

**Ohavi Zedek Synagogue**  
**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**  
**January 15, 2015**

**Present:** Peggy Munro, Gary Visco, Sharon Panitch, Abby Rosenthal, Liz Kleinberg, Jeff Potash, Peter Pelaia, Basha Brody, Mitch Cypes, Michael Schaal, Miriam Sturgis, Rabbi Joshua, David Borsykowsky

**Telephone:** Joanna May; Vivien Rabin Brown

**Absent:** Joey Bergstein

**Guests:** Naomi Barell, Mark Green, Michael Rosenthal

Meeting was quorate and called to order at 5:38PM.

**1) D'var Torah:** Rabbi Joshua read a poem related to recent events in France. Spoke about Shavuot Pilgrimage to Israel - Approx May 17 for 10-11 days.

**2) Acceptance of Minutes:** Dec 7 - Sharon moved to approve minutes from the December 7<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, Basha seconded, unanimously approved. Liz moved to approve minutes from the December 11<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, Gary seconded, unanimously approved.

**3) Hebrew School Update:** "We have a wonderful school." Very strong committee this year with wide array of views. Madrichim integral part of staff. This is Naomi's 4th year. Has worked to make more succinct curriculum - 1 page rubric on website. Wonderful Junior Congregation. All school events based on monthly themes help create community.

Language learning lab is now on the stage - as well as children's library. 3 people work there. Kids work in variety of media there and get one-on-one attention. Currently involves Kitah Gimel-Zayin. May expand to younger kids. It also serves as a "time out" area. Last year started Hebrew language intensive instead of spring elective - games/videos/books in Hebrew and ulpan.

Other accomplishments: Revitalized Purim - trying to make the Purim party bigger and better. Kitah Zayin Shabbaton - didn't have enough kids for this year but did 2 years before. First Wed of every month Israeli dance. Worked on physical space last 2 years. Lots of sprucing up. New classrooms and nice wall upstairs. Sound is a little difficult in the new classroom with closable wall. School greener - trying for 0 waste, composting. Curriculum - challenging because parents want very different things. Hard to "get it all in" in the very limited # of hours/week. Now have semester themes. Last semester Shmita. This semester Pesach. Lot of art projects planned and family mock seder 3/29. Each class will write their own hagadah. Will make it experiential. Also has electives - guitar, Jews in sports, Judaism and environment.

Looking forward: wants more connection with greater synagogue. Want to "get the word out". Meeting with Yoram to do marketing. Front Porch Forum. Naomi is requesting help from

the board with this. Wants membership and outreach committee revitalized so families feel welcomed. Talking with Melanie and meeting to develop alternative track for Hebrew School which will be presented at the next board meeting.

Naomi's contract is up in June. She very much wants to continue in her work and would like an expanded position - preschool through teen learning and adult ed. She has new ideas for adult ed classes.

Responses to questions and discussion: 75 kids are registered for this year. We used to have 90 four years ago. Enrollment has dropped also in public school. Naomi expects the alternative track to start in 6th grade. Nobody goes to Hebrew Chai. Basha would look for programming for teens. Naomi is looking to create teen mitzvah corp with UVM Hillel. Peter feels that enrollment is down in the grades where we had no programming for preschool kids. We lost only 1 family to another Jewish institution. Michael S wonders about doing some distance learning. Jeff and Peter both feel that having a preschool here could be very beneficial. Naomi wonders if there is a budget for marketing. Liz asked clarification for Naomi's requests. Abby wanted to know why preschool stopped - Basha replied asbestos problems. That was approx. 2003. Sharon still has a child at Gan Yeladim preschool. They have a waiting list. They are constructing a new facility. Rabbi Joshua clarified that preschool stopped for financial reasons. It had to be self-sufficient. At the end of one year it was realized there were no more younger siblings and the teacher felt it was too big of a gamble. Vivien - it is very inspiring to be here Sun AM and Wed PM. Michael R says after 15 years teaching at OZ that Naomi is the best principal he has worked under. Abby feels that there is big improvement in the curriculum and amount of learning.

**4) Changing OZ Banks:** We are changing from Merchants Bank. They have been very unresponsive to our needs and they have been unprofessional, making mistakes. Looking at NBT bank, VT bank. Basha and Michael have had very good relationships with Merchant's. Michael requests permission to give feedback to Merchant's which was given an OK. Peggy motioned that we terminate our relationship with Merchant's bank and institute a new relationship with NBT bank. Basha seconded. Passed unanimously.

**5) Library Planning:** Children's library moved to stage. Ellen Gittlesohn is looking for a volunteer position working with adult ed and plans to end her paid position as Hebrew School librarian. Naomi feels the library is not being used as a library any more. Ellen feels adult books are really not being used. Planning to re-home the books we plan to keep (reference, spirituality, some others) to Rabbi Jan's vacant office, archive some books, and free library space for new uses. Question then becomes what to do with the space given our variety of needs.

Executive team has discussed this issue and feels that the best use of space would be to renovate the library into a new Rabbi's Study, allowing for more privacy for congregant coming to see the rabbi (currently the office staff can hear fairly clearly what is said in the Rabbi's office). Executive Director would move to the Rabbi's current office to be closer to the office staff and centralize the staff team. Vacant offices could then be renovated to new smaller library space. The benefit of these changes, other than meeting important needs, is that they would be

minimally expensive and provide the least disruption. We would wait until after Rabbi Joshua leaves to make the changes.

Discussion followed. Consensus was that we should evaluate options more fully before making any changes and wait to involve the new rabbi if we will be moving the rabbi's office space. Freeing the library space could potentially allow us to meet other needs if we are willing to invest more time and money (such as relocating the front office to be near the current primary entrance – creating a more welcoming environment and providing additional security while meeting the other needs discussed). The House Committee will evaluate options. However in the interim Ellen should be instructed to continue culling the library books as discussed, with the Library committee folding into the Hebrew School committee (for children's books) and Adult Ed committee (for other materials).

## **6) Executive Director's Report**

- **Financial Update:** Financial picture for the year is very good. A few things are down (Hebrew School tuition, holiday seats, etc.) but overall trends are still strong. We need annual appeal sheets ASAP! Currently \$35,000. Goal was \$39,000.
- **New Members:** 2 new members to approve. Hannah Zurofsky. Joshua and Jennifer Kernoff. Mitch moved, Peggy seconded to approve their membership. Motion passed unanimously. Basha will welcome them to the congregation via card. Jeff wants to reconvene a welcoming committee – discussion followed with suggestions for outreach such as:
  - put new members on hamentaschen list and bring to them.
  - New member teas with machers from the synagogue were suggested.
  - Have someone call and make a personal connection after approx. 6 months of membership.
  - Basha suggests each board member gets a new member to welcome.
  - Could give a book about home Jewish rituals.
  - Consider having Eva Stern from Big Tent come and talk. Abby - increasing # of kids are coming to YJ events.

New members generally happy. Bigger issue is the people who aren't yet members and keeping current members. There is a need for volunteer support in this area for any of the ideas floated to be implemented. Back to Jeff's original point, we need a Membership & Outreach committee. Board members should try to get members involved.

- **Rabbinic Search Update:** 11 candidates submitted applications. 4 were interviewed remotely. Search committee has invited 2 for in person interviews with just search committee and senior staff. If they pass the second round they will come for Shabbaton weekend. First candidate coming next week, second approx. 10 days later. Discussion followed. Board as a group will have an opportunity to meet candidates during the long Shabbaton weekends (several Board members are on the search committee). Search committee will recommend a final candidate and board votes to approve before sending the mater to congregation for vote. We are not yet opening search beyond USCJ. Lee

will be talking with head of the search process around the end of the month about the low number of quality candidates. The Board was clear that there not just be one candidate submitted for rubber stamp approval. Jeff will consult with Lee, Vivien and Peter about ways to keep the Board apprised as the search progresses.

- **Security Task-Force:** Congregants are increasingly concerned about security especially in light of recent attacks in France, rise of anti-Semitism globally. One Hebrew School parent is interested in working on this. He needs several volunteers from the Board to join the task force. Michael notes that we have an Israel program in April and Social Action committee is concerned about security for this. Liz, Peggy, David and Mitch volunteered to join the Task Force. A meeting to get security and emergency planning underway will be setup as soon as possible.

**8) Budget Process:** Budget season is almost here, we will be starting work soon. Committees should be looking at this now and figuring out how much money will be needed for next year.

**9) Bimah Seating:** Board members need to sign up on Bimah signup online. The sheet was also passed around.

**10) Executive Session:** At 8:52 PM Liz motioned to go into executive session. Basha seconded. Passed unanimously.

9:32 Board left executive session.

Basha noted that the Scholar in Residence theme for 2015 would be Judaism and the Arts.

Michael noted that the committee working on events and gifts to honor Rabbi Joshua has been meeting regularly and will be sharing details with the congregation soon.

9:36 PM Basha moved to adjourn by Basha, Peggy seconded, passes unanimously