

Meeting Minutes: Ohavi Zedek Board of Directors

Date: February 21, 2019

Present: Vivien Rabin Brown, Karen Parchem Corbman, Suzanne Brown, Nat Lew, Bill Miller, Mindy Evnin, Wayne Senville, Eric Corbman, Becky Wasserman (on phone), Rabbi Amy, Naomi Barell, Grace Oedel, Adam Bluestein

Trustees: Harvey Klein, Judy Hershberg

Absent: Jessica Schechter Kane, Judy Rosenstreich, Sergey Shpaner

Facilitator: Vivien **Meeting Recorder:** Adam

	Topic/Outcome – Who	Discussion	Action Steps
5:30 - 5:35	D'var Torah – Rabbi Amy	How does the design of sacred space reflect our values? Do we want to acknowledge wealth? Or live modestly. How can we hold both values? God's house needs to be welcoming and inviting to all, inclusive with respect for the gifts we all bring.	
5:35 - 5:47	Approve minutes and review action steps – Vivien	Nat moves to approve, Bill seconds. Minutes approved. Discussion of action items. List below reflects updates. Closed items: 1. Re voting on new members: Board agrees to continue to vote on new members as a formal policy. 2. Re membership committee: Richard Finkelstein has agreed to chair a membership committee. He is happy to do the welcoming part. Looking for people to help him.	
5:48 – 6:10	Rabbi's report – Rabbi Amy Outcome: To continue to engage board in work of the Rabbi	The rabbi had been asked by Vermont AG TJ Donovan to be part of panel discussion to support a plan to establish a reporting system for bias incidents that would offer civil remedies for harassment of people of color and in vulnerable communities. Before meeting, the NAACP dropped out, and first meeting was put on hold. The African-American community was also upset by proposal to change language in a recent state bill on inclusiveness to specially include anti-Jewish harassment. That bill had been in process two years, but there was a perception that "privileged" Jews were stopping process, which was not the case. Through speaking with other clergy, the Rabbi has become aware of the tender feelings about race in the state. Rabbi discussed fallout from Patriot Front incident from last month. There was an outpouring of support from community: cards, wreaths, an audio card from one church; Rev. Ken White at College St. Congregational Church preached about the incident. The Rabbi and Grace also spoke at downtown rally organized by one of the	Do we need to do something to promote program at race at the Good Shepherd church? Are there other ways we can reach out to African-American community in Vermont?

		<p>LGBT groups also targeted.</p> <p>Rabbi has suggested bringing in Derek Black, ex-white-nationalist and author, for a major city event like one the mayor organized last year to raise awareness about opioid crisis.</p> <p>Re improving relations with African-American community, Wayne asks are there ways to do something at congregational level. The social action network is working on something. Rev Arnold Thomas at Good Shepherd Luther Church has planned whole program on race, and the Rabbi did one session. They would like the community to attend.</p> <p>Development of pastoral care group is coming along well. The Rabbi has done two workshops with them, and they will do Skype sessions with Dale Freeman in the spring.</p>	
6:10 – 6:25	<p>Executive Director’s report – Grace Outcome: To update the board on ongoing work</p>	<p>OZ has two new members: Miriam Albern and Jane Koplewitz. Judy H. will put notice in the Voice. Nat moves to approve new members; Bill seconds. Motion passes without opposition.</p> <p>Grace has been working hard to turn around application for DHS grant that came up, which could provide some funding for “target hardening” security measures.</p> <p>The Sanctuary and Immigration working group has been meeting regularly and thinking about how to have most impact on immigration issues from here in Vermont. They are connecting with local/state groups to figure out what holes there are in services. Will work on event with Migrant Justice in May. Some Jewish justice groups are doing action around Passover—maybe we can do something tied in with Adult Ed’s Haggadah-making workshop? The group is also collecting funds for Vermont Bail Fund.</p> <p>By speaking with English language learners at OZ, Grace and others have found that they didn’t know they were “wanted” at OZ.</p> <p>Development Committee is trying different things. We will be doing Mishloach Manot gift-giving for Purim this year. Efforts around legacy giving have had some success. Got indications from eight</p>	<p>When we see English language learners at OZ, we should make a point of saying hello, introducing ourselves, making them welcome.</p>

		<p>people who have OZ in their will, and talking with a couple of others. Also, we are committed to hosting a “progressive dinner” with Vermont Interfaith Action, a combined event that will split fundraising, in the fall. Grace is now on their board.</p> <p>The preschool is creating contracts for next year and contemplating expansion.</p> <p>As part of a mitzvah project, OZ students are doing an intergenerational music program with Fern Hill residents, open to the community on weekends.</p>	
6:25 – 6:40	<p>Treasurer’s report - Bill Outcome: To update on finances, including finance documents and early budget information</p>	<p>We are about \$40k ahead of budget, almost the same as last year at this time. Projections looks like we will break even [for year], maybe be \$10k to \$15k short vs. budgeted negative \$30k. We are looking at about \$25k shortfall for next year. Will check budget and look for any easy cuts. Annual appeal raised about \$16k but usually \$25k; still missing family that usually gives big gift. At next meeting, will have Finance Committee’s budget proposal to share with board. Will circulate and vote on next investment policy and spending policy documents next time, as well.</p> <p>Looking at ethical investment option for endowment funds. Not much more in expenses, with returns about as good as portfolio with traditional “sin” investments. Finance Committee idea was to move endowment over little by little; we still maintain a large cash position. Nat: This feels like right thing to do. Suzanne: We don’t want to lose investment returns. We should get more information to discuss as a board.</p> <p>Vivien: Still looking for Treasurer. Open to thoughts, ideas.</p>	<p>Bill: circulate and vote on next investment policy and spending policy documents next time.</p> <p>Have presentation, when possible, on pros/cons of an ethical investing approach for endowment.</p> <p>Continue hunt for new Treasurer!</p>
6:40 – 6:48	<p>Hebrew School Report – Naomi Outcome: To update the board on the Hebrew School</p>	<p>There is a lot going on. Big effort to improve communication between teachers and parents, looking at different platforms. Want to avoid extra costs and undue burden on staff. Hebrew School Committee and staff are working on proposals.</p> <p>Working on new ideas for 7th grade curriculum next year. Class will have only 3 kids. One idea is “Kitah Zayin hits the road,” which will involve lots of field trips culminating in class trip to New York City. Goal is not to change the budget.</p>	

		<p>Naomi met with Linda Kelleher about the mural super-elective. The teacher and madricha who ran the curriculum gave feedback to pass on to mural board.</p> <p>Youth group: Naomi has conversation with USY re youth group. Their advisor/intern here didn't really step up, so there hasn't been good attendance. Event last week had six kids. Needs to be more consistent. There likely won't be an intern next year, so Naomi would likely have to run program. (Sinai does not want to collaborate on a youth program at this time, but we will be doing other joint programs with Sinai, like Simchat Torah.)</p> <p>Naomi met about security with Burlington Police to do walkthrough of OZ space, reviewing means of escape. The library is most challenging space.</p> <p>Mitzvah Day was grand success. Kids make blankets donate to Children's Hospital at UVM. Next up, Purim!</p>	
6:45 – 7:00	<p>Security update – Grace Outcome: To discuss security ideas/plans</p>	<p>There have been a couple of security trainings with staff, including an active-shooter drill with the preschool teachers. There are lots of concerned parents, and we need to walk a fine line between due diligence to keep people safe but also be calm and assure people. Might behoove us at next Congregational Meeting to have a more robust training. Parents want to know and see plan. Various organizations have offered to do training. We should think about that, because it can be kind of scary.</p> <p>A former member wants to offer Krav Maga training. This would be either a class or offered free for everyone. Maybe we should invite other communities to train with us. This could move you to place of action; people who want to be synagogue protectors but not by carrying guns. Let's think about how we want to message this in congregation. Should we have police come to a meeting to discuss security?</p> <p>Nat: Don't want to be unwelcoming, shutting the front door on Shabbat. Sergey: Safety is important; first concern is not having welcoming space.</p>	<p>Think about what kind of training we would want at next Congregational meeting. Are there other organizations we want to bring in?</p> <p>Plan Krav Maga training?</p>

7:00 – 7:25	Minyan		
7:25 – 7:55	B'nai Mitzvah and Membership Policy – Rabbi Amy Outcome: To consider how long a family should be OZ members in order for their child to become B'nai Mitzvah	People are asking for smaller services, private services. There is a strong sense of individualism in Vermont, but not just here. We don't want to expectation to be too high. How do we handle people who are unaffiliated or want to do nontraditional b'nai mitzvah? Do we offer a fee-for-service model? Or is it part of a community? Proposal from small group (Vivien, Grace, Naomi, and Amy) would require synagogue membership at time you schedule a bnai mitzvah, typically two years in advance of ceremony. Adam: We should find out why people are in Hebrew school but not members. How do we encourage them to be members? Grace: We should be welcoming but have rigor. How? Hebrew school can be an entry and a testing for people. Nat: Bar mitzvah services can also create greater connection. Harvey: Analogy is foster families -- can we welcome "fosters" in some way? Sergey (via email): "I find such policies inevitably clumsy and offputting to those whose involvement they are designed to foster. Late-comers should feel welcome and encouraged to stay engaged after the b'nai mitzvah." Naomi: We need information, so we don't make assumptions about why people don't become members. Harvey: We should be a welcoming community, not a welcome mat. Discussion about need for positive messaging about pay-what-you-can-afford dues, membership benefits of reduced Hebrew School tuition and priority for preschool enrollment, and emphasizing membership invitation as a way of the community welcoming them. With exceptions for people moving to town, for example, it seems reasonable to require at least two years of membership as qualification for having b'nai mitzvah. Putting decision on proposal on hold for now. Let's get more information, check in with Naomi.	Make decision about proposed "2-year rule" for b'nai mitzvah. Adam to connect with Richard and Naomi to get information/survey Hebrew School families about barriers to membership.
7:55 – 7:57	Discussion of March 3 retreat – Grace Outcome: To review plans for retreat	Retreat is 9:00 -12:30. Come early for coffee. Make sure to do the survey.	
7:58 – 8:03	10. President's report - Vivien Outcome: To update the board on ongoing work	April board meeting will be April 11. Vivien has connected with an organization called Salaam Shalom Sisterhood—Muslim and Jewish women. They usually meet every 6 to 8 weeks. They also have teenage programs, and the Imam and	Board members should pay what they want toward food at meetings.

		<p>Rabbi Amy are eager to help us connect with them on this.</p> <p>Re money for food at board meetings. Board members used to be billed \$100 a year for food. Latest decision was to pay what you like as voluntary donation, but it won't appear on billing statement. But now not put on statement.</p>	
8:03 -8:15	Security (continued) – Rabbi Amy	<p>Rabbi Amy says she sympathizes with desire to be welcoming but also feels pressing need to keep us safe. Churches have doors locked, too. All security experts we spoke to recommend having only one entrance for access. Question about whether people on committees are having issue with code for entry. Nat: We need better communication with congregation about what our goals are. Naomi: Need to make an effort to get everyone the same information on security. Grace: If we are using side entrance as main way people come in, we who should do some work on feng shui of that area (preschool bathrooms, etc.). Wayne/Adam: We have a beautiful front lobby; ideally, we would figure out how to use front entrance.</p>	Continue to evolve security plan.
8:00 – 8:15	Board member involvement opportunities – Grace Outcome: To discuss roles for board members	Skip for now.	
8:17 – 8:25	Religious committee subcommittees – Rabbi Amy Outcome: To introduce board to two subcommittees: bar/bat mitzvah alternatives and Shabbat morning visioning.	<p>A group is starting to look at how make Shabbat mornings more user-friendly. For some, change is not welcome, for others, it's long overdue.</p> <p>Bar/bat mitzvah alternatives: How do we handle people wanting offsite b'nai mitzvahs, personalized experiences? It's a prominent conversation in the Jewish community, and we are confronting these needs. Forming a subcommittee on this. Naomi: Important to continue the exploration. Need to take a step further. Rabbi: Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremony as we know it is a 20th Century invention.</p>	
8:25 – 8:35	13. Cantor search update – Nat Outcome: Latest information on cantor search	<p>Cantor Steve Zeidenberg had a very positive experience here. Not a lot of people filled out feedback forms, only about 20, but almost entirely positive. Steve is considering another offer. Nat has asked him to get back to us with a decision by March 12. In meantime, search committee looked at seven more applicants and identified two whom they plan to Skype with. They may move to have one of</p>	

		<p>those candidates come here to interview.</p> <p>Regarding terms of an offer, Nat got additional information on travel budget and pension range, clear numbers that negotiating team can use.</p> <p>Second matter: We need to get a committee to work on a goodbye gift/ceremony for Kochava. Agreed.</p>	
8:35 – 8:45	14. Other committee – Vivien Outcome: For board liaisons to fill the board in on any committee updates or questions	Skip for now.	
8:40 – 9:15	15. Executive Session	Wayne moves, Nat seconds to enter exec session. Out of exec at 9:25. Wayne moves to adjourn, Bill seconds. So adjourned.	

Action Items

Ongoing items: Updates in bold.

- Nat: Work with Religious Committee on Small Sanctuary comprehensive design proposal (memorial plaques, options for Main Sanctuary) to give us perspective on what to do next. **Nat to follow up when interior designer friend available in April. Adam will ask Hebrew School parent/architect if he would offer to review.**
- Vivien to invite new Kehillah Manager to visit OZ.
- Succession planning: Wayne and Judy and Grace to form subcommittee to work on this.
- Create draft political activities statement. Grace, Karen, and Wayne will work on this. **We liked the model we saw. Let's approve a version of that.**
- Grace will create a signup genius and indicate Shabbat priorities (b'nai mitzvah and birthday/anniversary services).
- Add to The Voice more info about ways to give and the funds that are available and what they are for (Judy H and Vivien) .
- Consider audit, budget meetings ahead of Congregational Meeting to help others learn more, review endowment being paid back over 30 years and contribute surplus to this, reducing term. **For future.**
- Add more information in *The Voice* about ways members can give, funds that are available, and what they are for (Judy H and Vivien).

Items from December board meeting:

- Bill/Vivien to put Raymond James portfolio in Dropbox for board member review.
- If we decide to pursue an ethical investment portfolio for endowment, we should publicize among members and broader community.
- Discuss work of committees and board liaisons (Grace)

