

Central Baptist Church

Congregational Meeting re Fire Alarm System Upgrade and DBA (Doing Business As) Name Choice

October 4, 2026

Moderator Deb Nordstrom opened the meeting at 10:56 a.m.

Fire Alarm System Upgrade & Emergency Funding: John Page described the current issues and timeline necessitating the fire alarm system upgrade,

Current Issues:

- **Zone Five Malfunctions:** The main panel is experiencing recurring faults on zone five, triggering frequent false alarms.
- **Signal Failure:** During a recent alarm incident at 3:00 AM, the system failed to alert the fire department.
- **Outdated Infrastructure:** The current system—originally installed approximately 45 years ago—is completely antiquated, non-repairable, and requires full replacement.

Regulatory Mandates & Timelines

- **Fire Marshal Order:** Jamestown Fire Chief Howie Tighe originally issued a 30-day order to bring the building back to code. Due to active ongoing discussions and demonstration of progress, the fire marshal has granted temporary flexibility.
- **Town-Wide Mandate:** Jamestown requires all commercial and public buildings to upgrade to a new transmitter system by the start of 2027, as the old municipal transmitter network is being phased out.

Proposed Solution & Cost

- **Vendor & Equipment:** Coastal Electric evaluated the property and recommended installing a Kingfisher transmitter. Because the church has a direct line-of-sight to the fire station, a massive exterior antenna is not required, minimizing total costs.
- **Financial Proposal:** A maximum budget of \$14,000 is requested to cover the new Kingfisher transmitter, full system installation, and a new main fire alarm panel.
- **Consequences of Inaction:** Failure to approve these upgrades would result in the immediate loss of the building's occupancy permit, forcing a shutdown of church services, halting community space rentals, and voiding the property's fire insurance policy.

Financial & Cash Flow Status: John Andrews explained how the \$14,000 will be covered by the church finances.

- **Available Reserves:** The church currently holds approximately \$50,000 in combined cash reserves across all accounts.
- **Incoming Funding Streams:**
 - The church is awaiting an imminent \$17,000 check from the **Rhode Island Energy Grant** program tied to the solar panel installation, which will comfortably cover this emergency expense without creating a cash flow bottleneck.
 - An additional \$35,000 is anticipated in the spring from a federal direct-pay program.
- **Budget Status:** While the operating budget remains in a structural deficit, these capital funds ensure the project can proceed safely.

Action & Vote:

- Barbara Haskell made a motion to accept Coastal Electric's recommendation and approve up to \$14,000 for the complete fire system overhaul; seconded by John Andrews.
- The motion passed unanimously via hand vote.

Discussion and Vote on DBA (Doing Business As) Name Choice: Moderator Nordstrom introduced the second agenda item: the vote on the DBA Church name, a choice between the two top vote-getters at the September 20 Congregational Meeting:

Central Community Church

Church at 4 Corners

Discussion ensued.

- **Membership Governance & Constitutional Compliance:** Jean Britton expressed concerns that the congregation is not following official membership procedures outlined in the church constitution. It was noted that traditional steps for

admitting new members—such as recording names in the official registry, differentiating between active and non-voting associate members, and conducting congregational votes to accept presented candidates—have not been actively practiced.

- **Floor Responses:** Moderator Nordstrom acknowledged that while the strict letter of the constitution has not been followed for years, the congregation has long operated under a shared, collaborative decision-making process for passing budgets, projects, and general voting. She affirmed that everyone present is recognized as a deeply dedicated, active participant in the life of the church, making their participation in the day's vote entirely appropriate. It was confirmed that recent members (e.g. Cynthia Leonard) had officially joined via the traditional baptistry process.
- **Proposed "Doing Business As" (DBA) Name Change**
 - **Retention of Legal Name:** Moderator Nordstrom explicitly assured the congregation that there is absolutely no intention to change the legal name of the institution. It will permanently remain Central Baptist Church for all legal, historical, and property matters.
 - **Implementation of a DBA:** The proposal is strictly to select a "Doing Business As" (DBA) name for public relations, marketing, and community outreach. The goal is to provide an inviting, modern public profile to welcome the broader community.
 - **Community & Social Media Feedback:** Peggy Burse brought forward negative feedback observed on a local Facebook page, noting that several town residents expressed confusion or disapproval regarding a potential name change. John Andrews shared that he had reviewed the social media comments and noted that nearly all the online criticism originated from individuals who have not attended or been involved with the church in the last decade, if ever. One notable exception included a family member of a former congregant. Cathy Kaiser noted that initial resistance to change from others is expected. Once the strategic reasoning behind the DBA—such as distancing the local church from certain national regional resolutions—is explained, public perception will generally shift to understanding.
 - **Floor Responses:** Donald Haskell read a statement from Paul Hemp, who couldn't be at the meeting, providing reasons to choose Central Community Church as the DBA. Janet Smith reiterated that we will still be a Baptist church, but now with a new “nickname.” Duana Bucklin advocated for an additional name choice: Community Baptist Church. John Andrews pointed out that there is already a Community Baptist Church in Newport at the Martin Luther King Center.
- **Action and Vote:** Moderator Nordstrom restated that the agenda item is a vote on the DBA Church name: a choice between the two top vote-getters at the September 20 Congregational Meeting:
 - Central Community Church**
 - Church at 4 Corners**Board Leadership will formulate a clear public relations message to explain the DBA implementation to the wider Jamestown community following the vote.
- The congregation proceeded with the planned paper ballot vote to choose between the two final options for the new public-facing DBA name. Church at 4 Corners received 31 votes; Central Community Church received 7 votes. Church at 4 Corners will be the DBA name of Central Baptist Church.
- Cathy Kaiser noted that years ago the congregation faced a similarly divisive issue: whether to sell the parsonage. After the vote, the congregation moved forward in unity and can do so again now.

The meeting adjourned at 12:18.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cathy Kaiser