



Temple Beth Abraham

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TEMPLE BETH ABRAHAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Minutes

Tuesday, November 11, 2014 @ 7:30 PM

Attendees: Gayle Aaron, Herb Baer, Alan Berkson, Neil Bruckner, Cantor Margot Goldberg, Julie Gur, Rabbi David Holtz, Mel Savitch, Jamie Wilson, Karen Filler, Allison Fine, Jodie Lane, Kimberly Marcus, Rick Misrok, Mark Polisar, Jen Povman, Mike Sonkin, Jen Greenspoon, Loren Ratner, Jennifer Schwartz, Meredith Siegel, Stuart Skolnick, Risa Swersey, Marla Peers (via teleconference), Steve Gosset, Phyllis Leary, Liza Karstens (via teleconference)

Guests: Michael Karnes, Jim Biolos, Randy Carter, Bob Evans of Evans Consulting, Barbara Shornick

Meeting commenced at 7:38PM.

Marla is taking minutes virtually, so Herb asked that members be cognizant of this and to say their names before speaking to make it easier to correctly minute. Karen is taking notes to fill in any gaps.

Rabbi Allison is here for the first time, having been newly installed as our religious director. She introduced herself to the board and added a few things about her family (Rob, husband; three girls, Sophia, Bella, and Maddie. They currently live in New Jersey).

Group moved to the Sanctuary to see the newly installed Ark doors.

I. Invocation: Rabbi spoke about this week's parasha, when Abraham actually went to the cave of Machpehlah. The importance is that Abraham wants there to be no doubt that he owns the property. He

purchased the land not just for his immediate family but to ensure that there is land for our people. When he dies, Abraham does not yet have grandchildren but he wants a family plot because he has a *vision* of what might be, that he will have a legacy. There is this notion of a nation and a future. Similarly, although we aren't 100% sure that we will be here in 100 years, we are doing our roof over and making other changes not for the next five years but with the confidence that whatever we do we are doing for the future. Making these major decisions about our future is really what a board of trustees is all about; it's not just about "the plot."

II. Approval of Minutes: Approved.

III. New Business

A. Proposed acceptance of gift: We don't really have a gift policy and need a more formal policy. Rabbi said that there are people who want to give in-kind gifts and things like timeshares but we have no policy yet. We have a donor who wants to make an anonymous donation of a wine cellar valued at about \$400,000. What he wants to do is donate the appraised cellar and we will have to auction it off. The wine goes from the cellar to the auction house (Risa's husband, Kevin, has offered to help with this). The amount of the actual donation will be determined by the outcome of the auction. As we don't have a policy for anything like this, Rabbi asked if we would approve the acceptance of this gift. Motion made by Marla; seconded by Jamie to accept the gift. None opposed; one abstention (Risa). Approved.

B. Need for additional 10 hours/week of office staff and proposed adjustment/reallocation of budget to accommodate Last year we voted for a part-time position that would give 15 hours to the religious school and five for the office. Toby took on the position, but found it not a good fit for her. We refilled the position with Alix. It is apparent that the five hours assigned to the office is insufficient. Alix is currently working 20 hours, with 15 for the school; we would like to assign the school office hours to Alix and increase the office position to 15 hours and hire someone else. We are almost halfway through the year and we would have to allocate \$5,500 to cover this increase through our fiscal year, then budget for this position in the next year. Jen asked what the net impact would be.

The amount for the full year for the additional 10 hours is about \$12,000. We would need to free up an extra \$5500. Stuart indicated that the coverage will overlap a bit but that Alix covers the office while the school is in session on Sundays, Mondays, and Wednesdays. LaKinna will work Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday providing office coverage all week and this breaks apart the job responsibilities, drawing a clean line between them. Jen Greenspoon further clarified Alix's responsibilities. Mel said that going through his budget might give us more insight into this.

Herb said that where the money will come from isn't as important as deciding that this extra position is necessary. Stuart explained all of the responsibilities and that most of these are recurring weekly, monthly, and annually. He cannot really manage to do this without help. Jen Povman moves that we approve an additional staff position to add ten hours. The motion was, Seconded by Julie Gur. Michael said that he thought that the position should be offered to a congregant. Neil thought that would be a conflict of interest and Michael responded that, in that case, Pam working for the temple would have been considered a conflict of interest, as well. Cantor Margot said we should have a conversation about hiring congregants at another time. Motion passes unanimously.

IV. Old Business

A. Dues to Donations Task Force Report:

Herb said hardcopies were available for those who want to take notes. In addition, Allison wants to thank the many people on the task force. They spent an enormous amount of time on it. She reiterated what the Rabbi had said and asked everyone to actively listen and focus on the handout and hopefully there will be time after the presentation for shaping this. The task force has a proposal. We are looking to move the proposal of "dues-to-donations."

Alan walked everyone through the handout. He started out saying that he got his passion about temple from his parents.

One of the reasons he is on the board was to be part of this change. To be part of how the 21st century Jewish community can support one another. Our narrative doesn't have to change. We've embraced change over the years. We have the opportunity to change how we operate. We don't

operate in a vacuum. There is a trend towards change in the dues model. It's a risk. There are other options – Chabad, online study, etc. What is the risk of doing nothing? If our model is based on joining for our religious school, we are also losing people post-bar mitzvah. We need to look beyond that. How do we change this challenge into an opportunity in our greater community? We have the opportunity to move the member-synagogue relationship beyond a transaction.

If we do nothing, where will that leave us in 5, 10, 20 years from now? The question isn't if we will change but when. This is both a financial and emotional problem.

Task force focused only on the revenue portion of our budget. Allison said that line 17 –an effort at reshaping the annual contributions people make– is part of the larger capital campaign we launched a couple of months ago. We wanted a model that provides flexibility for our members. If you want to give anything other than our prescribed amount required going through the special needs process. She mentioned a former congregant who had wanted to pay only \$2000 a year, not because they couldn't afford it but felt it wasn't worth more to that family. They found through parlor meetings, that we treat everyone the same. There is a value to being here – everyone is the same, is treated the same. They wanted a model of generosity (which is contagious). That's why auctions happen, why they are successful – it's contagious. Allison hopes we consider this when we discuss: our members are known to us and they are kind and generous or they wouldn't be here. She urged us not to let the possibility of someone being unkind and ungenerous outweigh the probability that most people will be generous. And, as Alan said, we need a model that will fit the generations to come. We need places and spaces to meet the sensibility and values of the younger families coming in.

We can do this in concert with the larger campaign. What we can't do is make the congregant who is giving what he can feel badly about what he is doing. We need to make everyone feel good about what they are doing and giving.

Dan Judson has been following us and working with us and he thinks we are moving in the right direction and intelligently so.

Karen, Barbara Shornick, Risa, and Patti looked at list of former congregants who left as far back as 2008, looking for possible families to reach out to. They reached about 18 different families, told them that we are thinking of making changes and asked them how they would feel about the change from dues to donations, that we are looking for the sustainable amount. How would you feel about making a donation? Karen said that the responses were generally positive (a few not happy). Out of the 18, 8 were maybes or interested; the others were just not interested, TBA was not to be part of their lives. Karen said there are many more to call and they must make the effort do so (Rabbi and Cantor looked at the list, first, to ensure that they call only appropriate people). One of the comments from a couple of people was that it wasn't for them but that they thought there were some others in the community who would be interested. In response to Kimberly, Karen said that she honestly felt that there are people there who are not members because they cannot afford it and that there would be continued communication with them, and others who said they could be members and pay less. Of those 8, she didn't think they would be those who would pay at sustaining levels.

We are not saying, "Pay what you want, but that dues is something that happens to us." You get a bill and if you can't pay it, there is shame involved and if we don't pay, we get a call and there is shame involved. This approach is not rooted in generosity, and is going in an unproductive way in trying to create and sustain community. With a change to donations, the message is that this place requires resources to provide everything we are doing, this is the number that would sustain and allow us to deliver. If you cannot pay that, if there are extenuating circumstances, there is a way you can belong. This is what we mean by sustainable membership, that which will keep the temple going and growing.

Under current model we get a bill in July and then if not paid, we call and try to get the shortfall. Proposal is to call in March or April and say that we are shifting our model and this is our sustainable level; can we count on you? We'll know early on before any formal collections happen. We can

gauge to see if we are going to be better, worse, etc., in terms of what we can expect from congregants. Around the same time in June, we will go out with a formal request to give at the sustaining membership level and we'll get results around the same time as we currently do, but we will know earlier if this looks like it would fly, giving us time to go to a plan B.

In response to Jen Povman, Allison said that there would be a group making calls. There won't be a need for special arrangements or confidentiality because people will be paying as they feel good about/able to give. It is a donation. Every year there will be a pledge in March. Allison also said that no one who is currently on special arrangements will be asked to pay more than they are currently paying. In response to the Rabbi's clarifying question, they are calling people who are currently paying full dues.

Allison clarified that we need several members to give significantly more than they currently give to sustain us. IS THIS RIGHT?

Bob said he urges us to drop the dues-to-donations name. He described another synagogue he knows that has divided their membership into three groups -3 separate years to create a face-to-face discussion. That synagogue's group has 10 weeks to contact each family. Commitments to be for a 3-year stretch. And only a third of the congregation will be in each cycle. Another third is having the capital campaign conversation, and the last third is in the Torah Society pool. They already have about 20% of their congregation making a legacy pledge. Even those households who have made legacy bequests are asked to revisit it. This congregation is in a major campaign and the two groups are in conversation with each other throughout the process.

One of the successful things about Chabad is a feeling of connectivity. He asked us how warm and friendly we really are.

Bob also said that, barring any tragedy, 2014 is going to be the best year for charitable giving. And you don't get unless you ask. We are putting a capital campaign into place. The endowment income is miniscule. Most non-profits see endowments as 15-25% of their budgets. We have work to

do. We also need to be looking for money not only at the higher end, but at the lower end, as well.

Gayle asked how many interviews we've conducted so far. Bob answered that one is in process and he has only done one other.

Allison said that they want to propose that we agree to this as a three-year pilot. It will allow people to focus on giving monthly.

Michael discusses what a revenue budget can look like. Everything that had been already said was very important. He added that he has always been extremely fiscally conservative. He is as scared about it as anyone in the room, but also recognizes that this is a decision that needs to be made. People in the past were worried that dues were going to explode... and they have. He said that in 25 years, our dues will be \$10,000. So we need to look at the numbers. How would budgeting be done? Michael started with Herb's financial sheets showing last year's actuals. One thing is clear: we need \$1.3 million to keep the synagogue running. What are the variables we are holding constant? The \$1.3 million and the other sources of revenue we need to keep things running. It also anticipates the same levels of expenditures. Today, we need to raise about \$850,000 for the coming year and we receive approximately \$117,000 between the donations from gateway, etc., and members on special needs. That won't change; those same people will be paying the same amounts. So, in taking out the specials, there are 6 categories. We have 162 whole families, of which 42 gave as part of HH appeal or fair share. Those 42 families already say they are already willing to give more so we can assume they will still do. The 167 families are those we are at risk of losing some of their money – but 24 are either long-term families or long-term singles who continue to pay what is expected of them, so they, too, should be counted on. Then there are those whose children are no longer in religious school but are still here. It's only those others in religious school who we risk losing some income from – probably about 25% will choose to lower the amount that they are currently paying. Michael suggests that if a family goes from \$3400 dues to a substantially lower amount, we should think that they are in financial need and that the Rabbi should be following up with concern. Michael thinks that those who will lower their amounts will do so between \$500

and \$1500, giving us a \$30,000 shortfall. How do we make this up? We are doing away with categories. One of the first things that will happen is that everyone will be asked for the same amount and by definition, we will be asking congregants for more than they have been asked for.

We don't have a plan yet to go after new congregants but we do have a plan to pursue our former congregants.

We need to be willing to have a shortfall, but believes the long-term looks good. The keys to the success are to "sell" the 122 families in religious school and the other is to bring back former members. They won't pay the full amount but they will provide extra revenue. Our older members really sustain us – they continue to support but their needs are lower than younger families.

Allison said that we can list our questions, and address them in December. Mark Polisar wonders if we can have a meaningful enough discussion to come to a decision in December.

Discussion tabled for tonight. We will be meeting on Sunday, November 23rd @ 3PM.

B. Capital Campaign Status Report: Gayle has been working on putting together the chairs for the campaign and has 5 of the 6 positions filled. Jim Barkley – Major Gifts, over \$100,000; Margie Ostrower – Special Gifts (btwn \$25,001-\$100,000); co-chairs Bruce Edelson and Stuart Kolbert –Congregational Gifts (under \$25K) ; Karen Filler – Planned Giving; financial oversight – Don Ostrower; Communications and Special Events chairs is the one left to find a chair for. Also working on agreement with the architect to come up with a master plan of what we see our building needs. Hard to ask people to give without a vision of what we might want to do with the money.

V. Director's Report: Stuart thanks the clergy for taking staff out for staff appreciation day. Cantor and Rabbi felt that it was appropriate to show their appreciation for all of the above-and-beyond work they have done.

VI. Comments/Announcements: Reminder about the meet-the-board member articles.

Jamie printed up some literature to have people ask for donations for Latkepalooza. Glen Markowitz emailed her; he has already been getting donations. Risa added that she sent out a Sign-Up Genius and hopes people will sign up.

Mark announced a new chavurah. Starting with six people but if anyone can recommend let him know.

Kimberly said that she heard that the Philadelphia trip with the 11th grade was wonderful.

Cantor extended a special invitation to attend services this Friday night for the first of 6 musical shabbatot. And Saturday evening at Temple Israel Center for Kol haChazzanim.

Risa noted that over 40 people showed up for Ari DeLevie's presentation last Sunday and noted that it was really terrific. Ari also co-sponsored the breakfast.

On Tuesday, 09 December, a gentleman will be talking about Jews from Arab countries.

Kimberly added that December 5th is the kick-off for our "Light One Candle" program. We ask for wrappers to wrap gifts and donations of wrapping paper.

Interfaith Thanksgiving service at the Old Dutch Church. Holds only 110 people; no bathrooms, candlelight, Tuesday 25 November.

VII. Good and Welfare

Meeting moved to executive session at 10:21PM

VIII. Executive Session

- IX. Special Meeting to discuss Dues-to-Donations: Sunday, 23 November @3PM
- X. Next Meeting – Tuesday December 2, 2014 @ 7:30 PM
- XI. Adjournment – meeting adjourned at 10:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marla A. Peers