church congregation for funds. The campaign consultant might be able to help us in these areas but success in obtaining funds through these sources is an unknown.

**Sports programs on the athletic field have been mentioned. How will these be funded?**

There are grants available to fund sports programs that could help with start-up of the programs. There have already been some donations to the Bluffton ministry from outside the church that were designated for 'ministry through sport'.

**Revenue from the property has been mentioned. Do you have plans for revenue – generation?**

The immediate plans for revenue generation that are being discussed with the Building Committee involve use of the athletic field as a training field for soccer teams. These discussions are in the very preliminary phase.

**Church Approvals/Status**

**What church approvals are required and what is the status?**

St Andrew adopted expanding into Bluffton as a mission in 2014. In the fall of 2015 a congregational vote approved the use of capital campaign funds for site preparation of the Buckwalter property.

The current work funding and loan acquisition has been recommended by the Building Committee (established in Sept. 2021) and approved by the Finance Committee, Church Council, and the Trustees. The District Superintendent and the District Facilities Committee have also reviewed and endorsed the plan. The goal to develop the property was in the Senior Pastor's 2022 goals which were also approved at a Charge Conference at the end of 2021.

**Who is on the building committee and how does it function?**

The Building Committee is comprised of seven voting members: Dave Deis, chair; Sherry Conrad, vice-chair; Floyd McKeag, Josh Tiller, Shirley Sigler, John Boyles and Bruce Trimbur. There are a number of people that serve in ex-officio capacities: Jeff Jones, church advisor; Sarah Coffin, Church Council Chair; John Troyer, Finance Committee chair; David Manning, youth advisor; Phyllis Brodie, church advisor. Monica Barricks and Lois Chandler also provide support and assistance. Pastors Robin Dease and Daniel Burbage are always available to address questions. The committee has recently agreed to build a bank of church members interested in assisting as subject matter experts. This will allow us to tap the considerable expertise in the church.

The committee currently meets every two weeks via Zoom. We also meet for special circumstances, e.g. interviewing the capital campaign consultants.

**How do I contact the Building Committee?**

The best way is to email the church. Your questions or comments will be forwarded to the Building Committee.

**Bluffton Data - Attendance and Financial Data****What is the current in person and on-line attendance?**

On average, attendance both in-person and on-line is over 175 people (2020 data). This matches in-person attendance in 2019 (pre-pandemic). In 2019, in person attendance in Bluffton was approximately 33% of the overall weekly attendance at St. Andrew (approximately 500 people/week in 2019).

**How long does it take for a start-up church to be self-sustaining?**

Data from the Methodist Church indicates approximately 8-12 years is the norm for a church to become self-sustaining. The Bluffton ministry was started in 2015 (7 years) with 2 years (2020 – current) during a worldwide pandemic that shut down in-person church attendance.

**How many giving units are there? Are we starting to track Bluffton giving vs. expenses?**

As of January, 2022 budget year member pledges and donations were not tracked by campus. Some members attend services at both church campuses. On-line giving also does not specify 'campus' with on-line giving being a major portion of periodic donation (more than plate collection). Since this has become a concern with some members an effort has been made to identify members with their respective campus.

Bluffton's expenses are identified on the current church balance sheet.

**Questions that we're working on****What is the next work of the Building Committee?**

Currently, our effort has shifted to the capital campaign. We are interviewing three prospective consultant groups. A recommendation will be made in March. Following that, if permits are approved, our focus will shift back to the development project and the selection of a general contractor to take us through the site development.

**Will there be a groundbreaking ceremony?**

Yes. We have some preliminary plans already but we are waiting on permit approvals to begin action.

**How will the athletic field be used?**

Local contacts have already been established and a sub-team has been formed to address this issue. Ideas have included soccer camps/clinics for youth and forming an agreement with traveling soccer clubs for site use. Ministry through sport is a well-established part of the Methodist church and provides a method of outreach to youth.

**A pavilion has been mentioned. Is that in the development plan?**

It is not in Phase 1. The building committee will discuss and propose various options to allow use of the site for ministry until permanent structures are built. A pavilion might not be a permanent structure but before it is built there must be appropriate approvals and funding must be available.

**When will the site be available for use?**

The project is expected to take approximately 8-9 months if work proceeds at normal pace and there are no major interruptions. Site access might be sooner depending on the general contractor and safety concerns.

**Will there be 'green' considerations in the site development?**

We are planning to use the lagoon as a source of irrigation water for the site. The parking lot will be composed of semi-permeable materials. The site development plan preserves vegetation on the edges of the property and does not infringe on the wetlands to the east of the property.

**What is the process for future expansion, e.g. buildings?**

The first step is to inform the church that the building committee will be investigating an expansion project. A plan for the investigation will be recommended to church council. If approved, we will likely involve an architectural firm to begin the concept design process. Concept design includes building a requirements document that involves members of the church through focus groups. Key subject matter experts will be asked to advise on items such as power requirements for the music program, space/facilities for youth, etc. State and local requirements, for example for disability access, will be factored in. Once this requirements document is completed, building costs can be estimated and presented for approval.