***General Body Meeting March 23, 2019 (Remarks by Ravi Khattree):***

As you know, you can choose your friends, but you cannot choose your neighbors. Look at India and the neighbors she is stuck with. The similar concerns have always been with our Temple. We want our neighbors who are as cooperative as we are. With that in mind, we had been trying to purchase the Old stone school – the house at the corner of South Blvd and Adams for more than 25 years and had not been successful.

The opportunity presented itself recently, when with some twist of fate, the house was owned by city and city decided to have a closed bid auction for it. We clearly have vested interest in this property. After a special emergency meeting of BoT, we decided to act on it. Despite short notice and close deadline, we worked hard and put a bid. We also won the bid recently and our offer was also formally approved by Troy City Council during its March 18, 2018 meeting. I was there along with Dr Saini and city did have several questions from us, which I was able to answer. Our BoT on its march 17, 2018 meeting, has approved by majority voting, a plan to own this property and in due time integrate it to temple property for meaningful use. I will leave the financial details to other speakers from LRPC and FC.

Stone house is a part of the Troy historic district – meaning as part of the history, it should be preserved. Having a historic property will be a source of pride for the Temple. Having a historic property within our campus is a good community relation. Having a historic property with makes us more visible. In sixty years, when the temple currently recognized as the “best of troy” will be 100 years historic property itself, it will have a preserved property which is 250 years old. Our future Hindu community will indeed be proud of what we will create for them today to showcase to fellow citizens.

There are other aspects to consider as well. First, as indicated earlier, we must avoid, if we can, neighbors who are difficult to deal with or may lack mutual respect. By purchasing this property, we have taken care of this problem for any foreseeable future. Not purchasing this property, leaves this problem persistent for ever as the ownership may change. Secondly, if we do not own this property now, we may lose control forever. As I read during the meetings with city and Historic District Society, City does not have money to maintain this property and would like to unload this property as soon as possible. A deteriorating structure right in front of our beautiful temple for years to come is not good for the image of the temple. God forbids, in desperation to get rid of it they take a step which hurts the look and image of this very presentable and beautiful temple, then we may be at a great loss. Someone with a commercial enterprise, if moved in there, will inevitably use our parking lot for their customers without authorization. Economy changes, times change. What if this plot is rezoned as commercial?

Yes, there are financial commitments. But they are all not immediate. They will come in phases. Our responsibility is also to preserve the exterior of the structure in the original form, shape and look. Increase in insurance will be minimal. Maintenance expenses such as snow removal, grass cuts will add only a small part in our overall contracts. However, interiors can be remodeled to fit our needs. Extra land can be used to build other structures if the need be. The whole pond when owned exclusively by us can be used as a dam to divert our winter precipitation only to be used wisely during summer for our sprinkler system. Pond of course, has other religious uses as well. However, such decisions are to be made in due time after proper consultations with experts as well as general body. The first step is to ensure the ownership of this property.

History of ownership of this property as documented by city is on our website. I hope you have read it.

Finally, I want to cite a phrase from Katyayan-smriti:

विरोधी यत्र वाक़यानम, प्रणामम तत्र भूयसत.

तुल्य प्रमाणक्तवतु, न्यायः ईवा प्रकीर्तथह.

From *Katyayana-Smriti*

(*When there is contradiction, the decision by the majority is considered as the authority. (But) where evidence is of equal weight, the (common sense) reason/logic is considered the authority.)*

The equal weight, in worst case scenario, here refer to short term expenses involved with this purchase and long-term gains realized from it. We as BoT feel that long term gains outweigh any short-term expenses. Common sense, reason and logic must prevail in this case.

I close my remarks by thanking you. I will now make a presentation indicating the positives and negatives of owning this property.

Thank you. -Ravi