

Analysis of the CMI Reopening Plan

Respectfully submitted by:

John Spelman
President, Rhode Island Association of Camps
Executive Director, Aldersgate Camp and Retreat Center

Analysis Response from CMI

Canonicus Ministries will clarify key issues raised in this report. Look for the yellow boxes.

Preface

Camping has long been one of the most meaningful ministries in my professional life. I believe deeply in the power of camp to shape lives, build resilient communities, and create sacred spaces where young people and adults encounter growth, friendship, healing, and faith. Faith-based camping, in particular, offers something increasingly rare in modern life: time set apart for reflection, belonging, and transformation.

That conviction is especially strong in Rhode Island. Camps in this state hold a unique place in the fabric of local communities. They are often multigenerational institutions where children become counselors, counselors become donors, and families return year after year. They preserve open space, create jobs, serve churches and nonprofits, and offer young people formative experiences that can echo across a lifetime.

Since the COVID era, however, the camp industry has faced significant strain. Across New England and throughout the nation, camps have closed, consolidated, sold property, or struggled under the weight of deferred maintenance, staffing shortages, changing family habits, and rising operating costs. Every closure is more than a business event—it is the loss of a mission, a gathering place, and a piece of communal memory.

Because of that reality, my instinct is always to hope for thriving outcomes. I want camps to succeed. I want ministries to endure. I want sacred outdoor spaces to remain active and life-giving for future generations.

At the same time, hope is strongest when paired with honesty. The purpose of this report is to provide a clear-eyed, practical assessment of the proposal under consideration, its strengths, risks, feasibility, unanswered questions, and strategic implications. This is not written to discourage vision, but to strengthen it through realism.

Good decisions require both imagination and facts. My aim is that all parties involved can move forward not with confusion or wishful thinking, but with clarity, knowledge, and confidence about the road ahead.

I should also be clear about the nature of this report. I am not serving as a formally retained consultant, auditor, engineer, attorney, or licensed valuation professional in this matter. No fee has been paid for this work, and this document should not be mistaken for a formal due diligence report or technical study. It is simply an independent professional opinion offered in good faith.

What I bring instead is practical experience. My perspective is shaped by a career working in camping, particularly in Rhode Island and within faith-based camp and retreat settings, where I have spent years navigating the real challenges of operations, enrollment, staffing, facilities, budgeting, governance, and long-term sustainability. These observations come from ***lived industry experience rather than detached theory.***

Responses and observation to this report also come from “lived industry experience rather than detached theory”. There is nothing more practical than good theory combined with visionary thinking which is grounded in empirical data.

We have well over 150 years of ‘property management’ alone on our current board.

Bolded italic text in the original report has been added to show the issue we are addressing in the report.

Facilities Assessment and Capital Readiness

Any discussion of reopening the Canonicus property must begin with the physical condition of the facilities. While the site retains significant strengths, natural beauty, existing infrastructure, waterfront access, lodging capacity, and strong nostalgic value, the buildings and systems appear to require substantial reinvestment before operations could responsibly resume at scale.

Based on currently available assessments, there would likely be at least \$148,800 in immediate capital improvements required before an insurance carrier would be willing to insure the property for active camp, retreat, or rental use. These types of threshold items typically relate to life safety, code compliance, building systems reliability, deferred maintenance, and other risks that carriers view as non-negotiable.

Beyond basic insurability, the broader cost to make the site reasonably viable for reopening to campers, guests, and rental groups is estimated at approximately \$321,800 total (inclusive of the \$148,800 above). This larger figure reflects the difference between simply being insurable and being operationally ready. A property may technically secure coverage yet still fall short of the standard guests, parents, churches, and retreat groups expect in today's market.

There are two primary critiques of the Canonicus Ministries proposal. The first is that capital improvement/deferred maintenance is overwhelming and therefore impossible.

Does the property need capital improvements? In a word, YES. Canonicus Ministries has said that from the beginning. We have had a professional architect evaluate the buildings and provide a report. The bottom line summary is many structures need 'refreshing' for example new carpet, new paint, new furnishings or a mechanical replacement but the fundamental infrastructure is in place. We have secured some bids on high priority projects. We are not unaware of the numbers.

The real question is does Canonicus Ministries have the money to fix it and do we have a strategic plan for phasing in repairs? Yes and Yes. Our strategic plan is based on revenue management. Fix the high priority repairs that will support the highest revenue streams. We will reboot the conferencing and retreat function first as we then move aggressively to reclaim the resident camp operation. We have raised \$550,000 to date for the restart of operations and we need additional funding that we will raise from foundations and supporters.

We have a letter of 'insurability' from a major camp insurer but cannot go through underwriting and be granted a policy until we have a legal commitment with the property.

In addition, there is a further \$81,000 in known capital improvements and projects that would likely need to be addressed over the next five years to improve competitiveness, guest satisfaction, and long-term marketability. These are the kinds of projects that help a camp move from merely open to genuinely attractive in a competitive environment.

Importantly, these totals do not include funding for program enhancements or replacement of program equipment. Items such as waterfront gear, ropes equipment, arts and crafts resources, sports inventory, camp furniture, AV systems, signage, and activity-area improvements would require additional investment beyond the facility figures above.

In practical terms, this means reopening should not be viewed as flipping a switch. It is better understood as a phased capital relaunch requiring sufficient upfront resources, realistic timelines, and clear prioritization. Any proposal that relies on rapid reopening without dedicated facilities funding carries meaningful operational and reputational risk.

Registration Projections Analysis

A central question in evaluating the Canonicus reopening proposal is whether the projected registration and revenue expectations are grounded in recent history and current market realities.

The last full “normal” operating summer for the site was 2019, when Canonicus recorded:

- **98 camper-weeks of day camp**
 - **132 camper-weeks of overnight camp**
- These are the most recent actual demand figures available prior to closure and before the pandemic-era disruption.***

These are not market demand numbers but low enrollment numbers. And current enrollment is now at zero with 5 years of shut-down. The second key critique in this report is that the Canonicus Ministries proposal for enrollment is too optimistic.

The real marketing question is can we offer a ‘camp’ or a ‘conference’ experience that delivers the kind of quality outcomes that families are looking for at a price they can afford. And can we deliver that message in an effective way.

Yes, that is a challenging mission. Vision minded organizations love challenges. The marketing plan contained in our proposal and the supplemental fact sheet makes two key points. #1 - the big picture numbers of potential customers are documented in the overall marketplace. Those represent the empirical potential for optimistic growth patterns. If Canonicus Ministries does not provide the life changing programs or get out that messaging then enrollment will not be sustained. We can do that with God’s blessing and effective leadership. # 2 – we have shared two regional case studies (Camp Sentinel and Grotonwood Camp) that are demonstrating success. Some dismiss those examples because “they are not the same as Canonicus or RI”; that is what we call a “limiting belief”. *Limiting beliefs are false assumptions or negative perceptions about the world that restrict a person's potential and prevent them from pursuing their goals.* If we get the roadblocks out of the way, Canonicus Ministries can be successful like our ABC brothers and sisters to the north.

Methodology of This Analysis

The proposal itself does not translate budget assumptions into explicit camper counts. To evaluate feasibility, the camper-week figures in this report were developed independently by extrapolating likely enrollment totals from the proposal's stated revenue goals and comparing those revenues against average tuition levels charged by local day camps and regional faith-based overnight camps.

In other words, these projections are not quoted directly from the proposal. They are inferred estimates of the enrollment volume likely required for the proposal's financial model to succeed.

That distinction matters: if the budget requires a certain revenue total, the organization must either generate that through camper volume, higher pricing, outside subsidy, ancillary income, or some combination thereof.

Overnight Camp Revenue Translation

Using regional tuition averages, the proposal's financial assumptions appear to require approximately:

- Year 2: 235 overnight campers
- Year 3: 305 overnight campers

- Year 4: Nearly 400 overnight campers

Comparison to Historical Performance

Against the last actual overnight total of 132 camper-weeks in 2019, this would represent:

- Year 2: +78% above 2019
- Year 3: +131% above 2019
- Year 4: +200% above 2019

This suggests the proposal depends on Canonicus becoming materially larger than it was in its final operating years.

Day Camp Revenue Translation

Based on local competitor tuition averages, *the proposal's budget appears to require approximately:*

- **Year 1: 120 camper-weeks**
- **Year 2: 130 camper-weeks**
- **Year 3: 260 camper-weeks**
- **Year 4: 312 camper-weeks**

Random trivia: when Canonicus day camp was started 37 years ago. Year one launch was 376 camper weeks; year 2 was 575 camper weeks. Rapid growth can happen. The Canonicus Ministries budget projections to your left for 2027 are much more modest 😊

Comparison to Historical Performance

Compared with the final actual day camp total of **98 camper-weeks in 2019**, this would represent:

- **Year 1: +22%**
- **Year 2: +33%**
- **Year 3: +165%**
- **Year 4: +218%**

Again, this suggests the proposal depends on Canonicus becoming materially larger than it was in its final operating years.

Overnight Camp Market Analysis

The proposed overnight camp growth should be evaluated against both the historic performance of the Canonicus site and the larger overnight camp market, especially within faith-based and mainline Protestant camping.

At Canonicus, the last normal summer before closure was 2019, when the site served 132 overnight camper-weeks. That figure is the clearest pre-COVID benchmark for the property itself.

The broader market picture suggests caution. The Outdoor Ministries Connection (OMC) director survey, which tracks mainline Christian camp leaders over time, found that the pandemic hit camping ministries hard: about half of camps were fully closed in summer 2020, almost all others operated with reduced capacity, and the effects were still being felt in 2021. In its 2022 findings, OMC reported that while three-quarters of camps saw enrollment improve from the prior summer, only about a quarter had returned to pre-pandemic levels, and overall camper numbers still remained well below 2019.

That is consistent with what many camp leaders have continued to observe in the years since: recovery has happened, but it has been uneven, especially for overnight faith-based camps, which often depend on long-standing church relationships, trusted tradition, and multi-year family habits that were disrupted during COVID. OMC's own commentary also points to a continuing weakening of congregational ties,

noting that only 28% of responding directors in 2022 described their connection to congregational ministries and their faith tradition as “strong or very strong,” down from 41% in 2016. Because mainline camps have historically relied on congregational networks for camper recruitment, that erosion matters directly for overnight enrollment.

This challenge predates COVID. Sacred Playgrounds’ long-running analysis of Christian camping describes a steady decline in summer camper numbers among many Christian camps over the last decade-plus, tied to denominational decline, demographic change, and the weakening of the old church-to-camp pipeline. That helps explain why reopening a faith-based overnight camp today is not simply a matter of turning the lights back on; it means re-entering a market that was already under pressure before the pandemic and became more fragile after it.

There are also broader national headwinds. The American Camp Association has warned of an ongoing demographic cliff, driven by a long decline in birth rates and a projected falloff in high school graduates through at least 2036. ACA notes that these demographic pressures, combined with pandemic-related staffing and enrollment disruption, are reshaping the field. Even where demand is healthy, the environment is more competitive and less forgiving than it was in the pre-2020 period.

Taken together, the market does not suggest that overnight camp is impossible. It does suggest that rapid growth projections should be treated carefully. A reopened Canonicus would not be returning to the 2019 market; it would be entering a more difficult one, where mainline Christian camps are still rebuilding, denominational referral systems are weaker, and national demographics are moving against easy enrollment growth.

For that reason, the most prudent feasibility posture is to assume a slower overnight enrollment recovery, especially in the first several seasons. Conservative planning would treat pre-COVID numbers as an upper benchmark to rebuild toward, not as a floor from which immediate growth should be expected. On the evidence available, a realistic market analysis supports reopening only if leadership is prepared for a gradual rebuild in brand trust, church relationships, staffing, and parent confidence rather than a rapid return to historic or aspirational overnight volume.

Summary and Professional Assessment of the CMI Plan

The Canonicus Ministries Incorporated (CMI) plan is rooted in a sincere and commendable desire to restore camping ministry to the Canonicus property. Its strongest feature is mission alignment: it seeks to return children, youth, families, and churches to a site with deep spiritual and communal history. In that sense, the proposal speaks directly to the emotional and ministry hopes many stakeholders understandably carry.

The plan also reflects optimism about the continued value of faith-based camping and a belief that renewed leadership and focused effort can reactivate a dormant asset. That vision has merit. Reopening camp ministry on the site is possible under the right conditions.

However, from a feasibility and financial planning standpoint, the proposal appears materially underdeveloped in several key areas.

1. Insufficient Recognition of Upfront Facilities Revitalization Costs

The largest concern is that the operating budget appears to understate, or omit, the significant capital investment likely required before the property can reliably reopen.

Earlier facilities review indicates:

- Approximately \$148,800 in likely immediate improvements before insurance carriers would reasonably insure active operations
- Approximately \$321,800 total needed to make the site viable for reopening to camp and rental groups (inclusive of the prior figure)
- An additional \$81,000 in known capital needs over the following five years to maintain competitiveness and marketability

These figures do not include program equipment, waterfront gear, furnishings, activity resources, or other guest-experience investments.

Importantly, most of these revitalization projects are the type of work that must be completed by licensed outside contractors pulling permits, such as electrical, plumbing, roofing, structural, fire/life-safety, septic, and code-related upgrades, and should not be assumed achievable through volunteer labor alone.

If those capital requirements are not separately funded, they will place immediate pressure on operating cash flow and could quickly destabilize the reopening effort.

2. Camper Enrollment Targets Appear Too Aggressive

The plan's enrollment assumptions, particularly for overnight camp, also appear optimistic relative to both site history and current market conditions.

The last normal summer in 2019 produced:

- 98 camper-weeks of day camp

- 132 camper-weeks of overnight camp

The proposal's implied revenue model appears to require rapid growth beyond those historical numbers, especially in overnight camp. This comes at a time when many faith-based camps nationally continue to experience softer overnight enrollment than pre-COVID levels, slower family commitment cycles, and greater competition for summer time.

In practical terms, the plan seems to assume not only a successful reopening, but a near-immediate market expansion beyond the site's last proven operating performance.

That is possible, but it should be considered an optimistic scenario, not a base-case planning assumption.

CMI presents a meaningful ministry aspiration, but as currently submitted it does not rise to the level of a financially credible reopening plan. It appears materially under-capitalized, overly dependent on aggressive enrollment assumptions, and insufficiently developed around known recurring costs and immediate facility liabilities.

In its present form, the proposal risks confusing hope with feasibility. Without substantial new capital, significantly revised projections, and a more rigorous operating model, there is a serious likelihood that reopening under this plan would lead to early financial distress, deferred maintenance compounding further, and another operational setback for the property.

The same caution extends to the broader ABCORI shared-use concept. While partnership and space-sharing may improve revenue potential on paper, those arrangements do not eliminate the underlying need for major capital improvements, code compliance work, insurable conditions, and infrastructure readiness. Multiple users sharing a property can increase complexity, wear, scheduling pressure, and liability exposure, but they do not reduce the upfront cost of bringing aging facilities to an acceptable operating standard.

Put plainly: neither plan can rely on creative occupancy models to solve basic capital realities. The vision may be sincere, but the current proposals are not strong enough to recommend as responsible standalone paths forward without major revision, substantial outside funding, and a realistic facilities reinvestment strategy.

What does ABCORI have to lose?

As stated consistently in our proposals, if the property is turned over to Canonicus Ministries and they "fail" to develop an impactful ministry that is fiscally solvent; the contract would return the property to ABCORI, Inc.

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|-----------------------------------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| Known Improvements Needed Before Insurance | | (\$ 148,800.00) |
| Total Known Capital Improvements Before Habitability | | (\$ 321,800.00) |
| | | |
| Capital Improvements for Marketability or Next 5 Years | | (\$ 81,000.00) |
| | | |
| Total Known Capital Expenditures Over Next 5 Years | | (\$ 551,600.00) |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|--|--|----------------|--|----------------|
| | | (\$ 65,000.00) | | | (\$ 16,000.00) | | (\$ 81,000.00) |
|--|--|----------------|--|--|----------------|--|----------------|

| | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Resident Camp | (\$ 13,440.00) | (\$ 162,000.00) | (\$ 210,600.00) | (\$ 264,600.00) |
| Day Camp | (\$ 54,000.00) | (\$ 58,500.00) | (\$ 117,000.00) | (\$ 140,400.00) |
| Other Youth Camp Rentals | (\$ 30,000.00) | (\$ 81,000.00) | (\$ 90,000.00) | (\$ 33,600.00) |
| | | | | |
| Campers to Make Budget | | | | |
| Resident Camp | 19 | 235 | 305 | 383 |
| Day Camp | 120 | 130 | 260 | 312 |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Day Camp Comps | | | | |
| South County YMCA, Peacedale | (\$ 450.00) | | | |
| Kent County YMCA, Warwick | (\$ 450.00) | | | |
| | | | | |
| Overnight Comps | | | | |
| ECC | (\$ 600.00) | | | |
| Grotonwood | (\$ 825.00) | | | |
| Sentinel | (\$ 750.00) | | | |

| | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|--|--|--|
| Wightman | (\$ 650.00) | | | |
| Aldersgate | (\$ 625.00) | | | |
| Average | (\$ 690.00) | | | |