

95 MAIN PROJECT (PARSONAGE) LEASING TO NEW MAINERS: AN OVERVIEW

Why do this, and why now?

Addressing the needs of New Mainers has been the focus of much of First Universalist action for a few years. We ask what they need, and respond where we can. Housing has been a need since the beginning, but until now Yarmouth has not been a reasonable option. That's changing – Portland affordable options are in short supply; Yarmouth now has bus service; a New Mainer community is beginning to exist in Yarmouth; the Yarmouth Compassionate Housing Initiative (YCHI) exists. (*YCHI is a collaborative project of St. Barts, LDS, and First Universalist, providing emergency housing, meals, transportation, and even a pop-up shelter.*)

We now have the opportunity to connect with the New Mainer community right here – right now! In addition to offering much-needed housing, our vision includes connecting deeply with the New Mainer community. We could offer language classes, conversation time, 'housing coaching', and their participation in our social events such as Maine Farm Suppers and Music on Main concerts.

And, the Project will yield the monthly income as budgeted. We expect the new monthly rate will be about \$2400, \$1800 base plus \$600 for utilities (oil, electric, water/sewer, cable). We anticipate up to 4 separate leases (up to 5 unrelated people can live in a Yarmouth single-unit dwelling).

Who cares?

We are not alone in this New Mainer commitment. Several area organizations (grassroots and public-private partnerships) work together to support the New Mainer community, including: Opportunity Alliance, Portland's Family Shelter, Preble Street, In Her Presence, Supporting Immigrant Tenants/Prosperity Maine (housing coaching & security deposits), Welcoming the Stranger (mentoring & critical needs), ILAP (legal). We have connections to each of these organizations.

The current ad hoc group for this 95 Main Project include: First Universalist FIA members Jane Makela, Pete & Marge Titcomb, Sue Ellen Bordwell; and St. Bart's/YCHI member Carla Hunt.

What's next?

The ad hoc group (and others) is meeting weekly implementing the plan of action, addressing all questions identified to date, with the goal of occupancy by April 1.

95 MAIN PROJECT: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What are the long term implications? What if the new settled minister wants to live at 95 Main (in the parsonage)?

A: Nothing changes the long-term use of the building. The leases are short term, so we have the option of not renewing the leases. However, we think our new minister would view our use of the parsonage for New Mainers as a uniquely positive aspect of our congregation -- that we are living our mission.

Q: What about the lost income? What will this cost? Can we afford it?

A: Tenants will pay consistent with our budget, currently \$1800 net after utilities. The 4 new leases will be for about \$600 each: \$2400 total, which includes \$600/month for utilities.

Cleaning & repairs are volunteer tasks.

Q: Is this allowable under Yarmouth Zoning Code & Fire Codes?

A: Yes; occupancy is limited to no more than 5 unrelated adults. Fire Chief has no concerns; there is a second egress (back stairs and exit).

Q: Who is going to do the work? Do we have the bandwidth for another project? Who will oversee the project?

A: The board's Ad Hoc Team of YCHI & First Universalist people will oversee the work. Nearly 50 people from 4 Yarmouth churches have already stepped up with a variety of skills that fit our identified needs.

Q: How will the tenants be selected? Mixed gender? Singles? Families?

A: We are working with current leaders in the New Mainer community to identify tenants who will succeed in this rooming house arrangement. We are drafting our Application Form, Lease, and Interview process in line with Maine law.

For more information or to get involved, ask more questions or voice concerns, contact any member of the Ad Hoc Team:

First Universalist: Marge or Peter Titcomb, Sue Ellen Bordwell, Jane Makela
YCHI/St. Barts: Carla Hunt