

Meeting Minutes - Ohavi Zedek Board of Directors

Date: August 15, 2019

Present: Vivien Rabin, Rabbi Amy, Steve Zeidenberg, Sarah Glassman, Eric Corbman, Karen Corbman, Bill Miller, Jeff Priest, Naomi Barell, Nat Lew, Adam Bluestein, Becky Wasserman, Mindy Evnin, Jessica Schechter Kane

Absent: Wayne Senville, Sergey Shpaner, Judy Rosenstreich, Erika Geremia, Zoe Panitch-Hecht.

Trustees: Judy Hershberg

Facilitator: Vivien **Meeting Recorder:** Adam

	Topic/Outcome – Who	Discussion	Action Steps
5:32- 5:38	D’var Torah – Rabbi Amy	Meaning of the Shema. What does echad, “one” mean? One God only? No. One God we worship? Not really. Another fascinating interpretation is that echad is a misprint of achav, which means love. That aligns with ve’havta, which comes after: “Hear O Israel ... Love our God ...” The implication is that the purpose of being a Jew is devotion to what God asks of us. Our purpose is to find God within around and among us, and to be devoted to God.	
5:40 - 5:40	Approve minutes and review action items— Vivien	Jeff Priest notes change to clarify two “Jeffs,” moves to approve as amended; Nat seconds. Minutes approved. Skip action items today.	
5:42 – 6:03	Gun policy sign – Rabbi Amy/Vivien Outcome: Gun policy has been approved, but further discussion needed concerning sign on door.	Gun policy has been approved. Rabbi says that the sign outside, doesn’t feel welcoming. Deb Lashman was fine with not having a posted sign. The Rabbi says that JFNA’s secure communities network contacted her after learning about our sign. They don’t approve of posting a no-guns policy. In USCJ webinar discussion there was a wide range of views. A couple of members sent thoughtful emails about posting the policy outside. Why announce no guns to a “bad actor”? Is it enough to tell members what the policy is? The sign has temporarily been taken down. The Rabbi suggests leaving it down. If we need a sign, it should be placed somewhere else and look different than it does. Questions: Is there insurance issue? Becky: Feel like policy is a feel-good policy. Not against state law to carry a gun. More perceptions and feelings than legal or reality issue.	Gun policy sign will not be posted for now. Sarah and Vivien will discuss where policies “live,” after High Holidays.

		<p>Sign isn't going to cause shooter to come in, but not a deterrent. Vivien: We voted on the policy, not necessarily a sign. We don't need to vote about posting a sign or not. Becky: Note that Judy R. had felt strongly about the policy, and is not here to discuss. Adam: Where does the policy live? Vivien: Members got email -- should it go in Voice? Sarah: Policies float in different places. No centralized spot for these things. We should invest some time in that. Cantor Steve: Big current policy changes should go on website. Adam: What about stranger who comes in with family for event? Jessica: Some of that on members as hosts and hostesses. Becky: Responsibility of members to inform Nat: What are other non-Jewish congregations in town doing? Rabbi: Christian colleagues are all over place. A synagogue is in a different position.</p>	
6:04 – 6:25	<p>Security – Sarah/Rabbi Amy/Vivien Outcome: To discuss ongoing security and HHD security</p>	<p>Sarah: We will have police as always for High Holidays. For Shabbat security, talked with firm that Gary Margolis recommended. Figuring out the right hours to schedule, we found they have 4-hr minimum plus a \$8,500 annual management fee. More than expected, and discussing with them. Gary says this fee is way less than others places. Vivien: We can't always get the police. Raul not here Friday nights. Sarah has reached out to other executive directors to get some sense what other synagogues doing. Not lot of response but those that did hire security, had costs of \$20 - \$30 an hour. Not all had security. That costs suggests they have unarmed security. The firm recommended to us is an armed-guard service. Sarah sent email inquiries to firms that do unarmed security. What is sentiment re armed vs. unarmed guards? There are pros and cons, and huge budget implications. Adam: Did we have more estimates than police, Margolis group? Sarah getting more quotes. Vivien: Currently, about 2/3 of member dues are giving the extra</p>	<p>Sarah to follow up on unarmed services, costs and training. Anyone want to work w Sarah and Vivien on this?</p>

		<p>security fee. If all members renew and pay the fee, that's about \$20k, says Sarah. Current security quote is about \$40k.</p> <p>Mindy: In her experience at methadone clinic and elsewhere, unarmed security services lack training and education. We should make sure qualified.</p> <p>Naomi thinks security fee should be mandatory. We should consider a Hebrew School fee, too. But the current proposal does not cover HS hours, or preschool?</p> <p>Does is it make sense to hire FT guard instead?</p> <p>Nat: We're bad at understanding risk and respond with expensive panic decisions. Security for worship only seems irrational. Seems misdirected. "Security theater." Many places use unarmed guards.</p> <p>Jessica: Seems statistically more likely to have threat on Shabbat.</p> <p>Bill: What about community police officers (from other towns)?</p> <p>Rabbi: Internal politics between agencies make it difficult. Contacted Mike Schirling, now head of public safety for state.</p> <p>Becky can contact a preschool parent who is state police officer re ideas, too.</p> <p>Rabbi: What comes to mind is Israel during Intifada.</p> <p>Nat: Want quote for unarmed vs armed.</p> <p>Adam: Will security guards let us use front door again?</p> <p>Rabbi: Probably not. Experts still suggest just one entrance.</p>	
6:25 – 6:30	<p>Who represents OZ to media? – Sarah</p> <p>Outcome: To decide on who may speak to media about OZ</p>	<p>Proposal that Rabbi, Executive Director, President, and Cantor be authorized to speak on behalf of OZ. They will consult as group with one another. Nat: If tricky, call Jason. Mindy makes motion authorizing only the Rabbi, Cantor, Executive Director, and President to speak formally on behalf of the congregation. Bill seconds. Approved by vote with none opposed.</p>	

6:30 – 6:38	<p>Executive Director’s report - Sarah (includes Preschool report) Outcome: To continue to engage the board in the work of the Executive Director</p>	<p>New members, Buchwalds and Loffeys, announced. Approved by board. DHS grant update: Still answering some questions, that’s good. USCJ: Sarah has submitted dues abatement request. Preschool: Doing new playground, applied for zoning permit to build fence. Finding fencing and woodchip company. Sarah would like to start a quarterly meeting to coordinate among different committees to update one another and help avoid duplication of efforts. Will bring it up after High Holidays. Bill: Meeting was helpful to learn about themes from year -- committees own themes, vs a unifying theme. Rabbi suggest Sarah check with Grace about why this fell by wayside in the past.</p>	<p>Sarah will come back with plan for quarterly cross-committee meeting.</p>
6:38 – 7:00, 7:30 - 7:38	<p>Length of OZ membership for B’nai Mitzvah (see item 2 below) – Adam/Rabbi Amy Outcome: To vote on policy on this issue</p>	<p>Sergey (via email) suggests: “In order to schedule a b’nai mitzvah, you must be a member” vs. imposing a 2-year rule. Sarah reviews financial projections showing there would be a negligible financial impact from imposing a 2-year membership rule. Rabbi: Two years not a magic number. Idea was to sign up in order to schedule a b’nai mitzvah; many people starting planning two years ahead. Important questions is if financial commitment to membership translates to feeling more sense of community? There’s a problem that now some people don’t know if they’re members or not. Adam: Policy vs practice? Could the “rule” be a reminder that “people typically do this a year or more in advance”? And when people sign up for Hebrew School, can we send a reminder card about OZ membership and flexible dues? Nat: The guide should be revised to be clear that you don’t get a date until your family is a member. At first meeting with rabbi and cantor, need to articulate that you need to be member to join. Rabbi: With every communication about payment for Hebrew School, there should be a message about OZ membership. Nat moves to adopt proposed language about scheduling, seconded and approved.</p>	<p>Add language below to the B’nai Mitzvah guide: <i>In order to schedule a b'nai mitzvah date, you must be a dues-paying member of Ohavi Zedek Synagogue. B’nai mitzvah dates are typically scheduled at least one year in advance.</i></p>
7:00 – 7:25	<p>Minyan</p>		

7:40 – 7:45	<p>Hebrew School report – Naomi Outcome: To continue to engage board in Hebrew School activities</p>	<p>Hebrew School is fully staffed. Three UVM students helping out this year, are highly recommended. Nadav is fully funded for coming year. Another grant is coming in, so we are over projected grant numbers. Lots of kids a reinterested and have already signed up. New Kitah Zayin curriculum coming together. A new “Learner Service” is aimed at bringing the community together, see Naomi’s Voice article. All are invited to attend on 9/21 21, Saturday morning. Class shabbatot will now be on Saturday mornings instead of Friday nights The USCJ is giving its Sol Schechter award to OZ for Nadav program.</p>	
7:47 – 7:55	<p>Executive Session</p>	<p>Nat moves, Vivien seconds to go into executive session. Nat moves to exit session, Bill seconds.</p>	
7:57 – 8:23	<p>Rabbi’s report – Rabbi Amy Outcome: To continue to engage the board in the work of the Rabbi</p>	<p>How do we respond to challenge of BDS movement? Started by Palestinian activists, the movement has Jews involved, too, which makes it more confusing. Affects us here. In Burlington, Peace & Justice Center (PJC) had strong anti-Israel positions and recently passed a new resolution backing BDS. Its author was head of social action committee at Temple Sinai, much to consternation of their Rabbi and members of synagogue. He wrote letter of protest to PJC and wanted us to be co-signers; was stronger than Rabbi was comfortable with given her ongoing work to engage with PJC. Rabbi got some notes about OZ participation in the recent ICE protest, for which PJC was running the publicity. We have a policy that we will not participate in things organized by PJC, but this event wasn’t organized by them. Rabbi Edelson didn’t want us to participate. Vivien: PJC doesn’t control us. If something important to OZ, we should do it. Rabbi: Every rally, Vermonter for Justice in Palestine show up. Vivien: Michael Schaal wants to work with Interfaith Social Action Committee to figure out what we do when at rally and we see them. What is positive message? Should we have a formal discussion about BDS with congregation? If board wants to make policy, we should say so, but the Rabbi</p>	

		believes it is too polarizing. Cantor Steve and Sarah were instrumental in writing statement sent out to congregation. Thanks. In other news, Imam Hassan, who moved to Cleveland, has come back. He and Rabbi and Ken White are talking about doing a “God Squad” podcast.	
8:24 – 8:30	Mission statement – Adam Outcome: To vote on OZ mission statement	Review of two versions of new OZ Mission Statement discussed at previous board meeting. Nat moves, Jessica seconds to vote on these. With two abstentions, version below is approved: <i>Ohavi Zedek’s mission is to provide a welcoming home for a diverse Jewish community, offering both traditional and innovative spiritual practice, learning for all ages, and a commitment to social action.</i>	
8:30 - 8:37	Pre-HHD outreach to members – Vivien Outcome: To finalize instructions for outreach to members (material sent in separate e-mail to board)	Distribution of member lists for each board member to call. Vivien has sent an email with “script” for calls. Board members to make calls after Labor Day and before Rosh Hashanah.	
8:37 – 8:44	Upcoming events	Skip financial report tonight. Upcoming events include fundraising Calcutta, Sept. 23. Congregational Meeting is Dec 15. Hanukkah Party. Board members need to sign up for bimah sitting at High Holidays. Still looking for Treasurer.	
8:45		Jessica moves to adjourn, Mindy seconds. Vote to adjourn.	

A. Ongoing Action Items

- **“Big Think” group to review ideas/proposals with board.**
- Invite new Kehillah Manager to visit OZ. **Vivien.**
- Succession planning: **Wayne, Judy+ to form subcommittee to work on.**
- *The Voice*: Include information in an upcoming issue ways to give and what different funds are for. **In process.**
- Find new Treasurer. **Ongoing.**
- Presentation on pros/cons of an ethical investing approach for endowment.
- Continue work on ongoing security coverage for OZ – **Vivien/Sarah – anyone else want to work on this?**

- Where do OZ policies “live”? **Vivien/Sarah to review**
- Plan for quarterly cross-committee meetings - **Sarah**

B. For Future Discussion

- 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.
- USCJ affiliation and interfaith marriage.
- Staffing models—program designs/core program areas/hopes for growth.
- Organizational and facility models (JCC, multiplex).
- Development/engagement/relationship building.
- Other long-ranging questions: buildings, growth.