

St. Margaret's sold to Brass City Charter School

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WATERBURY – An appeal to the Vatican defeated, St. Margaret of Scotland Church and associated buildings sold to the Brass City Charter School for just over \$1 million last week.

Brass City Charter School opened in the former St. Margaret's Catholic School building on the church's Willow Street campus in 2013. At the time it made lease payments to the parish.

The church has since closed, and the parish merged with five others. Payment for the land sale will go to the new All Saints, Todos Los Santos Parish.

The sale will allow Brass City Charter to pursue an \$7.5 million renovation program aimed at preparing the school to serve children through eighth grade. The school is dedicated to helping close the achievement gap experienced by minority and low-income students.

"We came to an agreement to buy the property because we all needed to move forward, especially us," said Andy Sternlieb, chairman of the school's board of trustees. "We are finally happy to own the property and to be able to provide our kids, our staff and the families the modern facilities they deserve."

Sternlieb said he anticipates the project, including purchase price, to cost about \$7.5 million. The project will involve renovation, not demolition, of existing structures and begin this summer, he said.

Last May, the Archdiocese of Hartford announced a wide-reaching plan to close churches and consolidate parishes in the face of dwindling attendance and a shortage of priests.

In Waterbury, St. Margaret and five other parishes would merge as All Saints. Four church buildings would close. Our Lady of Lourdes and The Shrine of St. Anne would remain to service the new parish. St. Margaret is the first building to be sold.

A few St. Margaret parishioners hired a canon lawyer to fight the closure. Some contended Catholic authorities didn't give St. Margaret a fair hearing due to the presence of a ready buyer. The canonical argument behind the appeal was never made public. The appeal was defeated.

Brass City paid \$75,000 cash last week and signed an agreement to repay All Saints the remaining \$965,000. The school anticipates receiving and handing over an \$850,000



St. Margaret of Scotland Church. Republican-American Archives

facilities grant from the State Department of Education within the next two months, according to closing documentation.

Brass City anticipates folding its remaining \$115,000 debt to All Saints into financing for the multi-million-dollar renovation project.

Richard Corrigan, formerly a member of the St. Margaret Finance Council, has been the most vocal opponent of the closure. On Monday, Corrigan said he'd like the Archdiocese to comply with a request the St. Margaret parish and finance councils made in early 2017 – that sale proceeds be put into a scholarship fund.

“We wanted our legacy to be Catholic education, so you had something of St. Margaret,” Corrigan said. “I don’t believe that will ever be the case. They are so out of shape financially down there and they need that money.”