

Cornwall Property Ballot 2019

Letter From Council

DATE

Dear U.S. Grail Member,

The Grail Council is coming to you -- our Grail sisters -- to seek your permission to sell the Grail property at Cornwall. We make this request with regret, but as a necessity for our future.

Efforts to plan for a Grail future at Cornwall began in 2011. Yet Grail members have not been able to develop a viable plan. Not enough people are willing to make a commitment to living in a residential Grail community at Cornwall. Neither can we continue deficit budgeting and loss of financial resources. The Grail does not have either the human capacity to manage, staff, and oversee maintenance of the property or the financial means to justify hiring others to do this essential work. As a result, we have determined that we must stem the bleeding of Grail financial resources for a center that no longer sustains the Grail work. We also must, in good conscience, adhere to International Grail policy which states that Centers need to be self-sustaining.

In a May 2018 vote, a majority of Grail members (55%) votes yes that it is time to sell the property. However, Grail by-laws require a two-thirds vote to approve sale of property. The management staff members at Cornwall have retired, and the cost to continue to hold the Cornwall property is at least \$50,000 a year. We implore each of you to consider the cost of saying no to selling which means continuing to hold vacant buildings and unused land.

Since spring of 2018, several Grail members attempted to develop a plan for continuing Grail ownership. This valiant and heart-felt effort did not produce a sustainable plan for the Grail in terms of staff and finances. The Council offered consultation and assistance to this effort, which the team did not use. Although the group asked for another year to develop its proposal, the Council has not seen evidence that another year of effort would move us any closer to sustainability (staff and finances) needed to hold the center.

Enclosed is a ballot for your vote on selling the Grail property in Cornwall.
For your vote to count, this ballot must be postmarked by September 30.

The Grail Council and staff need to have authority to sell in order to list the property so that both the Grail and interested parties can be protected in the transaction.

Please read the accompanying documents on the Cornwall Center background, which includes a brief history of Cornwall and the efforts that have been put in place over the past eight years to plan for its future. In addition, both the June and July issues of Gumbo include articles about the Cornwall situation and the decision we face.

We – your Grail Council – respectfully request your support for this important step so that we might move together to imagining a future the U.S. Grail can embrace.

Thank you,
U.S. Grail Council

Cornwall Property Ballot 2019

Things to Consider

FACTS:

- The Grail does not have the human capacity to operate Cornwall. Management staff members have retired, and no other management level staff have come forward.
- We will continue to face large, unsustainable deficits were we to hire others to keep Cornwall open.
- Cornwall is too far removed from the UN to use for a two-week period each year during the Commission on the Status of Women.
- The U.S. Grail has been operating at a deficit averaging \$200,000 a year for over a decade for a total of \$2 million over ten years.
- The policy of the International Grail promotes the guiding principles of solidarity, self-reliance, subsidiarity, accountability, prudence, and creativity for all financial activities at local, national, and international levels. (page 53 of International Council Manual)
- Income from the sale of Grail property at Cornwall will be allocated according to the Grail's asset policy.
- A portion of the proceeds from this sale will support future Grail work.
- **Sale of Grail property at Cornwall could allow for rental of meeting space in NYC. (put in bold.)**
- Investment returns would be available for projects and programs in the our country and internationally to promote our Grail vision and mission.

CONTEXT:

- Grail members have used Cornwall for retreats, meetings, and gatherings less and less frequently in recent years. Can you give an average number of times used by Grail over the past 10 years?
- The management staff members at Cornwall have retired, and no members have come forward with the skills to manage the property sustainably.
- **Cornwall has never been used for agricultural purposes nor is it zoned for such use. (put in bold)**
- The U.S. Grail is an aging movement with the majority of us in our retirement years -- 67% are over the age of 70 and 85% over the age of 60.
- Fewer members can commit themselves to full-time work in Grail centers or projects.
- In a larger context, Grail retreat centers are among many within the U.S. that have closed in recent years. We are not alone.

- With others (such as religious communities) in similar situations, we hold it in faith that something new is trying to come forth. We hope to be attentive to new opportunities.
- **New York nonprofits, such as Lower East Side Girls Club and Middle Collegiate Church, Benincasa, and Rural and Migrant Ministries, have expressed some interest in possible purchase of the Grail property. The Grail Council and staff cannot proceed with conversations prior to permission from membership to sell. (put in bold)**

RECOMMENDATION:

- The Cornwall Future Task Force (2016-2017) -- building on the work of the Cornwall Think Tank (2011-2013) and Cornwall Dream Quest (2012-2014) -- made the recommendation to Council in January 2018 for the sale of all Grail property in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York.

LIKELY NEXT STEPS:

- A skilled task force will be put in place to invite, receive and evaluate offers to purchase the land and buildings at Cornwall.
- The task force will evaluate offers to purchase, keeping in mind Grail mission, vision, values and needs
- The task force will make recommendations to Council.
- Council will communicate recommendations and proposed actions to Grail members.
- **Sale criteria will include:**
 - a. asking price at our appraised value.
 - b. follow sale priorities indicated by members, including conservation and/or other socially responsible uses.
 - c. Interest in possibility of working relationship with Grail members and programs.
 - d. all offers vetted vetting of offers as to funds available to pay full negotiated purchase price at closing.
- If we do not sell now, we may eventually be forced to sell to the highest bidder with no restrictions.

Cornwall Property Ballot 2019

Cornwall Property Ballot Survey Questions

1. *This decision requires approval by 2/3 of those voting.*
 - YES, I agree that Council and Council representatives have permission to negotiate the sale of Grail property in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York, with priorities as indicated below.
 - NO, do not proceed with selling Cornwall property.
I understand this means the Grail will accrue expenses of \$50,000 or more per year to hold the property, and that the Grail does not at this time have staff to manage the property.
 - I abstain from voting.
2. *Regardless of your vote (yes, no, or abstain), please indicate your preference if the property is sold. Your preference for the use of the property will guide the Council's negotiations regarding sale.*

Rank your preferences with a number:
[1] for your 1st choice, [2] for your 2nd choice,
[3] for your 3rd choice, [4] for your 4th choice.

If the Grail votes to sell, Council will follow the sale criteria listed above under *Likely Next Steps* and the priorities indicated by members through this vote.

I prefer sale of the buildings and land in Cornwall, NY for [place number in brackets]:

- [] **Socially Responsible Use:** Sell at full market value to socially responsible non-profit organization with values similar to the Grail.
- [] **Conservation Organization:** Sell at negotiated price to protect land for the wider community.
- [] **Development:** Sell the land with no restrictions at its "highest and best" market value and use the funds for future Grail work.
- [] **No preference and will accept best option identified by leadership.**

Please note any other concerns you may have about sale priorities:
