

**Ohavi Zedek Synagogue**  
**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**  
**November 20, 2014**

**Present:** Gary Visco, Mindy Evnin, Mitch Cypes, Michael Schaal, Liz Kleinberg, Peggy Munro, Vivien Brown, Peter Pelaia, Sharon Panitch (by Phone), Jeff Potash, Joey Bergstein, Joanna May, Basha Brody, Rabbi Joshua (after 6:25) and Rabbi Jan (after 6:45)

**Absent:** David Borsykowsky and Abby Rosenthal

**Guests:** None

**1) Approval of Previous Minutes**

Joey moved to approve previous minutes. Peggy seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**2) President's Report**

- Rabbinic Search: Applications are coming in. The Search Committee will be meeting on December 1, 2014.
- There will be a 5 minute Board meeting to elect officers after the Congregational Meeting on December 7, 2014.

**3) Executive Director's report**

Financials Reviewed

- Peter provided a financial review. We are about one third of the way through the financial year and that the finances are looking good.
- Due to some recent and unexpected donations, the large donor budgeted amount has been met.
- Hebrew School Tuition and High Holy Day earnings were less than anticipated.
- 85% of the anticipated membership renewals have been received. Notices will be sent to those who have not renewed so far. We are expecting an increase in revenues of 7% to 8% hopefully.
- Expenses have been as budgeted. There have been no major unexpected costs.

New Members to Approve

- New members to approve include Jon Blatt and Esther Haldene. Peggy moved to approve new members. Mindy seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Major projects

- The kitchen and classroom construction is completed.
- Bids for the new fence and signage for playground are being solicited.

- Mural project construction has been occurring for a month. A project manager, Bob Neeld from Engineering Ventures has been hired to oversee the project construction. Plaster work is being done. A plan for work in the lobby almost completed. Over \$300K has been raised so far. Future efforts to fundraise include efforts from the Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce, The Burlington Business Association and The Church Street Market Place.
- Repairs and improvements are almost complete on the Shuk, which included fixing the roof, and moving and replacing the entrance doors.

#### Other

- The new synagogue web site is up and running, and which is easier to maintain, add and improve. The Board will send a thank you letter to Ariella Pelaia, for her hard work creating the improved web site.
- A security camera contract has been signed; some additional discussion in Religious Committee but the project is proceeding. Plan is to minimize impact in sanctuaries by focusing on doors/ark. Notice and sign placement will occur to let people know about the cameras once operational.
- The Sukkot Festival went well and was very well attended.
- The assignment list for Annual Appeal will be provided soon. These can be provided at J-Village on December 3<sup>rd</sup> or if one cannot attend that night, the list will be provided about that time.
- A meeting was held to continue discussion of the Chavurah education program discussed last month. Melanie and Naomi are working on a plan for bringing the two programs closer together. Larger group will meet again in early December.

#### **4) Scholar-in-Residence Recap and Green Follow Up Actions**

Basha reported the following:

- 108 people attended the dinner.
- 80 people attended the service.
- The study session had 30 people including some non-Jews attending. They were only expecting about a dozen.
- 60 people attended the service on Saturday night, which they hoped would be better attended. The theme was a need to look at in future.
- The presentation at the Hebrew School went well.
- The result of the meeting with Young Judea students included a 4 or 5 item action plan, which included constructing rain gardens that could be a part of mitzvah day in spring.
- In the future OZ could become part of a Community Supporting Agriculture (CSA) group. OZ does host a CSA group, who were very helpful with their project. The presentation had the community look at how we purchase items. OZ could start with local egg purchasing and promoting legislation to limit plastic bags.

- Sharon discussed a project to plant trees to honor people and the trees could be placed by leveling some ground in front of OZ to make an orchard. The good ability of the OZ property to infiltrate stormwater and utilize rain gardens was discussed. It is believed that grants may be available to build these at OZ and possibly Fern Hill.
- Budget wise spent a little more than raised, but had money from past years was available for use. It was noted that Fran Pomerantz put in a lot of hours cooking and contacting farms and figuring out where kosher food could be obtained locally with the Rabbi's approval. The Board agreed she should be thanked for her hard work.
- It was suggested that a Green Team be organized.
- The event had good participation from the Religious and Social Action Committees.
- Next year's scholar in residence is scheduled for November 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup>.
- The Board thanked Basha for her hard work.
- Basha asked for suggestions for either speakers or themes for next year. Several possible ideas for next year were discussed.

## **5) Security Camera Concerns**

Rabbi Joshua stated some people believe that it is inappropriate to have security cameras in the sanctuary. It was discussed how it is a balancing act on security and people's concerns. Staff security should also be considered. Cameras in the sanctuary will be aimed at the exterior door and ark and not at the congregation at this time.

## **6) High Holy Day Review & Seating for 2015**

There is a concerning trend of declining ticket sales, attendance and honors purchases. There were less than 410 seat reservations this year. There is a revenue line item in OZ's budget, which also includes money gained from the Book of Life. Some who do not purchase a seat attend the service. This is a major fundraiser for OZ.

Reasons for this could include the following:

- People may want to support the service in different ways.
- Change of revenue may reflect the changing nature of Judaism and the way people like to connect to their Jewishness.
- A lot of the old timers are gone and their children are not attending.
- Some people prefer to go to Rosh Hashanah by the lake, which has greatly increased in attendance.
- The current system of selling seats is negatively viewed because it suggests that there is a class structure with different pay scales.

Possible changes included the following:

- To have open paid seating, which has been suggested by the Religious Committee for the second day of Rosh Hashanah, which would allow and encourage more people to sit up front to make the attendance seem fuller.

- Having reserved seating in the sanctuary for the elderly and handicapped, but some people feel they would be stigmatized.
- To have open seating, but an optional fee for reserved seats.
- Could no longer charge for seats and raise money either by encouraging larger annual voluntary donations and/or encourage non-members to give a donation for attending High Holy Day services.

Concerns and questions raised include the following:

- Changing to selling tickets would help greatly with security, allowing us much better control over access to the building.
- A change to an open seating system will make it more difficult to find a person to receive an honor.
- Larger groups may find it more difficult to sit together.
- Visitors should be able to sit with friends and families
- Some families want to keep a tradition of sitting in a specific location.
- Holiday expenses gives a message that OZ is not welcoming.

It was noted that the overall revenue (from all income streams) continues to increase. A clear understanding of how many people want to have assigned seats would be helpful. The Board believes it should solicit feedback from congregation. It was stated that the Religious Committee may be willing to do this, but wants direction from the Board. It was agreed that this should be a congregation decision and that a survey should be drafted to solicit feedback from the congregation. Sharon, with help from Basha, Joey and Peter, volunteered to draft a survey, which should be available by the February Board meeting.

## **7) Other New Business**

- The Miriam Sturgis Shabbat was discussed and Michael volunteered to introduce her.
- The Volunteer Appreciation event will be on February 1<sup>st</sup> from 11:30AM to 1:00PM. It will be similar to last year and be on a Hebrew School day with a bagel brunch. Line dancing is planned. The appreciation could include planting trees in honor of volunteers.
- Michael moved that the Board of Directors acknowledge, honor and express our deepest gratitude to Vivien Rabin Brown for her years of service as President of Ohavi Zedek Synagogue. Basha seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. Michael presented a leaf to Vivien from the Board to be placed on the tree of life commemorating her service to Ohavi Zedek.
- The Board thanked Mindy for her service on the Board.

## **8) Executive Session to Discuss Personnel Issues**

Basha moved to go into executive session. Gary seconded. Motion carried. The Board entered executive session at 7:30 PM.

The Board left executive session at 8:05 PM.

Email of confirmation for Annual Appeal location will be provided.

Mindy moved that we adjourn. Gary seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM.