



Temple Beth Abraham

25 Leroy Avenue
Tarrytown, NY 10591
Phone 914-631-1770
Fax 914-631-7872

David K. Holtz, Rabbi
Margot E.B. Goldberg, Cantor
Stuart P. Skolnick, Director of Temple Operations
Rabbi Allison Berlinger, Director of Education
Dr. Paul R. Siegel, Rabbi Emeritus

MINUTES

TEMPLE BETH ABRAHAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

August 5, 2014

Next Meeting – Tuesday September 2, 2014 @ 7:30 PM

Attendees: Herb Baer, Alan Berkson, Neil Bruckner, Karen Filler, Allison Fine, Cantor Margot Goldberg, Steven Gosset, Jen Greenspoon, Julie Gur, Rabbi David Holtz, Jodie Lane, Glen Markowitz, Marla Peers, Jen Povman, Loren Ratner, Mel Savitch, Jennifer Schwartz, Stuart Skolnick, Michael Sonkin, Mark Stein, Jamie Wilson

Meeting commenced at 7:35PM.

Invocation: At sundown, we will have completed the fast of Tisha B'Av, the day on which all of our major Jewish tragedies occurred. Of particular interest for Rabbi, today, was the idea that, since Israel's existence, the Reform movement decided that we have been redeemed with the State of Israel and many Conservatives stop their fasts at noon. Oddly, though this is the saddest day, it is thought that the messiah will be born on this day. Out of sadness, we look for a glimmer of hope. Looking at what is happening in Israel today, we can hope that there is hope for the future. Also, we are not permitted to plant fruit trees on Tisha B'Av; one of Rabbi's colleagues said that if you have a sapling in your hand when the messiah arrives, first finish your planting. Trees are important as symbols of hope, perhaps more important than the messiah. The first thing we ought to do after something horrible happens, we need to look toward the future. Rabbi thinks we should start a new custom that everyone should plant a tree the day after Tisha B'Av.

Approval of Minutes: Approved with corrections.

New Business

Issue with timely tribute acknowledgment letters – Herb:

This letter does not describe an isolated incident. Herb sent out the letter to ensure that all on the board was aware of the issue and added that the office is

addressing it. Stuart apologized and asked for our indulgence as they work to correct this. As a result of this negative issue, they have reassessed their entire procedure, which will make it more efficient. Previously, they were handled in batches; new procedures will ensure a timely response.

Review of High Holyday Guest Ticket Policy – Herb

Holiday tickets are a benefit of being a member of TBA and include some family members, whose ages and relationships are specified in our policy. Guest ticket purchases are also permitted with specific guidelines to prevent non-members from buying tickets when they might have become members. Under a donations model, this will need to be given more thought and will have to be addressed separately. For now, there may be ways to address this issue. A congregant last year had come to Herb feeling unsettled about having to buy tickets for their grown, but dependent, children who are still living home. Herb also looked at another congregation and the result is what is being proposed:

- Proposed change for complimentary adult children age cutoff from under age 25 to age 26 and under. There was much discussion. Allison suggested that we eliminate the age restriction. Steve asked if we knew how much money we got for purchased tickets. Approximately, \$15,000 is what we made last year; Glen estimated that \$5,000-\$6,000 was for tickets for adult children. Steve noted that at his parents' synagogue, there are no tickets and they are able to invite others to their services. Glen said that he would suggest capping the number of tickets at what they had originally been entitled to (whatever the family size was before they reached adulthood) and suggested that we open this up only to families who meet their full financial responsibility. Others, including Allison and Jodie, suggested that this information is confidential and that it doesn't help in making us a welcoming community to do that. Additionally, as noted by Herb, as we move from dues-to-donations, this would be a moot point.

Steven suggested that we make this a policy of, perhaps, only a few paragraphs; it will limit confusion and still allow us to make revenue.

We discussed that we wanted to encourage our married children to stay connected to TBA and adding 'dependent' might preclude some from participating. At that point, the Rabbi added that he hopes that people feel obligated to support their temples and that this has been an ongoing problem.

The final proposal, made by Allison and seconded by Julie, allows that children of members may receive complimentary High Holyday tickets. Reference to “dependent” and age are to be removed from the document. It was agreed that the actual wording would be finessed by Herb. Fifteen members voted in favor of the proposal, with three abstentions and one opposed. Mel voiced concern that we are being too loose with our finances and that this vote has an immediate impact on our budget. Herb agreed that he would have preferred to bring this to the next meeting but that time is of the essence and any change needed to be made now, before the HH packets go out.

Karen added that, having agreed to this significant change, we should definitely use it as a selling point.

- Proposed change to include free Guest tickets for various Mitzvah Circle levels:

There was considerable discussion about this, including the fact that people are actually confused about the actual difference between the Mitzvah Circle, Fair Share, and their ramifications as relate to the Annual Appeal. We agreed not to look at this item this year but instead return to it next year in sufficient time to come to a decision.

What is the role of the Board? Deferred.

Revised Board Meeting Dates for longer “stretch-out” meetings – November, February and May – Herb: Herb gave some background information about this item for those who missed the original conversation. Essentially, we agree that we will have some large agenda items that will take a longer-than-usual amount of time to adequately discuss, such as dues-to-donations, fundraising campaign, etc., and that rather than carry on very late into the evening, we might perhaps change some of our meeting dates to allow for such deep conversation. Mark Polisar, in particular, voiced concern about changing the schedule, noting that many of us agreed to be on the board based, in part, on the schedule, while others opted not to be on the board for that very same reason. In deference to Mark, as well as others, who are not at the meeting tonight, Herb felt it appropriate to table this item until next month.

Old Business

Update on Homeland Security Grant Proposal - Herb: The security committee had applied for a Homeland Security Grant and it was not approved, after making to the second level in the process. This was the third year that they had applied and the third time their proposal was denied.

Moving Forward with 2013 Approved plan for parking lot lighting – Herb: Because grant monies could not be disbursed for projects retroactively, the security committee had previously asked for approval of the parking light expense in the event that the Homeland Security Grant was not approved. So, we will now go forward with this. Stuart and Neil acknowledged that this won't be completed so quickly, as they now must apply for a variance and the village will have to call a meeting/vote of the neighbors who will have to approve the petition to install the lights. Given that this proposal had been suggested by the Tarrytown police department, it seems unlikely that it will not be approved.

Proposed Roof Repair over south portion of building – Neil: Neil reviewed the portion of the roof that will be impacted by this repair. It will encompass the side of the building where the chapel, sanctuary, and clergies' offices are, as well as the foyer and social hall. Neil said that he checked on every suggestion that had been previously made except solar panels but would do that if we requested. He explained that this would include installing a new air conditioning system as it would have to be removed to repair the roof and that the system, itself was old and in need of replacement so they decided to do both at once. The question was asked if they might also consider including the hallway from classroom 13 to the end, but Neil noted that if we did that, it would be wasteful and costly, as the air conditioning would be on all the time in the bathrooms. To mitigate the heat problem in room 13, Neil said that we have two air conditioners that had been on the bima before the sanctuary renovation and that one could be installed in room 13.

The proposal was to allocate funds not to exceed \$100,000 for this project. We currently have about \$400,000 in the building fund. The board voted 18 for; one abstention (Mike Sonkin), to approve the expense.

Update on Sharon Abner and plan for substitutes – Cantor Margot: Sharon continues to improve and she may well leave the rehab by the end of August. Although her spirits are high and her improvement continues, she is in no way able to come back to work at this point. Consequently, Cantor has hired two organists: one to play at our HH services and one who will be at most of our

Friday night Shabbat and Saturday b'nei mitzvah services. Because Sharon's had been working at TBA for 30 years, her salary was higher than we will be paying the two organists and Cantor expects that she will come in under budget.

No separate teen services for High Holydays – Herb: This is mentioned only for informational purposes. As the High Holyday packets are going out shortly, Herb wanted us to be aware of this should anyone be asked.

Update on Sanctuary Ark Doors – Herb: The doors are expected to be ready in time for the High Holydays. The design is an etched etz chayim (tree of life).

Financial Report - Mel: Mel noted that we find ourselves at the end of the fiscal year solvent. And in answer to the question about the amount of dues we still seem to be owed, Mel believes that not all of this money is actually owed, that some of the people thought to still be members are actually no longer members. This discrepancy is part of an ongoing issue that we continue to work to resolve.

Mel also added that, henceforth, each committee will receive a monthly RA (Revenue Adjustment).

Comments/ Announcements:

Israel Bonds: Rabbi proposed that we invest some of our liquid assets in Israel Bonds. We used to do so, and it was Rabbi's and Mel's guess that when the last bonds matured, they were redeemed but not reinvested. Jodie made a motion, seconded by Marla, to ask the finance committee to invest some of our liquid assets in Israel Bonds, as they see fit. Motion moved, unanimously.

Steven also suggested that we consider investing in other Israeli companies that are publicly traded; this vote would not preclude us from doing so in the future.

Paying dues with Investment Capital – Karen: Karen noted that Glen had mentioned this last month and it's something that she believes could have significant merit if we advertise this. In essence, a stockholder can pay his dues with the transfer of stock to the temple; this allows the stockholder-member to pay dues and avoid paying capital gains tax on the stock's earnings, and because they are donating the appreciated security, they can then take a tax deduction as with any other cash donation. The temple sells the stock, again without having to pay taxes on the sale; Glen said he did this last year and found it very simple to do. There was excitement around the room about this idea and it was agreed that the concept, with explanation, be communicated to the congregation through the High Holyday literature with the additional suggestion that Herb might perhaps mention it in his HH speech.

Young Adult Networking Opportunity – Karen: Karen explained that there are many college- and post-college-aged TBA children who might benefit from networking with, and outreach from, other TBA community members who may be able to connect them with internships, jobs, etc. She has asked that this be included in a future agenda.

Jamie asked that we reconsider Herb's High Holyday ticket item number 2, above, because she believes that this has the potential to bring in a significant amount of money in donations but because we had already voted not to address it this year, we did not act upon it. Jen Greenspoon added that we need to start thinking about this much earlier next year, should we want to make any changes to our policy regarding Mitzvah Circle and complimentary tickets.

Meeting adjourned at 9:37PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marla A. Peers