



Temple Beth Abraham

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TEMPLE BETH ABRAHAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING Minutes

Tuesday, December 2, 2014 @ 7:30 PM

Attendees: Gayle Aaron, Herb Baer, Alan Berkson, Karen Filler, Allison Fine, Steve Gosset, Jen Greenspoon, Julie Gur, Rabbi David Holtz, Liza Kartsten, Jodie Lane, Phyllis Leary, Kimberly Marcus, Glen Markowitz, Rick Misrok, Marla Peers, Mark Polisar, Jen Povman, Loren Ratner, Mel Savitch, Jennifer Schwartz, Meredith Siegel, Stuart Skolnick, Michael Sonkin, Mark Stein, Risa Swersey, Jamie Wilson

Meeting commenced at 7:37 PM

- I. Invocation – Rabbi said that usually it’s quite difficult to get people to be on the board but this past year was not so difficult, that people realized that this is the type of decisions that leaders need to make. What we are faced with is leading the direction of liberal Judaism. We have a bright and exciting future as a congregation and hope that we can look to that and not allow fears to keep us from where we need to go. Rabbi is incredibly impressed by these last several meetings by the work we are doing.
- II. Approval of Minutes
November 11, minutes. Approved as written
November 23, minutes. Approved as written
- III. New Business
 - A. Authorization for Bank Account for Capital Campaign: felt it was appropriate to have Stuart and Gayle (chair of capital campaign) as additional signatories, outside of that which is in the bylaws, generally requiring that one of the signatories be a member of the executive committee. Mel noted that he didn’t feel that we needed a separate account with separate signatories, which is not in accordance with our bylaws. He would like it to reside in the general ledger with Chase. Mel also believes that, as treasurer, he will lose control over the account and he is uncomfortable, as the responsible person. Stuart did note that Evans Consulting suggests as separate account. As long as there is a separate line item for the capital campaign, Gayle is comfortable with it.

At the Rabbi's suggestion, we will table this until we hear from Bob Evans with an explanation of his thoughts.

B. Clergy Parsonage:

- Cantor Margot asked that it be included in the minutes that she would like to declare \$50,000 of her income as parsonage for the year beginning 1/1/15 through 12/31/15.
- Rabbi would like \$65,000 declared as parsonage and will remit proper form.
- Allison Berlinger would like to declare \$21,000 in parsonage for the year 2015 (Mark Polisar, on her behalf).

C. Disposition of Kosloff Fund and Wexler Fund – Mel noted that the Kosloff Fund is in the negative (was a music fund) and it's not being used. Mel would like permission to dissolve it. The Wexler Fund has a small balance and he would like the fund to be absorbed into the general ledger. The motion was unanimously approved.

IV. Old Business

Dues to Donations Task Force Report: Remained to be discussed from last meeting was the sequencing of events. Included in this discussion are proposed bylaws changes, which Stuart distributed at the meeting (also sent via email) for review and discussion.

Highlights of Mark Polisar's proposal: Basic concerns that he heard were the fact that dues-to-donations would happen at the same time as the capital campaign; we have no safety net in place; and that we are hoping to get new members. Lastly, there was a question about whether the sustaining level was geared toward families and individuals at the same level. He proposed that initially new and returning members would get the dues-to-donations benefit with the hope that this would be rolled out to existing membership.

Mark Polisar noted that the original proposal is completely different from that which was initially proposed and he is nervous about that, suggesting that perhaps we can test out what they have put together without it being scary. What he proposes is an alternative. Jodie brought up the possibility of hurt feelings by some not being offered this. The other is that she doesn't think that it's really a valid way to see if we can retain members, post-b'nei mitzvah. Others similarly felt concerned about present members wanting to leave because they weren't included. Allison noted that the changes to the original proposal were intentional, and came about as a result of feedback from all of the meetings with members.

We are discussing the sustaining amount is per member unit – per household.

In response to the per family/per person basis issue, Michael Karnes said that to get recognized as an individual donor, one would have to pay a significantly larger amount (on a per-person basis) to get that honor. The issue of how to recognize people came up and was also discussed.

What it means to be a member has not been resolved. Rabbi believes that the delineation of single and family membership has been arbitrary. There are singles who can afford more than some families but are only asked to pay a lower, single member amount. The number of adults in a household does not impact the family use. But because we have been in this multi-tiered system, many are finding it difficult to accept. The decision to make it a single sustaining level was made on the recommendation of Dan Judson, the originator of this concept, and to keep it as simple as possible. The language that we choose to use has to be carefully chosen to make everyone feel welcome and accepted.

Michael Sonkin said that we are all struggling with how this will be implemented and feels that we have to take the time to figure out what it is we are looking to do and how. Some agreed with this and others felt that time is of the essence and that we should take a leap of faith and move forward.

Michael Sonkin said that he has heard that this is really a timing issue, not that it will not get done.

Risa brought up that when we were interviewing consultants for a capital campaign, she was concerned about the dues-to-donations project that had already garnered a lot of attention and despite her voiced concern, we voted to hire a consultant. Allison felt that to roll out a capital campaign and not the dues-to-donations would feel like a bait-and-switch. Herb noted that we could roll them both out at once and he also noted that we could choose to roll one out, then the other, announcing that one would precede the other. Mark Stein asked if rolling one out both at the same time might have a negative impact on the capital campaign, making some think that we are not being fiscally responsible.

In response to Mark Stein's question, the first phase of the capital campaign would be completed during the winter, around the same time we would be starting conversations about dues-to-donations, with dues-to-donations to actually begin with the new fiscal year.

Glen wondered if we might be able to delay the active phase of the capital campaign to 2016 to enable us to roll out dues-to-donations without the appearance of a conflict.

Kimberly asked that the board have oversight over these programs. Communication, in general has been sorely lacking at TBA and she is concerned that this will not get the attention required.

Jodie added that the key is to turn not being able to pay and feeling shame to a feeling of hope without inadvertently ruining the privacy that exists today. That is the only stumbling block.

Allison added that regardless of what system we go to, if we don't get better at making people feel valued and appreciated, we won't be here in five years. The board should be engaged in reviewing communications material and that we might even be able to get another consultant from Connected Congregations to specifically assist with this. Phyllis added that nothing has been stated about how we are going to communicate this to our community in a caring, inclusive way.

What is the downside to delaying this? People who have been waiting for this and now are upset, perhaps angered, that we've launched the capital campaign. A delay might well be construed as tantamount to not doing it at all.

Michael made a motion, seconded by Jodie, to make a recommendation to the congregation to change to a flexible donations model. Mark had concerns about the financial projections and agreed with Michael that we need some sort of a fallback and doesn't know if it's something we need to build into this motion. Rick noted that if we run into a financial problem, the board would be discussing and working to rectify the situation. Herb added that Michael likely built in these thresholds so that we have something to guide us with a somewhat "cool" head.

Vote: 19 in favor; 1 opposed; 1 abstention. Motion passes.

A second motion by Steve and seconded by Liza, was made to approve and roll out simultaneously the flexible donations model and the capital campaign, with the new model to be effective July 1, 2015. Jodie asked, if we waited until after the campaign was successful, could we use some of that money on communications for the flexible model? Rabbi said we have money now to hire a firm if we really wanted to. Rabbi thinks we should not lose momentum and that even if we lose money (and he thinks we may well lose more than Michael predicted), we should take that leap.

Vote: 17 in favor; 4 opposed; 1 abstention – Motion passes.

Allison thanked the committee and the board with a special thank you to Herb for shepherding us.

Herb announced that we will have the congregational meeting in January, giving the two teams moving forward the opportunity to complete the work necessary to bring this to a congregational vote. It being important for the Rabbi to be at the meeting, we are limited in our choice of dates.

Congregational meeting: January 6, 2015 at 7PM

V. Financial Report: deferred.

VI. Comments/Announcements:

- Risa still needs volunteers for Latkepalooza, especially for book fair setup on Saturday afternoon, from 3-6PM.
- Jamie is asking for more donations for the Latkepalooza fundraising. Jamie will provide a list of donors so that we don't duplicate efforts.
- Adult Ed program next Tuesday: Joseph Levy will be talking about Jews from Arab countries.
- Light one Candle donation kicks off this Friday. On 12/11; 12/15; 12/17 – gift wrapping, from 5:30-8.
- Mussar classes: Rabbi is starting a class. Classes will be on alternate Tuesdays through the end of May.

VII. Good and Welfare

- Rick's daughter, Arielle, was cited as a scholar athlete for her GPA and prowess on the volleyball court.
- Friday night – 5th grade service with musical arrangements.
- Irvington, Sleepy Hollow, Ossining, Dobbs Ferry – Brandon Swersey was elected captain of the Rivertowns Legends.

VIII. Next Meeting – Tuesday January 6, 2014 @ 8 PM following congregational meeting, time permitting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:41PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marla A. Peers