



## Temple Beth Abraham

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### TEMPLE BETH ABRAHAM BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

#### Minutes

**Tuesday, February 3, 2015 @ 7:30 PM**

Attendees: Gayle Aaron, Herb Baer, Alan Berkson, Neil Bruckner, Cantor Goldberg, Steve Gosset, Jen Greenspoon, Julie Gur, Rabbi Holtz, Liza Karsten, Phyllis Leary, Kimberly Marcus, Glen Markowitz, Rick Misrok, Marla A. Peers, Mark Polisar, Loren Ratner, Mel Savitch, Jennifer Schwartz, Meredith Siegel, Stuart Skolnick, Michael Sonkin, Risa Swersey, Jamie Wilson

Commenced at 7:37PM.

I. Invocation –Here is the question that Rabbi posed: About what in our lives do we feel commanded to do, what don't we have a choice about because we look at it as an obligation? Where is the line drawn – what MUST I do, or what CAN'T I do. It's a powerful thought experiment, as we prepare to read about what G-d commands us in this week's parasha, Yitro.

II. Approval of Minutes -  
Special Congregational Meeting - accepted  
January Board of Trustees Meeting – approved with corrections.

III. New Business

A. Security Committee Report – Proposals for enhanced security Measures - Stuart Bob Zinman sends his regrets but was too sick to attend the meeting. The report, from December, was handed out to everyone. The permit for the lighting has been submitted to the town for enhancements recommended by Homeland Security. They are asking to add laminate to the windows to prevent shattering from impact to them. Once they get bids in, they will ask the board for approval for the disbursement of funds. Kimberly noted that there is a new glass that was developed after the Newtown shootings and she didn't think that the cost was prohibitive. They will look into it. In response to a question from Glen, Neil agreed that we will chip away at the list of things that they would like to do to keep the building secure. Rabbi added that, as part of the capital

campaign, if we make changes to the building, security issues at those points will be made along with the enhancements. Stuart said that the building is open during services and special events and they are asking to create a task force to find a means to access the synagogue in a secure manner. The committee would like approval from the board for the laminate or what Kimberly has suggested, and to form a second sub-committee to create an access policy that will be brought before the board for approval.

Rabbi said that there are no security issues at present. There is police presence in the parking lot quite often to keep an eye out for any security breaches or issues.

#### B. Gift Acceptance Policy, Gayle and Bob Isaacs

Bob gave an overview of the above policy that was distributed to board members. One of the pieces that makes for a successful campaign is trust and transparency. It's good practice to have a policy to state precisely what sorts of gifts we will accept, outside the clear-cut donations (e.g., cash). For example, can we accept a time-share donation? There is very little that one can do with that. Essentially, the policy states that, once you get beyond cash and publicly traded securities, those things need to come to the board to determine whether or not it's something we would accept. The other thing that the policy will state is that when money donated is earmarked for a certain use, it will be used for that. Lastly, the Temple doesn't give tax advice; those questions will have to be directed to the donor's tax advisor.

Bob's recommendation was not to start an endowment for unnamed restricted funds for less than \$10,000. Before an endowment is accepted for a named fund, Bob recommends a gift of \$100,000. The donor cannot dictate the investment of the funds. Herb noted that these figures are not included in the proposed policy; Bob indicated that they will look at it and add. Page two will say "restricted gifts," striking the word endowment.

The third thing the committee is working on is an investment policy and it will be in accordance with the strict New York State regulations governing not-for-profit corporations.

When a donor's name goes on a dedication: It is the committee's recommendation that a minimum of 60% of a gift must be paid before the donor's name goes up to prevent a delicate and embarrassing situation in which a donation pledge doesn't materialize.

In response to suggestions for modifications, Bob indicated that those will be made.

In response to questions regarding combining donations, Bob said that, for purposes of raising money, it doesn't suit the process to allow multiple individuals to combine gifts and can actually harm the process. The idea is to get families to stretch to get to a dedication number. The board can overrule this policy should we believe that we will lose a donation.

Donor Recognition Policy: Donor recognition is as an important part of the campaign. It says that we value every gift and that there are ways to recognize each gift appropriately, and those donors' gifts will be used in the manner they wish; that they can donate anonymously, etc., as set forth in the policy distributed via email to all board members. Lastly, if a donor has acted illegally or has been convicted of an illegal act, the board has the right to remove the plaque/recognition.

There will also be a permanent listing of everyone who gave a gift, regardless of the amount. Every donation will be recognized.

[Rabbi noted that to reach the lower threshold to have one's name on a plaque, it would cost \$500 a year for five years; Bob added that this amounts to \$42 a month.]

The proposed policy sets a baseline, not all of the levels; those will be determined later.

Through May, we are looking for 6- and 7-figure gifts. Having a wall was something that TBA has been resistant to, Rabbi said, and that coming to a consensus to allow a wall to publicly recognize donors will allow the committee to move forward. In response to a question posed by Herb, the board members present were in agreement that such a wall would be acceptable to us. Steve, however, thought that this might be creating an elitist situation in which the "others" might feel inferior. Others felt that if we did not publicly recognize large donors, we would lose money. And we would ensure that every donor, regardless of level, would be recognized and made to feel a valued member. Rabbi noted that the tree of life in the lobby has trees and rocks, it's obvious who the larger donors are; the same thing exists on the memorial plaques in the Conservative chapel. Much discussion ensued. Bob insists that this is what today's donors are looking for; very few people are interested in anonymity. Kimberly suggested that something be given to every single donor (a pin, for example) that equalizes the donor pool and celebrates all donors uniformly.

Rabbi made an impassioned plea to accept the concept of public recognition at the donors' levels. If we don't agree to this, he believes we should cancel the capital campaign. Jen Greenspoon added that we need to start looking at ourselves as part of a team, part of the TBA community instead of looking at this as leaving someone out.

A motion was made by Liza and seconded by Marla, to accept both policies, with proposed edits to the gift acceptance policy.

In favor: 13; opposed: 3; no abstentions. Motion passes.

#### IV. Old Business

##### A. Flexible, voluntary contributions: Liza

Now that we have made the decision to move to donations, her concern is that, while we have a communications committee under the umbrella of the campaign, we no

longer have that for our new donations philosophy. We need to create a communications committee, which is sorely missing from our board. Herb said that there is a need for a new task force to implement the program, including a communications piece. A critical piece is being able to bridge the dues-to-donations and the capital campaign. Adena, our consultant from Connecting Congregations has agreed to come to work with both committees on language. The board had expected the task force to help implement the dues-to-donations, but that task force, now that the congregation voted in favor of it, has been disbanded. Alan, who was on that task force, noted that we need a different set of skills to pull this together. He thinks it makes sense to have a task force to work for a specific duration of time to help all of the committees incorporate this. We had been assured and led to believe that there would be enough manpower to make it happen, yet with the disbanding of the task force, this board feels as if we are left afloat. There are specific things that need to get done to move forward. Membership, in particular, needs a script, etc., to help us move forward.

Allison was contacted during the meeting and she assured the board that further assistance on this matter will be provided.

**B. Capital Campaign Status Report:**

Gayle passed out a new list of the organizational chart. The only difference from last year is that Liza Karsten and Dave Pomeranz have agreed to chair the Special Gifts committee. Marge Ostrower had to step down due to a conflict of interest.

They had an initial meeting with the architect to sketch our dream synagogue.

**V. Financial Report: Mel**

Committee chairs had been asked to submit a proposed budget for their committees. The budget committee had a productive meeting; Glen came up with a range of what he thought would be a sustaining amount but without committee budgets, we cannot set our sustaining amount. There was also a proposal for a lesser amount but that idea was disregarded. Mel has asked each chair to please send their preliminary budget to him ASAP. This will allow them to come up with a sustaining amount. If someone needs help, please reach out to him.

Herb pointed out that the fundraising committee goals for the year had not been proposed. Jennifer Schwartz said that she had been told not to work on an annual event with the campaign about to be underway. If we don't an event, the proposed income will not come close to budget. Mel needs to know if the income side will hold up. He has asked Jen to see if she can come up with a proposal.

Through December, our income has come in on budget. The "gala" income wouldn't come in until last spring. Herb noted that we are currently \$28,000 shy of our projection. Some sort of event would help tremendously.

## VI. Director Report: Stuart

We have migrated to the cloud; the transition went smoothly and more quickly than anticipated. We are saving some money (no longer need for spam filter); Stuart thanks Jeff at RightClick who walked them through the process. We now have a new copy machine installed. The February edition can now be printed, in color, in-house (though they won't print in color). No longer is there a need to outsource. Health insurance was renewed with an increase of about 2%.

## VII. Comments/Announcements

Rabbi: in regard to changing our dues-to-donations, we have gotten a lot of play – it was in the Enterprise and Jewish Week; News12 and others are interested in coming to speak with us.

This past Friday was Chavurah Shabbat; Rabbi Salkin was here and people really enjoyed him. Visual tefillah was appreciated by the people who were at services; Rabbi hasn't heard from people watching online. He noted that the camera has been lowered, too for better online visibility.

Friday, February 7, we will have an alternative Shabbat.

Dorot went well; we were short about three people. Kimberly had advertised out to the community and a few people outside of TBA came.

This past Sunday, Rabbi Allison and PJ Library sponsored a great Tu' B'Shevat program. Ten families came and it was very successful. There may be some potential members. Loren said that Rabbi Allison did a tremendous job.

Risa wanted to commend Rabbi and Herb for a lovely job on the article in the Enterprise. She also noted that Rabbi Jeff Salkin's discussion about Deborah and Yael was very timely in that the Women's Circle had had a discussion about them the prior week.

Rabbi said that the Mussar program is full and has begun (one snow day).

Rabbi said that he has been working with Ben Gross and Jen Friedman (from the community law practice at Pace University) and are working on a program to help immigrant families apply for DAPA (delayed action for parents of arrivals). They are going to train people to help with applications. This training, not only for attorneys, is going to occur on June 14.

Synergy event at UJA yesterday: Allison represented us; it will be publicized on the Facebook account.

Cantor said that she has been working to add more musical events to Shabbat. Congregants helped to add harmony and the plan is to get more of us to join.

February 27<sup>th</sup>, Cantor has invited Kol Rina back for our Friday night service.

Don't forget Purim on Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>. Dinner at 6PM. There is still time to take out an ad in the Shpielbill and to order tee shirts.

#### VIII. Good and Welfare

Our bookkeeper, Maggie Lissy, is recovering from her third bout of shingles.

Mr. G (the ba'al t'fillah who finishes services in Conservative when the clergy leave for a bar/bat mitzvah), is waiting for a hip reconstruction and is doing well. He hopes to be back in March, though that might be a little idealistic. Kimberly asked if the board could use some money to send something to Mr. G. and there was general agreement.

Gus Sheer has just become a grandfather and there will be a bris tomorrow at TBA. He is the b'nei mitzvah tutor who has been working with us for several years.

Cantor's mom is in the middle of chemo for lung cancer. Her dad, who recently completed his radiation treatment is doing well and seems to be "clear," according to a CAT scan.

Risa is celebrating an article in WeilCornell Medicine about Brandon's concussion, in which Brandon gave an interview. This was confirmation to Risa that he is fully healed after a long recovery. He had had another accident but was on the ice tonight, although not playing, but is on the way to recovery.

IX. Next Meeting – Tuesday March 3, 2015 @ 7:30 PM

Meeting adjourned at 9:46PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marla A. Peers