

Cherokee Retreat Center Lease Transfer Proposal

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the history and specific duties of the Administrative Commission (AC) for the Future of Cherokee Retreat Center?

Commissioned in November 2014 and fully appointed in February 2015, the Administrative Commission for the Futures Planning and Implementation of Cherokee Retreat Center and Camp was established for the two year period of 2015-2016. The major roles and responsibilities shall be “to plan and implement partnership processes, with careful attention to creating the form and style of appropriate covenant agreements and then to seeking, securing, and sustaining partners committed to CRCC’s long-term sustainable mission and ministries. Note that the CRCC Futures Planning and Implementation Team should engage in an open process with latitude to adopt, adapt, or replace the guidelines as appropriate or necessary.” The administrative commission has met frequently during the 2 year period and has engaged in meaningful conversations with the CRCC Operations team. Having faithfully and prayerfully explored numerous options and with the end of the commission approaching, the CRCC Futures Administrative Commission is prepared to make specific recommendations for a transfer of Cherokee Presbytery Properties lease for the CRCC at the November 15, 2016 Stated Meeting of Cherokee Presbytery.

2. Why is the Futures AC proposing a lease transfer at this time?

After serious and extended conversation between the Futures Administrative Commission and the Operations Team, it has become clear that to continue to maintain the Cherokee Retreat Center facilities and a safe and vibrant camping program is beyond the financial and human resources available to Cherokee Presbytery. In the midst of these conversations, the presbytery was approached by several entities enquiring about taking over the facility. In Presbyterian-speak, we call this Providence. A lease transfer now will allow the Presbytery to focus on the ministry of camping and outdoor recreation with people of all ages without the burden and the liability of maintaining the property.

3. How will Bartow County use the facility and to whom will it be available?

Bartow County will operate the retreat center under its Parks and Recreation division. As we understand, they will eventually operate overnight camp programs as well as day camps on the grounds. The facility will be open for public rentals just as any other county recreational facility. Cherokee Presbytery and our member congregations will be able to reserve the facility for events.

4. Will this end our obligations to the Army Corps of Engineers?

Yes. When the lease is transferred, our legal obligations to the Army Corps of Engineers will come to an end.

5. What other options did the Futures AC explore?

We have worked over the past two years to rent the facilities to outside groups in an effort to cover our ongoing operational and maintenance expenses. These rentals have helped offset the operational costs, but they do not cover the total operational expense. In addition, we are aware that to continue to keep the camp safe, attractive, and competitive with other area facilities, a significant capital investment is needed. Cherokee Presbytery does not have those resources. In addition, we have explored partnerships with other denominations and non-profits to share both the risk and reward. We have not been able to identify a willing and capable partner. With the help of a consultant from the PC(USA) camping ministry, the teams investigated other camping and hospitality models. Again, the needed investment in deferred maintenance and facility improvement along with additional full-time staff made the options untenable as well. As a last-ditch resort, the Operations Team investigated "moth-balling" the camp for now in hopes of one day being able to return to a viable program at the facility. In light of changing demographics of our congregations (most of us have very few children in our pews!) as well as the cost of maintaining the property even at a minimal level made this option unattractive.

6. Why are we transferring the lease for no cash payment?

The cost of "moth balling" the camp is estimated to be \$5000-\$10,000/year. The Operations Team estimates a cost of over \$200,000 over several consecutive years to restore the camp to fully operational status. The estimates of cost for returning the property back to its original state as per the requirements of our lease begin at a minimum of \$300,000. The facilities are in fair but not good condition and require substantial investment. Ultimately, transferring the lease to Bartow County will save Cherokee Presbytery expense we cannot afford.

7. Can we still have summer camp at CRCC?

Yes! The Futures AC is working to secure dates for Camp Cherokee for several years into the future right now. In addition, the facility will be available to Cherokee Presbytery for weekend events just as it is available to anyone else in the area. Moreover, Bartow County has indicated that, for the foreseeable future, the name Cherokee Retreat Center (or Camp Cherokee) will be retained which is another way to continue our legacy of more than 50 years of ministry in this sacred place.

8. What will happen to designated camp funds?

Cherokee Presbytery's Treasurer and Bookkeeper are investigating the requirements of our current endowed funds to assure we comply with the donor's intent. To the extent possible, all funds previously designated for camper scholarships and other camp uses will be used for our ongoing camping program.