



Temple Beth Abraham

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TEMPLE BETH ABRAHAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING Minutes Tuesday, September 9, 2014

Members present: Herb Baer, Karen Filler, Rabbi David Holtz, Cantor Margot Goldberg, Steve Gosset, Gulie Gur, Liza Karsten, Jodie Lane, Phyllis Leary, Glen Markowitz, Rick Misrok, Kimberly Marcus, Mark Polisar, Jen Povman, Loren Ratner, Mel Savitch, Jennifer Schwartz, Meredith Siegel, Stuart Skolnick, Michael Sonkin, Mark Stein, Risa Swersey, Jamie Wilson, Marla Peers

Meeting commenced at @ 7:38 PM.

- I. Invocation: In keeping with what we do as we approach the High Holydays, Rabbi said he would like to apologize for anything he may have done to hurt one of us but he further has asked that we come to him and actually tell him, because he would like to be able to respond to it.
- II. Approval of Minutes: approved with corrections.
- III. New Business

A. Presentation of Pre-Campaign Assessment Report from Fundraising consultant (Evans Consulting): Herb began by explaining to new board members about our decision last year to hire a consulting firm and introduced the firm, who gave a presentation.

Bob Evans and Bob Isaacs walked us through the entire report that we received via email last week.

Bob Isaacs:

1. We have not had a major campaign in years;
2. Everyone in the synagogue world is talking about endowments and

their importance in synagogue survival. We need to become a culture of asking and a culture of giving.

3. We need continued transformation of our building and endowment-building.
4. Americans are returning to giving and this year is expected to exceed the levels of giving in 2007, which is when donating reached its peak.
5. Presentation is split into several parts – introduction; statistics; our campaign. As questions arise, we've been asked to chime in.
6. Statistics: they asked a little bit about money but more about connections. They can almost predict at least 50% of the responses in any campaign at this stage, based on the ease with which people respond and arrange for the interviews. For this step, it was exceedingly easy to schedule the appointments. This was seen as a very positive sign, before they even asked the questions.

The 36 interviews represented over 60 people. See the handout for the specifics, which were explained by Bob Isaacs.

Respondents loved the religious school but there was concern about the change in school leadership.

2/3 of the people believe that the synagogue is carrying out their mission, aims, and vision. Only a small percentage did not know what they were.

Mike Sonkin asked how many people were invited to the interviews. Their goal was to get about 35 interviews. They had more on their prospect list to ensure that they would get to fill 35 spots. The prospect list was comprised of 65 households. They preferred both partners in the family, though they did not always get both people. Almost everyone met them at their home. They don't conduct their interviews in public places. No one requested that they meet at TBA, which they claim is another positive sign.

In response to Kimberly's question about how the people were chosen, Bob Isaacs sent a pie chart with four major categories telling us who they were looking for: leadership; possible donors; 60% of the pie needed to be "people of wealth" that was defined by previous giving to the temple and knowledge of their giving to other organizations.

Risa asked them to turn to page 9 in the printed document as she was confused with the conclusions about lay leadership. She had difficulty with the comments vis-a-vis the statistics listed. They said

that those comments were based on some “rumblings” though perhaps not on the actual numbers which does indicate a disconnection between the congregation and lay leadership. We are, they say, getting better, moving in the right direction.

Biggest strengths: professional leadership; religious school; warmth. Greatest challenges: physical facility; connection and communication with members; programming/services; lay leadership.

When people come into the building, they feel welcomed, but they don't feel as if they are actually connecting with people, leaving after services, etc., without feeling connected with others. Bob Evans said that they are hearing this very thing in Reform synagogues all over the country.

Jodie said that we've been working really hard to make people feel warm and wonders if they will be able to help us. They said that the perception is what people have and that it's difficult to change perceptions. What they know is that changes can be remarkable and made overnight, but the perception won't change overnight. Jodie said that if people are saying that we are not giving them what they want and we have been killing ourselves to give, will this consulting group help us figure out what it is they do want?

They said that what they hear all over is that there is insignificant programming for seniors and older adults.

Rabbi added that this is something we've been struggling with for a long time. But he added that we are doing better than we had been.

The consultants actually think that this report card, while not all A's, is actually pretty good. “We do, more or less, have our act together as a congregation.”

Top endowment priorities:

1. Education (number 1), first children, then general; family planning.
2. Addressing communication from staff to congregants and among congregants; the marketing of the congregation.

Of little importance, are green environment and technology.

Likelihood for campaign support: majority of participants (95%) believe TBA can make a meaningful case for the proposed campaign. Importantly, 85% were prepared to support the campaign financially. 70% are willing to support both a capital and endowment campaign. The numbers were lower than they wanted to see in terms of the amount people might be prepared to give, though they found a higher capacity to give than people were actually willing to give.

The people interviewed also thought that the rest of the congregation might not be as willing to give as they are. The consultants said that this reflects that we are not a culture of giving.

Note: this is NOT a feasibility study but a pre-campaign survey.

29% were willing to be on the campaign leadership team; 24% are willing to ask other individuals for financial support; and 82% might be willing to host an event, indicating a strong statement of connection.

Bob Evans:

They tested a \$5 million goal, meaning that is the amount that they think we can bring in, which is not as high as they had hoped. The rule of thumb is the lead gift – not necessarily the first gift that might be as much as 1/3 of the total amount. They did not hear a 7-figure number from any of the respondents. Therefore, they are recommending that they go into the next phase (the “quiet phase”) without an announced goal. They would bring top leadership and top potential donors. The capabilities exist to raise a significant amount of money; there are people in this area who are giving very large gifts to other organizations and they are waiting for presentations to the congregation, waiting to have “their socks knocked off.” Some might wait for others to donate and others may want to lead. They think that a \$5 million pledge should take about 18 months to complete with five years to pay. 10% of the gifts given last year were in legacy giving. Planned giving needs to be a large part of this campaign and they expect to reach out to people over 65.

They expect to build a campaign team with a chair. Their organizational chart is included in the appendix of the study.

In response to a question by Glen, it was admitted that we don't actually know all of the members who have a significant amount of money. The firm said that some sophisticated software exists that can help us find who they are; this will help them guide us in the campaign.

What else has to happen?

- A multi-phased facilities plan
- develop and approve donor recognition and gift acceptance policies
- develop program of donor recognition opportunities. We should say "thank you" in seven different ways and donors how they want their donation acknowledged. It was noted that in 2008-9, most synagogue donations were anonymous; this has changed;
- planned giving

What the campaign organization will look like:

Chair; chairs of the following committees: major gifts; special gifts; congregational gifts; planned giving; financial oversight; communications and special events

Major Gifts would be considered \$100,000 or more;

Special Gifts: \$25,000-\$99,999;

Congregational Gifts: under \$25,000.

We will need to monitor receivables to ensure appropriate and accurate oversight to ensure that the money is received over the course of five years.

How much will this cost to run (excluding their fee) – a person dedicated as part-time support staff at \$30,000 (not volunteer); promotional materials (\$20k); donor recognition (\$7,500); special events (\$5,000); campaign software (\$3,500); postage (\$2,500); miscellaneous for items such as renderings of upgraded building or other undetermined items (\$10,000) = \$78,500.

Gift Range Chart: \$5,000,000 Goal

They believe that they can get:

2 \$1,000,000 gifts

8-10 six-figure gifts

30 “special gifts” (see above)

160 “congregational gifts” (see above)

The norm for them is 70%; this is a low-ball estimate (about 50%). They are looking at both total dollars and percentage of participation.

Steve asked how a campaign like this would square with all of the other things we are asking money for and also questioned how this will impact how we are looking to change our dues structure. How will these donations going to impact the other fundraising activities?

The campaign they are looing at is a “one-time” campaign in addition to the other financial commitments affiliated with TBA. The primacy of regular giving can’t be jeopardized and some people may not make the high donations they might have made because of their other financial obligations to TBA. Most people give because they are asked.

Jamie said that at her parlor meeting, many of the families complained that they were asked too much and too often. Bob said it was an excuse. Jamie acknowledged that those people didn’t say we shouldn’t ask, but should perhaps ask in a different, more targeted way.

The firm said that giving during this campaign will be asked as an “above and beyond” what they are already giving to TBA.

Glen said that we collect about \$900,000 in dues and that we don’t collect even 10% of that in donations. He believes that this shows that we have nothing to lose and that even if this fails, we will still get 7-figures out of this. Glen asked what we should start doing now – do we start printing literature now, etc.? Bob replied that we first need to commit to doing the campaign and signing with his firm, then get a core group together to find a campaign chair (individual or couple), then put the rest of the committee chairs in place. Once they have been recruited, Bob’s firm would want to meet with them to put together their committees, then move forward to put the campaign together. Then they would conduct training, a campaign handbook, and a prospect identification list and to do research to ensure that the people they’ve identified are legitimate prospects. Then they will ask

us to make financial commitments – 100% participation at a capability level. They will start going to their prospects; once they are ½-way down, and this should take about 6-8 months, they would go into the public phase.

The last 5% of any campaign is the most difficult, sometimes requiring that we revisit donors who have made pledges because we think they might be able to do more.

They would finish with a milestone event and recognize donors.

Risa spoke about the dues-to-donations issue and that we have to know whether or not the two can be done together. She said that in some ways, it's actually happening, but not 'run' by leadership. How do we know that one doesn't hurt the other. Liza said that she said that it is believed by the coach at Con-con (connected congregations) that we can do both of these things together but that it will be critically important that both teams come together to create a symbiotic program. She plans to get the Con-con group to put together this and Bob would be part of the conversations.

Rabbi said that other congregations who have done this have all said that they have been very successful and that this will change us into a culture of giving. Congregations all over the country succeed at this and we will not be the ones to fail. We may not do fabulously, but we will be able to make significant and wonderful changes to our synagogue.

The proposal was handed out to members present. Bob Evans Consulting would charge a monthly retainer. They do not charge by the hour. One of the things we are **not** hiring them for is to be a professional solicitor. They will guide us and teach us how to fundraise. They do everything possible to be the coach, mentor, prodder to make this happen. Any agreement with Evans Consulting can be terminated with a 30-day notice.

Mark asked how we will find the expenses to pay the consultants and pay for our expenses before we have income from the campaign.

It is acceptable that 10-12% of a campaign is expenses. Campaign

expenses come out of campaign income. Rabbi said that we have ½ million in donations to help cover it. Rabbi is confident that we will have enough money to cover our expenses.

Herb gave us some choices – to vote to contract with Evans Consulting tonight or take the time to consider the proposal and vote at a future meeting. The proposal that we were handed was actually elaborated on this evening. Rabbi said it's in keeping with everything else we have heard. Three groups had made presentations and their fees were all similar. Last year, the board agreed that if we moved to a capital campaign, this would be the group. That group decided to split it into two segments, the first of which was just completed. Liza said that she is thrilled to finally have this opportunity and that it's a win-win, and encouraged all of us to step outside of the box and envision the possibilities.

At Kimberly's request, we are taking a brief recess so anyone wishing to, can read the proposal, allowing us to vote.

Liza made a motion to give the executive committee the authority to enter into a contract with the Evans Consulting Group to begin an Endowment and Capital Campaign in accordance with their proposal. Mark Polisar seconded. Seventeen voted in favor; none opposed; one abstention (Mike). Jamie suggested that we put together the committee before we contract with Evans. Liza countered that we could really use their expertise to help us choose the right people. Herb noted that, with this authority, he would negotiate somewhat and not sign immediately.

B. High holyday greeting calls (Loren): for the past three years, the board has agreed to call congregants to wish them a Happy New Year. We have been asked to call the names on each of our lists which were distributed at the meeting. Get in touch with Loren or Meredith if you need to amend your list. A script was given out as a guide, should we need one. If for some reason we are falling behind, please reach out for assistance in completing the calls. If we get specific feedback, please share it. We have to follow through on questions, complaints, etc. If we encounter an incorrect telephone number, call the office please.

Family services for HH are on the afternoon on the first day of Rosh

haShana and the afternoon on Yom Kippur. Attendees are usually not members. If anyone decides to join the service to greet, it would be appreciated. Loren will email a sign-up. Liza and Jodie agreed to help.

Opening Day, Religious School: Membership Committee will be hosting a brunch. Any committee can sign up to have a table and committees are responsible for putting on the table what they wish to display. Sharon deLevie will be there, as well.

Religious School: Mark – first Monday school went fairly well.

C. High Holyday update (Herb)

Patti Potash is no longer serving as head usher, something she graciously did for many years. Herb put together a new method for aliyah invitations which will be changed next year if it doesn't work well. He is unsure how it's going at this point in terms of comparing responses to the old way, although it seems to be going okay. After the fact, we will discuss how it feels to be invited that way. Irene and Jodie were following up with those congregants we had not yet heard back from.

Staffing will be the same as last year, with a security guard to monitor the older kids; and uniformed police in the lobby and in the parking lot.

D. Networking between members and recent graduates looking for jobs (Karen): Tabled.

IV. Old Business

A. Revised board meeting dates for longer “stretch-out” meetings – Sunday November 2, Sunday February 1 and Sunday May 3 (Herb): Tonight's lengthy meeting, mostly surrounding our fundraising campaign, provides a great example of why we might choose to have some of these “stretch-out” meetings to keep us from getting too exhausted to discuss other less lengthy agenda items.

Herb proposed that, in lieu of Tuesday night meetings in November, February, and May, we meet on Sunday. Herb will send out a meeting wizard for November, choosing a date and giving two different time slots,

B. Status of roof repair over south portion of building (Neil): Work stopped for a couple of days because we needed to get a variance. We are back on track and expect to be finished by the HH.

V. Financial Report

Announcements for HH: Stuart asked that if we have anything we would like to have included please get in touch with him by the end of the week, Sunday the latest so that it can be included.

Advertising in Enterprise and Hudson Independent went out and will be out there for several weeks. Ads were passed around for anyone who has not seen them.

Rabbi added that Rabbi Allison will be making a presentation for interfaith families tomorrow at the Warner Library.

Greeters for Services: went out by Irene but Herb has asked that each of us please add our names to the sheet that was passed around.

Backpacks for La Asociation: Kimberly said that we are still collecting backpacks should anyone still wish to make a donation.

Mazal tov to Jodie and her family, as Hannah is being called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah.

Risa came to Shabbat services on her birthday and everyone wished her happy birthday. It was great to have her birthday remembered by her TBA family and really loved spending a good part of her birthday in the company of TBA members.

Jamie commended Melissa Baer for calling 20 families on the Caring Committee on her birthday and right after she came home from vacation.

HUC honors program – Benjy was chosen for this exciting and inspiring program.

Raffle for President's parking spot. Herb recalled that this was the first time he met Barb Burg and it was important to him to continue this tradition. He noted that a second spot will probably be auctioned, as well.

Next Meeting – Tuesday October 7, 2014 @ 7:30 PM
Meeting adjourned at 10:40PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marla A. Peers